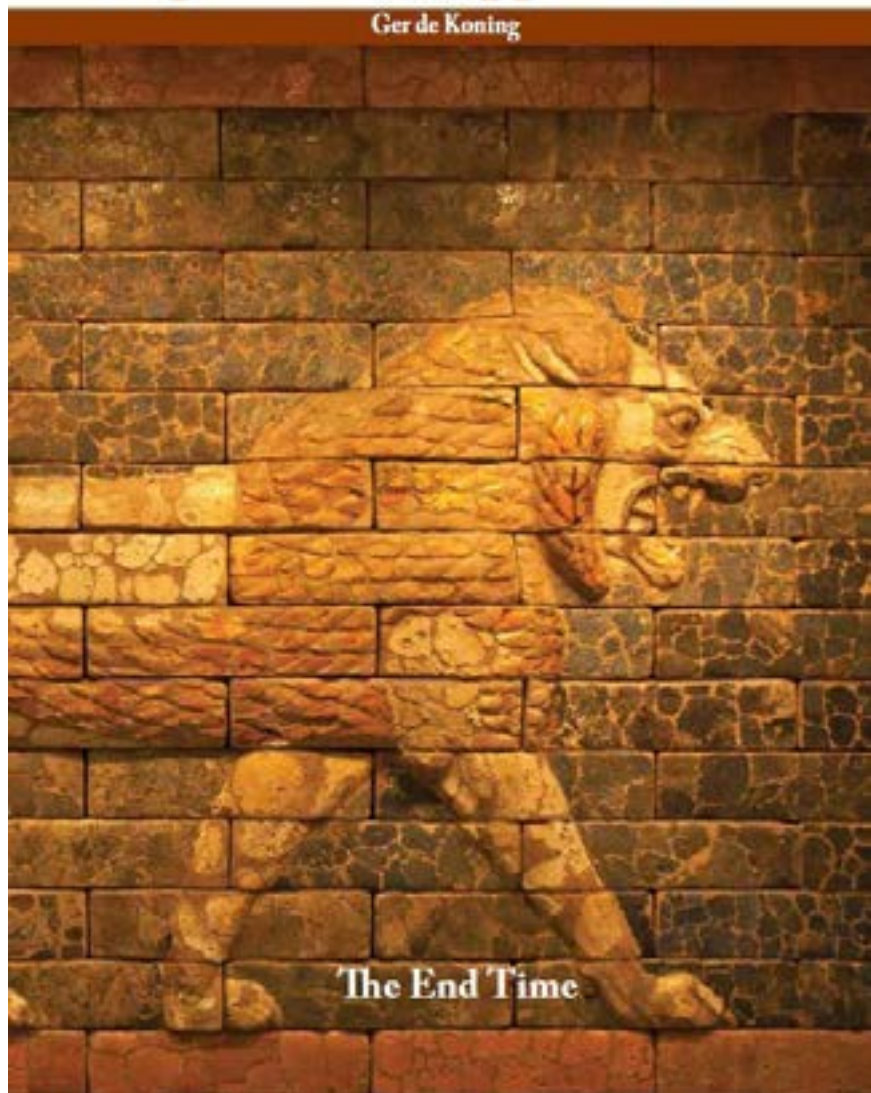


Daniel Explained & Applied 27

Ger de Koning



The End Time

The Book of Daniel

The Book of Daniel

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Ger de Koning

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Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible

Old Testament

Gen – Genesis

Exo – Exodus

Lev – Leviticus

Num – Numbers

Deu – Deuteronomy

Jos – Joshua

Jdg – Judges

Rth – Ruth

1Sam – First Samuel

2Sam – Second Samuel

1Kgs – First Kings

2Kgs – Second Kings

1Chr – First Chronicles

2Chr – Second Chronicles

Ezra – Ezra

Neh – Nehemiah

Est – Esther

Job – Job

Psa – Psalms

Pro – Proverbs

Ecc – Ecclesiastes

Song – Song of Songs

Isa – Isaiah

Jer – Jeremiah

Lam – Lamentations

Eze – Ezekiel

Dan – Daniel

Hos – Hosea

Joel – Joel

Amos – Amos

Oba – Obadiah

Jona – Jonah

Mic – Micah
Nah – Nahum
Hab – Habakkuk
Zep – Zephaniah
Hag – Haggai
Zec – Zechariah
Mal – Malachi

New Testament

Mt – Gospel of Matthew
Mk – Gospel of Mark
Lk – Gospel of Luke
Jn – Gospel of John
Acts – Acts of the Apostles
Rom – Letter to the Romans
1Cor – First Letter to the Corinthians
2Cor – Second Letter to the Corinthians
Gal – Letter to the Galatians
Eph – Letter to the Ephesians
Phil – Letter to the Philippians
Col – Letter to the Colossians
1Thes – First Letter to the Thessalonians
2Thes – Second Letter to the Thessalonians
1Tim – First Letter to Timothy
2Tim – Second Letter to Timothy
Tit – Letter to Titus
Phlm – Letter to Philemon
Heb – Letter to the Hebrews
Jam – Letter of James
1Pet – First Letter of Peter
2Pet – Second Letter of Peter
1Jn – First Letter of John
2Jn – Second Letter of John
3Jn – Third Letter of John
Jude – Letter of Jude
Rev – Revelation

Explanation of general format

PERSONAL PRONOUNS are capitalized when pertaining to Deity.

BRACKETS [] are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words which are not found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek but implied by it.

SHARP BRACKETS < > are used in this commentary in the Bible text to indicate words possibly not in the original writings.

When **ASTERISKS *** are used in New Testament quotations, it is to mark verbs that are historical presents in the Greek which have been translated with an English past tense in order to conform to modern usage. The translators recognized that in some contexts the present tense seems more unexpected and unjustified to the English reader than a past tense would have been. But Greek authors frequently used the present tense for the sake of heightened vividness, thereby transporting their readers in imagination to the actual scene at the time of occurrence. However, the translators felt that it would be wise to change these historical presents to English past tenses.

ALL CAPS in the New Testament quotations are used in the text to indicate Old Testament quotations or obvious references to Old Testament texts.

The book of Daniel

Introduction

This book speaks about the end time, that is, the time immediately before the coming of the Lord Jesus to reign on earth. It is an important book. This is also evident from the fact that the enemy attacks it again and again. It is perhaps the most attacked book of all Old Testament books. This is because the book contains many prophecies that were already fulfilled in the time when the Lord Jesus was on earth.

An example of this we see in the rise of the four consecutive world realms over which Daniel prophesied. Unbelief cannot accept that a prophet has predicted this so accurately. Therefore, Bible critics have dated the book much later. According to these people, the book was written after the fulfilment of the prophecies and so, they claim, cannot have been from Daniel.

But we have to do with a God who indicates in advance how history will go and how events will take place (Isa 46:10). In the book we also see things that took place later and things that also still have to happen. Above all, we have the clear testimony of the Lord Jesus Himself. He speaks emphatically of "Daniel the prophet" (Mt 24:15). His testimony is the end of all contradictions.

There is also a testimony about the Lord Jesus in the book of Daniel and that is His title 'Son of Man'. In the Gospels the Lord speaks several times about Himself as "the Son of man". This name appears three times in the Old Testament: twice in Psalms (Psa 8:4; 80:17) and once in Daniel (Dan 7:13). Every time He calls Himself by this name, it is a confirmation of the historical accuracy of the book of Daniel, for He is the Son of man Who Daniel describes, Who will come once to establish His kingdom of peace (Dan 7:13).

In the book of Ezekiel, we also find evidence of Daniel. Ezekiel is a prophet in exile and speaks of Daniel (Eze 14:14,20). Daniel is already known then. This is an extra argument that the book of Daniel can only be dated in that time and not later.

It is still important to know something about the historical background of this book. The last God-fearing king in Judah is Josiah. Josiah dies in the war against the king of Egypt, Neco, a war he should not have waged for Neco is on his way to Assyria and not to Judah (2Chr 35:21-24). Of the four sons that Josiah has, the people take the youngest son and make him king (2Chr 36:1). He rules only three months. The king of Egypt has power in Israel and takes him to Egypt. He makes the second son of Josiah, Eliakim, king, and gives him the name Jehoiakim. Jehoiakim is a godless king (2Chr 36:5-8). This king Jehoiakim is the one mentioned in Daniel 1 (Dan 1:1).

Babylon became a world empire in the year 612 BC with power over Assyria and Israel. Nebuchadnezzar is given authority over these countries by his father. In the book of Daniel we are in the year 606 BC. From that time on, the seventy years of exile are counted (Dan 9:2). Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem in the third year of Jehoiakim. This siege is not mentioned in non-biblical history, but here the Scripture writes history. Only later, in the eleventh year of Jehoiakim, does Nebuchadnezzar take Jerusalem. Then the second deportation takes place. The first deportation takes place during the first siege, here in Daniel 1. The third deportation is under Zedekiah. Daniel and his friends are also taken away on the first deportation and end up in Babylon.

There is another aspect that is important to remember and that is the division of God's people into ten tribes and two tribes. That division is caused by the sin of the people and their kings, beginning with Solomon (1Kgs 11:11-13). By persevering in their sins, God finally had to remove the ten tribes from the land first. He used the Assyrians, who deported the population of the ten tribes from their area and scattered them over other countries over which the king of Assyria ruled (2Kgs 17:3-6). The ten tribes are still in the 'scattering'.

The two tribes have not been warned by this, but have continued to sin and have sinned even worse than the ten tribes (Eze 23:11). God carries out the judgment on them by giving them into the hand of the king of Babylon (2Chr 36:11-21; Jer 52:28-30) for a seventy-year exile: "For thus says the LORD, 'When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place'" (Jer 29:10).

The book of Daniel is set in Babylon. Babel means 'confusion' and represents the religious confusion so characteristic of Christianity. In this book God shows in the attitude of Daniel and his friends what the attitude of His own should be in such circumstances. Daniel and his friends have not chosen their stay in Babylon and the career they have been given.

Daniel means 'God is my Judge'. That is an encouragement for him and it is an encouragement for us too. If we are in circumstances comparable to those of Daniel and his friends, we may be assured that only the judgment of God counts.

There are many prophetic books in the Old Testament, but Daniel is special. In all other prophetic books, Israel is still God's people, the people are still in God's land, and there is still the throne of God. God still recognizes the people. There are also prophecies in those books concerning the coming of the Messiah. In the book of Daniel, it is different. Israel is no longer God's people in this book, but it is "Lo-ammi", which means "not My people" (Hos 1:9). The people are no longer in the land either, but they have been taken to Babylon.

Here begins what the Lord Jesus calls "the times of Gentiles" (Lk 21:24). From now on, time is counted according to the kings of the world empires. The throne of God is no longer in Jerusalem. The glory of God has gone away from the earth. This happened in phases (Eze 9:3a; 10:18-19; 11:22-23). God is no longer the God of the earth, but of heaven (Dan 2:28,37), to which He has withdrawn. His government is no longer connected with Jerusalem.

Division of the book

We can divide the book into two parts:

1. Daniel 1-6: In this part we have the fates of Daniel and his friends;
2. Daniel 7-12: This part shows us future events through visions that Daniel has received.

Not only the second part of the book is prophecy, but the whole book, including the first part. We will see that what happens to Daniel and his friends, also has an application to the future.

The first part contains visions and dreams that are given to gentiles, but they must be explained by Daniel. Daniel represents the believing and faithful remnant of Israel in the end time. He is one of the wise men about whom we hear in this book and who have insight into the thoughts of God. The first part also describes the circumstances of the gentile rulers in connection with their behavior.

In the second part the announcements are made to the faithful prophet. These are events that are more directly related to the people of God.

Daniel 1

Introduction

The subject of this chapter is the conduct of those who, as a result of God's judgment of His people, are in a foreign land, wherein the favor of God rests on them. The message is that obedience to God gives insight into His thoughts and also the power to act in accordance with them. This is further elaborated in the following chapters.

Daniel and his friends are a picture of the faithful remnant of Israel in the end time. It is not a remnant in the land of God, but among the nations. That is how it will be in the great tribulation. The true believers in our days are also a remnant for God, they also live in an end time. It is about God finding in us something of the characteristics that should be found in the whole people. We see that in Daniel 1.

Daniel's personal behavior is the basis and introduction to gain insight into the whole book. With us it is the same. Separation from the (Christian) world – a pertinent refusal to participate in what it has to offer – puts us in a position to receive what God wants to communicate to us.

Dan 1:1-2 | The Deportation to Babylon

1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. 2 The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god.

What is described here is foretold by the prophet Isaiah: "Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house and all that your fathers have laid up in store to this day will be carried to Babylon; nothing will be left," says the LORD" (Isa 39:6). This prophecy is the judgment of what Hezekiah has done with the treasures of the LORD's house. He showed them all to the delegation from Babylon: "There was nothing in his house nor in all his dominion that Hezekiah did not show them" (Isa 39:2). That delegation

visited him because of his illness and miraculous healing and also because of the miracle of the going back of the sun's shadow (Isa 38:8; 39:1; 2Chr 32:31a).

Jehoiakim is a son of king Josiah. Josiah gave him the name Eliakim, but Pharaoh Neco "changed his name to Jehoiakim" (2Kgs 23:34). Pharaoh has the power to do so because Israel has been conquered by him. He makes Jehoiakim king. Jehoiakim is twenty-five years old then "and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem" (2Kgs 23:36).

During his reign, in its third year, Nebuchadnezzar besieges Jerusalem. There is no way to escape from his grip, because the LORD is behind this siege. This is not because Nebuchadnezzar is so strong, but because "the Lord", *Adonai*, the sovereign Ruler over all things, stands behind this siege. He must give His people into the hand of the enemy, because all the previous means to make His people repent failed to have any effect.

The third year of the reign of Jehoiakim is the year 606 BC. In that year the transport of a number of nobles, including Daniel and his friends, takes place (verses 3-4,6).

After this there are three more deportations of the population. The first of these takes place in the days of Jehoiachin, a grandson of Josiah, who came to the throne after Jehoiakim's death (2Kgs 24:6-17; 2Chr 36:9-10). When Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem in 597 BC, Jehoiachin and a number of others went out of the city to the king of Babylon, who took them prisoner (2Kgs 24:12). Ezekiel is part of this deportation (2Kgs 24:14-16; Eze 1:1-2), he is then twenty-five years old.

Nebuchadnezzar makes Zedekiah, a third son of Josiah, king in place of Jehoiachin. Zedekiah is the last king of Judah (2Kgs 24:17-20; 25:1-7; 2Chr 36:10-14), he reigns from 597-587 BC. He comes to his end because he rebels against Nebuchadnezzar, who goes up against Jerusalem and destroys the city in 586 BC. Nebuchadnezzar then again leads some of the population into exile (2Kgs 25:11).

Finally, around 582 BC, the last deportation takes place (Jer 52:30).

Nebuchadnezzar brings the captured temple vessels "to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god". Shinar is the area where the cities of the Babylo-

nian empire are located, with Babel as the capital. Nimrod is the founder of that empire (Gen 10:8-10). The name of the city and its origin can be found in the confusion of speech (Gen 11:1-9). Babel means 'confusion' or 'scattering'.

Twice it is said that Nebuchadnezzar brings the objects of the house of God into the house "of his god". This shows how great the unfaithfulness and apostasy of the people of God are towards the LORD. They never thought this would happen. They thought they could count on the eternal presence of the LORD in their midst in the temple. The temple is their national pride. They have boasted in it (Jer 7:4). But such pride must be punished by the LORD with humiliation. He leaves His people and surrenders His temple to the nations.

Dan 1:3-4 | Education

3 Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his officials, to bring in some of the sons of Israel, including some of the royal family and of the nobles, 4 youths in whom was no defect, who were good-looking, showing intelligence in every [branch of] wisdom, endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge, and who had ability for serving in the king's court; and [he ordered him] to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.

Nebuchadnezzar wants to train a number of young Judean men to serve at his court and to give them an important position in his country's government. He acts according to the principle 'he who has the youth, has the future'. In verses 3-4, a profile of these young men is given. Among them are Daniel and his three friends.

Daniel belongs to the Judean nobility. He was brought to Babylon at the first transportation. The prophet Isaiah prophesied the deportation of these men to Babylon: And [some] of your sons who will issue from you, whom you will beget, will be taken away, and they will become officials in the palace of the king of Babylon" (Isa 39:7). These men are chosen to increase the glory of Nebuchadnezzar. But God uses these young men from Judah to provide a testimony for Himself in Babylon with the most powerful man on earth.

In order to free them completely from their own way of thinking and to introduce them into Babylon's way of thinking, a program with three main points must be followed. In order to do good service, the first point is "to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans". This part of the program focuses on their mind, what they should take in, in their mind and how they should pass on their knowledge in words to others.

This is in contrast, to being taught in "the sacred writings" (2Tim 3:15) and speaking "the things which are fitting for sound doctrine" (Tit 2:1). As a current application we can look at the Bible translation we use. Is it a reliable translation? We can also think of the songs we sing. The use of these means, form our spirit and our language. Therefore, it is good to ask ourselves what we read and sing.

Dan 1:5 | Eating and Drinking

5 The king appointed for them a daily ration from the king's choice food and from the wine which he drank, and [appointed] that they should be educated three years, at the end of which they were to enter the king's personal service.

The second point of the program concerns food. The deported princes and nobles get other food. They should eat from the royal table. The spiritual meaning is that they must find the strength for their service in the products of Babylon or the methods of Babylon. What is offered to them is attractive for their natural taste. But the trick behind it is that the Babylonian food will transform them into Babylonian people with Babylonian behavior.

The food they eat speaks of what they absorb in their minds. The result will be that their whole behavior, their whole attitude, will radiate what appeals to man without God. In the application we can say that they are trained in sales techniques and management that is intended to promote Babylon and keep it big. Drinking the king's wine means that they must find their joy in the things in which he finds his joy. The result will be that their spiritual discernment will disappear.

Dan 1:6-7 | Other Names

6 Now among them from the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. 7 Then the commander of the officials assigned [new] names

to them; and to Daniel he assigned [the name] Belteshazzar, to Hananiah Shadrach, to Mishael Meshach and to Azariah Abed-nego.

Here the names of four of the deported young men are mentioned. God's Spirit puts the spotlight on them, because in them the characteristics of the faithful remnant are clearly visible. Nowhere it seems that they share in the judgment God had to bring over His people because of their personal crimes. But there is also no evidence that they have opposed this judgment for that reason. We just see them bowing under the judgment that affects the whole people, including themselves.

At the same time, we see how they remain faithful to the LORD and his statutes, from Whom and from which they have not departed. Their upbringing in Israel is not rejected by them in the land of their exile. Even though Daniel, it is estimated, is currently between fourteen and eighteen years old, a teenager.

The third point of the program of the re-education concerns their names. Of these four young men are mentioned both their old, Hebrew, names and the new, Babylonian, names they receive.

1. Daniel means: God is my judge,
2. Hananiah: Yahweh is Grace,
3. Mishael: Who is like God?
4. Azariah: Yahweh is help or Yahweh helps.

The new names are related to the gods of Babylon. The meaning of these names is not always clear.

1. Belteshazzar: (possible meaning) 'prince of Bel', the god of Babylon,
2. Shadrach: possibly derived from 'Rach', a sun god,
3. Meshach: (possible meaning) 'he who belongs to the goddess Seshach',
4. Abed-nego: 'slave of Nego' also a god of Babylon.

They have to accept this name change and they did. They do not defend themselves against it.

In the change of their names we can see a process of 'brainwashing'. In their Hebrew names the name of God or of the LORD appears in each of

them. This can be seen from the syllable *el* or *yah*. *El* means ‘God’ and *Yah* is ‘Yahweh’ which is translated with ‘LORD’. Any reminder of their origin must make way for their new status. If this is done consistently long enough, they will have forgotten their origin over time and fully adopted Babylon’s way of living and thinking.

Dan 1:8-9 | A Resolution of Heart

8 But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king’s choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought [permission] from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself. 9 Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials,

They have not refused to change their names, but they do not take the food that is given to them. Daniel intends not to defile himself with this. The LORD has said beforehand that His people will defile themselves with the food of the nations, when He has had them taken away (Hos 9:3).

Daniel will have known that prophecy. But he does not use that reason to adapt. He doesn’t say, just to adapt it to themselves: ‘You have to go with the times.’ Or: ‘The Bible is time-bound.’ He also does not seek excuses in the circumstances. For him, the Word of God is also the norm in Babylon, when he is far from home, and he submits to its authority.

He “sets upon his heart” (which is the literal translation) or “purposed in his heart” (Darby translation) not to defile himself. The heart is the center of life. There all decisions are made: “Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it [flow] the springs of life” (Pro 4:23). God can use Daniel because he purposes this in his heart.

He cannot refuse to undergo his forming, but he can ask if he does not have to defile himself as a Jew. He is honest about what he is. He does not protest, but submits a request. He did not protest against the name change, but eating what defiles is another matter. Then one must “obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). However, he does not demand, but asks.

When young people come in another environment, for example to study, it becomes clear what their upbringing has done to them. What matters in such a situation is the intention of the heart. Daniel “purposed in his heart

that he would not defile himself". This principle is of great importance to every young person who knows the Lord Jesus. It is not about a Christian behavior, the appearance, but about what is in the heart.

Daniel never let himself be dominated by the science of Babylon, because he directed his heart to God. He was willing to obey the LORD in all things, even in the smallest things. It is about what we feed ourselves with, what we spiritually take in, for that is what forms us. This also determines the answer to the question of whether a person adapts to the circumstances or whether he is guided by his dealings with the Lord.

By the way, Babylon does not so much represent the wicked world, but the Christianity which is led by worldly principles. For us, to remain standing in Babylon means to remain standing in Christian confusion – Babel or Babylon means, as I said, ‘confusion’ – before the principles of God. If we remain with the Lord with a resolution of the heart (Acts 11:23), we will not follow the trend of casual Christianity based on a pragmatic gospel.

There are in connection with Babylon, some lessons for us. We read about the departure of a remnant from Babylon that returns to Jerusalem (Ezra 1:2-3,5). This presents the aspect of separation within Christianity. We need to withdraw from the confusion and look for the place where the Lord Jesus is in the midst, where He is now, gathering the church. Another aspect is that at the same time, we are also in Babylon, because we cannot leave Christianity. If we look at ourselves in that aspect of Babylon, the lesson is that we have to show a sure and decided attitude. We see that attitude in Daniel.

We are part of Christianity. Another thing is that we must not allow; is ourselves to be influenced by the principles that prevail there. These principles are attractive to the flesh. We are, like Daniel, of royal blood, we are “a royal priesthood” (1Pet 2:9). Christianity addresses us in that way, often in flattering language. But the program she has ready for us is aimed at forgetting our origins and the purpose of our lives, and to commit ourselves to forming a power on earth. Certainly, we have earthly responsibilities, but we should look at them in the light of our citizenship that is in heaven (Phil 3:20).

Daniel addresses himself correctly to the commander of the officials. He approaches him with due respect, aware of his submissive position. God blesses Daniel's intention and attitude and gives him "favor and compassion" in the sight of the commander. He works in the heart of the commander of the officials, so that he listens to Daniel.

Dan 1:10 | Objections

10 and the commander of the officials said to Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has appointed your food and your drink; for why should he see your faces looking more haggard than the youths who are your own age? Then you would make me forfeit my head to the king."

The commander of the officials does not understand what Daniel says and is also afraid of his position. According to him, what Daniel proposes can never be better than what he wants them to eat. After all, that is of the best possible quality, isn't it? Thus, the man of the world understands nothing of what the Christian is concerned with, what he feeds himself with.

The world feeds on what is destined for God. Man, without God uses his time and strength for himself and is busy with what has been sacrificed to the idols. He believes that this also gives the best result. But what is food for the world cannot be food for the believer.

Dan 1:11-13 | A Trial Period

11 But Daniel said to the overseer whom the commander of the officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, 12 "Please test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink. 13 Then let our appearance be observed in your presence and the appearance of the youths who are eating the king's choice food; and deal with your servants according to what you see."

Daniel suggests a test. He proposes a ten-day trial period. Ten is the number of responsibility. We see this, among other things, in the ten commandments. Young people are always put to the test when they come to stand alone. You can, just like Daniel does here, ask that you be put to the test to show for whom you live. You can also dare to go into it and think you will succeed.

Daniel dares nothing, but acts in faith, from a relationship with God. He doesn't choose wine, which is good in itself (Jdg 9:13; Psa 104:15a), but water. For us the choice is: wine, that is to say the earthly joys, or water, that is to say the living water.

Daniel does not speak in pride, but with the certainty of faith. He trusts the outcome, that it will be governed by God. After the trial period, the test must be evaluated.

Dan 1:14-17 | After the Trial Period

14 So he listened to them in this matter and tested them for ten days. 15 At the end of ten days their appearance seemed better and they were fatter than all the youths who had been eating the king's choice food. 16 So the overseer continued to withhold their choice food and the wine they were to drink, and kept giving them vegetables. 17 As for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every [branch of] literature and wisdom; Daniel even understood all [kinds of] visions and dreams.

That the overseer wants to try it for ten days is the result of God's work in him. After the ten-day test, the effect of the food that Daniel and his friends have eaten is apparent. They looked better and fatter or healthier than any other of young men. Sincere trust in God will always be rewarded by Him. God gives the four friends knowledge, intelligence and wisdom – and to Daniel also insight into all kinds of visions and dreams.

It will become clear to the world with what we feed ourselves. That cannot remain hidden. That is already the case now. It is also true when the time comes, that men of the world will have to acknowledge that what has occupied the believers has real value, while what has occupied them will turn out to be worthless.

Because the test is positive, the young men receive vegetables instead of the food from the king's table. God takes care of the men because they have remained faithful to Him. He blesses the teaching they follow at the 'university' in Babylon. In reality they are not taught by the scholars of Babylon, but by God, for *He* gives them insight.

If anyone follow learning and submits to the Lord in it, he may trust that the Lord will make clear to him what he needs to know. If the heart is fo-

cused on the Lord, he remains with Him. Much of what he must learn is not true because it goes against the Scriptures, but the Lord will make sure that he does not become entangled in it.

Dan 1:18-20 | Before Nebuchadnezzar

18 Then at the end of the days which the king had specified for presenting them, the commander of the officials presented them before Nebuchadnezzar. 19 The king talked with them, and out of them all not one was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's personal service. 20 As for every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians [and] conjurers who [were] in all his realm.

After three years the young men come to Nebuchadnezzar. They can answer him to all his questions because they are taught by God. Not only are they better than the other magicians in the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar, but they rise head and shoulders above them. They are “ten times better” than all the magicians of Babylon. This is because they have kept God’s Word (Psa 119:98-100). They have experienced that the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom (Pro 1:7a; 9:10a), while the wisdom of the world is folly.

Their wisdom, knowledge and insight do not make them proud, but subservient. There is no need for intelligent young people, but for servant-minded young people, as there is for the elderly. God controls everything in such a way that the men come into service for the king. Solomon said: “Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will stand before kings; He will not stand before obscure men” (Pro 22:29). The friends have experienced that. We also see here the fulfilment of what the LORD says to Eli: “Those who honor Me I will honor” (1Sam 2:30).

They get this high position because they have resolved in their hearts to obey the Word. In that position they have shown that they trust the LORD and have not polluted themselves with the destruction that prevails around them. This has given the LORD the space to fill them with the knowledge of His thoughts and to use them as His witnesses in the very environment where He is not taken into account.

Dan 1:21 | Duration of the Stay in Babylon

| *21 And Daniel continued until the first year of Cyrus the king.*

Daniel has experienced the entire history of the New Babylonian Empire. In the “first year the of Cyrus the king” he is about ninety years old. He has then been more than seventy years in Babylon. This mention at the end of this chapter indicates that Daniel has shown the same faithfulness to God that we see in this chapter, through all the time he spent in Babylon. He is an example of the word: “Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it” (Pro 22:6).

Also “the first year of Cyrus the king” refers to the end of the exile in Babylon and the liberation of the people of God from it (Ezra 1:1; 2Chr 36:22; Ezra 6:3).

Daniel 2

Introduction

In Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the statue reveals the history of the world's empires. Daniel 7 gives that history too, but there it is revealed in a dream to Daniel and presented in beasts. Beasts are creatures without insight and without conscious connection with God. The statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream is in accordance with *his* imagination of power and rule, how *man* sees those realms. The beasts in Daniel's dream show how *God* thinks about these realms, how *He* sees them.

Daniel 2 is fundamental to the understanding of prophecy. It contains a key to many other prophecies. The dream of Nebuchadnezzar is very telling, because here in brief the whole history of the world is presented, with the final piece – and this is what it is all about – the creation of the realm of the Lord Jesus.

Dan 2:1 | Nebuchadnezzar Dreams

1 Now in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was troubled and his sleep left him.

In Nebuchadnezzar's dream, God shows him the history of the world. The way in which it is made known makes it clear that the most powerful man on earth depends on the prophet of God for its interpretation. This chapter shows three characteristics related to Nebuchadnezzar:

1. He has received his authority from above.
2. He has been given his authority for a specified period.
3. For insight he depends on faithful people.

Dan 2:2-12 | Nebuchadnezzar and His Advisers

2 Then the king gave orders to call in the magicians, the conjurers, the sorcerers and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king. 3 The king said to them, "I had a dream and my spirit is anxious

to understand the dream." 4 Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic: "O king, live forever! Tell the dream to your servants, and we will declare the interpretation." 5 The king replied to the Chaldeans, "The command from me is firm: if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you will be torn limb from limb and your houses will be made a rubbish heap. 6 But if you declare the dream and its interpretation, you will receive from me gifts and a reward and great honor; therefore declare to me the dream and its interpretation." 7 They answered a second time and said, "Let the king tell the dream to his servants, and we will declare the interpretation." 8 The king replied, "I know for certain that you are bargaining for time, inasmuch as you have seen that the command from me is firm, 9 that if you do not make the dream known to me, there is only one decree for you. For you have agreed together to speak lying and corrupt words before me until the situation is changed; therefore tell me the dream, that I may know that you can declare to me its interpretation." 10 The Chaldeans answered the king and said, "There is not a man on earth who could declare the matter for the king, inasmuch as no great king or ruler has [ever] asked anything like this of any magician, conjurer or Chaldean. 11 Moreover, the thing which the king demands is difficult, and there is no one else who could declare it to the king except gods, whose dwelling place is not with [mortal] flesh." 12 Because of this the king became indignant and very furious and gave orders to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.

In these verses a scene unfolds that shows the tragedy of searching for explanations about future things without asking God. We see the human wisdom of the advisors of Nebuchadnezzar and his own power expressed in a disillusioned way. That's how it always goes. When the wisdom and power of the world are put to the test, wisdom turns out to be moderate, and power turns out to be completely inadequate to obtain the answers. First, man will try to solve the riddles of life and the future by all means at his disposal. Only when it has become apparent that there is no satisfactory answer in this way, is one inclined to listen to God. Man's failure paves the way for the revelation of the wisdom and power of God.

Nebuchadnezzar wants to know the meaning of his dream. He orders his entire staff of advisers to come before him, all specialists in the field of dream explanations, everyone from his own perspective. Let the king tell his dream and they will give him the explanation. It is not clear from the

text whether the king has indeed forgotten the dream or whether he simply does not want to tell it. This is not important either. It is about Nebuchadnezzar, that if he would only tell them the dream they will have a meaning ready for it.

It is not inconceivable that he knows their twists and turns of explanations and that he knows how they will manipulate the explanation of his dream. As long as this has been favorable to himself, he has endured their twists and turns. But because God is at work, this time he is not content with a plausible explanation. He wants to know the right meaning. Those who can tell the dream can also be trusted with the explanation.

God uses the king's demand to expose the foolishness and inability of his counselors. They answer that they are not able to tell the king his dream. In verses 10-11 they unconsciously give the right answer: no creature can meet the king's demand. In so doing, they acknowledge their failure. Only the gods can tell the dream, but they fail. This time the scholars cannot live up to their pretensions that they are in contact with the higher world. Only the true God can make known this dream because the dream comes from Him. By unmasking these people, He clears the way for this Himself.

Not only the scholars of Nebuchadnezzar are disillusioned, but also Nebuchadnezzar himself is disillusioned in his power. His worst threats are powerless as a means of exerting pressure to find out what he absolutely wants to know. In powerless anger, he lets his threats be carried out. He orders the killing of all the wise men in Babylon.

Dan 2:13-18 | Reaction of Daniel

13 So the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they looked for Daniel and his friends to kill [them]. 14 Then Daniel replied with discretion and discernment to Arioch, the captain of the king's bodyguard, who had gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon; 15 he said to Arioch, the king's commander, "For what reason is the decree from the king [so] urgent?" Then Arioch informed Daniel about the matter. 16 So Daniel went in and requested of the king that he would give him time, in order that he might declare the interpretation to the king. 17 Then Daniel went to his house and informed his friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, about the matter, 18 so that they

might request compassion from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his friends would not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

When Daniel hears about the threat to be killed, he does not shy away from the problem. He first asks what is going on, why there is such a hurry. Daniel does not allow himself to be tempted to act hastily. He goes to the king and asks for time. That is courageous, because the king has already given the order that the wise men should be killed.

The way Daniel addresses the king is a testimony of faith. He promises the king that he will give him the explanation. In verse 28, he testifies that the explanation does not come from himself, but that God has revealed the explanation. Here, however, Daniel does not yet know anything about the dream, but he is aware that there is a God who reveals “profound and hidden things” (verse 22). Because Daniel has a living faith in God and trusts Him unconditionally, he can speak to the king in this way.

In his speech, no pretention can be heard. He is not self-assured, but asks for time. He asks no delay to explore all kinds of clever possibilities and to plan to escape the imminent danger. He uses the postponement to share his needs with his friends and pray together for the situation (cf. Acts 4:23-31). Faith leads to dependence on God. In this prayer, a common prayer, they pray to “the God of heaven”. They approach God in the right attitude, without the pretention of being His people. They ask mercy from Him, that they may not be put to death.

Dan 2:19-23 | Heard and Praise

19 Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven; 20 Daniel said,

*“Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever,
For wisdom and power belong to Him.*

21 “It is He who changes the times and the epochs;

He removes kings and establishes kings;

He gives wisdom to wise men

And knowledge to men of understanding.

22 “It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things;

He knows what is in the darkness,

And the light dwells with Him.

23 "To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise,

For You have given me wisdom and power;

Even now You have made known to me what we requested of You,

For You have made known to us the king's matter."

The prayer of Daniel and his friends is heard in an impressive way. Daniel sees in a night vision exactly the same thing Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream. He is also given the explanation. Here the word is experienced: "The secret of the LORD is for those who fear Him, And He will make them know His covenant" (Psa 25:14). What Daniel experiences here, agrees in a number of ways with what Joseph has experienced, who also explains a dream several times (Gen 40:4-8,12,18; 41:15-16,25). Only Daniel also gets the dream itself revealed and not just the explanation. Daniel and his friends have no doubt about this answer from God.

Daniel's first reaction is not that he goes to the king to tell him the dream, but a thanksgiving to God. He praises God for Who He is and what He does and of what He is capable. All change comes from Him. It is important to see and realize that. All authority comes from Him. He removes kings and establishes them. He also gives people what they need in wisdom and knowledge.

Daniel is not proud that the dream has been revealed to him and not to his friends. He speaks of a response from God to him and his friends ("us") to a prayer from him and his friends ("we"). There is no truth that we can call our private property. What we have received belongs to all who believe. This will save us from boasting about what the Lord has given us as insight (cf. 1Cor 4:7).

Dan 2:24-30 | Daniel Before the King

24 Therefore, Daniel went in to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon; he went and spoke to him as follows: "Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon! Take me into the king's presence, and I will declare the interpretation to the king." 25 Then Arioch hurriedly brought Daniel into the king's presence and spoke to him as follows: "I have found a

man among the exiles from Judah who can make the interpretation known to the king!" 26 The king said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen and its interpretation?" 27 Daniel answered before the king and said, "As for the mystery about which the king has inquired, neither wise men, conjurers, magicians [nor] diviners are able to declare [it] to the king. 28 However, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days. This was your dream and the visions in your mind [while] on your bed. 29 As for you, O king, [while] on your bed your thoughts turned to what would take place in the future; and He who reveals mysteries has made known to you what will take place. 30 But as for me, this mystery has not been revealed to me for any wisdom residing in me more than [in] any [other] living man, but for the purpose of making the interpretation known to the king, and that you may understand the thoughts of your mind.

The circumstances, which are all in God's hand, ensure that Daniel asks for and receives delay. He went to Arioch fearlessly and told him not to kill the wise men. This time it looks more like an order than a request. If God has revealed anything, any reluctance to accept or do so is a stain on His credibility. When Daniel acts in the certainty of faith in what God has revealed, God confirms His presence by paving the way for Daniel to the king. Arioch hurries to bring Daniel to the king.

Arioch introduces Daniel to the king as one of the "exiles from Judah". This emphasizes that only that people have knowledge of the true God and that God only reveals His thoughts to the members of that people. It also emphasizes that the heads of the peoples depend on them for knowing the revelation of God. The king must know that wisdom can be found among the faithful of that people, who are a remnant, no matter how much the people as a whole have failed.

We see this as a general principle that also applies today. The truth concerning God revealed in Christ can only be found in Christendom. To know the truth of Who God is, one must be with "the church of the living God", for that is "the pillar and support of the truth" (1Tim 3:15), no matter how much the church has failed. In practice, one must be with those who acknowledge that failure and who want to be faithful to God's Word as a remnant. Outside the church of the living God a person cannot be en-

trusted with the knowledge of the truth. This denounces every other world religion as a lie.

There is always a great danger that a person will boast about his knowledge of what God has made known. That is why Daniel's attitude is so valuable and exemplary. We see in him that the real, deep knowledge of the ways of God does not puff up, but humbles. He did not attribute any honor to himself. He declares that he is no smarter than any other person. Everything he knows comes from God, and he therefore gives Him all honor.

The true purpose of what God has shown is to make known to Nebuchadnezzar "what will take place in the later days" and "what will take place in the future" (verses 28,29). It is not so much about events in the days nearby, but about what will happen in the end time. Certainly, the dream also says something about the near future for Nebuchadnezzar. But it is particularly about the end time. Nebuchadnezzar does not see a statue that grows, but a ready-made statue. And then he sees the destruction of the statue by a stone. He sees this stone grow and become a great mountain (verses 34,35,44,45). The emphasis is on what the stone does and becomes. When we come to discuss the relevant verses, we will see their great significance.

It seems that Nebuchadnezzar has been very busy in his mind with the coming of his kingdom and that God answers the thoughts of his heart through the dream (verse 30; cf. Ecc 5:2a). God addressed Nebuchadnezzar personally in the dream: "He has made known to you" (verse 29). Contrary to what Elihu observes about ignoring God's speaking through dreams (Job 33:14-15), Nebuchadnezzar does heed the dream and wants to know its meaning. He may be a gentile ruler but he is not like so many people today who do not care about the future and their own future.

Dan 2:31 | The Dream of Nebuchadnezzar

31 *"You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome.*

In his dream Nebuchadnezzar saw a statue. According to the description given, it is not just a statue, but a “great” statue. Furthermore, it is a “large” statue and “of extraordinary splendor”. It has an exceptional appearance. The whole is both impressive by its beauty and terrifying by its largeness. Those who see it are deeply impressed. From the statue a major threat is going out.

This is how Nebuchadnezzar sees the statue. It responds to his view of a world empire. As mentioned in the introduction, this is different from Daniel 7. There the world empires are shown to Daniel. And how does he see them? Like tearing beasts. Daniel sees the character of the empires as God sees it, while Nebuchadnezzar only sees their appearance.

Nebuchadnezzar sees the statue in the form of a statue of man. To this man belongs the earth, it is the earthly man. The statue expresses the self-righteousness of man. Nebuchadnezzar gets to see the realms of the world the way people like to see them. It focuses on the person who boasts of the results of his own efforts.

Dan 2:32-33 | The Components of the Statue

32 The head of that statue [was made] of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, 33 its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.

The statue consists of four parts of different material. It presents the history of four successive empires. Yet it is only one statue. The empires can alternate, but the main idea is that authority rests with the nations, regardless of which nation is in power.

The description of the statue begins with the head and ends with the feet. The materials that make up the body parts are decreasing in value. They range from the most expensive to the cheapest material: from gold to silver and copper to iron, finally mixing this iron with clay. That they decrease in value does not mean that they decrease in size, but in power. We will see that in the explanation.

It is remarkable that the latter empire is not only represented in the legs of iron, but that it is seen even lower, in the feet, which are composed of iron and clay. This means that the fourth realm at the end of its existence (“its

feet”) will have a different character than at the beginning (“its legs”). In the beginning it is only iron, which means that there is a coherent whole that is hard like iron. The end, however, will be incoherent, as we see in the feet.

When the statue is explained, we suddenly hear about “the toes of the feet” (verses 41-42). Then it becomes clear that the last manifestation of this realm will consist of ten realms that are tied up to one realm, just as the toes are connected to the feet.

Dan 2:34-35 | The End of the Statue

34 You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them. 35 Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

The whole statue rests on a construction of iron and clay. That shows how unstable it is. Proof of this is provided when, under the watchful eye of Nebuchadnezzar, a stone is cut out that hits the statue at the feet. The special feature of the cut out stone is that it is “cut out without hands”. This means that no human or human effort is involved here, but that God Himself cuts out this stone and works this result (cf. Job 34:20; Col 2:11).

As a result of the collision of the stone with the statue, the statue does not just fall down, no, the whole statue is crushed by the stone, nothing remains of it. All materials are blown away by the wind as if they were chaff on a summer threshing floor. The statue is so thoroughly crushed that there is no trace of it to be found.

As the last part of his dream, Nebuchadnezzar sees the enormous contrast between the vanishing of the statue without a trace and what happens to the stone. The stone grows so much that it finally fills the entire earth. What happens to the statue finds its fulfilment just before the establishment of the kingdom of peace where Christ will reign for thousand years. Just before the dawn of eternity something similar is happening. For then

heaven and earth flee away from the face of Christ, Who sits on the great white throne, “and no place was found for them” (Rev 20:11).

The destruction of the statue also contains a lesson. When at the end of time, in the last days, the statue is destroyed, this destruction concerns the whole statue, so all the empires, and not just the last empire. Each empire that has conquered the previous empire has taken in elements of the conquered empire. Therefore, after the destruction, still something remained. Therefore, all the empires are destroyed at the same time in what is left of them.

Whatever has been said about the stone, whatever explanation was given, it is clear that this stone has never filled the whole earth and that this stone still does not fill the earth. The extermination of the world empires has yet to take place. This means – and this is the lesson – that we still live in the history of the four world empires.

We are now ready for the explanation. It is worth remembering that we do not need history to explain what we read in God’s Word, but that it is the other way around. We need God’s Word to explain history. In retrospect, history always seems to confirm what God has said in His Word beforehand about how it will be.

Dan 2:36-38 | The First Empire

36 *“This [was] the dream; now we will tell its interpretation before the king. 37 You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory; 38 and wherever the sons of men dwell, [or] the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given [them] into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold.*

Daniel has accurately described the dream. The first condition of Nebuchadnezzar is thus met. Now he can rest assured about the explanation. Daniel begins with the golden head. With due respect he addresses Nebuchadnezzar. Then he says that the ruler has seen in the dream Who has given him his power. He owes everything he is and owns only to God.

Daniel leaves no doubt as to who represents the golden head. He says to Nebuchadnezzar: “You are the head of gold”. God announces, through the

explanation given by Daniel, that He has transferred the rule to Nebuchadnezzar as the head of the nations.

With the appointment of Nebuchadnezzar as head of the nations, “the times of the Gentiles” (Lk 21:24) have begun. Israel is no longer in the land, God no longer lives there, the temple is empty. Israel is no longer the center of the earth and history from the moment that the glory of the LORD has left the temple and the land. A whole new period has begun in which the people have become “Lo-ammi”, which means “not My people” (Hos 1:9).

God then gave His authority to the head of the nations. God will count history according to the heads of the peoples. The realm of Nebuchadnezzar is the first great world empire after Israel has been set aside. The big difference from the time that Assyria and Egypt were world empires, is that Israel in that time is still recognized by God as His people.

But although God can no longer recognize Israel as His people, He is still in touch with a remnant. The first characteristic of this remnant is faithfulness. And whoever is faithful gets insight into the thoughts of God, in His mystery. Only with those who want to live by the Word of God can knowledge of God’s thoughts be found.

The light they possess is not their own, but is given to them by God. The world can only find God’s thoughts in those who hold faithfully to His Word. Through the dream God makes clear through Daniel’s explanation how the history of the world will play out after Israel is set aside.

Dan 2:39 | The Second and Third Empires

39 After you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth.

Nebuchadnezzar is also told that his power is only valid for a certain period of time. Jeremiah determines the duration of his kingdom: three generations will reign (Jer 27:7). Then his kingdom will be succeeded by other kingdoms. Those other empires will also come to an end. Only the last empire, the fifth one, will be an eternal empire. That is a very special empire.

So, the first empire is Babylon, represented in Nebuchadnezzar. But there will follow still three empires. If Nebuchadnezzar has already flattered himself with the thought that his kingdom will last forever, something that every ruler has within him, then his dream will burst his bubble. His kingdom will be succeeded by a kingdom “inferior to” his, like silver has a lower value than gold. The silver refers to the Medo-Persian empire (Dan 5:28). It is a double realm, which is reflected in the two arms.

But the Medo-Persian empire will also come to an end. There will rise a third world power that will overpower the second world power. The battle between these two empires is described in Daniel 8. There we also read that this third empire is the kingdom of Greece (Dan 8:21). In just a few years Alexander the Great conquered the huge previous empire and more. From this third empire it is additionally mentioned that it is an empire “which will rule over all the earth”. Alexander must have complained that there is no other world to conquer. When he is thirty-three years old, he dies. After that his four generals divided the kingdom among themselves.

The decrease in the value of the metals symbolizes the decrease in power of the successive kings. This state of affairs is not in line with what man claims. According to man, things are getting better and better. But Scripture says that there is decline. This decline, as has been said, is not in the size of the empires, but in the power that will be exercised by the rulers of those empires:

1. Nebuchadnezzar is an absolute dictator. He is ruler over everything (verse 38; Jer 28:14; 27:5-6).
2. In the case of the Medes and Persians, the authority of the king is not absolute. The rulers themselves are bound by the laws of that empire (Dan 6:9,15).
3. In the third empire, the ruler’s authority is even less. Alexander is dependent on the support of his generals.
4. The fourth empire, the Roman empire, is the least absolute in its rule. The emperors rule by the grace of the people. How important the voice of the people is, we see in Pilate’s fear that the people are threatening to charge him before the emperor (Jn 19:12-13).

Dan 2:40-43 | The Fourth Empire

40 Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces. 41 In that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay. 42 [As] the toes of the feet [were] partly of iron and partly of pottery, [so] some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle. 43 And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery.

The fourth empire is the Roman empire

The proof that the fourth empire is the Roman empire is found especially in Revelation 17. We will discuss this in more detail in a moment. First, we must draw attention to another proof. That proof lies in the relationship between the world empires and Israel. Remarkably enough, each of the three world empires mentioned so far has ruled over Israel. That is actually why they are mentioned. A people only have a place in the Bible if it is somehow related to the history of God's people.

Scripture confirms that the fourth empire, the Roman empire, also ruled over Israel. We read about the reign of the Roman emperor Augustus about Judea (Lk 2:1) and about the reign of the Roman emperor Tiberius (Lk 3:1). Other places in the Gospels also prove Rome's rule over the land of Israel (Lk 20:22-24; Jn 11:48; 19:10,11,15). It should not surprise us that we find this back in history. In the year 63 BC Pompey conquered Judea which then became a Roman province.

The three preceding empires are described relatively briefly. In comparison, the description of the Roman empire is comprehensive.. This description with the explanation gives some details that show that this very empire is extraordinarily interesting. And when we see that the history of Europe is given to us in this empire, the data interests us all the more.

Two phases

In the development of the Roman empire, two phases can be distinguished that are related to the division of the empire into an eastern and a western

part. The Western Roman empire ceases to exist when Rome is destroyed in the year 476. It was not until 1453 that the Eastern Roman empire comes to an end, when the Turks conquer it. Of these two empires, the Western Roman empire falls within the framework of prophecy.

This leads us to the discussion of a problem that we first have to deal with, before we continue: How can the stone hit the statue at the feet, i.e. the Roman empire, when it no longer exists? As a solution to this problem, it has been thought that the stone represents Christendom, which originated through Christ. Then, with the advent of Christendom, the dream of Nebuchadnezzar must have been fulfilled.

But the coming of Christ, and with Him Christendom, did not destroy the empire. As for Christ, the opposite is true. That empire has killed Christ. So Christendom cannot be the fulfilment either. The dream shows the crushing of the statue as a sudden thing, after which the stone fills all the earth. Who would dare to state that Christendom suddenly attacked the Roman empire and then gained general rule over the world?

The fourth empire is still to come

This means that this fourth empire still is to come. But how is that possible? It existed before and now it no longer exists, doesn't it? The solution to this problem is found in Revelation 17, already mentioned. There we read of the beast representing the Roman empire (Dan 7:7-8; Rev 13:1-11): "It was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss" (Rev 17:8). Not only is the empire itself divided into two parts, east and west, but the history of the empire also consists of two parts, that is, two phases. The first phase of the empire is past, it "was". And at present the empire does not exist, "and is not". The second phase is still in the future, "and is about to come up out of the abyss".

It is clear that for the prophecy to be fulfilled, the once disappeared Western Roman empire must be restored. This restoration is still future, but this future is very close! During the course of history several people have tried to restore this empire to its former glory. Powerful rulers such as Napoleon and Hitler all tried to revive this empire by force. It did not work. The empire will therefore not be established by force and conquest, but by ten kings who will voluntarily give their power to an autocrat (Rev 17:12-13).

The legs, the feet and the toes

These ten kings are already symbolically indicated in the statue. If we look for a moment at the part of the statue representing the Roman empire, the legs and the feet, we can see in the two legs and the two feet with the ten toes the two phases of the Roman empire. The two legs are a picture of the two parts of the *former* Roman empire, that is the Western Roman empire and the Eastern Roman empire. The ten toes represent the division of the empire in the *future*.

It points out that in its final phase this kingdom will be composed of ten kingdoms, according to the ten toes (cf. Dan 7:24). The future empire will consist of ten parts, each with a king, a situation that the empire never knew in its former existence. If these ten parts of Europe voluntarily join together, that empire will be destroyed by the coming of Christ, for He, and no one else, is represented in the stone that rolls off the mountain.

The toes are not only made of iron, but of iron and clay. This indicates a binding of something hard like iron with something brittle like clay. Iron and clay are two elements that by their nature cannot be mixed. They both maintain their own characteristics. It is a hard and at the same time a brittle kingdom. The constitution is hard, but it is not a compact unit. We can think of the democratic principle that is incompatible with authoritarian state power that wants to act with military force. These things are reflected in the current drive towards one Europe.

Clay also represents man, where we can think of individualism, self-interest, personal freedom and participation. We see those also clearly present in Europe. We see the power of the great whole on the one hand, and the maintenance of national interests on the other.

History

Incidentally, the decline and finally the fall of the once mighty Roman empire has been a subject of study for many historians. Their amazement is at a different level than that of John. We have already talked about one of the suggested causes of the fall of the Roman empire, Christendom. Some other causes are mentioned in a booklet edited by Donald Kagan, 'Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire *Why Did it Collapse?*'. In it a number

of historians have their say. Everyone comes to their own conclusion after research. And these conclusions are very diverse.

The one blames the downfall to a class struggle, a struggle of the slaves against the ruling class. Another believes that climatic conditions were the cause. As a result, there would have been no rain for a certain period of time, resulting in crop failures and population displacement. That would have had an effect on the strength of the army, because the growth of recruits would have been halted by the withdrawal of the population. Yet another considers it possible that racial mixing caused the decay. (Hitler may have wanted to defend himself against this last aspect when considering his measures for the maintenance and promotion of a purely Germanic or Aryan race. The idea of growing a super breed came from Heinrich Himmler, a close employee of Hitler.)

All these historians are wrong with their assumptions. Scripture is the only reliable source for history. Scripture also describes history when everything has yet to happen. That is because Scripture is the speaking of God (Rom 9:17) and God declares the end from the beginning (Isa 46:10).

Dan 2:44-45 | The Fifth Empire

44 In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and [that] kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever. 45 Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy."

Although Daniel does not mention the number ten – John does (Rev 17:12) – he speaks of “kings” (verse 44). The empires of all those kings come to an end, because “the God of heaven” establishes a kingdom that is eternal. This fifth empire is a total replacement of the fourth and will not be succeeded. The previous kingdoms have always ended. This kingdom has no end. It puts an end to all previous empires and itself endures forever. Nothing, and nobody is able to overcome this empire. It does not belong to

the statue and does not absorb anything of it, as the previous empires did with the empires they conquered.

The stone, the last empire, completely destroys the statue and then grows into a mountain. This kingdom is not established by a man, “not by hands”, but by God (cf. Heb 9:24a; 2Cor 5:1). This kingdom originates with God in heaven. When Jesus Christ establishes His kingdom, He will first judge all the power of man. The stone is a picture of Christ (Lk 20:17-18). In Daniel 7 we will see that the cutting of the stone corresponds to the return of Jesus Christ.

Time and again Daniel uses the words “you saw” in his explanation. In this way he reminds the king of what he saw with his own eyes. It is an extra emphasis of the truth of the dream and the explanation. Daniel concludes his explanation by pointing to “the great God” as the Origin of the dream and declaring that the “dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy”. Everything that comes from God provides a handhold, you can rely on that.

Dan 2:46-49 | Homage From Nebuchadnezzar

46 Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and did homage to Daniel, and gave orders to present to him an offering and fragrant incense. 47 The king answered Daniel and said, “Surely your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery.” 48 Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts, and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon. 49 And Daniel made request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego over the administration of the province of Babylon, while Daniel [was] at the king’s court.

Nebuchadnezzar is deeply impressed by the explanation by Daniel. He has let him finish without interrupting him. There is no doubt whatsoever with him about its accuracy. He feels that he is dealing with a power that completely shadows his power. The great, mighty king falls down before Daniel and worships him. The golden head bestows divine honor upon a poor exile!

It is impossible to suppose that Daniel would have accepted that divine tribute, nor the sacrifices. That is contrary to his character and his piety. Peter refuses this honor also when Cornelius honors him, as do Paul and Barnabas when the crowds want to sacrifice to them as if they were gods (Acts 10:25-26; 14:14-15).

Through what Nebuchadnezzar says about God, we see that he has not truly come to repentance and conversion. He praises the God of Daniel. That Daniel's God has also become his God, is unfortunately not apparent. He does Daniel great honor and loads him with gifts. Daniel lets his friends share in the honor. He had asked them to pray for and with him for an outcome regarding the dream of Nebuchadnezzar. Now that Nebuchadnezzar has made him head over all the wise men, he uses his position to give his friends certain privileges. Faith shares in distress and in prosperity (cf. 1Cor 12:26).

Daniel 3

Introduction

In the book of Daniel two themes are dealt with. The first theme is the history of the four empires during “the times of the Gentiles” (Lk 21:24). These times began when Israel was no longer the people of God. They last until the moment that Israel will again be God’s people. That time is spoken about in Daniel 2 and Daniel 7. That is the time of the fifth empire, the empire over which the Son of man, the Lord Jesus, will reign. Then Israel will be the center of the earth, which is in the kingdom of peace.

The second theme is what the people of God will experience at a time when God cannot openly recognize His people as His people. At that time the nations will rule over His people and they will be oppressed by the nations. This will happen in the great tribulation in the most intense way (Mt 24:21). The faithful remnant of Israel will then be purified, while the wicked mass of the people will be judged. In Daniel and his friends, we see the faithful remnant. We see that especially in Daniel 3-6. There we have to do not only with history, but also with the prophetic events of the end time during the fourth empire.

We could say that we too live in the end time. The character of the rulers of the world empires show features that we increasingly see around us in the leaders of the world and in men in general. From the very beginning when God placed dominion into the hands of the nations, it has been clear that man does not take Him into account and fails in the responsibility that God has given him.

We see the increase of wickedness in Daniel 3-6:

1. In Daniel 3 we see idolatry and the putting aside of God.
2. In Daniel 4 we see the glorification of man.
3. In Daniel 5 the ridicule of God comes to the fore.
4. In Daniel 6 the highest point is reached when man takes the place of God.

These histories with their prophetic implication warn us that we live in times of supreme wickedness. All boundaries given by God are crossed and erased. Nothing is sacred anymore. Man has taken the place of God. At the same time, it is also the time for us to be able to show more clearly than ever, what God's rights are. Anyone who does this can at least expect misunderstanding on the part of mankind, but more often experience outright hatred. Those who do this, however, can count even more on the appreciation and assistance of God. He wants to glorify Himself in those who recognize Him, as a small and faithful remnant, standing against the renegade mass.

In short, we have in

1. Daniel 1 obedience of the remnant.
2. Daniel 2 the insight of the remnant.
3. Daniel 3 the suffering and persecution of the remnant in the great tribulation.
4. Daniel 4 the judgment of the ruler.
5. Daniel 5 the end of the Babylonian empire.
6. Daniel 6 the preservation of the remnant from the power of the devil.

Dan 3:1 | The Golden Image

1 Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, the height of which [was] sixty cubits [and] its width six cubits; he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar makes an image of gold, possibly inspired by his dream. In his dream he saw himself as a head of gold. Now he no longer only sees a head of gold, he only sees himself. He does not take into account the loss of his kingdom. That is why it is an image all of gold. He makes this image in order to have one object of worship for his entire empire with so many different cultures and religions.

There is nothing that so disturbs and destroys relationships between families and peoples as much as a difference in religion. At the same time, the opposite is also true: the best way to unite people is through a common religion. Religious unity also brings about political unity. Thus, the unity

of Europe is also shaped by a common idolatry, that of the antichrist, in which the world ruler himself is glorified (Rev 13:12).

The measures of the image revolve around the number six. The number six is characteristic of this image. The number six is also characteristic for man. In the history of man there have been three absolute rulers. All three are characterized by the number six. Adam was the first. He was created on the sixth day. The second is Nebuchadnezzar. Here he is linked to the numbers sixty and six. The third will be the dictator of the restored Western Roman empire, the beast that rises from the sea. "The number of his name" is "the number of the beast", which is the number "of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six" (Rev 13:17-18).

Dan 3:2-7 | The Dedication of the Image

2 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent [word] to assemble the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. 3 Then the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces were assembled for the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. 4 Then the herald loudly proclaimed: "To you the command is given, O peoples, nations and [men of every] language, 5 that at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up. 6 But whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire." 7 Therefore at that time, when all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations and [men of every] language fell down [and] worshiped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

All those who bear responsibility in the empire are called upon to come to the dedication of the image. All these different authorities represent the nations they come from. This is how they are addressed (verse 4). We read that "all peoples" throw themselves in front of the image (verse 7), whereas in reality this is only done by the authorities present.

What Nebuchadnezzar invented is man's religion. It is at the same time a world religion through which he wants to merge all the people he rules into one entity. He places a magnificent golden image before the attention of man and orders him to worship it.

To make the whole even more attractive, the inauguration is complemented by a musical contribution using a variety of musical instruments. No special sacrifice or monetary contribution is requested. The religion of Nebuchadnezzar is easy and pleasant for the flesh. You don't have to do anything, just fall down and worship. It doesn't have to take long and happens under the sound of deafening music.

It is clear that music plays an important role in this whole event. The whole orchestra is mentioned no less than four times (verses 5,7,10,15). Music works on the emotion. Deafening music brings people into a state of trance and apathy. The mind and conscience are eliminated. Thus, people are an easy prey for the devil, for whom they actually fall down.

The worship of the image is not a voluntary matter, but is enforced. Whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire, so without trial and without any recourse. Therefore, we see that all peoples, represented in their leaders, fall down and worship the image.

Dan 3:8-12 | The Three Friends Charged

8 For this reason at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and brought charges against the Jews. 9 They responded and said to Nebuchadnezzar the king: "O king, live forever! 10 You, O king, have made a decree that every man who hears the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, and bagpipe and all kinds of music, is to fall down and worship the golden image. 11 But whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire. 12 There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon, [namely] Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. These men, O king, have disregarded you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up."

There are three men who remain standing when all have fallen down. Some watchdogs of Nebuchadnezzar see this and bring charges against

them to the king. The friends are charged for not worshiping the gods of Nebuchadnezzar. Their indictment is also a wonderful testimony about the three friends. They worship only the true God, the God of Israel, and no other god.

Dan 3:13-15 | The Ultimatum

13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in rage and anger gave orders to bring Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego; then these men were brought before the king. 14 Nebuchadnezzar responded and said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? 15 Now if you are ready, at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery and bagpipe and all kinds of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, [very well]. But if you do not worship, you will immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire; and what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?"

Nebuchadnezzar sees himself offended in his absolute authority. He let the friends come to him and gave them another chance to submit to him by obeying his order. If they don't do that, they will unrelentingly and directly enter the burning fires. He adds to it, with contempt, who may be the god who will deliver them from his hands.

To him, the God of the three friends is nothing more than an idol. His earlier confession (Dan 2:47) appears to have been only of a temporary nature. He was impressed for a while, but that impression has faded and disappeared. This is the case when conscience has not been touched and there has been no true conversion.

Dan 3:16-18 | Fearless Testimony

16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. 17 If it be [so], our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. 18 But [even] if [He does] not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

The young men are confronted with the choice: bow down for the image or die. It would not be difficult to consult with oneself: “Everyone does it, let us not be an exception.” Or: “Let us do it for the sake of appearances, but not in our hearts, for God sees the heart.” Or: “We can’t do anything about this situation, we are here because of the unfaithfulness of our ancestors, we have to fall down.” However, we do not read anything about such considerations, which easily arise in us in often much less difficult situations.

The friends do not defend themselves, but make a brief, clear statement: “We will not fall down.” Their testimony is impressive. We know the outcome, but they do not know it. They have no doubt that God can deliver them. They only don’t know if He will do that by delivering them *before* the fire or *through* the fire. Faith trusts that God is able to forego them entering the fire, but also that He can deliver them out of the fire.

Whatever it may be, it is clear to them that He will deliver them from the hand of the king. They are not in the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, but in the hand of God. As for them, the outcome is certain. Therefore, they will not bow to the image, not even in form, nor worship it. Their attitude is a wonderful illustration of “the perseverance and faith of the saints” (Rev 13:10b).

There is no rebellion with them against the king. They recognize him in his dignity as king. But they cannot obey his order to worship his gods. In this they must and want to “obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). They speak in the spirit of the Lord’s disciple, for they are “not ... afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do” (Lk 12:4). For the Christian it is not a question of how the king rules, but of what the king asks and how he should behave as a Christian in these matters (Rom 13:1-7).

Dan 3:19-22 | Cast Into the Midst of the Fire

19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with wrath, and his facial expression was altered toward Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. He answered by giving orders to heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. 20 He commanded certain valiant warriors who [were] in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego in order to cast [them] into the furnace of

blazing fire. 21 Then these men were tied up in their trousers, their coats, their caps and their [other] clothes, and were cast into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire. 22 For this reason, because the king's command [was] urgent and the furnace had been made extremely hot, the flame of the fire slew those men who carried up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego.

Their obedience to God did not prevent them from being cast into the oven. On the contrary. Nebuchadnezzar is so furious, that he lets the oven be heated seven times more intense. However, this only makes the miracle of salvation seven times greater.

Their faith “quenched” – not the fire, but – “the power of the fire” (Heb 11:34). The power of the fire is so great, that Nebuchadnezzar orders the strongest men from the army to cast the three friends into the oven. But even though they are still considered so strong, they are losing out to the power of the fire. While the strongest men cast the friends in the oven, these powerhouses are killed by the fire.

The friends do not firstly quench the power of the fire when they are inside the furnace of blazing fire and the fire does not affect them. They have already quenched the power of the fire when they stand before Nebuchadnezzar and he points them to the furnace of blazing fire. He has threatened to cast them in it if they would not kneel before his image. With the fires in mind, the friends have said in faith that they trust in God for the outcome and have remained firm in their refusal to kneel before the image.

In this way, many who died as martyrs at the stake in the fire quenched the power of the fire. They have not revoked their confession of the true God and have remained faithful to Him, despite the fire. The threat of fire has had no hold on them. They have “taken up the shield of faith” and thus extinguished “all the flaming arrows of the evil [one]” (Eph 6:16).

Dan 3:23-25 | The Fourth Man in the Fire

23 But these three men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, fell into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire [still] tied up. 24 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded and stood up in haste; he said to his high officials, “Was it not three men we cast bound into the midst of the fire?” They replied to the king, “Certainly, O king.” 25 He said, “Look! I see four men loosed [and] walking

[about] in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of [the] gods!"

As soon as the men have fallen into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire, Nebuchadnezzar sees something that frightens him enormously. He gets to see something a man normally does not get to see: he sees a fourth man who has "the appearance ... like a son of [the] gods". This is the Son of God Who is in the furnace with friends (cf. Isa 63:9). The result of Nebuchadnezzar's actions is that he brings the three friends into the company of the Son of God.

Before he comes to his exclamation, we read that he stands up in haste. That is, he comes down from his throne. As an application it can be said that if someone comes face to face with the Lord Jesus, he must come down from his throne. Man, without God sits on the throne himself. He will come down from it as soon as the Lord Jesus shows Himself to him.

It can still happen voluntarily now that someone comes from his own throne, so that the Lord Jesus can take His place on the throne of his life. When He sits on the throne, it means He has authority. Do we give him that, even if we already know him?

The men are cast bound into the midst of the fire of the furnace. The description "in the midst of fire" makes us extra aware of the enormous test for these men. They are in the center of the fire. Nebuchadnezzar is bewildered at what he sees and asks in his despair whether it has happened, as he ordered. After the affirmative answer he tells what he sees. He sees the men who were thrown into the furnace bound, now walking around loose.

He wanted to kill them by the fire, but God made a change to the fire. What was meant by Nebuchadnezzar for evil is used by God for good. The only effect of the fire is that the men's bonds are consumed and that they now walk around loose. He also notes that there is no injury to them. Finally, he tells us that he sees a fourth Person and what this One looks like. As already said, it is an apparition of the Lord Jesus.

In this scene we see something encouraging for everyone in a trial. Those who are in difficult circumstances can know that God does not watch the suffering of His own from on high, but comes to them in their suffering.

He is not indifferent, but is with them in the trial (Isa 43:2,5a). The Lord Jesus is with the disciples in the ship when it is in the storm (Mk 4:35-41).

We also see this in the scene of the burning bush, where the LORD appears to Moses “in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush” (Exo 3:2). God is with His people in the bush, He *dwells* there; He is not only there to visit. The bush is a picture of Israel that is unfaithful to Him and therefore burns. The fire is so to speak necessary to remove the thorns. At the same time, the bush is not consumed, for God is always with His people when they suffer, even when they suffer because of their own sins.

The fire of the trial serves to purify the faith (1Pet 1:7; 4:12). God allows it or even sends it. It is to take away what is not His honor. The fire cleans. With Daniel’s friends it is not about cleansing away anything, but about showing the faith to the outside world. Faith is brought to light through this trial. It makes clear what God can do in His own people for consecration and decision.

Usually God does not take away the fire of the trial in the life of a believer. He does not take away the suffering, but adds something to it and that is His own presence. In the Spirit, God the Son comes to us. The Spirit of the Son is with us and supports us as we are in the trial. The result of the fire of the trial is to walk in freedom. Nebuchadnezzar literally notices this with the three friends.

The picture of fire with regard to God’s earthly people is also seen in Zechariah 13:

“Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd,

And against the man, My Associate,”

Declares the LORD of hosts.

“Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered;

And I will turn My hand against the little ones.

“It will come about in all the land,”

Declares the LORD,

“That two parts in it will be cut off [and] perish;

But the third will be left in it.

“And I will bring the third part through the fire,
 Refine them as silver is refined,
 And test them as gold is tested.
 They will call on My name,
 And I will answer them;
 I will say, ‘They are My people,’
 And they will say, ‘The LORD is my God’” (Zec 13:7-9).

First, we read about the cross (Zec 13:7), where God strikes His Messiah with the sword of His righteousness. Then it is about the remnant, “the little ones” who are scattered as a result of the rejection of the Messiah, but to whom He turns. Then a jump is made to the future (Zec 13:8-9). In the end time, “two parts [= two thirds] of it will be cut off”. The remnant, “the third”, is refined in the fire. Of them God says: “They are My people,” and from them He builds His people in the kingdom of peace.

Dan 3:26-27 | Out of the Fire

26 Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the furnace of blazing fire; he responded and said, “Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, come out, you servants of the Most High God, and come here!” Then Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego came out of the midst of the fire. 27 The satraps, the prefects, the governors and the king’s high officials gathered around [and] saw in regard to these men that the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men nor was the hair of their head singed, nor were their trousers damaged, nor had the smell of fire [even] come upon them.

Nebuchadnezzar has already risen from his throne, but is now moving on. He goes as close as possible to the door of the furnace of blazing fire to speak to the young men. He starts by naming their names. It is striking how often the names of the friends are mentioned in this history. The Spirit of God finds His joy of always mentioning the names of people who have made God great. He honors those who honor Him.

Nebuchadnezzar then addresses them as “servants of the Most High God”. This is an open testimony of the faithfulness of the friends. All those who in the course of the centuries until the end of time have ever persecuted

the faithful will be forced to give this testimony (cf. Rev 3:9). Persecuted believers who have remained faithful to their confession of the living God are given this testimony.

Nebuchadnezzar commands them to come out. They would have been able to leave through the door before and to place themselves triumphantly in front of the king. However, they only leave the furnace on the king's orders. Additionally, the company of the Son of God will have filled them with so much joy and peace that they would have gladly stayed with Him in the midst of the fire.

But by order of the king they come out of the furnace and stand in front of him. There they stand before Nebuchadnezzar, as faithful to him after they have been in the furnace of blazing fire as before. The fire has not changed their appearance, nor their behavior.

Then all those who charged them before Nebuchadnezzar come to the king. They do not come up with a new charge. That is not possible, because the verdict has been executed. What they observe is that the fire has had no effect on the young men, yes, that there is not even a smell of fire on them.

Here is also an important application to make. Believers who have been in a severe trial because of their faithfulness to the Lord will not make a fuss of their salvation from it. They will not boast about it and will not spread great stories about it. There will be no self-glorification. If they say anything about it, it will only be to make the Lord great, but upon themselves there will be "no smell of fire". Their faithfulness to the Lord after the trial will be as great as before.

Dan 3:28-30 | The Testimony of Nebuchadnezzar

28 Nebuchadnezzar responded and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, who has sent His angel and delivered His servants who put their trust in Him, violating the king's command, and yielded up their bodies so as not to serve or worship any god except their own God. 29 Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation or tongue that speaks anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego shall be torn limb from limb and their houses reduced to a rubbish heap, inasmuch as there

is no other god who is able to deliver in this way.” 30 Then the king caused Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego to prosper in the province of Babylon.

The testimony of the friends brings Nebuchadnezzar to a praise of God, whom he calls “the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego”. God rejoices when His own are connected with Him in this way through the world and “God is not ashamed to be called their God” (Heb 11:16b). The behavior of the friends has shown Who God is.

The king recognizes deliverance through God. He acknowledges that they have trusted Him and that in their trust they have not been ashamed. They have resisted his word, the word of him as king, the most powerful man on earth, out of faithfulness to God. He has seen that their faithfulness to their God is so great that they have even surrendered their bodies. The greatest threat, and even the execution of the sentence, has not been able to induce them to unfaithfulness to their God by glorifying or worshiping another god. They have only glorified and worshiped their God.

After this remarkable statement, Nebuchadnezzar goes even further. He sends an order through his entire empire that there must be general respect for the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. He who speaks anything offensively against God will be severely punished personally, while his house will also suffer. His house is the place where the defamation could have happened, so that that place has become unclean and may no longer be inhabited. That house becomes a memorial as a warning.

This judgment is the lot of anyone who speaks anything offensive. To speak offensively is speaking evil against better judgment. Anyone who, after this clear proof from God that He is a redeeming God, and speaks evil of Him, cannot be excused. And everyone in the whole empire of Nebuchadnezzar will hear about it. All those in authority have looked attentively at it (verse 27) and will be able to witness this great salvation in the countries from which they have come and to which they will soon return.

Nebuchadnezzar forbids only to speak anything offensive against God. Unfortunately, he does not go so far as calling upon his people to worship and serve that God. He needs to learn an even deeper lesson. This is shown in the next chapter.

Daniel 4

Introduction

In Daniel 4 we don't hear anything about the faithful remnant. This chapter is about the ruler of the world empire. It connects to Daniel 3, where, in those things that happened to Daniel's three friends, we see the fates of the remnant. A 'faithful remnant' is that in which God finds true faith. The characteristics of the whole people are found there. Together with Daniel 3, this chapter describes the fates of the two main actors in the end time, the faithful remnants and the world ruler.

As already mentioned, with the inauguration of Nebuchadnezzar there has come a turning point in God's actions with His people and the nations. God has placed the dominion of the world, which He initially ascribed to Israel, in the hands of a gentile King and a gentile empire. This is the start of "the times of the Gentiles" (Lk 21:24). These times of the Gentiles come to an end with the liberation of Jerusalem. That liberation comes because of the reconciliation through and the coming of the Messiah. We will see that in Daniel 9.

The fact that God has placed the dominion in the hands of a gentile ruler and withdrawn His hands from His people does not mean that He leaves the world to itself. In a certain sense, He does, because the world is following its own course and with it, its own downfall. At the same time, God keeps the supreme government. We can see that in what happens to Nebuchadnezzar.

The subject of Daniel 4 is the pride of the ruler and how God acts upon it. Pride is the primeval sin (1Tim 3:6). Any other sin results from that. Warnings against this sin are often given, and we too must have an eye in our lives upon the danger of pride (Jam 4:6; 1Pet 5:5; Pro 3:34; 16:18; 18:12).

Dan 4:1 | Beginning of the Proclamation

1 Nebuchadnezzar the king to all the peoples, nations, and [men of every] language that live in all the earth: "May your peace abound!"

It is remarkable that the testimony of Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation does not come from Daniel's mouth, but from Nebuchadnezzar's own mouth. Just as remarkable is the fact that he doesn't confide his experiences to a few confidants somewhere in an inner room, but that he communicates what happened to him to all the peoples.

We have here an example of a pagan man who, under the action of God's Spirit, communicates things he would never naturally tell. But if God wants this mighty king to testify to the whole world that He is the Supreme One and that Nebuchadnezzar, as a mighty king, cannot argue with Him, it happens exactly as He wants it.

This will also happen in the end time. All nations, and especially their kings, will bow before the Lord Jesus. He, the Messiah, is the Most High God (verse 2). This will be recognized by all "who live on all the earth". Those who "live in all the earth" are those who have connected their souls and their whole life to the earth. They look no further than the earth and live only for it (Rev 3:10; 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8,12,14; 14:6; 17:2,8). By "all the earth" is meant the part of the earth that is known and ruled by Nebuchadnezzar (cf. Dan 2:39; Lk 2:1).

It is not clear when Nebuchadnezzar made this proclamation. It seems that he is at the height of his power, and peace reigns in his empire (verse 4). As a good ruler and governor he wishes for all his subjects an increase in peace. Even people who do not take God into account often see the great blessing of peace and wish others will have that peace.

Dan 4:2-3 | Nebuchadnezzar Honors God

2 It has seemed good to me to declare the signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for me.

3 "How great are His signs

And how mighty are His wonders!

His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom

And His dominion is from generation to generation.

By starting with saying "it has seemed good to me", he makes it clear that as head of his kingdom he does not act on the orders of anyone else. He does not say that he gives his testimony because God has commanded him

to do so. He thinks it's good to do that and that's why he does it. He is not aware that God is urging him to do so.

But he does speak of God as the One Who dealt with him through "His signs" and "His wonders". Signs and wonders are often mentioned together in Scripture (Exo 7:3; Deu 4:34; 13:1; 34:11; Isa 8:18; Jer 32:20). Not every sign is a wonder, but every wonder is a sign. Signs are events or things with a certain meaning.

A sign does not have to be something extraordinary or supernatural. When the Lord Jesus was born, the shepherds were told that this will be "the sign" for them: "You will find a baby wrapped in clothes and lying in a manger" (Lk 2:12). A baby in a manger and wrapped in clothes is no wonder, it is nothing extraordinary. But this Baby and the way He came into the world is a sign. His coming to earth has a deep meaning.

In a sign God shows His presence and power. A wonder is something that causes great amazement, because it is incomprehensible and inimitable for man. A wonder shows God's presence and power in a supernatural action with the intention that man recognizes that God is acting.

Nebuchadnezzar calls God here "the Most High God". In so doing, he acknowledges that God is above all things and also above His own gods. This is the conclusion he comes to, after being humbled by God in the deepest sense. A person only recognizes God's exaltation above all things, when he has experienced how small he is himself. This experience is to be given by God to man because he exalts himself and boasts of his own person and works.

Nebuchadnezzar is deeply impressed by the signs and wonders the Most High has done to him. He expresses his amazement by talking about "how great" and "how mighty" they are. This means that he sees these signs and wonders as incomprehensible or indescribable or unexplainable. They are unique and incomparable. In the life of Nebuchadnezzar, this has become visible both in his humiliation to the state of a beast and in his restoration, in which he receives even more greatness and glory than he had before his humiliation (verse 36).

His confession is remarkable in that the kingdom of God is "an everlasting kingdom" (Dan 2:44; 7:14,27; Psa 145:13). It means that he sees his own

kingdom as passing by. His high mind is gone and he gives God all honor, both in His Person and in His kingdom. With that kingdom Nebuchadnezzar connects a dominion that is “from generation to generation”. This means that he recognizes the supreme authority of God through the ages, from the beginning of creation thus far and also further.

It is also important for us to stick to this. The dominion of the Lord Jesus throughout the history of mankind may encourage us by remembering that He also has complete dominion in our personal lives. Nothing gets out of hand for Him. Nebuchadnezzar is forced to acknowledge this. Sometimes that has to happen in our lives. But the result of this acknowledgment is that we entrust our lives to Him with peace of mind and with joy.

Dan 4:4-5 | Nebuchadnezzar Sees a Dream

*4 “I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and flourishing in my palace.
5 I saw a dream and it made me fearful; and [these] fantasies [as I lay] on my bed and the visions in my mind kept alarming me.*

After his introductory proclamation about the greatness of God, Nebuchadnezzar explains what has happened to him. He goes back to the moment when he lives at ease in his house and is flourishing in his palace. He seems to have everything under control. He has nothing to fear from his enemies, for they have been conquered. In his palace, that is to say his government, everything is going well. Also, internally everything is in order. His rule is well established. He is at the height of his power.

At the same time, a state of rest is a dangerous state (cf. Eze 16:49; 2Sam 11:1-4), if that rest is attributed to one’s own effort. Then God must show that He is there. He does so through a dream. Nebuchadnezzar is disturbed in his ease and prosperity. This is not done by an outside enemy he has overlooked or by a confidant who unleashes a palace revolution, but by Someone he has not taken into account at all.

A person can have everything under control, but in his mind, in an unconscious state neither he nor any other person has control. The only one who can approach the spirit of a man against his will is God. He can do that in different ways. Here He does that through a dream. It is often the case that “the dream comes through much effort” (Ecc 5:3a). That is not the

case here. God enters his life again through a dream. The previous dream, which is in Daniel 2, is about his empire. The dream he gets now is about himself personally.

This man who is very robust, is overcome by fear because of the visions he sees. On his soft bed, which will be well guarded, Someone, gets through to him to tell him something. If God wants to approach a person, He penetrates the most inner being of that man, no matter how much that person has equipped himself with defense mechanisms to prevent God from ‘bothering’ him.

Dan 4:6-9 | Who Knows the Interpretation of the Dream?

6 So I gave orders to bring into my presence all the wise men of Babylon, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. 7 Then the magicians, the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the diviners came in and I related the dream to them, but they could not make its interpretation known to me. 8 But finally Daniel came in before me, whose name is Belteshazzar according to the name of my god, and in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and I related the dream to him, [saying], 9 ‘O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, since I know that a spirit of the holy gods is in you and no mystery baffles you, tell [me] the visions of my dream which I have seen, along with its interpretation.

Just as with the first dream, it is clear to Nebuchadnezzar that this second dream is not just a dream. He realizes that it is a dream with a message. He wants to know that message. To find out the meaning of the dream, he calls all the wise men of Babylon into his presence. They stand around him as a large group. In contrast to the first dream (Dan 2:4-11), which he may have really forgotten, he now tells what he dreamed.

But all his scholars are inadequate; they cannot tell him the interpretation. When they were called on the occasion of his first dream, they claimed that Nebuchadnezzar only needed to tell the dream and then they would tell him the interpretation (Dan 2:4,7). It is clear why they can’t interpret the dream even now, even though he has told them the dream. For the dream comes from God and only God can give the interpretation, for nobody knows the mind of God but the Spirit of God (1Cor 2:11).

Finally, Daniel comes. Did he forget Daniel? Or is it below his level of honor to have to be helped by a Jewish exile again? In any case, he cannot ignore him. Daniel appears on stage when all worldly wisdom has failed and has been unable to provide a solution. After his earlier experience with the interpretation of dreams it would have been understandable if the king had first thought about Daniel. But so quickly does man, and certainly man who does not live with God, forget God's former actions in his life. The lesson must be learned again.

The last person the world thinks of will be the first to be recognized by God. We also see this with the woman who spent everything on doctors for her illness. When there is no one who has been able to help her, when all the resources she has tapped into have failed, she finally goes to the Lord Jesus. With Him she finds the long sought after and coveted healing (Mk 5:25-34). So many people only resort to the Bible when all the other books have not given what they are looking for. God's Word is the last refuge.

When Nebuchadnezzar speaks about Daniel and also when he speaks to him, he still turns out to be an idolater. He connects Daniel with his god, he sees Daniel as someone in whom the spirit of the holy gods is, and speaks to him as "head of the magicians". He has no doubt that Daniel has insight into the most hidden secrets. Full of confidence in 'Daniel's 'skill' to interpret dreams, he tells him his dream.

Dan 4:10-12 | The Tree

10 'Now [these were] the visions in my mind [as I lay] on my bed: I was looking, and behold, [there was] a tree in the midst of the earth and its height [was] great.

*11 'The tree grew large and became strong
And its height reached to the sky,
And it [was] visible to the end of the whole earth.*

*12 'Its foliage [was] beautiful and its fruit abundant,
And in it [was] food for all.*

*The beasts of the field found shade under it,
And the birds of the sky dwelt in its branches,
And all living creatures fed themselves from it.*

Nebuchadnezzar sees a tree. First he mentions the place where this tree stands: “in the midst of the earth”. Then he talks about its height: it is a tree of great height. But there is also growth in the tree. It increases in size and strength. It gets so high that it reaches to the sky. Because of its enormous height it is “visible to the end of the whole earth”. Wherever people live, they can see the tree.

It is also a beautiful tree to see and it provides numerous fruits that serve as “food for all”. Finally, the tree appears to provide shade for the beasts of the field and a home for the birds of the sky. So this tree is a blessing for all creatures.

In the interpretation it becomes clear that this tree represents Nebuchadnezzar. Trees are often used as a picture of a human being (Eze 17:22-23; 31:3,18; Psa 1:3; 92:12). In the picture sketched in the tree, we see Nebuchadnezzar as the center of the earth. He is the world ruler. His power increases even more. It seems that his power extends to heaven, which indicates that he even wants to extend his power into heaven.

It recalls the tower building of Babylon (Gen 11:4). This tower must also reach into the heaven and be visible all over the earth. It is an expression of man’s pride and his rebellion against God. We see that also here in Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon. Babylon is the symbol of pride and disobedience linked to idolatry.

Nebuchadnezzar’s rule has brought him prestige and a good life for all his subjects who comply with his rule. It seems, however, that there is room in his empire for all kinds of beasts, both beasts on earth and beasts living in the sky, the birds. The birds of the sky often represent demonic powers and influences that exert a pernicious influence on the spirit of man (Rev 18:2; Mt 13:32).

Dan 4:13-16 | What Happens to the Tree

13 *‘I was looking in the visions in my mind [as I lay] on my bed, and behold, an [angelic] watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven.*

14 *‘He shouted out and spoke as follows:*

Chop down the tree and cut off its branches,

Strip off its foliage and scatter its fruit;

Let the beasts flee from under it

And the birds from its branches.

15 *“Yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground,*

But with a band of iron and bronze [around it]

In the new grass of the field;

And let him be drenched with the dew of heaven,

And let him share with the beasts in the grass of the earth.

16 *“Let his mind be changed from [that of] a man*

And let a beast’s mind be given to him,

And let seven periods of time pass over him.

It is as if Nebuchadnezzar takes a breath after the description of the tree. There is more to come. Something will happen to the tree. This is made known to him in the continuation of his vision or dream. He tells Daniel that he sees in his dream that “an [angelic] watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven”. It seems that we have to think of an angel. The angel says what to do with the tree. This is not done with a soft voice, but with a powerful exclamation.

The power with which it is spoken matches the content of what is said. Force has to be applied to the tree. The tree must be chopped down, and any blessing attached to the tree must be stopped. There should be nothing left of this impressive stature that is visible all over the world. Everything that the tree provides for shade, habitat and food must disappear. This is how it will be with all the prosperity on which man relies.

But the chopping down of the tree does not mean the final end of the tree. This is shown by the command that the stump with its roots must be left in the ground. This contains the promise of a future restoration (cf. Job 14:7-9; Isa 6:13; 11:1). Until then, the trunk is kept under control by “a band of iron and bronze” around it to prevent premature flowering. Until then, the stump stands “in the new grass of the field”. Nothing is left of the tree that rises far above the grass. It has become equal to the grass and as dependent on the dew for the continuation of life as the tender, perishable grass.

The trunk is thus reduced to its original nullity. “All flesh is like grass, And all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, And the flower falls off, But the word of the Lord endures forever” (1Pet 1:24-25a). That makes

the transition in verse 16 from the picture of the tree to a human and a beast less strange. The tree, which represents the man Nebuchadnezzar, has a mind. But because his mind is not directed toward God, his mind must change into the mind of a beast.

The chopped down tree, of which only the stump is left, is comparable to a beast. A tree is connected to the earth. A tree also has no sense of God at all. So it is with a beast. A beast is connected to the earth and has no knowledge of God. That is what Nebuchadnezzar must experience for himself (Ecc 3:18).

In that situation he will remain seven times, which means seven years. A perfect – the number seven is the number of perfection – period will elapse before Nebuchadnezzar will be restored. The discipline of God must have a complete effect.

Dan 4:17 | Purpose of the Sentence

*17 "This sentence is by the decree of the [angelic] watchers
And the decision is a command of the holy ones,
In order that the living may know
That the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind,
And bestows it on whom He wishes
And sets over it the lowliest of men."*

The dream ends with the statement that the decree is fixed in heaven. Angels agree. Every decree made by God always receives the consent of all heavenly people. What will happen to Nebuchadnezzar is according to "a command of the holy ones". In other words, it may be that the same is said here as in the first part of the sentence. This is indicated by the use of the word "watchers" in the first part of the sentence and the use of the words "holy ones" in the second part of the sentence.

Verse 13 refers to "a watcher, a holy one", which clearly shows that "watcher" and "holy one" refer to one and the same person. Another indication that they seem to be heavenly beings is the contrast with "the living" mentioned in the following sentence. By this are meant all people living on earth.

The purpose of God's dealings with Nebuchadnezzar is that all people on earth come to the acknowledgment that He rules. This applies not only to the people in general, but certainly also to all who are in authority (cf. 1Tim 2:1-2). It is about Nebuchadnezzar and the kingship that God gives to whom He wants. For God's children this is an encouragement, because they often have to deal with rulers who do not care about God and forbid them to live according to God's will.

Governments can only exercise power within the space God gives them. It is even so that He determines to whom He gives governing power (Dan 2:21; Rom 13:1b). He can give honor to even "the lowliest of men" (1Sam 2:8a; Job 5:11; Psa 113:7-8; 75:6-7). David, who is the lowliest among his brothers, is a good example of this.

Dan 4:18-19 | Daniel Must Tell the Interpretation

18 This is the dream [which] I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar, tell [me] its interpretation, inasmuch as none of the wise men of my kingdom is able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able, for a spirit of the holy gods is in you.' 19 "Then Daniel, whose name is Belteshazzar, was appalled for a while as his thoughts alarmed him. The king responded and said, 'Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation alarm you.' Belteshazzar replied, 'My lord, [if only] the dream applied to those who hate you and its interpretation to your adversaries!

After Nebuchadnezzar has told the dream he has seen, he says to Daniel to tell him its interpretation. He says in addition that all his wise men have failed to tell him the interpretation. On the one hand Daniel is his last hope, on the other hand he has no doubt that Daniel will give him the interpretation. He again attributes this to the holy gods. At the same time he realizes that they are not Daniel's gods.

When Daniel has heard the dream, he immediately knows the interpretation. About that, he becomes appalled. How long that appalment lasts, which prevents him from speaking a word, lasts. In any case, it lasts so long that the king sees that the explanation of the dream appalls Daniel and that he must urge him to tell the explanation.

It may surprise us that Daniel was shocked by the dream. The dream makes it known that Nebuchadnezzar will learn a formidable lesson. Shouldn't he be happy? This is a good opportunity to sarcastically tell Nebuchadnezzar what would happen to him. For that man has done so much evil to his people, that is God's people. And he himself was taken away by him from the land of God. But there is no trace of any sense of revenge or gloating. On the contrary, Daniel is scared of the judgment that will come upon the king.

That brings us to the question what about our concern for all those people who are directly on their way to hell and will also end up there if they do not repent. Generally speaking, we may have that compassion and, forced by the love of Christ, we urge people to repent. But is there also this feeling for those who cause us to suffer, who make our lives difficult or perhaps almost unbearable?

By God's grace Daniel feels no hatred against Nebuchadnezzar, but compassion. Paul calls for prayer for all people and especially for those who are in high positions, like the cruel emperor of Rome (1Tim 2:1-2). If we have hearts like Daniel and Paul, we will pray for such rulers. We will not wish them hell, but wish them to be saved (Acts 26:29).

Dan 4:20-26 | The Interpretation of the Dream

20 The tree that you saw, which became large and grew strong, whose height reached to the sky and was visible to all the earth 21 and whose foliage [was] beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in which [was] food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwell and in whose branches the birds of the sky lodged — 22 it is you, O king; for you have become great and grown strong, and your majesty has become great and reached to the sky and your dominion to the end of the earth. 23 In that the king saw an [angelic] watcher, a holy one, descending from heaven and saying, "Chop down the tree and destroy it; yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground, but with a band of iron and bronze [around it] in the new grass of the field, and let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him share with the beasts of the field until seven periods of time pass over him," 24 this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king: 25 that you be driven away from mankind and your dwelling place be with the beasts of the

field, and you be given grass to eat like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven; and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes. 26 And in that it was commanded to leave the stump with the roots of the tree, your kingdom will be assured to you after you recognize that [it is] Heaven [that] rules.

In his explanation of the dream, Daniel begins with an almost verbatim repetition of the first part of the dream. By doing so he shows Nebuchadnezzar that he has heard and understood the dream well. By repeating the dream again, the king will experience its application even more strongly. Immediately after his repetition of this part of the dream, Daniel says of the tree: "It is you, O king."

Thus he heard Daniel also say at the interpretation of the first dream: "You are the head of gold" (Dan 2:38). That will have flattered him. He would also have loved to have heard the application of the tree to him if there would not follow more. His greatness is overwhelming, both in height – which "reached to the sky" – and in breadth – it "was visible to all the earth".

Then Daniel repeats the part of the dream that is about the watcher and what he said. He does so in somewhat stronger terms than in the depiction of Nebuchadnezzar. Thus Daniel speaks of "destroy it". In what the watcher says, we see what heaven thinks about this wonderful tree, about this wonderful Nebuchadnezzar, who is impressed by himself and with whom people are impressed.

Heaven says: "That which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God" (Lk 16:15). That is why the voice sounds from heaven: 'Turn that thing upside down, and nothing should remain of all appearances.' However, the stump of the tree must be left. There is no definitive end to the life of Nebuchadnezzar. This is indicated by the word "until". It is a temporary humiliation, for a period of seven times.

After the repetition of the second part of the dream, Daniel explains what the meaning is. He introduces the interpretation with the serious assurance that what happens to Nebuchadnezzar according to the interpretation, "is the decree of the Most High". With this he places the king, whom

he addresses with due respect with “my lord the king”, in the presence of God as the Most High. It is about Nebuchadnezzar being convicted of His existence and His sovereignty. What will happen to him is a decree of the Most High and therefore it will not be possible to be changed or ignored by a human being.

The content of the decree is that Nebuchadnezzar will be driven away from the people’s living area and will have his dwelling place with the beasts of the field. He will lose his place among men and he will go into the company of the beasts and behave like one of them. His dwelling, his food, his clothing, his dignity, everything that makes up his greatness as a human being, he loses. Instead he shall be in the open field, without covering, and shall eat grass like cattle. He will no longer quench his thirst with selected wines, but will have to be content with the dew of heaven.

The humiliation is complete and ends when he recognizes “that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes”. Before he reaches that point, seven times will have passed, a perfect period. That this period of humiliation is coming to an end is included in the words “to leave the stump with the roots of the tree”, words that Nebuchadnezzar also heard. Daniel adds that after his recognition “that [it is] Heaven [that] rules”, his kingdom will be assured to him.

For every human being there can only be a connection with God when he acknowledges that God is the Most High Ruler over everything. God is sovereign. Recognizing this gives peace to the heart. We, as believers, must also learn this regularly in our lives, in which so many things can happen that show that we have forgotten this.

Dan 4:27 | Advice of Daniel

27 Therefore, O king, may my advice be pleasing to you: break away now from your sins by [doing] righteousness and from your iniquities by showing mercy to [the] poor, in case there may be a prolonging of your prosperity.’

When Daniel has interpreted the dream, he adds a personal word. He advises, unasked for, but out of compassion, Nebuchadnezzar to break away from his sins,. The rule of Nebuchadnezzar, experienced as a benefit by all who submit to him, does not mean that he is not a sinner and does not

do iniquities. His rule is not a righteous and just rule. He lives for himself. Daniel points out to him that he does not show mercy to the oppressed. If he wants to prolong his prosperity, he must change that. This is only possible if he repents and acknowledges God with his heart as the Ruler of all things.

What Daniel says does not mean that Nebuchadnezzar can make his sins undone by acting righteously now and proving grace. It is not possible to become clean from sins on the basis of good works. A person is saved from his sins only by confessing them and believing in the atoning death of Christ. In the time when the Lord Jesus has not yet come, God can forgive sins in view of the offering that Christ will bring (Rom 3:23-26). For man nothing has changed before and after the cross. God forgives sins only by confession (1Jn 1:9), whereby the basis for forgiveness is the sacrifice of Christ (Heb 9:22b).

Dan 4:28-33 | Fulfilment of the Dream

28 "All [this] happened to Nebuchadnezzar the king. 29 Twelve months later he was walking on the [roof of] the royal palace of Babylon. 30 The king reflected and said, 'Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?' 31 While the word [was] in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven, [saying], 'King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you, 32 and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place [will be] with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.' 33 Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair had grown like eagles' [feathers] and his nails like birds' [claws].

Nebuchadnezzar has been told that the decree is assured. But he also heard Daniel's advice. If God's decree is certain that a sinner will go to hell, but the sinner accepts the warning, then his fate will change. In the same way, the prophecy would not have had to come over Nebuchadnezzar if he had taken to heart the warning. However, he did not take the warning to heart.

Over time, that is, after a year, what is in the heart of Nebuchadnezzar becomes public and what is promised to him in his dream interpreted to him by Daniel happens.

He walks in great complacency on the roof of his royal palace and looks at Babylon. His heart swells with pride. He expresses his pride by honoring himself. Everything he sees is thanks to him, he has done it himself, in his own strength and he deserves all the credit for it.

There is no thought of God with him, he simply ignores God, does not mention Him, does not take Him into account. He does not acknowledge that he owes his power to God. All his buildings proclaim his glory. He sees his own name on everything that is Babylon. Here we see an example of pride. Pride is the sin of the devil (1Tim 3:6). It is the first sin in creation.

A lot of people have their own miniature kingdom, for example in a company with different departments where each manager runs his department like his own kingdom. It can also be true of a father who sees his family as his own kingdom and attributes everything that is nice to his own merit. Maybe we have something of which we think we're just a little better at than any other. If we boast of this, it is pride.

We must learn that the word is true: "What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?" (1Cor 4:7). The Lord Jesus is among His disciples as One Who serves. He never boasted about anything. On the contrary, He humbled Himself. Nebuchadnezzar experiences the truth of the word: "God is opposed to the proud" (Jam 4:6). We will also experience this when we are proud.

The king has not yet pronounced his utterances to the full, the sound of the words have not yet died away, when there is another voice, a voice from heaven. This voice lets hear a proclamation: "Sovereignty has been removed from you." From the moment he boasted of his achievements, he lost his kingship. A believer who boasts of his own works also loses his royal dignity and gets heaven against him. What a contrast with the Lord Jesus. Above Him the voice of "God [the] Father" sounds from heaven, testifying of Him: "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased" (2Pet 1:17).

All that is said of Nebuchadnezzar happens to him. At the same time he is robbed of his reason. Suddenly he is insane and in his behavior he becomes “like the beasts that perish” (Psa 49:20). As announced, he is rejected by the people and takes his place as a beast. There he stands in the open field and eats grass like cattle. Thus seven times pass over him.

To the description of the dream by Nebuchadnezzar and its repetition by Daniel, it is now added that his hair and nails are growing all this time. There is no question of any physical care. The image of the once so powerful ruler is becoming increasingly blurred.

So vain is even the most powerful man on earth when he exalts himself against God by placing himself in the place of God. A beast has no awareness of its Creator. When a man denounces the connection with God, he becomes like a beast. This is the situation of every person who does not have God in mind, but only himself.

Dan 4:34-37 | Nebuchadnezzar Gets Back His Reason

34 “But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever;

For His dominion is an everlasting dominion,

And His kingdom [endures] from generation to generation.

35 “All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing,

But He does according to His will in the host of heaven

And [among] the inhabitants of earth;

And no one can ward off His hand

Or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’

36 At that time my reason returned to me. And my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom, and my counselors and my nobles began seeking me out; so I was reestablished in my sovereignty, and surpassing greatness was added to me. 37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride.”

When the days of Nebuchadnezzar being a beast are over, he raises his eyes toward heaven. A beast only looks toward the earth and has no con-

sciousness of the Creator. If Nebuchadnezzar looks up to heaven, it is because he has back his reason. God has taken away his reason from him and gives it back to him. He has achieved His goal with His discipline. This is evident from the first words spoken by Nebuchadnezzar. They are words of praise and honor to the Most High. He glorifies Him.

The name 'Most High' is the name of God in the kingdom of peace. The first time that name occurs is when Melchizedek meets Abraham who by battle has freed his cousin Lot from the power of a few kings. Melchizedek is a priest of "God, the Most High" and blesses Abraham on behalf of "God, the Most High" (Gen 14:18-20). This situation is reminiscent of the liberation by the Lord Jesus of the faithful remnant of Israel in the future. After His victory, He is the true Melchizedek Who distributes bread and wine for strength and joy. The kingdom of peace will be full of them.

Nebuchadnezzar recognizes God even as the One Who lives forever, Whose government is eternal. He not only rules forever, He also rules from the moment there is something to govern, that is, from the moment He created something. There has never been a time when He did not have the rule and there will never be such a time.

Against this greatness Nebuchadnezzar recognizes the nullity of man, not only as an individual, but as a total mankind. All men together cannot do anything against Him. All heavenly inhabitants are under His authority, just like all earth-dwellers. No one is strong enough to ward off His hand and thus evade His authority. Which man is so audacious to take up the word against Him and call Him to account (cf. Rom 9:20)? He who does this, sins against his life.

After this acknowledgment, which is the result of the return of his reason, he also gets back the kingdom. His nobles seek him out again. He gets more greatness than he possessed before that time (Pro 29:23). It is often the case that we lose more than we gain if we go a road that is not good. But it is also sometimes the case that God gives more than we had.

We see that with Peter. After his restoration, he is given a great task among the believers. His two letters are proof of this. Someone who has truly repented that he went a wrong road or did a wrong deed, sometimes receives more praise than in the life he lived before that time.

Nebuchadnezzar concludes his proclamation with a new praise. He calls God the "King of Heaven", He Who has all authority in heaven. With this position he connects His deeds and paths on earth. Everything He does is true and in accordance with heaven where everything is true. Every way which He goes, whether with a man or with a nation, is a way in righteousness; that is the righteousness of heaven. Everything in heaven corresponds to His Being of truth and righteousness. We see the results on earth.

When the Lord Jesus rules on earth, all deeds and paths on earth are a reflection of heaven. He Who rules in heaven, Whose throne is in heaven, shall then reign on earth, and His throne shall be on earth. Then the prayer will be fulfilled: "Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Mt 6:10). In view of this time, may it be our prayer that this is already visible in our personal lives.

Daniel 5

Introduction

The events in the previous chapters took place under the kingship of Nebuchadnezzar. Under him the Babylonian empire grew and became a great unity. Nebuchadnezzar died in the year 562 BC after a government of forty-three years. In the following years, until the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus in the year 539 BC, this empire was characterized by an ever-increasing decline and murder. Nebuchadnezzar was succeeded by his son Evil-Merodach (2Kgs 25:27-30; Jer 52:31-34), who ruled for only two years, from 562-560 BC. His reign came to an end because he was murdered by the son-in-law of Nebuchadnezzar, Nergal-Sharezer (Jer 39:3,13). This man ruled for four years.

According to non-biblical history he was succeeded by his son who was murdered after a few months of government. Nabonidus then becomes king over Babylon. He ruled seventeen years, from 556-539 BC. Belshazzar was his eldest son. He was co-regent of his father. That explains why in the first verse of Daniel 5 he is called 'king' and exercises royal authority, while Nabonidus is the real king. (This overview of the history of Babylon is taken from *DAS ALTE TESTAMENT erklärt und ausgelegt (THE OLD TESTAMENT explained and interpreted)* by Jn F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, Band 3.

Regarding Nabonidus it is still told that he may have been in exile for several years. Belshazzar has not only been co-regent, but also king. Reportedly, Nabonidus was married to a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar. This means that Belshazzar is the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar and explains why Nebuchadnezzar is spoken of as "his father" (verse 2) and why Belshazzar speaks of Nebuchadnezzar as "my father" (verse 13; cf. Jer 27:7).

Historically, in this chapter we have the end of the Babylonian empire. Prophetically, we see in this chapter a picture of the end of the Roman Empire at the coming of the Lord Jesus. Also we see in the person of Daniel a type of the faithful remnant of Israel in the end time, with whom are

wisdom and understanding. We have the example in this that we must be characterized by wisdom and understanding, because we also live in an end time. In this we find ourselves as individuals, a remnant, who want to remain faithful to God's Word and lean on it. We can, if all goes well, also explain that Word to those who have questions about the end time.

Dan 5:1-4 | The Great Feast of Belshazzar

1 Belshazzar the king held a great feast for a thousand of his nobles, and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand. 2 When Belshazzar tasted the wine, he gave orders to bring the gold and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple which [was] in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them. 3 Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God which [was] in Jerusalem; and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them. 4 They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.

In this chapter the decay of the Babylonian empire finds its lowest point. This low point is linked to the high point of revolt against God. In this chapter we find an unprecedented form of defamation and defiance of God. In addition, Babylon is surrounded by the armies of the Medes and Persians who are about to capture the city. In view of this death threat, Belshazzar is organizing a huge party. He mocks God and death. It is the attitude of "let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (1Cor 15:32b; Isa 22:12-13).

Belshazzar's whole attitude shows a deep contempt for God. In it he drags his entire kingdom with him into destruction. To the greater glory of himself, he surrounds himself with a large number of rulers to demonstrate to them what daredevilry he is capable of. He is the pacer in the hollow fun, he is the greatest party beast. Everyone must follow him and do like him. This does not change the fact that his rulers are all responsible for their own behavior. Together with Belshazzar they let themselves go in their debauchery.

Belshazzar's mind, darkened by sin, comes into even deeper darkness through the use of wine. In this total eclipse, sin is led to a low point.

Belshazzar is going to violate the holy things of God in a way that the holy is profaned in the most shameful way. The sacred vessels intended by God to honor Him must be collected to serve the satisfaction of one's own desires. He consciously chooses from all the captured objects the objects that come from the temple in Jerusalem. With this he and all his fellow party-goers grieve God at the deepest. It is an unprecedented insult.

The holy is taken here by the dogs (cf. Mt 7:6). This not only deeply grieves the heart of God. It also goes like a sword through the soul of His people. The heart of His people is very attached to these sacred vessels (Jer 27:18). When the exiles are soon to be allowed to return to their land, their main concern is to bring the temple utensils with them (Ezra 1:7).

For us it is similar. Don't we feel deep pain and indignation when people mock the Lord Jesus, the Holy One of God? Doesn't it cut through us when a sacred institution when the marriage between man and woman with the sexuality that goes with it is reduced by men to a disgusting union between people of the same sex, in which sexuality becomes nothing but satisfaction of lusts?

Such practices are praised and promoted. It is attributed to the god of freedom. Freedom must exist in all areas. Each area has its own god. All kinds of gods have got a grip on the thinking of man who has been ransacked from God and rejects Him firmly. The ideas that arise in the through and through polluted minds of people must be given space to be experienced in life. Experience your ideal! Make true what you want and feel! You live now. Therefore live the life you want to live. Feel free to use others for this, even if they break down. Abuse what is dear to others, even if it deeply hurts them. It's about your 'happiness', your 'right' to happiness, isn't it?

At the feast of Belshazzar everyone participates in the contempt of what is of God. All the rulers and also the women and concubines of the king do as he does. We recognize this in today's world. Many prominent people, often with important positions in society, are under the spell of people who are just a little more powerful than they are. They join in what such people organize and venture to do. They see what those powerful and influential figures do and they love it. That's what they want too: to impress others. Anything that is somewhat honorable must receive its end. Bragging, vul-

gar language is expressed, the sexual morality is crushed by debauched, repulsive behavior.

By praising “the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone” Belshazzar makes it a matter between God and the idols. It is no longer ‘merely’ a matter of satisfying carnal lusts, it is now a matter of worshiping the demons that hide behind these material gods. He attributes to them the victory they would have gained over the only true God to Whose vessels he is offending.

We must remember that a struggle between demons and God is not a struggle between good and evil powers that are evenly matched. Demons can only move within the limits God has set for them. To attribute to demons a power that would be equal to the power of God is foolishness, let alone attribute to them a power that would be greater than that of God.

As soon as the revelers glorify their gods, God enters the king’s palace in the most exalted way and in the least form, and denounces the judgment. His appearance is crushing and extinguishes all revelry.

Dan 5:5 | The Writing Fingers

5 Suddenly the fingers of a man’s hand emerged and began writing opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace, and the king saw the back of the hand that did the writing.

When Belshazzar and the whole reveling company let the cups go around, suddenly the fingers of a man’s hand appear writing something on the wall. It will have become dead quiet. The deathly silence is not the result of an ear-extinguishing thunderclap or a blinding lightning bolt. Nor does an angel appear with a sword to kill them all. It is only “the fingers of a man’s hand” which write something on the plaster of the wall, “opposite the lampstand”, that is, in full light, so that all can read it.

The finger with which God has written for His people the two tablets of the law (Exo 31:18; Deu 9:10), now writes the judgment on Babylon and Belshazzar on the wall of the royal palace. God’s written Word is sufficient to frighten to death the most proud and rebellious sinners.

The king sees the part of the hand that writes, but he does not see Whose hand it is, which makes the scene even more frightening. We can say that in creation we see a part of God's hand. To say it with Job, we see "the fringes of His ways; And how faint a word we hear of Him!" (Job 26:14). God's finger is the finger of power.

We see His power in creation when we look at the sky called by David "the work of Your fingers" (Psa 8:3). We also see God's power in the judgment when Moses, on behalf of God, brings the third plague over Egypt. With his staff he strikes the dust of the earth, which becomes gnats in the whole country of Egypt. The magicians say to the pharaoh: "This is the finger of God" (Exo 8:19). "By the finger of God" the Lord Jesus casts out the demons (Lk 11:20). The finger of God means the Holy Spirit, as is apparent from the parallel text in Matthew 12 (Mt 12:28).

It has rightly been noted that if all these are characteristics of God's finger, what will happen when He moves His hand and His arm? Shall we not be even more impressed by His actions? And if we are so impressed by a small part of His Being, how great must He be in His Person?

Dan 5:6-9 | Reaction of Belshazzar

6 Then the king's face grew pale and his thoughts alarmed him, and his hip joints went slack and his knees began knocking together. 7 The king called aloud to bring in the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the diviners. The king spoke and said to the wise men of Babylon, "Any man who can read this inscription and explain its interpretation to me shall be clothed with purple and [have] a necklace of gold around his neck, and have authority as third [ruler] in the kingdom." 8 Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the inscription or make known its interpretation to the king. 9 Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, his face grew [even] paler, and his nobles were perplexed.

When the king sees the fingers, his intoxication is instantly done. The yelling crowd, who may be drinking with much hurray shouting because of the expected downfall of Cyrus and his army, is suddenly struck with muteness. The frenzied cheerfulness turns into extreme horror. The music stops playing, the dancers stand motionless, the waiters who run back and

forth between the bar and the various tables with their trays full of drink, don't make a step anymore. They all stare at the wall.

Belshazzar is frightened to death. Why? He cannot even read what it says, let alone know its meaning. Why, for example, does he not see it as a good omen? It is because he has no peaceful conscience. This is an event that is completely beyond his reach. He has to deal with a power over which he has no control. His face grows pale, which means that all the color disappears from it and the appearance becomes pale.

At the same time his thoughts alarm him. He is addressed directly in his conscience. He is placed before a power far above him whom he never wanted to take into account, but to whom he is accountable. Further on in this chapter Daniel tells him that he is a warned man, but who has ignored the warnings (verse 22).

What he sees also has a reaction on his body. Not only does the color disappear from his face, all the power to walk and to stand is gone. All those boasters who now still dare to say with a big mouth that they will tell God what they think of His dealings when they stand before Him, will have the same experience.

When he has recovered somewhat from the first shock, he is back in control of his voice. He calls all his demon servants to him. He calls aloud, because the matter is urgent. They have to tell him what is on the wall and what its meaning is. He promises a rich reward if they give him the interpretation. That the interpreter will be the third in the kingdom means the third after Nabonidus as king and Belshazzar as co-regent. The fact that Belshazzar is promising this high post as reward shows how keen he is to know the interpretation.

But it is as with the two dreams of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 2:2-11; 4:7): What comes from God cannot be interpreted by idolaters. All the king's wise men do not know what the writing means. Because his wise men do not know the answer, the king is greatly alarmed and his face grows even paler. The rulers are also panicking. Their large number – they are with a thousand men – does not give them any hope of victory. To the power they face, numbers are nothing. What do numbers mean to Him to Whom

“the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and ... as a speck of dust on the scales” (Isa 40:15)?

Dan 5:10-12 | The Queen Remembers Daniel

10 The queen entered the banquet hall because of the words of the king and his nobles; the queen spoke and said, “O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts alarm you or your face be pale. 11 There is a man in your kingdom in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of your father, illumination, insight and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him. And King Nebuchadnezzar, your father, your father the king, appointed him chief of the magicians, conjurers, Chaldeans [and] diviners. 12 [This was] because an extraordinary spirit, knowledge and insight, interpretation of dreams, explanation of enigmas and solving of difficult problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Let Daniel now be summoned and he will declare the interpretation.”

The queen hears of the horror of the king and his nobles. The queen is probably the queen-mother. In any case, she is not one of his wives, because they are all present in the party room (verse 2). When we hear how she addresses Belshazzar, it reinforces the idea that we are dealing with the queen-mother. Only she can address the king as she does. She is probably the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar.

She greets him with the usual greeting. The greeting “live forever” sounds extra harsh here. After all, Belshazzar only has a few hours left to live. Then she reassures him. He doesn’t have to be afraid, because she knows someone who can help him. Then she tells about Daniel and how he has been of great use to Nebuchadnezzar. She also tells him about the esteem Nebuchadnezzar had for him. If Nebuchadnezzar had such an appreciation for Daniel, then that is a special recommendation to let him be summoned.

Then she gives an impressive testimony of the special qualities of Daniel. It has become clear to everyone that in him “an extraordinary spirit, knowledge and insight, interpretation of dreams” are present. These qualities cannot be seen, but must be evident from what someone says or does. He is a man who explains enigmas and solves difficult problems.

Everything she says about Daniel is not exaggerated. Daniel has an excellent record of service. She can only recommend him to the king. If he has this man brought, he will give him the interpretation of the writing. She does not doubt it, but puts it as a certainty. She knows him too well for that.

The testimony of the queen about Daniel has something to tell us. Do the people who live in the world and are in fear about certain events know us as believers who can interpret those events by means of God's Word? Can people be referred to us? As long as there are people like Daniel, others do not have to despair. We know God's thoughts and can make them known. In all despair we can point to God and tell how things will go in the world. As long as there are people like Daniel in the world, there is hope for the few.

Dan 5:13-16 | Daniel Is Brought in Before the King

13 Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Are you that Daniel who is one of the exiles from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah? 14 Now I have heard about you that a spirit of the gods is in you, and that illumination, insight and extraordinary wisdom have been found in you. 15 Just now the wise men [and] the conjurers were brought in before me that they might read this inscription and make its interpretation known to me, but they could not declare the interpretation of the message. 16 But I personally have heard about you, that you are able to give interpretations and solve difficult problems. Now if you are able to read the inscription and make its interpretation known to me, you will be clothed with purple and [wear] a necklace of gold around your neck, and you will have authority as the third [ruler] in the kingdom."

Belshazzar follows his mother's advice and has Daniel bring in before him. Daniel must be around ninety years old here. As a venerable greybeard he appears before the king. It seems that he meets him for the first time. We hear no greeting from the mouth of Daniel. There he stands silently before the king. Then the king speaks up and asks him if he is the Daniel who was brought from Judah to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. Without hearing a confirmation from Daniel's mouth – perhaps he nodded 'yes' – the king continues and tells what he has heard about Daniel.

With a “just now” Belshazzar begins to explain why he had Daniel brought in. The wise men and conjurers were previously brought in before him to read “this inscription” – possibly pointing to the wall on which the inscription is written – and to make him known its interpretation. But, he must admit, they were not able to do so. Now he has heard that Daniel can do it. That is why he had him brought in. If what he has heard is true and Daniel reads and makes its interpretation known, he will receive the reward he promised his wise men earlier.

Dan 5:17-21 | Daniel Points Belshazzar to Nebuchadnezzar

17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king, “Keep your gifts for yourself or give your rewards to someone else; however, I will read the inscription to the king and make the interpretation known to him. 18 O king, the Most High God granted sovereignty, grandeur, glory and majesty to Nebuchadnezzar your father. 19 Because of the grandeur which He bestowed on him, all the peoples, nations and [men of every] language feared and trembled before him; whomever he wished he killed and whomever he wished he spared alive; and whomever he wished he elevated and whomever he wished he humbled. 20 But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit became so proud that he behaved arrogantly, he was deposed from his royal throne and [his] glory was taken away from him. 21 He was also driven away from mankind, and his heart was made like [that of] beasts, and his dwelling place [was] with the wild donkeys. He was given grass to eat like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until he recognized that the Most High God is ruler over the realm of mankind and [that] He sets over it whomever He wishes.

Daniel’s attitude towards Belshazzar is very reserved. Nor does he have the respect for this man he had for Nebuchadnezzar. After all, Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold. He refuses all tributes from Belshazzar, while he has accepted them from Nebuchadnezzar. Nor would it make sense to accept any promise from Belshazzar. His kingdom will be conquered in a few hours, and he himself will be killed. Belshazzar can still pronounce the order for the reward (verse 30), but nothing comes of its realization. In addition, Daniel himself has reached an age that makes a long enjoyment of a possible reward unlikely.

The way Daniel rejects the reward is a lesson for us. In this way we should also reject all the rewards of the world if they are offered to us because the world expects something from us. Let the world pay the people in the world for achievements that are worth something to the world. We must be incorruptible and be able to judge in the right, that is to say spiritual, way what the world offers. We may trust that we have a Lord in heaven Who will richly reward every faithful service that is done for Him (Col 3:23-24).

Yet Daniel is inclined to read the inscription to the king and let him know its interpretation. He wants to fulfil his duty to this man. But before he does, he has a word of admonition for the king. What he says to him is at the same time the introduction to the statement of the inscription in which the verdict on Belshazzar is given. So what Daniel says as an introduction is actually the indictment, while the interpretation of the inscription is the judgment.

He begins his indictment by reminding Belshazzar of his ancestor Nebuchadnezzar. He points out in the first place that Nebuchadnezzar owed his role as king and what goes with it not to himself but to “the Most High God”. His general rule, with even power over life, made his subjects live in fear and trembling for him. His power was absolute.

But Nebuchadnezzar might still be mighty, God was above him, and that has also been proven. For when he forgot to whom he owed his power and considered his glory to be his own merit, his heart lifted up and he became proud. He imagined himself to be God. As a result, he was taken from the throne. He lost his kingship and the honor that went with it (Dan 4:29-33).

It did not stop there. Daniel draws a picture before Belshazzar’s eyes of the deep humiliation that Nebuchadnezzar had to undergo: Nebuchadnezzar was even expelled from the human community and became the company of beasts, while his heart was changed into that of a beast.

Daniel says that the beasts that formed his company were wild donkeys. The wild donkey is the right picture of man who acts in his own will and does not care about God. Ishmael is said to be “a wild donkey of a man” (Gen 16:12). This state of Nebuchadnezzar of being a beast lasted, so Daniel concludes in his story about Nebuchadnezzar, “until he recognized that

the Most High God is ruler over the realm of mankind and [that] He sets over it whomever He wishes”.

Dan 5:22-24 | The Charge Against Belshazzar

22 Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this, 23 but you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines have been drinking wine from them; and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which do not see, hear or understand. But the God in whose hand are your life-breath and all your ways, you have not glorified. 24 Then the hand was sent from Him and this inscription was written out.

When Daniel has presented the example of Nebuchadnezzar to Belshazzar, he addresses him directly and in a confronting way. We see, as it were, that his finger is piercing towards the king and we hear how his voice is raising. The message he speaks to Belshazzar is impressive. With his story about Nebuchadnezzar he hasn't told Belshazzar anything new. He says to him: “Even though you knew all this.”

Thus, every man who is not converted will hear the judgment from the mouth of the Lord Jesus. Every human being knew that he had to repent, that he had to humiliate himself under the powerful hand of God. He who does not allow himself to be warned, but “hardens [his] neck after much reproof will suddenly be broken beyond remedy” (Pro 29:1).

Instead of humiliating himself he has exalted himself against “the Lord of heaven”. His rebellion against Him has been demonstrated by the use of the vessels of God's house to mock with them “the Lord of heaven” – “Lord” is *Adonai*, that is “Sovereign”, “Ruler” – and to toast his idols, who are not gods. Daniel sneers with his words about the worthlessness of the gods praised by Belshazzar. The only true God to Whom he owed his life, he did not take into account and did not honor Him.

That his breath is in God's hand means that he is completely dependent on God for every breath. When God withdraws His hand, the life of a man ends. Belshazzar has, as it were, repelled that hand. That is what in fact every person does who wants to have nothing to do with God. But who-

soever repels the drawing hand of God, will have to deal with His hand in judgment.

God makes Himself known in His works, also in works of judgment. That judgment also comes because Belshazzar has gone his own way, without remembering that his ways belong to Him, the Lord of heaven. Man is created to live for God and to do His will. If, however, he puts God aside as Someone Who does not matter, he declares Him dead as it were, and arranges his life as he wishes, the moment of judgment comes. To such a person the judgment must be announced, calling on him to repent in order to escape the judgment.

God has announced judgment to Belshazzar by sending the part of the hand and writing this inscription. We do not hear Daniel say to him that he should repent, as he did say to Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 4:27). For Belshazzar the time is over. Against his better judgment, he misappropriates the holy things of God to defy Him. Then comes the judgment without possibility of conversion. "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb 10:31).

Dan 5:25-28 | The Inscription and Its Meaning

25 "Now this is the inscription that was written out: 'MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.' 26 This is the interpretation of the message: 'MENE' — God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it. 27 'TEKEL' — you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient. 28 'PERES' — your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians."

Daniel is ready to tell what is written on the wall. There are four words that the sages could not read, which he pronounces in front of the king. The translation of the words is: 'numbered', 'numbered', 'weighed', 'and broken' (or: 'and divided'). The last word is 'pharsin'. The initial 'u' means 'and'. Even if the sages had been able to pronounce the words and knew their translation, they would not have known their meaning. These words have a meaning, not in the sense of a translation, but in the sense of a message. Daniel will interpret what that meaning is.

"Mene" contains the message that God numbered the days of the kingship of Belshazzar, i.e. determined the amount of them. The days of Belshazzar

are over. His days are finished. Repeating the word “mene” underlines the importance and seriousness of this fact. Thus the days of the life of every human being are numbered by God, both of unbelievers and believers. For every human being the last day inevitably comes, during which the believer may look forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus which can take place at any time and he is taken up by Him to be with Him. God knows as the All-knowing God of every man the day and the hour of his death.

There is another side, however, and that is the side of human responsibility. Man can speed up the day of his death, for example by living unhealthy or by mocking his life by doing dangerous things. Also defying God, as Belshazzar did, can give him premature and also pre-timely death.

The explanation of “tekel”, ‘weighed’, is that God weighed the life of Belshazzar, in the sense of judging it, and that He found it too light, that is, that Belshazzar failed. It is not about weighing up good deeds on the one hand against evil deeds on the other hand, but about the person. Daniel talks about the person, he talks about “you”. It is about the person and how the heart is towards God. Not only the fruits are assessed, but also the tree is assessed. Being found too light means that his life was vain, empty, without weight, there was nothing in it for God.

In the interpretation Daniel changes the last word ‘pharsin’ into ‘peres’. According to experts, this is not a change in the meaning of the word, but a change from plural (‘pharsin’) to singular (‘peres’). “Peres” means ‘broken’. Daniel seems to make this change because of a play on words. The word ‘peres’ is reminiscent of Persia. In his interpretation Daniel says that the kingdom of Belshazzar is divided or broken and that it is given to the Medes and Persians.

This must have sound in Belshazzar’s ears as the last judgment. He is immediately and completely back in reality. If he had any thought of escaping this judgment or simply wanting to deny it, then he hears it pronounced clearly now. The Medes and Persians lie before the city to put an end to his kingdom.

Dan 5:29-30 | Belshazzar Slain

29 Then Belshazzar gave orders, and they clothed Daniel with purple and [put] a necklace of gold around his neck, and issued a proclamation concerning him

that he [now] had authority as the third [ruler] in the kingdom. 30 That same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain.

When Daniel is ready, Belshazzar does what he promised, but it is in pride. He seems not to have been impressed by what he has heard and does not humiliate himself. He keeps the honor to himself. The reward is only for a few hours and concerns only the decorations.

In few words and powerfully it says that Belshazzar is slain that same night. In this message of his death, we don't hear anything about the way it happens. It is simply given as a communication. He who kills him is irrelevant. It is an instrument in God's hand that performs His judgment (cf. Dan 8:25). He, the king of the Chaldeans, however great and high, is slain. This is also how the last world rulers come to their end. Without any battle being described, without trial, they are thrown into the pool of fire by the Lord Jesus (Rev 19:19-20).

Non-biblical history tells us that in the night that Belshazzar is killed, Babylon is conquered by Cyrus. To gain access to the city, the Medes and Persians diverted the river that runs around the city and serves as a natural protection. As a result, part of the river has become dry. The dry riverbed has allowed the armies to enter into the city, which they have taken without fighting.

Dan 5:31 | The Empire of the Medes and the Persians

31 So Darius the Mede received the kingdom at about the age of sixty-two.

Darius is from the Medes, not from the Persians. In the last verse of the next chapter we read about "the reign of Darius" and "the reign of Cyrus the Persian" (Dan 6:28). Media and Persia are two different empires that do have the rule together. We have seen this in the two arms of silver of the statue (Dan 2:32). We also see it in Daniel 7 in both sides of the bear, where one side is stronger than the other (Dan 7:5) and in Daniel 8 in the ram with the two horns (Dan 8:20).

The most powerful man is Cyrus, the Persian. He has overall dominion. Because of the size of his kingdom, he gave to Darius, the Mede, the kingship over the kingdom of the Chaldeans, so the Babylonian part of the

Medo-Persian kingdom (Dan 9:1). Darius is connected to the same area and the same city where Daniel always lived.

Daniel 6

Introduction

Daniel 6 is the last chapter of the historical part of the book. It is a highlight in the prophetic interpretation. Daniel 1-5 take place in the Babylonian realm. Daniel 6 takes place under the rule of the Medes and Persians. The Babylonian empire existed for about seventy years, that of the Medes and Persians will exist for about two hundred and ten years.

In Daniel 3-6 moral characteristics of the ruling heathen forces are shown in various histories. In it we see an increasing hostility towards God.

1. In Daniel 3 Nebuchadnezzar belittles God by presenting Him as a God Who cannot deliver (Dan 3:15b).
2. In Daniel 4 Nebuchadnezzar ignores God and boasts of his works as the result of his own effort and merit (Dan 4:30).
3. In Daniel 5 Belshazzar defies and insults God by mocking the vessels of God's house and glorifying his own gods (Dan 5:23).
4. In Daniel 6 we have the height of enmity against God. Here we see a ruler, a man, who throws God off the throne and takes the place of God (Dan 6:7-9).

This apostasy of God is presented to us in the New Testament as the hallmark of the end of the times of the nations. In the second letter to the Thessalonians, Paul foretells the coming apostasy and relates it to the revelation of "the man of lawlessness ..., the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God" (2Thes 2:3b-4). From Revelation 13 we learn that this man of lawlessness is the second beast, the beast of the earth (Rev 13:12,15). Darius' decree to address every request to him alone is a foreshadowing of the actions of this through and through evil man.

Incidentally, it is good to note that it only concerns the injunction and not the person of Darius. Darius as a person seems to have had a better char-

acter than the licentious and self-willed Belshazzar we had before us in the previous chapter. In this chapter he appears sympathetic in his attitude towards Daniel. There is no doubt that he has sincere admiration for Daniel. He even has a sleepless night because of him and is very pleased when he discovers that Daniel is still alive. Like Nebuchadnezzar, he finally comes to the recognition that there is only one God, namely the God of Daniel.

However, a warning is also appropriate. We have to be careful not to be too impressed by certain characteristics that seem pleasant to us. It will not come as a surprise if it turns out that the man of sin will also be an extraordinarily charming man with a very attractive appearance, someone who comes across as sympathetic. Corruption is in the heart.

Dan 6:1-3 | Darius Wants to Promote Daniel

1 It seemed good to Darius to appoint 120 satraps over the kingdom, that they would be in charge of the whole kingdom, 2 and over them three commissioners (of whom Daniel was one), that these satraps might be accountable to them, and that the king might not suffer loss. 3 Then this Daniel began distinguishing himself among the commissioners and satraps because he possessed an extraordinary spirit, and the king planned to appoint him over the entire kingdom.

The opening verses are the introduction to the injunction that Darius will publish. We indirectly find in this that jealousy is the reason for issuing his royal decree. The territory over which Darius is in charge is so large that he divides the kingdom, which is the original Babylonian empire, into 120 districts, each with one satrap. Above these 120 satraps, he places three commissioners to whom the satraps are accountable. The commissioners must be trusted representatives of the kingdom because they must ensure that the king might not suffer loss. He can only give such a task to people he can trust. Daniel is one of the commissioners.

Darius has an eye for the person, or maybe he has been told that Daniel possesses an exceptional spirit. In Daniel he sees someone who is of the greatest significance for his kingdom. He is thinking about appointing him as a kind of viceroy. Given the reaction to this, the king will have expressed his thought. It must have been difficult for the satraps to be held

accountable to this exile from Judah. But now that the king intends to put Daniel above his fellow commissioners as well, they will have been filled with jealousy (cf. Ecc 4:4a). If anyone is caught in envy, no means is too bad or cruel to use it (Pro 27:4). Motivated by envy they all go in search of a means to get rid of Daniel.

Dan 6:4-5 | Looking for a Ground of Accusation

4 Then the commissioners and satraps began trying to find a ground of accusation against Daniel in regard to government affairs; but they could find no ground of accusation or [evidence of] corruption, inasmuch as he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption was [to be] found in him. 5 Then these men said, "We will not find any ground of accusation against this Daniel unless we find [it] against him with regard to the law of his God."

In their search for an accusation they could bring against Daniel to the king, they find nothing. On the contrary, they discover that he is faithful, without corruption or anything he has done wrong. They are forced to admit that Daniel cannot be caught in any error because he does not make any. That is indeed a very remarkable fact in that circle of commissioners. This is where people often use illicit means to get still more than they already have.

The people of the world also take a close look at our lives as Christians, in order to speak evil of us. They will speak evil of us anyway. However, if there is no valid reason, they will be ashamed if they revile our good behavior in Christ (1Pet 3:15-16). Like Daniel then, we are strange elements in the world today. We are exhorted to do "all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life" (Phil 2:14-16a). We may ask ourselves: 'How do we do our work? How do we behave towards our neighbors?'

The only possibility they see is to find something against him in the law of his God. In order to use this option, they must have been familiar with Daniel's religious customs. But even there they find nothing. Daniel is faithful to the king and he is faithful to his God. Yet now they see an op-

portunity to get rid of him. They have to come up with something that will make him unfaithful to his God. They go looking for something in his service to God that gives them a weapon to eliminate him.

We too are increasingly faced with such matters. There are more and more laws that are anti-Christian. Not that every law that goes against God's Word should lead us to action. We have a law that allows abortion, but women in the Netherlands are not (yet) obliged to have an abortion. But when we are faced with a law that forbids us from calling homosexual relationships sin, we do come to the area that demands something of us, as we cannot go along with that law. We cannot obey laws that oblige us to do something that goes against the Word of God.

Dan 6:6-9 | To Acknowledge Darius as God

6 Then these commissioners and satraps came by agreement to the king and spoke to him as follows: "King Darius, live forever! 7 All the commissioners of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the high officials and the governors have consulted together that the king should establish a statute and enforce an injunction that anyone who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, shall be cast into the lions' den. 8 Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document so that it may not be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked." 9 Therefore King Darius signed the document, that is, the injunction.

The hypocrites are of one mind in the evil and go to the king. They greet him with the usual greeting. Then they come up with their proposal, a proposal that is a great flattery of the king. The only reason we can think of that this proposal has a chance of succeeding is the pride of the king. These people must have known that and they respond skillfully to that. The proposed law does not require a long discussion. Without any enquiry as to why, the proposed law is signed by the king, including the sanction in the event of violation.

The real reason for enactment of this law is to eliminate Daniel. The law as such is nonsensical. Even today laws are made for no other purpose than the elimination of Christians. We must be aware that all anti-Christian laws are only intended to eliminate Christians or at least to suppress Christian

influence. Everything is ultimately aimed at banning every thought of Christ. The enmity concerns Him.

It is always about laws that are nonsensical. With every law that is intended to eliminate Christian influences, the petitioner commits a suicide attack. Christian influences have always been beneficial to all areas of life. Removing them is foolish and opens the door to all kinds of malicious elements that only hurt society instead of doing good. Such laws instead of increasing happiness only bring more and more plagues to society that ravage and torment the people.

While writing the rules above, I saw an example of this on the opinion site Habakuk.nu. It is an opinion article about sexually transgressive behavior. The author points out that the much-praised legally obtained freedoms blur and erase the boundaries that God has given as protection. He cites as an example the boundaries given by God with regard to sexuality. Take them away and the following is observed, not by a Christian institution, but by a secular research group:

Sexual transgressive behavior: 84% of boys and 66% of girls between 15 and 25 years of age, has to do with this subject. The younger you are sexually active and the more changing your contacts, the greater the risk. And then we are almost always talking about a form of physically or psychologically enforced sex, whether or not under the influence of alcohol. *And despite all the acquired freedoms of the sexual revolution, the result is still anger, fear, guilt or a distorted attitude towards sexuality.* (End of quote; italicization by me, GdK.)

In Darius we see that he is caught in the deceit of flattery to be honored as the only God for thirty days. This makes him a slave to his subjects. What he does is to enact a law in which he substitutes himself for God (cf. Isa 14:13-14). For thirty days he is the only god to whom a man may address himself. It is the supreme form of rebellion against God: the idolization of man.

Dan 6:10 | Daniel Prays to His God

10 Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he

continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously.

When Daniel hears of the injunction, he is not afraid. He does not submit a request for exemption to the king. He also does not seek the conversation with his opponents. He goes home immediately. Back home, he goes to his roof chamber to pray according to his habit, leaving the consequences to God. Praying is not something special for him, it is part of his life. For him it is as natural as breathing. Prayer is not something for special events, an escape valve for when the pressure gets too high. It is not a spontaneous religious burp when suddenly a difficulty arises. When Daniel prays here, it is the continuation of something he is used to.

For us it is also important to make prayer a habit that we will not allow to be robbed of or forbidden. This approach to prayer is completely different from praying out of routine. No instruction is given to us as to how often we should pray. However, we are told several times that we must persevere in prayer (Lk 18:1; Eph 6:18; Col 4:2; 1Thes 5:17). We are not prescribed an attitude of prayer either. We do find clues. We can kneel, stand or lie down. Our attitude will fit with what is in our hearts to pray for. When we are in great need, it is conceivable that we are kneeling or even lying stretched out on the ground. If there is gratitude and praise to God it will be done more standing up.

Whatever attitude it is, it will be a respectful attitude. After all, we are approaching the holy God. Certainly, we may call Him Father, be close to Him and speak with Him in a confidential way. But that doesn't mean we're dealing with Him in a popular way. Confidentiality does not exclude respect.

Daniel does not only pray, he also gives thanks. He finds reasons to give thanks, despite the very threatening situation. According to Solomon's prayer he prays, with the windows open, in the direction of Jerusalem (1Kgs 8:48). He is used to praying with open windows and did not close them for this occasion. He wants to keep his clear view on heaven, as it were, and he also wants to keep the connection with heaven open in practical terms.

Through his dealings with God, Daniel comes to do what is forbidden to him. Here he cannot obey the government. He wants “to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). He refuses to address Darius instead of God, because God has said that He does not give His honor to anyone else. For the first commandment is: “You shall have no other gods before Me” (Exo 20:3). Daniel has to deal with this in the first place and to be obedient to it, and therefore he refuses the king’s injunction.

Our personal prayer may also be an open and visible matter to all. We do not have to do that secretly. Prayer for eating in a restaurant or at work is a testimony. Even during a business trip it is important to openly show that you are different from the rest. This is evident not only from not participating in wrong talk and activities or not going to wrong places, but also from praying and reading God’s Word. Daniel refused any compromise for himself and we must do so as well.

Daniel kneels on his knees. His attitude is in line with what he does. He could also have done it standing or walking, so that no one would notice that he was praying. He does not adjust his prayer attitude so as not to be noticed. Nor does he change the times of his prayers. As always he prays three times a day, perhaps following the example of David (Psa 55:17). For example, he will not pray at night during those thirty days, so as not to be seen.

There is another important aspect to Daniel’s prayer and that is that he does not pray before the eyes of the people, but before the eyes of God. People are allowed to see him pray. But he does not do it for the people, but for God. With the Pharisees it is different. They pray to be seen by men (Mt 6:5), ignoring the fact that God does not pay attention to their prayer, yes, their prayer is even an abomination to Him. Instead of praise from people, Daniel is confronted with the enmity of people. This proves the genuineness of his prayer. Any hypocrisy is alien to it. Our serving of God is only proven to be real when it takes place under the pressure of enmity.

Dan 6:11-13 | Charged

11 Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God. 12 Then they approached and spoke before the king

about the king's injunction, "Did you not sign an injunction that any man who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, is to be cast into the lions' den?" The king replied, "The statement is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked." 13 Then they answered and spoke before the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the injunction which you signed, but keeps making his petition three times a day."

The men know Daniel's habit and the times when he prays. They also know his character that he will remain true to it, whatever the consequences. Unanimously in their malicious plan they go to Daniel's house. They lurk, as it were, and perceive what they expect. There they find a praying and supplicating Daniel. Now they have what they want: a violation of the law enacted, because he is addressing someone other than Darius. Now they can charge and convict him. However, the indictment is not the result of a failure in his service to God, but rather the result of his faithful serving of his God. Their conspiracy succeeds because they rightly count on Daniel's consistent attitude in serving his God.

Maybe they have heard him pray and beg for mercy. If Daniel has indeed been aware that these people see and hear him, it will have only made his prayer and supplication more fervent. He makes "petition and supplication before his God". Whatever people can plan against him, above them he sees the face of God. That he makes petition and supplication means that he does not expect any possibility of salvation from himself. Nor does he appeal to any excellence that would be in him. To make petition and supplication means that he expects everything from God alone, without any merit of his own. To make petition and supplication excludes any *right* to be heard.

When the men have found that Daniel has just continued to pray, they immediately go to the king to accuse him. They don't waste any time. When they are with Darius, they first remind him by means of a question of the law he promulgated. They also point out the punishment for the offence. The king says that he has enacted that law and adds that the law is irrevocable.

Well, they have an offender. Triumphant they call the name: Daniel. They add that he is “one of the exiles from Judah”. With this they express their contempt for all who are out of Judah as exiles among them. As an accusation they say to Darius, that Daniel did not heed him, the king, nor the injunction he signed. In this way they try to work on his sense of honor (cf. Dan 3:12).

Dan 6:14-18 | Cast Into the Lions’ Den

14 Then, as soon as the king heard this statement, he was deeply distressed and set [his] mind on delivering Daniel; and even until sunset he kept exerting himself to rescue him. 15 Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, “Recognize, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or statute which the king establishes may be changed.” 16 Then the king gave orders, and Daniel was brought in and cast into the lions’ den. The king spoke and said to Daniel, “Your God whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you.” 17 A stone was brought and laid over the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signet rings of his nobles, so that nothing would be changed in regard to Daniel. 18 Then the king went off to his palace and spent the night fasting, and no entertainment was brought before him; and his sleep fled from him.

When Darius understands what is happening, how he fell into a trap, he blames himself. He tortures his brain for a solution if something could redeem Daniel. It is about something that can free him from his own laws. But that is impossible. The longer he thinks, the more it becomes clear how much he is a slave to his own laws. That makes the big man very weak at the same time. Nebuchadnezzar did not have such laws.

The men, with some contempt called “these men” (verse 15), not only keep an eye on Daniel, but they also keep an eye on Darius. They know his predilection for Daniel. They notice how much the king is looking for ways to free Daniel from the lions. But that will not happen. Hypocritically, they remind him that nothing should be changed about a law of the Medes and Persians. Then Darius can do nothing but cast Daniel into the lions’ den. Before he lets him be cast into it, he expresses his confidence that the God Who is constantly or persistently honored by Daniel will redeem him. At

the same time Darius confirms that Daniel did nothing to deserve the lion's den. He justifies Daniel before his prosecutors.

When Daniel is cast into the pit, a stone is placed on it that is sealed with the signet ring of the king and with the signet rings of his nobles. Daniel's fate is sealed in several ways and is immutable. Liberation from outside is impossible and inside death is present in all its horror. After this act, the king moves to his palace. The man who has set down that he must function as a god for thirty days has no rest. That is not because he receives so many requests from people, but because his conscience tortures him. He refuses to be distracted and he can't sleep. Thus the night passes for him.

There is a parallel to be drawn between Darius and Pilate. Just as Darius has been manipulated by his commissioners and satraps to kill Daniel, so the Jews manipulated Pilate to condemn and kill the Lord Jesus (Jn 19:12-16). Just as Darius seals the stone of the den, which is a grave for Daniel, so Pilate has secured and sealed the grave of the Lord Jesus (Mt 27:65-66). That Pilate washes his hands in innocence (Mt 27:24) does not wash away his sin. We don't read about Pilate that he had a sleepless night of it, but his wife had. Darius has no rest that night, just like Pilate's wife (Mt 27:19).

Dan 6:19-23 | Taken up Out of the Lions' Den

19 Then the king arose at dawn, at the break of day, and went in haste to the lions' den. 20 When he had come near the den to Daniel, he cried out with a troubled voice. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you constantly serve, been able to deliver you from the lions?" 21 Then Daniel spoke to the king, "O king, live forever! 22 My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths and they have not harmed me, inasmuch as I was found innocent before Him; and also toward you, O king, I have committed no crime." 23 Then the king was very pleased and gave orders for Daniel to be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den and no injury whatever was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

When early in the morning, Darius goes to the den, the grave of Daniel, it turns out that Daniel is still alive. Early in the morning it also appears that the Lord Jesus lives. Daniel is here a picture of the Lord Jesus in His res-

urrection. When the nations become aware of this, they will acknowledge that He has the rule. With Darius we see that in verses 25-27.

That Darius goes to the den and speaks to Daniel is quite special. Normally there is no reason to believe that Daniel would be alive. The punishment was not without reason to be thrown into the lions' den. It was impossible to imagine a more certain death. Yet Darius must have felt something of the power of the God of Daniel. He can only have this feeling through his contact with Daniel and what he may have learned about Him from other sources. He addresses Daniel several times as a worshiper and servant of God. He has seen in the life of Daniel Who God is and of what He is capable. Then it is inevitable that this God is also able to redeem Daniel from the lions.

At the king's request Daniel testifies that his God has sent His angel who has shut the lions' mouth (cf. Acts 12:11). We read more about the lion's mouth in Scripture. David rescued his sheep from the lions' mouth (1Sam 17:34-35). This is a picture of the Lord Jesus Who rescues his sheep from the lion's mouth, that is to say from the power of the devil, for he "prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1Pet 5:8). He cares about them (cf. Amos 3:12).

The Lord Jesus experienced the lion's mouth when He hangs on the cross and evil people slander Him: "They open wide their mouth at me, as a ravening and a roaring lion" (Psa 22:13). He asked His God to be saved from this: "Save me from the lion's mouth" (Psa 22:21a) and was answered: "You answer me" (Psa 22:21c). "He was heard because of His piety" (Heb 5:7). God has heard Him by raising Him from the dead. This is evident in the very rest of Psalm 22.

The fact that the Lord Jesus experienced the lion's mouth means that He entered into the circumstances of His own. What His own experience, He also experienced and therefore He can sympathize with them. His attitude in it is our example, for while He experienced the lion's mouth He relied upon the LORD, as is also said here of Daniel (verse 24). Paul also speaks about being "rescued out of the lion's mouth" (2Tim 4:17). He stands before the world ruler Nero, but is aware that the Lord stands with him. We

are also dealing with world rulers who increasingly show the character of roaring and destructive lions.

There is another aspect to the deliverance of Daniel from the lions. That other aspect is his faith. For we read of a faith by which believers “shut the mouths of lions” (Heb 11:33). In the midst of the lions, he had rest in his trust in God. In Psalm 57 we read how David sings of his experiences and talks about lying down “among lions” (Psa 57:4). Daniel had that faith and God responded to it by sending His angel. But Daniel does not boast of his faith towards Darius. Before Darius he honors God Who delivered him from the lions’ mouths.

Daniel says that his innocence is the reason that the lions did not harm him. This is also found when he is taken out of the den. This is the same as what has been found with the three friends when they come out of the furnace of blazing fire (Dan 3:27). He has done nothing against the LORD, nor against the king. This testimony of innocence and his being delivered from any injury will also be given by the faithful remnant of Israel. They can give that testimony because Christ, the true Innocent, has borne the guilt of the remnant.

Because Daniel was in the lion’s den, the requirement of the law has been met. Now he can be delivered from it again, taken up out of it. As said, that is a picture of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. He is risen because everything that the law demands of man is fulfilled in Him and through Him in His death. Therefore He could be raised up by God.

Dan 6:24 | The Enemies Cast Into the Lions’ Den

24 The king then gave orders, and they brought those men who had maliciously accused Daniel, and they cast them, their children and their wives into the lions’ den; and they had not reached the bottom of the den before the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.

When Daniel has been delivered from the den, it is time to judge his enemies. They have knowingly sought his downfall. Now they will be given their just punishment. They are cast into the den they had intended for another person. Here the word becomes true: “The righteous is delivered

from trouble, but the wicked takes his place" (Pro 11:8; 21:18). With the prosecutors, their wives and children are also cast before the lions.

Sin often has consequences not only for the perpetrator, but also for his family and relatives. The law states that children may not be killed because of the fathers' sins (Deu 24:16; 2Chr 25:4; Eze 18:20). However, this is not an event in Israel, but in a heathen country. If in Israel children die with their sinning father, as with Achan (Jos 7:24-25), it seems that somehow they have supported sin, by which they deserve the same judgment. But the father is the main responsible person and by his sin is the cause of the judgment that comes over other family members.

As soon as these people are cast into the lions' den, the lions attack them and crush them. This happens even before they have reached the bottom. It is clear from what is happening here that the lions have not attacked Daniel because they were not hungry. The pure voraciousness of the lions makes the miracle that they have not harmed Daniel even greater. From his enemies the lions crush all their bones.

The saying that whoever digs a pit for someone else falls into it himself (Psa 57:6b; 7:16; Pro 26:27; Ecc 10:8), applies not only to persons, but also to nations. For them it sounds prophetic in Psalm 9: "The nations have sunk down in the pit which they have made; in the net which they hid, their own foot has been caught. The LORD has made Himself known; He has executed judgment. In the work of his own hands the wicked is snared" (Psa 9:15-16). This psalm speaks of the deliverance of the God-fearing remnant in the end time. Then the wrath of God is poured out upon the enemies and they die in the trap they set. In the last verse quoted it is also about "the wicked", that is the antichrist. He also perishes in his own evil works.

Dan 6:25-27 | Darius' Decree

25 Then Darius the king wrote to all the peoples, nations and [men of every] language who were living in all the land: "May your peace abound! 26 I make a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel;

For He is the living God and enduring forever,

And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed,

And His dominion [will be] forever.

*27 "He delivers and rescues and performs signs and wonders
In heaven and on earth,*

Who has [also] delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."

The testimony Darius gives about God and His power goes beyond what Nebuchadnezzar has ever testified. Nebuchadnezzar bears personal witness of Him (Dan 2:47; 4:1-2), and has given his people only the command that no derogatory things should be said about God (Dan 3:29). But Darius commands that all peoples in his empire must fear and tremble before God, which means that everyone has to take account of Him in their lives. It is an appropriate testimony at the end of the historical chapters. What Darius says clearly applies to the kingdom of peace. He represents and is the mouth of the nations that will be in the realm of peace. They shall proclaim and praise the glory, honor, and majesty of God. Great respect fits towards that great and mighty and awesome God.

Again he calls God "the God of Daniel". Daniel is a picture of Israel's faithful remnant that will also pass through a time of great distress and will be delivered from it by God. The peoples and nations will bear witness to this, they will acknowledge that He is the redeeming and delivering God, He "Who has [also] delivered Daniel from the power of the lions". Darius also calls God "the living God". That is also an expression that goes far for a heathen monarch. Often God is so named to indicate the contrast with the dead idols.

He also acknowledges that the Being of God and His kingship are unchanging and eternally inviolable. No outside power can exercise any influence on His Being or His dominion. His power is so great, that He carries and leads the entire world dominion. In doing so, He does not lose sight of any of His own, not even the little ones and the few, but redeems and delivers them.

He does this with means which as signs and wonders refer to Him. He does these signs and wonders both in heaven and on earth. He is the sovereign Lord to Whom all things belong and Who has all things at His disposal to use them for His purpose. That these things are so, He has shown in the delivery of Daniel from the power [lit. hand or claw] of the lions.

The first thing a prey has to deal with is the lion's claws, only then does the lion's mouth come into play.

Dan 6:28 | Success of Daniel

28 So this Daniel enjoyed success in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

The last message in the historical chapters about Daniel is that he enjoys success in the reigns of the second world empire. But here too there is a prophetic picture. It is more than just a communication about Daniel's success. We have seen in the previous verses that Darius in his testimony of the God of Daniel, the living God, represents the hearts of the nations in the realm of peace.

The mentioning of Cyrus expands that image even further. We can see Cyrus as a picture of the Lord Jesus. What is said of him by the prophet Isaiah, at least reminds us of this. We read that the LORD says of him:

"[It is I] who says of Cyrus, '[He is] My shepherd!

And he will perform all My desire.'

And he declares of Jerusalem, 'She will be built,'

And of the temple, 'Your foundation will be laid'" (Isa 44:28).

Also the next verse about Cyrus strongly reminds us of the Lord Jesus:

"Thus says the LORD to Cyrus His anointed,

Whom I have taken by the right hand,

To subdue nations before him

And to loose the loins of kings;

To open doors before him so that gates will not be shut" (Isa 45:1).

Cyrus is called "My shepherd" and "His anointed" in these verses, names that remind us directly of the Lord Jesus. In addition, Cyrus was the tool in God's hand to deliver His people from the hand of Babylon. All in all, it seems justified to see in this last verse a picture of the kingdom of peace, where the faithful remnant will live in peace and prosperity under the blessed reign of the Messiah. The nations will rejoice in their peace and

prosperity and share in it. For everything honor and glory will go to God. He is the Processor and Maintainer of it.

Daniel 7

Introduction

Daniel 7 is the first chapter of the second part of the book. History is not continued, as we return to the first year of Belshazzar (verse 1). In this second part we have four visions, the first in Daniel 7, the second in Daniel 8, the third in the last part of Daniel 9 and the fourth in Daniel 10-12. They're all dated differently. They are about the further histories of the world empires and how the little people of God will experience in them. Daniel 7 and 9 are about the West, the empire of Western Europe, Daniel 8 and 10-12 about the East.

Dan 7:1 | The Dream and Visions of Daniel

1 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel saw a dream and visions in his mind [as he lay] on his bed; then he wrote the dream down [and] related the [following] summary of it.

Belshazzar is the last king of Babylon, as we have seen in Daniel 5. In the first year of his government Daniel gets a dream. In that dream he sees some visions. It is shown to him that the empire of Belshazzar, the Babylonian empire, will be destroyed. He also sees a second, third and even fourth empire. Those empires too will all perish. It also becomes clear from the dream that the eternal kingdom, that of the Lord Jesus, does not come during the Babylonian or Medo-Persian empire, not even during the third, but during the fourth empire, the Roman.

That there will be four empires that will all perish, has been already made clear to him in Daniel 2 in Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the statue. Here it is about the same four world empires. However, they are seen here from another perspective. What is new is that the vision is not shown to Nebuchadnezzar, but to Daniel. This time the empires are also not shown in the form of a statue that makes a great impression, with beautiful metals, as people like to see the empires.

Here God shows the empires, as He sees them, in their corrupt character, as unreasoning beasts. Beasts are beings without any recognition of God, beings who have no knowledge and understanding of Divine things. God also shows what these empires will do to His people when in their lack of understanding they turn against the saints. God wants to speak to our hearts through this. He wants to show that He knows the future and that He is above the empires and their striving. He knows how to use them for His purpose: the purification of His people.

As said, Daniel will not see one, but a few visions in this chapter. When we read the chapter, it turns out to be three. We see that three verses begin with the reference to a vision (verses 2,7,13) and that two times an interpretation follows (verses 16,23).

1. The first vision, starting in verse 2, is about the first three empires, represented by three beasts.
2. The second vision, from verse 7 onwards, is about the fourth beast or empire.
3. The third vision is found in verses 13-14 and is about the eternal kingdom or the kingdom of the Son of man.
4. From verse 16 the first interpretation follows and from verse 23 the second interpretation.

Daniel writes down the dream. He records what he has seen, that is to say, as he himself says, the “summary of it”. After having had his dream, he thought about it and considered what it means. That is what the LORD has given him in his thoughts. This has enabled him to write down everything that is important and makes the interpretation clear. So it has been preserved for the generations to come and also for us.

Dan 7:2-3 | The Origin of the Beasts

2 Daniel said, “I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. 3 And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another.

Daniel tells us that in his vision he saw four great beasts coming up from the great sea. The great sea represents the turbulent mass of the nations

(Isa 17:12). This picture shows that out of the sea of nations at that time, four world empires come up successively. The four winds indicate the spiritual powers behind this turbulence. They are the spiritual powers in the heavenly places.

The following verses describe the development of the four empires. Not many words are devoted to the first three empires. The fourth realm in contrast is described in detail.

Dan 7:4-6 | The First Three Beasts

4 The first [was] like a lion and had [the] wings of an eagle. I kept looking until its wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man; a human mind also was given to it. 5 And behold, another beast, a second one, resembling a bear. And it was raised up on one side, and three ribs [were] in its mouth between its teeth; and thus they said to it, 'Arise, devour much meat!' 6 After this I kept looking, and behold, another one, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird; the beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it.

The first empire appears in the form of a lion. This represents the Babylonian empire (Jer 50:17; 4:6-7,13; 49:19,22). The lion has wings of an eagle. This points to the enormous speed with which the beast attacks its prey. But these wings are also plucked. The rapid expansion of power is coming to an end. The fact that this empire is then compared with a human being shows that this empire is reduced to its true meaning. It is over with all power.

The second empire appears in the form of a bear. This represents the Medo-Persian empire. The two components of this empire is indicated by the peculiarity that "it was raised up on one side". That means that there is a predominant side in this two-party kingdom. These are the Persians. It is the Persian Cyrus who through his entire empire circulated a proclamation regarding the return of the Jews to Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1). The three ribs that the bear has in its mouth may be seen in three directions of the wind and the areas that lie there that are captured by the Medes and Persians (Dan 8:4). This empire has an insatiable hunger for more conquests. It is urged to do so by a power from outside.

The third empire is the Greek-Macedonian empire and appears in the form of a leopard. A leopard is an extraordinarily fast beast. It symbolizes the speed with which the emperor of the Greek-Macedonian empire, Alexander the Great, overwhelmed the previous empire. His government lasted only thirteen years, from 336-323 BC, but in that short time he conquered the entire Medo-Persian empire and many more outside. He is only thirty-three years old when he dies.

This leopard has four wings and four heads. This seems to indicate that Alexander was able to carry out his quick conquests thanks to the support of his four generals (four wings). After his death these four generals divide his empire between each other. The four heads represent these generals as the rulers who each gain authority over a quarter of the empire. Alexander is the head of the empire himself. Power is given to him.

Dan 7:7-8 | The Fourth Beast

7 After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. 8 While I was contemplating the horns, behold, another horn, a little one, came up among them, and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it; and behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth uttering great [boasts].

Finally, the fourth empire appears in the form of a terrifying beast. This characteristic of frightfulness is also mentioned in connection with the iron of the statue (Dan 2:31). This beast has no name. It has no resemblance to any of the beasts created by God. Daniel can only describe it. The description gives the impression that we are dealing with a machine that devours everything within its reach without any compassion.

It resembles a beast that only occurs in nightmares, but to which unscrupulous people today give shape in various computer games. All those who seek their amusement in games in which a monster swallows up and crushes everything, will less and less recognize the terrifying character of the monster that will appear on the world stage soon.

The monster has ten horns, which indicates that the empire consists of ten parts. The first empire is a unity, the second empire consists of two parts and the third empire is divided into four parts. However, the difference between the first three empires and the fourth empire is not only numerical. The difference is, above all, that this fourth empire in its history never consisted of ten parts, as in the previous empires there is unity or they consist of two or four parts. But as we have already seen in Daniel 2, that event will become a fact in the (near) future. We see the signs of it in the unification of Europe.

Daniel's attention is drawn by the horns. As he looks closely at them, he sees how, at the expense of three horns, an eleventh, little one, elevates himself above all the horns. As a special feature of this little horn he notes that it represents a human being. He perceives eyes as human eyes and a mouth full of boasting. The person portrayed in this horn is extremely astute and also very presumptuous in his use of language, particularly blaming God, Christ, and the believers.

Dan 7:9-12 | A Glimpse Into God's Court

9 *"I kept looking
Until thrones were set up,
And the Ancient of Days took [His] seat;
His vesture [was] like white snow
And the hair of His head like pure wool.
His throne [was] ablaze with flames,
Its wheels [were] a burning fire.*

10 *"A river of fire was flowing
And coming out from before Him;
Thousands upon thousands were attending Him,
And myriads upon myriads were standing before Him;
The court sat,
And the books were opened.*

11 *Then I kept looking because of the sound of the boastful words which the horn was speaking; I kept looking until the beast was slain, and its body was destroyed and given to the burning fire. 12 As for the rest of the beasts, their*

dominion was taken away, but an extension of life was granted to them for an appointed period of time.

Daniel also sees that “thrones” (pay attention to the plural!) are set up. A throne speaks of government, but also of justice. At that moment, Daniel, as an Old Testament believer, cannot be told who will take their place on these thrones. They are vaguely referred to by the term “court” (verse 10). In the light of the New Testament we know who this will be. The book of Revelation shows that on these thrones the believers of the Old Testament and New Testament will sit, represented in twenty-four elders (Rev 4:4; 20:4).

Daniel does see that on one particular throne Someone takes His seat, namely “the Ancient of Days”. ‘The Ancient of Days’ is God. The appearance and behavior, presented in the “vesture” of this Ancient of Days, indicate that He is perfectly pure and holy. His Person radiates impeccable and powerful respectability, which is given an extra accent by “the hair of His head” that is “like pure wool”. The description of the Ancient of Days corresponds to that of the Lord Jesus as the Son of Man (Rev 1:13-15). It is one of the many proofs in Scripture that the Lord Jesus is God.

The characteristics of the throne of the Ancient of Days indicate a consuming judgment that is exercised without any mitigation and without any resistance being possible. For the execution of the judgment countless angels are at His service. Before the judgment is carried out, proof of its fairness shall be provided. The books will be opened. These books contain a flawless record of the charges (cf. Rev 20:12). No one who is judged shall have any reason to question or contradict the reason for his conviction. No one shall have a reply (Mt 22:12).

The fact that there are wheels on the throne indicates that the government of God is dynamic. The fact that the wheels are of burning fire means that He judges iniquity. He is the acting God. God’s government is in motion, a movement that always goes forward. God has a purpose, He always works towards it. For this He leads the course of history and events. He is the One Who was and is, and also the One Who comes, in which we see Him acting (Rev 1:8).

The trial focuses on “the horn” that speaks “boastful words”. Those boastful words become the reason for his condemnation. They are the expression of a total rejection and slander of God. That is why the beast is slain. Note the change from horn to beast. The beast and the horn represent the same. The horn is the ruler, the beast is the revived Roman empire. In the horn we see the representative of that empire. After the beast is slain, its body is destroyed and thrown into the lake of fire. The fact that its body is destroyed does not mean that this person ceases to exist, for as the first living being, the beast, along with the false prophet, ends up in hell (Rev 19:20).

With this judgment of the beast and the fourth empire, the rule of the other empires is also taken away. The other empires did not exist anymore as world empire. They were included in the next empires. That is to say, they had not fully ceased to exist. They still existed as empires, but without (world) rule. God has set the time of each empire.

In the end time, the times in which we live, we see that these empires take their place on the world stage again. In today’s Iraq, the former Babylon revives, Iran is the former Persia and Greece speaks for itself.

Dan 7:13-14 | The Son of Man and His Dominion

*13 “I kept looking in the night visions,
And behold, with the clouds of heaven
One like a Son of Man was coming,
And He came up to the Ancient of Days
And was presented before Him.*

*14 “And to Him was given dominion,
Glory and a kingdom,
That all the peoples, nations and [men of every] language
Might serve Him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
Which will not pass away;
And His kingdom is one
Which will not be destroyed.*

Daniel continues to look on tensely. He perceives a new phenomenon, or rather a new appearance, which he describes as "One like a Son of Man". This Person is none other than the Lord Jesus. In the Gospels the Lord Jesus regularly calls Himself 'Son of man'. When He says to the Council: "Nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN", this becomes the reason for the chief priests and scriptures to condemn Him: "He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? ... He deserves death!" (Mt 26:64-66).

These corrupt leaders of the people know only too well that He cites Daniel 7 (Dan 7:13). That means to them – and rightly so! – that He declares Himself to be the Son of God. But their depravity is evident from this, that they condemn Him on the basis of this testimony. That is, the Lord Jesus is condemned for bearing witness concerning the truth of His own Person.

That in Daniel 7 with the Son of Man God Himself is meant, we also see in His "coming on the clouds of heaven". Often in the Old Testament, the coming of God unto His people, or unto any other people, is accompanied by clouds (Exo 13:21; Deu 33:26; Isa 19:1). That He shows Himself from and surrounds Himself with clouds, enlarges the impression of His majesty.

If then the Son of man is God Himself, how can He come to the Ancient of Days, Who is undeniably also God, and receive the kingdom from His hands? Surely God cannot come to God to receive something, can He? Here we have a mystery that cannot be explained by human logic. This has to do with the inexplicable wonder of Christ in the glory of His Person since He became Man. He has become Man, yet without ceasing to be God.

The Gospels are full of evidence of the incomprehensibility of His Person. An example: He Who as a true Man is asleep because He is tired, aboard a ship, appears, when He is awakened by frightened disciples, to be the true and almighty God, Who silences the winds and waves with a word of power (Mk 4:38-39). The attentive reader of the Gospels will be able to add to this example many others. As for this secrecy concerning His Person, the Lord Jesus says: "No one knows the Son except the Father" (Mt 11:27a). What people cannot explain, we can believe and worship.

After killing the little horn, the fourth beast, and ending the reign of the other beasts, the way is clear for a totally different kingdom with a totally different Ruler. The fifth kingdom, and He Who is to be in charge thereof, is announced. The Ruler over that kingdom is different to all previous rulers and is characterized by two things. He is in the first place Someone to Whom God, because of the *dignity* of His Person, gives dominion and honor and royal power. But not only is He *worthy*, He is in the second place also *able* to rule over all nations. God subdues all nations to Him (Psa 8:6).

Not only His Person, but also His dominion has characteristics that fully differ from previous dominions. Thus His dominion is not limited to just one part of the earth, no matter how large that part might be, but He rules over the whole earth and in heaven. To Him “is given all power in heaven and on earth” (Mt 28:18). Another characteristic of His dominion is that it is an eternal dominion. In the exercise of His government He will not fail. No one will resist Him. There will be no reason to do so. His government will be a blessing to the whole world. In all respects, His reign is an enormous contrast to any previous human government!

Dan 7:15-16 | Daniel Wants to Know the Exact Meaning

15 “As for me, Daniel, my spirit was distressed within me, and the visions in my mind kept alarming me. 16 I approached one of those who were standing by and began asking him the exact meaning of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things:

What Daniel saw did not leave him unmoved. We may ask ourselves the question: “Does it bother me if the Lord shows me how things will be in the future?” If Daniel doesn’t even know the meaning, it already makes a big impression. If he also knows it, all the color disappears from his face (verse 28). The things of God do not primarily appeal to our intellect, but to our heart and conscience. God wants His communications to bring about something in us.

Daniel is distressed by what he has seen. He does not understand what it all means, but he does understand that it comes from God and that it has a meaning. He wants to know the exact meaning. Asking questions makes you wise, but we only get answers if we ask our questions in the

right mind. God does not answer if we doubt the correctness of His Word. We get an answer when we acknowledge that we ourselves are not able to explain the meaning of His Word. This is the attitude we see in Daniel.

Daniel goes to someone – who is vaguely described, but it must be an angel – to ask for the interpretation. In the interpretation an element emerges that was not present in the vision, namely the saints of the Highest One. God’s people are involved in it.

Dan 7:17-18 | A First Interpretation

17 ‘These great beasts, which are four [in number], are four kings [who] will arise from the earth. 18 But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come.’

The explanation of the four beasts is simple. They represent four kings arising from the earth. In verse 3 it says that they arise from the sea. The interpretation confirms that the sea represents the sea of the nations. These are nations on earth who, like the sea, are in great turmoil. There is no peace and quiet. The angel speaks about the earth to show the contrast with the saints of the Highest One who are in heaven. The fact that the earth is spoken of here as the origin of these four kings or kingdoms, also makes the contrast with the fifth kingdom clear that will come after those four. That fifth kingdom comes from heaven and is governed by a heavenly government.

In the expression “the saints of the Highest One” we have a clue with reference to the saints of the Old Testament in their condition after death. It is possible that Paul thinks of these saints when he speaks of “the heavenly [places]” five times in the letter to the Ephesians (Eph 1:3,20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12). He can speak about what is in heaven. There are saints in the heavenly places. They will arise at the rapture of the church and at the appearing of the Lord Jesus reign with Him for a thousand years. They don’t miss the kingdom. They experience it from the heavenly side.

In the interpretation Daniel is then told something that does not directly refer to something from his dream. In the dream Daniel saw how the Son of Man receives the reign. This is not said here in the interpretation. Instead, it is said that the “saints of the Highest One” receive the king-

ship. These saints are the believers who have committed their hearts to the LORD. They will have to suffer a lot, but they will also receive the kingdom, they will have a part in it. They enter the kingdom of peace of the Messiah. This significant addition means that the Lord Jesus will have co-rulers in His future reign.

Dan 7:19-22 | What Is the Meaning of the Fourth Beast?

19 "Then I desired to know the exact meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its claws of bronze, [and which] devoured, crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet, 20 and [the meaning] of the ten horns that [were] on its head and the other [horn] which came up, and before which three [of them] fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth uttering great [boasts] and which was larger in appearance than its associates. 21 I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them 22 until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom.

Before more is said about the reign of the saints, Daniel wants to know the true meaning of the fourth beast, of the ten horns, and of the little horn. His full interest goes to these extraordinary appearances with their special characteristics. For the other three beasts he doesn't seem to have much attention. But what he saw in connection with the fourth beast made a deep impression on him. He once again mentions in detail its horrific characteristics.

It therefore appeals to him so much because he sees how the little horn fights against the saints. These are the saints on earth, of course not those in heaven. We have already seen in the explanation of verses 7-8 that the little horn represents the mighty ruler of the restored Roman empire. This ruler aims his enmity against the saints of the people of God. The saints will be killed by the little horn.

But his success lasts as long as God allows it. There is talk of an "until" (verse 22). The boundary is reached when the Ancient of Days, that is the Lord Jesus, comes. He comes to do justice to "the saints of the Highest One" who have been persecuted and killed by the little horn. At first it

seemed as if they were the losers. Now comes the moment of truth. God reveals the law. God openly corrects the great injustice that has been done to them. The “saints” take “possession of the kingdom”, which means that the once persecuted ones, now become the rulers. They receive a kingdom, that is to say they have royal dominion and reign together with the Lord Jesus in the kingdom of peace.

This seems to contradict verses 13-14. We saw there that the kingdom is given to the Lord Jesus, while here we see that the kingdom is given to the saints. The solution is that the saints of the Highest One are glorified saints who together with the Lord Jesus will reign over the universe. These saints are the believers of the church, the believers of the Old Testament and the believers who will be on earth during the seventh week of years after the rapture of the church.

In that government with Christ there is a distinction between the believers of the church and the other believers. The believers of the church will reign in the closest connection with Christ as His body (Eph 1:10,22-23). The other believers will sit on thrones with royal authority and rule the earth as representatives of the great King (Rev 20:4).

Dan 7:23-26 | The Meaning of the Fourth Beast

23 “Thus he said: ‘The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the [other] kingdoms and will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it. 24 As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings. 25 He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time. 26 But the court will sit [for judgment], and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever.

In the interpretation, the characteristics of the fourth beast are first listed again. The fourth beast is the fourth kingdom, which is the restored Western Roman empire, or the united Europe. In the ten horns on its one head we see on the one hand the unity of the empire represented which on the

other hand consists of ten separate empires. No empire is as violent as this empire.

Then another horn arises. As the fourth empire differs from the previous empires, so does the last horn differ from the ten horns. The ten states, represented in the ten horns, will voluntarily give all their power in the hand of a single ruler, that is the little horn. That is the difference with the previous empires, all of which were created by subjugation of the peoples. The difference between the little horn and the ten is that he will eliminate three and possess an unprecedented power that he will exercise in unparalleled wickedness.

With this power he will turn in a satanic way against God and His people who are then on earth. He can only do something against God with his mouth. Because he cannot reach God with his deeds, he will with satanic pleasure persecute all those who belong to God to destroy them and thereby also provoke God. For this purpose, he will make alterations in times and in law in a way that will make service to the true God impossible. This shows that it is not about the church, for the service of the church to God is not governed by times and laws, but is a service in spirit and truth (Jn 4:21-24). Moreover, the church is already in heaven.

Also this end time fact of the change of times and laws casts its shadow forward. We can apply it to the voices that are becoming louder and louder in our days to banish everything that reminds us of God and Christ from society. Intolerance against all that is Christian is growing more and more.

Because God allows it, the little horn will be able to turn against all those who stand in his way, especially those who want to serve God. For this he gets a certain, but limited time span. God determines the boundary (cf. Job 1:12a; 2:6). This is indicated here by "a time, times, and half a time". This period, also known as the time of the "great tribulation" (Mt 24:21; Rev 7:14) or a "time of distress" (Dan 12:1; Jer 30:7), lasts three and a half years. This is expressed in the terms used, where 'a time' stands for one year, 'times' for two years, and 'half a time' for half a year (cf. Dan 9:27; 12:7; Rev 11:2-3; 12:6,14; 13:5).

Finally, Daniel is informed with remarkable clarity and without any fuss of words of the end of the reign of this anti-godly person. Nothing remains

of all his boasting and all his power. This paves the way for the introduction of an empire that is completely different, both in terms of its ruler and in terms of its rule.

Dan 7:27 | The Everlasting Kingdom

27 Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of [all] the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom [will be] an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.'

The bragging of the presumptuous little horn, the boasting fourth world ruler, is silenced. Now it is the turn of “the people of the saints of the Highest One”. Those who have suffered so much and waited so long will receive “the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of [all] the kingdoms under the whole heaven”. What a compensation for all the injustice suffered! What a reward for patience. What a blessing from God for their trust in Him.

God fulfils His promises. He keeps His pledges. He does so in an overwhelming way. His people will have the promised dominion over the earth. His people will be the center of blessing and the means by which the whole earth will be blessed. All nations will honor His people for it. All contempt is over and forgotten.

As noted in verse 18, we hear of the rule of the saints and not the rule of the Son of man. That does not mean, however, that the reign of the saints is separate from that of the Son of man. At the end of this verse is spoken of “His kingdom”, which is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus. Only because it is *His* kingdom, it is an everlasting kingdom. All who have been given dominion by Him will honor and obey Him. If His people rule, it is through Him. He gives His directions, He is the sovereign Ruler. He is the true source of blessing. All that His people give as a blessing to others is the passing on of the blessing that comes from Him. How great is He! He is worth all honor and worship.

It is still important to point out that the full meaning of this verse only becomes clear to us in the light of the New Testament. There is talk of a reign of Christ together with His saints (2Tim 2:12; Rev 2:26; 3:21; 5:10; 20:4).

There is not a single blessing imaginable that a believer will enjoy apart from Christ. Every blessing that a believer has, he owes to Christ and he can only really enjoy it in fellowship with Him.

This applies in a special way to the church. She is the New Testament people of God. Every member of the church is blessed “with all spiritual blessing in the heavenly [places] in Christ” (Eph 1:3). The church is made one with Christ like a head and a body being one (Eph 1:22-23). One of her special blessings arising from her unification with Him is that she may reign with Him (Eph 1:10-11). When He rules, she rules as it were automatically with Him. There is no other way. How could the Head reign without the body reigning?

Dan 7:28 | The Effect of the Interpretation

28 *“At this point the revelation ended. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts were greatly alarming me and my face grew pale, but I kept the matter to myself.”*

All that Daniel has come to know, he keeps in his heart. For him it is not theoretical knowledge, not scientific niceness, but he is closely involved in everything, it pervades his being. If Daniel already has such an overwhelming impression of the things concerning God’s earthly people, what impression should it make on us who are so much better acquainted with the Lord Jesus? The history revolves around Christ and His people. His future and our connection with Him in it should impress us deeply and determine our vision of world history and our lives.

It is about keeping these things in our hearts and making it visible in our lives that we have understood what God has shown about the future of the world, of His Son and of His own.

Daniel 8

Introduction

From Daniel 8 until the end of the book, the description of the events is again in Hebrew. The part from Daniel 2:4 up to and including Daniel 7 is written in Aramaic, the language of the first great empire. This change will have to do with the content of the following chapters. In the description of these events it is mainly about the consequences these events have for Israel, that is called “the Beautiful [Land]” (Dan 8:9). They also concern God and “the place of His sanctuary”, which is the temple (verse 11). Israel is the land on which God’s eyes are day and night (Deu 11:12; 1Kgs 9:3).

Daniel 8 is about the second and third empire, that is to say the world empire of the Medes and Persians and the Greek world empire. In Daniel 7 these empires are presented as a bear and a leopard. Here they are presented as a ram and a goat. The bear and leopard are predators, they devour, they are impure beasts. Rams and goats are pure animals. They could be eaten in Israel and were also used for the sacrificial service.

The world empires are unclean powers that devour horribly. Yet there is also an aspect in those world empires that makes it possible to compare them to a ram and a goat, which indicates that they are a pleasure to God. For they accomplish the pleasure of God by doing His work. That work consists of executing His judgment, first and foremost on His people, but then also on the people who executed His judgment, because this people went beyond God’s will.

Cyrus, the head of the Medo-Persian empire, is called the “anointed” of God (Isa 45:1a). He is the executer of God’s discipline, and he also cares for His people. We also find this in the book of Zechariah where the black horses that go north make the Spirit of God rest, that is, they do His pleasure (Zec 6:6-8). So in this chapter the goat is a pleasure to God if he destroys the ram. But he loses this pleasure when he exalts himself.

Dan 8:1-2 | Time and Place of the Vision

1 In the third year of the reign of Belshazzar the king a vision appeared to me, Daniel, subsequent to the one which appeared to me previously. 2 I looked in the vision, and while I was looking I was in the citadel of Susa, which is in the province of Elam; and I looked in the vision and I myself was beside the Ulai Canal.

When Daniel gets the vision, he is still under the reign of the ruler of Babylon, while the vision is about the judgment of the Medes and Persians through the Greeks. So he sees in advance that the second empire is conquered by the third empire. The vision he gets is in line with the previous one, that of the four world empires in the previous chapter. That was two years ago (Dan 7:1), but he still remembers it well. Of those four empires, the second and the third empire, that are the empires of the Medes and Persians and of Greece, are now highlighted (verses 20-21).

When Daniel sees the vision, he is not in Babylon, but in the citadel of Susa, in the province of Elam. Susa is the capital of the province of Elam, which must have been located west of Persia, east of Babylon and south of the Medes. In the vision Daniel is beside the Ulai Canal. Other visions are also connected to a river (Dan 10:4; Eze 1:1; Psa 137:1). Here the Ulai Canal is the place where Daniel sees the ram.

Dan 8:3-4 | The Ram and its Performance

3 Then I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a ram which had two horns was standing in front of the canal. Now the two horns [were] long, but one [was] longer than the other, with the longer one coming up last. 4 I saw the ram butting westward, northward, and southward, and no [other] beasts could stand before him nor was there anyone to rescue from his power, but he did as he pleased and magnified [himself].

In the vision Daniel is an attentive spectator. He is not passive, but involved. That is clear from the remark "I lifted my eyes". He sees a ram which has two horns standing in front of the canal. A horn is a picture of power. If a horn is broken, it means the end of power. He also sees that both horns are long, that there is a difference in length, and that the length

of one changes with respect to the other. We have also seen this with the bear, which is raised up on one side (Dan 7:5).

We do not have to guess for the meaning of the ram. In verse 20 is the explanation: the ram with the two horns “are the kings of Media and Persia”. It is one ram with two horns. This suggests that it is one empire, with two distinct powers.

I have been in uncertainty about the statement of “one [was] longer than the other, with the longer one coming up last”. I asked Gerard Kramer if he could help me. I know him as a reliable and competent Bible interpreter and historian, and I consult him more often. I am happy to pass on the clarification from his reply, which has given me the requested clarification:

The Medes and the Persians have lived in the same area for centuries. First the Medes dominated that area and later the Persians. But both of them stayed to live there; the roles were literally reversed, however. The last king of the Medes, Astyages, had to his sorrow only a daughter, called Mandane. He deliberately married her to a Persian, called Cambyses, to prevent that a possible descendant (his grandson) could assert rights on the Medes’ throne. The descendant came; it was the later Cyrus – who at first would have been called differently. This boy was considered a Persian – because his father Cambyses was a Persian – and was also a foundling, so that he knew nothing of his royal ancestry. However, when he was an adult, his identity came to light and he rebelled against his grandfather Astyages; he won, and thus became the first Persian king. The empire of the Medes was now replaced by the Persian empire.

In this Persian empire, ruled by the Persian kings, Medo vassal princes could occasionally be placed over certain areas to rule. Such a person was Darius the Mede. He “received the kingdom” at the age of 62, says Dn5:31 – according to some this expression indicates receiving the kingdom from a higher authority – in this case the Persian king Cyrus. Indeed he ruled, according to Dn9:1, over the Babylonian part. However, Cyrus was not first the most powerful, but permanently the most powerful: he ruled over the entire Persian empire, as did his successors. After that there was no Medo empire anymore. Alexander the Great put an end to the Persian empire.

By the way, the Greeks, who fought 100 years prior to Alexander the Great against the Persians, always referred to these wars as the Medo wars, although they fought against two Persian kings; however, we refer to them as the Persian wars. I am only telling this to show that the Medes are always a recognizable constant factor in the empire dominated by the Persians. [End of quotation.]

In short, it comes down to the fact that the moment the Medes and Persians are given world domination, the Persians are in power, with Cyrus at the head (Ezra 1:2a). That is the moment when, to say it with the words of Daniel 7, the bear rises up on one side (Dan 7:5), or to say it with the words of Daniel 8, one horn is longer than the other (Dan 8:3).

The ram, the Medo-Persian empire, was first very powerful. It exercised its power against Babylon, Syria, Greece and Asia Minor in the west, against the Lydians, Armenians and Scythians in the north and against Israel, Arabia, Ethiopia and Egypt in the south. This kingdom itself came from the east (Isa 46:11a; 41:2). These three winds with the areas in them are possibly the three ribs in the mouth of the bear (Dan 7:5). His power was so great that no one could hold out or free himself from his power. In all his conquests there was no thought of God. He acted only out of self-interest and seemed to succeed in his intention. He rose in power.

Dan 8:5-7 | The Goat and the Ram

5 While I was observing, behold, a male goat was coming from the west over the surface of the whole earth without touching the ground; and the goat [had] a conspicuous horn between his eyes. 6 He came up to the ram that had the two horns, which I had seen standing in front of the canal, and rushed at him in his mighty wrath. 7 I saw him come beside the ram, and he was enraged at him; and he struck the ram and shattered his two horns, and the ram had no strength to withstand him. So he hurled him to the ground and trampled on him, and there was none to rescue the ram from his power.

What Daniel sees, fascinates him very much. His attention does not slacken. He keeps observing and sees a male goat coming. He notices that the male goat comes from the west. Here too we do not have to guess who

the ram represents. It is according to verse 21 Greece. Greece lies west of Persia.

From the west, Alexander stormed into the mighty Medo-Persian empire at enormous speed. It is proposed here that he, as it were with a giant leap, without touching the earth, attacks the second world empire. His punching power is so great, that he shatters the “two horns” of this empire. That means that both realms of the Medes and Persians are made completely powerless. In this powerless state, Greece trampled this empire underfoot, leaving nothing remaining of it.

The power that Greece, led by Alexander, exercises is irresistible. There is no one in the once mighty second world empire who is powerful enough to launch a counteroffensive. Nor are there any friendly empires or allies to come to his aid. Alexander crushes the Medo-Persian empire in two wars. The power of Greece is absolute and world-wide. The execution of judgment over the Medo-Persian empire is according to God’s pleasure. The destroyer, the Medo-Persian empire, is now being destroyed himself (Isa 33:1b). Alexander has no awareness of it, but he is a tool in God’s hand to exercise judgment.

Dan 8:8 | The Large Horn and the Four Horns

8 Then the male goat magnified [himself] exceedingly. But as soon as he was mighty, the large horn was broken; and in its place there came up four conspicuous [horns] toward the four winds of heaven.

When Greece has the power, that empire grows larger and larger. This is not only about the size of his area, but also about his arrogance. In his arrogance he has Greek culture imported into the conquered areas, including Judea. This entering of Greek culture into its entire empire is sometimes called ‘Hellenizing’, after the formal name for Greece, Hellas.

Then comes the moment that “the large horn”, that is Alexander the Great, is broken. This means that he dies. It is known from non-biblical history that he started war at the age of twenty. When he is thirty-two or thirty-three years old, he “magnified [himself] exceedingly”. He is in the power of his life and at the height of his fame. Suddenly, however, Alexander

dies. He is not killed in war. His death has been attributed to a sudden fever.

Because Alexander has no son, his empire is divided among his four generals, all of whom gain power over a part of the great empire. They are represented in the four conspicuous horns. These four horns have the same meaning as the four heads of the leopard in the vision Daniel saw in the previous chapter (Dan 7:6; 11:4).

The four areas are divided among the four generals as follows:

1. Seleucus got Syria in the east,
2. Lysimachus got Asia Minor in the north,
3. Ptolemy got Egypt in the south and
4. Cassander got Macedonia in the west.

Dan 8:9-12 | The Small Horn

9 Out of one of them came forth a rather small horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Beautiful [Land]. 10 It grew up to the host of heaven and caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the earth, and it trampled them down. 11 It even magnified [itself] to be equal with the Commander of the host; and it removed the regular sacrifice from Him, and the place of His sanctuary was thrown down. 12 And on account of transgression the host will be given over [to the horn] along with the regular sacrifice; and it will fling truth to the ground and perform [its will] and prosper.

The small horn that appears should not be confused with the little horn from the previous chapter (Dan 7:8). The small horn here belongs to the ram and therefore comes from the third empire; the little horn from the previous chapter comes from the fourth empire. Nor is it here a horn that is given an independent place by exterminating three horns, but this horn originates from one of the four horns.

That means, that one of the four empires rises above the other empires and draws power to itself. Non-biblical history shows that it is the Syrian part of the empire of Alexander the Great. Nothing is said about when this will happen. With this small horn we will have to think of Antiochus

Epiphanes. So much is known about him in history, that there seems to be no doubt about it.

This Antiochus Epiphanes grows exceedingly great. In his lust for power he extends toward the south, Egypt, toward the east, Persia, and toward “the Beautiful [land]”, Israel. This is where God’s land and people come into view, and that is what prophecy in particular is all about. The “stars” are leaders and rulers of the people. Of one of them, Eleazar, an old man, is known that Antiochus kills him because the old man does not want to eat pig meat. That’s how he tramples many down. He also magnifies himself to be equal with “the Commander of the host”, that is with God.

He shows his horror of God by taking away the regular sacrifice, that is to say the morning and evening burnt offering. God has commanded that these sacrifices should be offered on His altar every day and that He dwells among His people on the basis of these two sacrifices (Exo 29:38-46). Antiochus forbids bringing these sacrifices. In fact, God is taken away from the people. Also “the place of His sanctuary” is thrown down. Antiochus does not burn and destroy the temple, but he desecrates it by making it a temple for Jupiter Olympus and placing its statue in it. He also flings the truth to the ground; he tramples the word of truth, which is the book of the law. He does what he can to destroy it completely, so that it will be lost and forgotten forever.

In all that the wicked Antiochus does, he is prosperous. He succeeds. Thus, the service of God seems to have ended. No more sacrifices can be made, the temple is desecrated, the book of the law rejected. God seems to be the loser. But Antiochus would never have succeeded if God had not allowed it. He would not have had any power against Israel if he had not been given it from above (cf. Jn 19:11). It all happens under the permission and rule of God.

Antiochus is used to bring God’s people into this misery “on account of transgression”. Because of the rebellion of God’s people against God, because of the apostasy of His people from Him, a self-willed sacrificial service is instituted as a substitute for the true service to the true God. The true service to God has been pushed aside by the Jewish people. Now the judgment comes by replacing the true service by religion of the Greek

main god Zeus. If the beautiful land and all its beautiful things have been destroyed, it must be acknowledged that the cause of this destruction is sin. "Who gave Jacob up for spoil, and Israel to plunderers? Was it not the LORD, against whom we have sinned, and in whose ways they were not willing to walk, and whose law they did not obey?" (Isa 42:24).

The great apostasy of the Jews after the exile consists of contempt and desecration of the holy things, a contempt for the service of God. This is expressed by offering the lame and the sick beasts as a sacrifice. In this way they say that they find the LORD's table despicable (Mic 1:7-8). Therefore God sends Antiochus to take away the regular sacrifice and to throw down His holy dwelling. And so it can be said he could "perform [his will] and prosper".

Dan 8:13-14 | How Long?

13 Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to that particular one who was speaking, "How long will the vision [about] the regular sacrifice apply, while the transgression causes horror, so as to allow both the holy place and the host to be trampled?" 14 He said to me, "For 2,300 evenings [and] mornings; then the holy place will be properly restored."

After Daniel has seen the performance of the male goat and especially that of the small horn, he hears "a holy one" speaking. This turns out to be "that particular one". It seems that we have to do with the Lord Jesus again here. We are not told what He has said. Then we hear another holy one, probably an angel, asking Him a question. The question is "how long" the devastating activities of the small horn will last. The angel repeats the activities mentioned in the previous verses. This question is asked because of the suffering that the saints endure because the service to God has been taken away. How long will the regular sacrifice remain taken away, how long will God not receive His daily sacrifice? How long will the apostasy last?

Remarkably, the answer is not given to the angel, but to Daniel. It is therefore indeed the answer to the question of his heart. He is the type of the faithful remnant of Israel that will ask that question in the end time if they

resist the oppression that the antichrist, of whom Antiochus is in certain respects a picture, brings upon them.

The duration of the taken away sacrifice is not given in days – 1150 days – but in evenings and mornings. This has to do with the daily morning and evening burnt offering (Exo 29:38-41), whose fragrance must constantly rise to God and on the basis of which He can dwell among His people. God counts according to the sacrifices that are withheld from Him. The 2300 evenings and mornings mean as many burnt offerings are withheld from God.

God counts the time of trial of His people in days. Thus the Lord Jesus, when He speaks of a great tribulation, speaks of “those days” (Mt 24:21-22; cf. Rev 2:10). However, those days are coming to an end. After its expiry, the holy temple will be cleansed and the people will be able to bring the prescribed sacrifices again. Although God in His righteousness can allow His sanctuary to be desecrated for a time, He will also ensure that His sanctuary is purified in His time.

Dan 8:15-18 | Understanding the Vision

15 When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it; and behold, standing before me was one who looked like a man. 16 And I heard the voice of a man between [the banks of] Ulai, and he called out and said, “Gabriel, give this [man] an understanding of the vision.” 17 So he came near to where I was standing, and when he came I was frightened and fell on my face; but he said to me, “Son of man, understand that the vision pertains to the time of the end.” 18 Now while he was talking with me, I sank into a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me and made me stand upright.

Daniel is not only a spectator. He experiences what he sees. He tries to understand what he sees in the vision. Then he sees someone “who looked like a man” before him and he hears a voice. It is the voice of a Man. He hears the voice “between [the banks of] Ulai”, which suggests that the Person is floating over the water. The Man of Whom he hears the voice is the Lord Jesus. He speaks to the angel Gabriel who Daniel sees standing before him.

Gabriel is commissioned by the Lord Jesus to let Daniel understand the vision. Gabriel changes place and stands next to Daniel. By entering that place he looks in the same direction together with Daniel. From this position he will tell him the meaning of the vision. But Daniel is first overpowered by fear and throws himself on the ground with his face down. He, as a sinful and mortal man, cannot bear the presence of this holy and powerful angel who brings God's presence so close to him.

When Daniel lies thus on the ground, Gabriel says to him that he must understand "that the vision pertains to the time of the end". Gabriel addresses Daniel as a "son of man", emphasizing Daniel's humanity. That's contrary to what he has seen because that comes from heaven. He also depends on a messenger from heaven for its explanation. The expression "the time of the end" refers to the last days just before the coming of the Lord Jesus to earth. The explanation goes beyond the vision. It is not only about what is already history for us, but there is also a prophetic meaning for the future.

It's all too much for Daniel. He falls asleep. This is not because of the lack of interest for the vision, or because of indifference, but because of the weakness and bewilderment of his mind. He wants to stay awake, but can't. His powers are exhausted (cf. Dan 10:9). Then Gabriel touches him. This means he gives Daniel the strength to stand up. Then he gives him the place he has taken first. That is the place where Gabriel stood next to him.

Dan 8:19-25 | The Interpretation of the Vision

19 He said, "Behold, I am going to let you know what will occur at the final period of the indignation, for [it] pertains to the appointed time of the end. 20 The ram which you saw with the two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia. 21 The shaggy goat [represents] the kingdom of Greece, and the large horn that is between his eyes is the first king. 22 The broken [horn] and the four [horns that] arose in its place [represent] four kingdoms [which] will arise from [his] nation, although not with his power.

*23 "In the latter period of their rule,
When the transgressors have run [their course],
A king will arise,
Insolent and skilled in intrigue.*

24 *“His power will be mighty, but not by his [own] power,
And he will destroy to an extraordinary degree
And prosper and perform [his will];
He will destroy mighty men and the holy people.*
25 *“And through his shrewdness
He will cause deceit to succeed by his influence;
And he will magnify [himself] in his heart,
And he will destroy many while [they are] at ease.
He will even oppose the Prince of princes,
But he will be broken without human agency.*

Gabriel introduces his interpretation with the promise that he will let Daniel know “what will occur at the final period of the indignation”. The application and interpretation is therefore about the end time. It is called here the “period of indignation”. The expression “indignation” is used in Isaiah for the indignation of God upon His people who have turned away from Him, following the antichrist (Isa 10:25; 26:20). It is the time of great tribulation.

The fact that it is about the time of the end means that the explanation goes beyond the immediate or near future. The near future is about the conquest by the Greeks of the empire of the Medes and Persians. We see this in the meaning of the ram and the male goat. What these represent, is clearly said. We also hear about the one large horn and the four horns that replace it. The first king is Alexander. Upon his death, his kingdom was divided among his four generals. This division also means the end of the power of the Greek empire. None of the four parts had the power Alexander had.

When the four kings are at the end of their power, an “insolent” king will arise. That is the small horn, or the earlier mentioned Antiochus Epiphanes. The reason for his rise is not primarily the approaching end of the kingship of the four kings, but the behavior of the apostates. It concerns the apostates of God’s people. There comes a moment when the degenerate Jews have made full the measure of their iniquity (cf. Mt 23:32; Gen 15:16; 1Thes 2:16). That is the moment when they are ripe for the destruction that God will bring upon them through Antiochus as a discipline. Besides his insolent deeds, this king is also “skilled in intrigue”, which indicates the

corruptness of his character. He achieves his goals by exercising a reign of terror and the use of lies and deceit.

The great power he develops he does not possess by himself: "His power will be mighty, but not by his [own] power." He owes his strength to another power. By this other power he is strong and he succeeds in his pursuit of causing destruction. It can't be otherwise but if someone who takes pleasure in causing destruction is an instrument of the devil. The remark "that he will destroy to an extraordinary degree" also shows this. Someone of whom you do not expect to be so powerful and yet to be so, has help from the realm of darkness. He has sold his soul to the devil who rewards him with 'power'. To this aim, the devil uses Russia, the mighty empire in the far north (Eze 38:2-6,14-16; 39:1-2).

The fact that the driving force behind Antiochus is the devil is also shown by the fact that he wants to cause destruction among God's people in particular. He will do it and he will succeed. We know it is because he – without being aware of it – is used by God as a means of discipline in His hand. However, this does not absolve him from his corrupt actions through and through, which will also be judged by God, as we read at the end of verse 25. God knows how to use man's evil deeds, for which he is fully responsible himself, for His purpose. His goal is the welfare of His people and the glorification of His Son by those people.

The "mighty men" he destroys are the leaders of Israel who lead the people into the apostasy. He will also destroy "the holy people". Despite the apostasy of the people, God's Spirit calls them here "the holy people". That is what the people should have been: a people set apart from all peoples to live only for God. But because they rejected Him and surrendered to the idolatry of the nations, they are surrendered by God to their enemies, here in the person of the cruel, wicked Antiochus. This is not a new way of acting by God. We see in the book of Judges several times that God surrenders His people into the hands of their enemies when they have departed from Him. He does so that they may return to Him. When they call upon Him, He sends a liberator.

This can also happen in our personal lives. When we depart from the Lord, He sometimes has to give us up to the power of sin. Then we learn the

reign of sin through experiencing the power of sin. By this we will remember how good it was when we followed the Lord and served Him. We hear that also from the prodigal son and what he says in the parable the Lord Jesus tells (Lk 15:17). The result is that we will then acknowledge with repentance our wrong path. We will know that the Father awaits us and takes us in His arms when we come back to Him.

In verse 25 attention is once again drawn to his cunning. Because he is cunning, he manages to be deceitful. He may well conceal his true intention and exercise power over others. His success will make him proud. He will boast of his prosperity. Somehow he will succeed in gaining a foothold in Israel. If the Jews think they have nothing to fear from him and they are at rest, he will strike and kill many. In his pride he will even venture to stand up against the Lord Jesus, as if he could destroy Him too. But he dies suddenly by the hand of God (Dan 2:45; Job 34:20).

Dan 8:26-27 | The Effect on Daniel

*26 "The vision of the evenings and mornings
Which has been told is true;
But keep the vision secret,
For [it] pertains to many days [in the future]."*

27 Then I, Daniel, was exhausted and sick for days. Then I got up [again] and carried on the king's business; but I was astounded at the vision, and there was none to explain [it].

If we had to give this vision a name, we could call it 'the vision of the ram and the male goat'. God's Spirit does not call this vision with that name. At the end of the vision the Spirit of God calls it "the vision of the evenings and the mornings". We think it is about the battle between the Greeks and the Medes and Persians. But God's Spirit says that in reality it is about the time when God's sacrifice, repeated twice a day, is denied Him. It "is true". We need not doubt it.

This is about the daily burnt offering. That speaks of the Lord Jesus in His work on the cross that was accomplished for God. Christ has glorified God perfectly and in everything. God wants us to tell Him what the Lord Jesus meant to Him on the cross. We often think about what the Lord Jesus did

for us, what the consequences of His work are for us. But how often do we think about what His sacrifice means to God?

Daniel must keep the vision secret. It is not only important for the immediate future in connection with the coming of the Greek empire and in particular the small horn (Antiochus Epiphanes). What it lastly is all about is the time of the end. Then what this vision has shown will find its fulfilment in the great tribulation, when enemies will oppress both from the outside and from within God's people. The (religious) main enemy inside is the antichrist. The (political) enemy from outside comes from the north, Syria, supported by the enemy from the far north, Russia.

When Daniel has seen the vision and heard the interpretation, he is exhausted. He is sick of it because it all touched him deeply. For us it's a bit different. It need not make us sick or even surprise us that there are world rulers who want to have nothing to do with God and persecute His people (1Pet 4:12).

What should touch us is how the believers are doing spiritually. Do we have an eye for the fact that there are spiritual powers that are gaining entrance among God's people to draw this people away from bringing daily sacrifices to God? False brothers try to sneak in and undermine our faith (Gal 2:4-5). If a spirit of legalism gets a grip on the believers, it means the end of bringing sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving to God. That this can happen should make us sick.

Because of everything that came down on Daniel, he is sick for a few days. He had to call in sick to the king. We see here that prophets are not machines that receive a message mechanically and deliver it onto the people. Prophets are holy men of God who are driven by the Holy Spirit (2Pet 1:21). They have not understood everything that has been told to them and have examined it carefully. Much has remained a mystery to them too, but they believed what is said: "As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that [would come] to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to

you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look” (1Pet 1:10-12).

With Daniel we see that every vision has worked a deep soul exercise with him. It has brought him to fasting and reading the Word of God. The same is necessary for us. We cannot grow in the grace and knowledge of God’s Word if we do not pray and if there are no soul exercises. In the next chapter we will see another wonderful example of this. The question for us is also: How does the Lord’s teaching about future events affect us?

Daniel 9

Dan 9:1-2 | Reason for Prayer

1 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans— 2 in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was [revealed as] the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, [namely], seventy years.

The rule of the Babylonian empire has come to an end. The government is in the hands of the Medes and Persians, the second world empire. We are here in the first year that Darius has been appointed king “over the kingdom of the Chaldeans”, the conquered Babylon. Daniel has been in exile for more than seventy years now. He experienced the rise and fall of Babylon. The Medes and Persians are now in power. He has a high position both in one world empire and the other.

But everything he has experienced and the high position he holds have not diminished his love for God, God’s Word and God’s people. For him, what we read in Psalm 137, which reflects the feelings of those in exile in Babylon, is completely true (Psa 137:5-6).

His love for Jerusalem leads him to “the books”, which are the Scriptures of the Old Testament, as far as they are available to him. In one of them, the book of the prophet Jeremiah, he notices that there is talk about the number of years that the destruction of Jerusalem would last (Jer 25:11b; 29:10). Daniel sees that the first part of the prophecy has been fulfilled, that is the downfall of Babylon. He also believes in the second part, which is the restoration of Jerusalem.

Although Daniel himself is a privileged prophet who receives and transmits the thoughts of God, he also takes the place of a disciple. He would like to learn from other God-inspired prophets in order to get to know God’s thoughts. This attitude is necessary to grow spiritually and to increase in wisdom and knowledge.

Daniel makes his discovery “in the first year of Darius”. The actual return will not be long in coming. However, at the time Daniel reads about the end of the seventy years, there are still no indications that justify the hope of a return. That God opens a door for His people to return to His land, he discovers in “the books”. He is guided by God’s Word and not by the circumstances. He also does not ask for special revelation. God’s Word is sufficient.

This is an important indication for our time. There are deceived people who believe that God still gives revelations and that they receive them. But God has given a full revelation of Himself and His thoughts about us and the future. He expects us to study His complete revelation, given to us in His Word. From His Word we learn how to know His purpose and how to live in this time. The Word of God gives the right key to prophecy. We do not need to explain the prophecy by events, nor do we need to wait for the fulfillment of the prophecies to understand them.

Dan 9:3-4 | Daniel Prays and Confesses

3 So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek [Him by] prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes. 4 I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed and said, “Alas, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments,

What Daniel read could have made him very glad. He has read that the seventy years are over and that the restoration is therefore imminent. But there is no joy in Daniel. What he has read leads him to confession. He knows God and knows that God only grants mercy when there is confession of sins. Without that He can do nothing.

The direct consequence of what Daniel read is that he turns to God. He does not go with the good news of his discovery to his friends or fellow exiles. Through his fellowship with God he sees the low spiritual state of the people. He sees its true character, and that leads him to confession instead of a cry of joy. Only in that position and in that feeling intercession for others can be done.

Those who are spiritual are first when it comes to confession. They feel more than others how much God is dishonored by His people. That makes the prophet an intercessor. Knowledge of the future leads in the first place to intercession, that is to say, to speaking to God for the benefit of the people, and only then can there be spoken to the people on behalf of God. God makes the future known in order to speak to our hearts and not to satisfy our curiosity. Prophetic statements are not about processing sensation, but about an experience according to God's thoughts.

Daniel begins his confession by honoring God in His greatness and awesomeness. He is deeply impressed by that. Anyone who knows God and has a relation with Him will address Him with great respect – and also speak of Him with great respect. That is general. At the same time, this mighty majesty gives the great confidence that He keeps to everything He has said. He does not only say, but He acts as well. He is able to do what He says and has promised.

Daniel reminds God, as it were, of His covenant and His faithfulness to it. To this Daniel also connects His mercy. That is God's side of the covenant. However, there is also the side of human responsibility. The covenant and mercy of God apply to those who love Him and keep His commandments. And there it went completely wrong. That brings Daniel to his poignant confession.

Dan 9:5-6 | We Have Sinned

5 we have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances. 6 Moreover, we have not listened to Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, our princes, our fathers and all the people of the land.

Daniel makes himself one with the people in their departure from God and His commandments by speaking of "we". He confesses the sins of God's people. It is striking that he expresses himself in all kinds of ways. It is as if his feelings need all these words to get a way out of the enormous burden that weighs on his heart. He does not get rid of it with a quick, meaningless, general "we are sorry", but he speaks of "committed iniquity", "acted wickedly" and "rebelled".

The cause of the misery in which God's people find themselves is the departure from God's commandments and ordinances. But not only that. When the people turned aside, God also sent His servants, the prophets, to His people. The wicked state of the people became all the more apparent then. This evil situation was present in all parts of the people, with kings, princes, fathers, yes, all the people of the land. To all is spoken by the prophets in the name of the LORD. But what does Daniel say? "We have not listened." From the account in 2 Chronicles we know how much the LORD has made an effort to make the people return to Him, but that they have even despised and dishonored His prophets (2Chr 36:15-16).

This confession of the sins of the people by Daniel also has something to tell us. We also have not only personal to do with God, but also as a community. If we call ourselves Christians, we bear the blame for the dishonor that Christians bring to the Name of Christ, after Whose Name we call ourselves. Even if we honor Christ as Lord in our personal lives, we are ashamed and confess our guilt for the injustice that occurred in the Name of Christ. We are to blame with all Christians together.

This also applies to the faith community of which we are a part. There is weakness and unfaithfulness, worldliness, carnality, legalism. There is nothing to boast about, as if we were better Christians if in "our" faith community certain sins do not occur or are removed through discipline. It takes faith and a spiritual mind to come to such a confession. These are only present when there is knowledge of one's own heart and when there is an awareness of the grace that must always save us. Who can say that he has always listened to God's voice in His Word?

Dan 9:7-9 | The People and the Lord

7 "Righteousness belongs to You, O Lord, but to us open shame, as it is this day—to the men of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those who are nearby and those who are far away in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of their unfaithful deeds which they have committed against You. 8 Open shame belongs to us, O Lord, to our kings, our princes and our fathers, because we have sinned against You. 9 To the Lord our God [belong] compassion and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him;

After Daniel has confessed the sins of “all the people of the land”, he justifies God in that He has judged the people (cf. Lam 1:18). He is aware that when division and scattering occur, these evil things must be accepted from the hand of God. They are certainly also the consequences of man’s evil deeds, but above all we must see that God acts in holy discipline.

We see this clearly, for example, in the great division of Israel, when the people fall apart into ten tribes and two tribes. Rehoboam was the actual cause of this tearing. But if he wants to undo this tearing by himself and on his own initiative, God says: “This thing is from Me” (2Chr 11:4). 450 years later Daniel acknowledges this for the situation which he finds himself in. He confesses to the Lord that He has expelled His people to all the countries in which they are now.

Daniel does not mention any names and does not point a finger at a certain person. He does not speak of Zedekiah and his follies. Nor does he refer to Nebuchadnezzar and his brutal performance. He looks above people and circumstances upwards and sees in the division and scattering the hand of a righteous God. Thus, sometime later the LORD speaks through the prophet Zechariah: “But I scattered them with a storm wind among all the nations whom they have not known” (Zec 7:14a).

A little later, Nehemiah recalls in his prayer the words of the LORD, Who said through Moses: “If you are unfaithful I will scatter you among the peoples” (Neh 1:7-8). We do not read that these men speak of a ‘permission’ to scatter. They say clearly that *God* has driven the people away and brought this evil upon them.

Contrary to justifying God in His dealings with them, Daniel speaks of open shame of the people. God did nothing other than what He said He would do if the people were unfaithful. The people have become unfaithful, and the only thing that suits them is shame because of their sins which they have committed against God. The only thing Daniel can still call upon is God’s mercy, for they depend on it.

He knows God as the righteous God, but also as the God of “compassion” and of “forgiveness”. Compassion means full of compassion and forgiveness means manifold forgiveness. This is a beautiful expression, which flows over with hope and trust. There is not just a little compassion in

God, no, He is full of it. There is no need for a little bit forgiveness for a single sin, no, with God there is manifold forgiveness for a multitude of sins. God “will abundantly pardon” (Isa 55:7) and is “willing to forgive” (Psa 86:5). Nehemiah knew God as “a God of forgiveness”, which means that He forgives many times (Neh 9:17). Daniel clings to this as the only possibility, for the reality is that “we have rebelled against Him”, so that every right to blessing has disappeared.

Dan 9:10-14 | Not Obeyed

10 nor have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His teachings which He set before us through His servants the prophets. 11 Indeed all Israel has transgressed Your law and turned aside, not obeying Your voice; so the curse has been poured out on us, along with the oath which is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, for we have sinned against Him. 12 Thus He has confirmed His words which He had spoken against us and against our rulers who ruled us, to bring on us great calamity; for under the whole heaven there has not been done [anything] like what was done to Jerusalem. 13 As it is written in the law of Moses, all this calamity has come on us; yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our iniquity and giving attention to Your truth. 14 Therefore the LORD has kept the calamity in store and brought it on us; for the LORD our God is righteous with respect to all His deeds which He has done, but we have not obeyed His voice.

Once again Daniel speaks in these verses about the fact that the voice of God has not been obeyed. All the misery that has come upon the people can be traced back to this. If we do not obey God’s Word and do not take the warnings to heart, God will fulfill His Word on us, not for good, but for evil. We lose the promised blessings and receive the promised curses. Daniel acknowledges that what has come upon the people is nothing but the fulfillment of what God said would happen if they turned aside. He understood that well. We see Daniel emphasizing time and again in his confession that none but God Himself has broken His people (verses 7,12,14). That is the basis of his pleading.

We also see that the disaster is unparalleled. Never has a city been judged as severe as Jerusalem. That is because there has never been a city that has been so privileged. It is the only city God has chosen to establish His

throne and to have His dwelling place, His holy temple. Of these people He says: “You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities” (Amos 3:2). Judgment has come upon those nearest to Him and in whom He sanctifies Himself (Lev 10:1-3). “For [it is] time for judgment to begin with the household of God” (1Pet 4:17a; Eze 9:4-7).

These verses also imply a serious message to God’s people for the days in which we live. The people of God are scattered and divided because of their sins. But who laments about that? We see it and accept it resignedly or even see it as a ‘valuable multicolor’. It shows that the truth of God about the unity of the church is hardly known. What is worse, there is hardly any desire to know that truth.

It is to be hoped that we will be spiritually exercised about the condition of God’s people. Then it will drive us out to prayer before the Lord our God. God will be able to let His Word speak to us and we will learn to deal wisely with God’s truth. The latter means that we will know God’s truth, absorb it and obey it. Dealing with God’s truth wisely means taking every word of it seriously, both the promises and the warnings.

Because the people of God did not deal with the Word of God wisely, evil came upon the people. God keeps Himself to His Word. He watches over it. He also watches over the doom that He has pronounced in it, so that it may come when the actions of the people demand it. The LORD also said this to Jeremiah: “Behold, I am watching over them for harm and not for good” (Jer 44:27) and also: “As I have watched over them to pluck up, to break down, to overthrow, to destroy and to bring disaster” declares the LORD” (Jer 31:28).

We can understand – and we like to hear it – that the LORD watches over His people to protect them. But here we find that He watches over them for evil and that Daniel justifies Him in it: “For the LORD our God is righteous with respect to all His deeds which He has done, but we have not obeyed His voice” (verse 14b).

Dan 9:15-16 | Confession and Request

15 *“And now, O Lord our God, who have brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and have made a name for Yourself, as it is this*

day—we have sinned, we have been wicked. 16 O Lord, in accordance with all Your righteous acts, let now Your anger and Your wrath turn away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; for because of our sins and the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people [have become] a reproach to all those around us.

After his confession Daniel calls upon the “Lord our God” as the One Who once redeemed his people and thereby “made a name” for Himself. He also speaks to God about “Your people”. God does not yet see it this way, for the people are not yet His people. But faith speaks in all circumstances in this way about God’s people. The name “Lord” is the translation of the Hebrew *Adonai*, that is the Ruler, the Commander, while “LORD” is the translation of *Yahweh*, that is the God of the covenant with His people. Daniel now addresses the Lord as the sovereign God Who has acted in the past for the benefit of His people.

At the same time he says to Him that “this day” He still bears the Name He made then. So he begs the Lord first to think back to His redeeming work He did before by saving His people from slavery. Then he calls upon Him to live up to that Name once more and now because they have sinned and acted wickedly.

The Name of God is magnified in a glorious way when He shows grace, for He proves grace by virtue of His righteousness. Because the Lord Jesus has fulfilled all God’s righteous demands, God can prove grace to the repentant sinner. With this, He has made a Name forever. When people ‘make a name’, it’s because of a certain achievement. But there are always imperfections to this achievement. God has made a Name through a redemption that is perfect and that remains forever.

After his confession “we have sinned, we have been wicked”, Daniel pleads with “the Lord” to turn away His anger and His wrath from Jerusalem. He speaks to the Lord about Jerusalem as “Your city” and “Your holy mountain”. He sees and acknowledges in faith that the Lord is the Owner of it and not the nations, although the city is given by God into the hands of the nations.

He also identifies the city and the mountain on which the city lies, that is Mount Zion, with each other. It is a “holy mountain”. It is the mountain on

which Abraham sacrificed his son Isaac long ago. This speaks of the sacrifice God the Father brought by giving His Son. Because of that sacrifice there could be a temple in which God could dwell. So it is with the church in which God now dwells and which is also called a temple (1Cor 3:16; Eph 2:22). For faith, the church is the dwelling place of God in the Spirit, no matter how much the church has in practice become a place where people who do not have the Spirit regulate the service.

It strikes Daniel deeply that God's city and God's people have become a reproach to all around them. How is it with us? Do we also go through everything that the church and the living together of God's children have become a reproach to the world around us? What my brother and friend John Bax experienced when he told the gospel to someone, illustrates it painfully clearly. In a report of this illustration, he writes the following:

An older man came to me when I shouted loudly: "Be reconciled to God" and John 3:16 "God so loved the world" etc. We had a conversation about the Bible. He had a lot of criticism and commentary and 'why-questions'. He did not understand that if there is a mighty God, He does not intervene because of all the evil in this world. When I said: "And if God should intervene one time because of all the evil in your own life?", he was no longer so open and complained about the Christians, what they have done about it. He said, "How many churches are not empty today? What kind of happy message is brought when people run away? How many schisms have there been in history in which you cannot agree together? Just look at all the different churches and denominations that are nowadays. In your churches you have great conflicts about faith. If you had something precious together, you should certainly show what keeps you together."

I told him: "If I have to look at man and at Christianity, I must unfortunately agree with you. What we have made of it is shameful. But I want to tell you about the Person of the Lord Jesus Who died in my place for all my sins. And for everyone who believes in Him. I wanted to explain the gospel to him further, but he walked away. After that I was a little distressed by this conversation, and sad, because the world is indeed watching us and seeing how we deal with each other. And also that this is put forward as a reason to reject the precious gospel. I was reminded of the Bible verse: "By

this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:35). [End of quotation.]

I think I don’t need to add something to this. Let us take it to heart and beg God to forgive us in His grace and give us another opportunity to be the church according to His thoughts. He desires to have a dwelling place on earth. That is where His own come together and dwell together in subjection to His Word and guided by His Spirit.

The Lord Jesus said: “For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst” (Mt 18:20). God dwells where He can be God, that is, where He is recognized in His rights as God. We can still ask for and search for that place. If we use His Word as a guide and follow the instructions of the Spirit, He will certainly lead us there.

Dan 9:17-19 | Daniel Begs God to Listen

17 So now, our God, listen to the prayer of Your servant and to his supplications, and for Your sake, O Lord, let Your face shine on Your desolate sanctuary. 18 O my God, incline Your ear and hear! Open Your eyes and see our desolations and the city which is called by Your name; for we are not presenting our supplications before You on account of any merits of our own, but on account of Your great compassion. 19 O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take action! For Your own sake, O my God, do not delay, because Your city and Your people are called by Your name.”

Daniel does not beg for an end to the exile nor for his personal interests. The subject of His supplications are the city, the holy mountain, the holy temple and the people of God. He begs God “for Your sake” to let His face shine on His sanctuary. He is concerned about the glorious Name of the Ruler and Commander. Daniel draws His attention to the fact that His sanctuary is desolate. He exclaims that God can’t leave it that way, can He?

So we must also learn to beg in view of what is now God’s sanctuary, His church, which is “a holy temple in the Lord” (Eph 2:21). If we see what remains of that in the practice of Christian faith, we must also say that that temple has been destroyed. If we were to share more in God’s feelings about this, we would be more like a Daniel begging God to let His face shine on it. What comes into His light He redeems and restores (Psa 80:3).

His light reveals what is going on and also shows the solution. Without His light everything remains in darkness. If we long for Him to shine His illuminating and restorative light upon His church, we will take to heart the word of Isaiah and do it according to it: "And give Him no rest until He establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth" (Isa 62:7).

We will continually, vigorously, and almost shamelessly, beg God to open and incline His ear and open and see with His eyes (Lk 11:5-12; 18:1-8). Daniel clearly mentions that he does not present or as it is literally "cause to fall" or cast down his supplications before God – another powerful expression that fits this intense prayer – on account of any merits of their own, for they do not possess them. He casts them down on the basis of God's "great compassion". The deeper we are permeated by this, the more boldly we will approach God, yes, rushing at Him and, as it were, continuing to bombard Him with our supplications.

Daniel does so with a threefold "Lord", in which he insistently pleads that the Lord hears, forgives, listens and takes action, and does not delay any longer. In short sentences, he strongly states his words. The various expressions show a heart that is completely overwhelmed by the matter that is before his attention. It expresses an intense commitment. He also pleads with God not to wait with His actions in favor of His city and His people. The seventy years are over, he read in the book of the prophet Jeremiah.

The prayer is that of a prophet, a man of God, a man who loves his land, a man who has the glory of God as the highest goal of his life. He has a close, personal relationship with God, whom he calls in verse 18 "my God" for the first time in his prayer. If such a person intercedes in this intense way and confesses sins and puts forward arguments for action, he will be accepted by God.

He does not say these things to teach God and he does not argue to influence God. This is the way God wants to be called upon, for it is the only way our thoughts can be brought into the right state. If we have the spirit, the faith, the repentance and the seriousness of Daniel, we can be sure that our prayers will be answered, just as his prayer will be answered.

The ground on which he begs all this is "for Your own sake". He seeks in everything the honor of God. It is about His Name. That Name is by

Himself inextricably bound to His city and His people, for that is where His Name is proclaimed. What happens to His city and His people touches Himself. That is the argument for Daniel. We must also have this plea to beg God to stand up for His church, “which He purchased with the blood of His own [Son]” (Acts 20:28).

Dan 9:20-23 | The Answer Comes

20 Now while I was speaking and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God in behalf of the holy mountain of my God, 21 while I was still speaking in prayer, then the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision previously, came to me in [my] extreme weariness about the time of the evening offering. 22 He gave [me] instruction and talked with me and said, “O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you insight with understanding. 23 At the beginning of your supplications the command was issued, and I have come to tell [you], for you are highly esteemed; so give heed to the message and gain understanding of the vision.

Daniel experiences that God hears while he still speaks and prays (Isa 65:24; 30:19b). That Daniel “was speaking and praying” seems to indicate that he prayed out loud. Speaking while praying he is busy “confessing my sin”. This is very personal. He has always involved himself by talking about ‘we’ and ‘us’. But now he says “my”.

We do not read of Daniel any sinful deed or a wrong word. Yet he is also a man to whom the words Solomon speaks in his prayer apply: “For there is no man who does not sin” (1Kgs 8:46). Believers who live most devotedly to the Lord are most aware of their own sins and deficiencies. Daniel is also fully aware that he is one with the sinning people, whom he calls “my people Israel”. He knows he is not better than they are.

After he had spoken before about presenting his supplications before God, he now speaks about causing to fall [as it is literally] his supplications before the LORD his God. He knows that he himself is in the presence of God. This places him directly at “the holy mountain of my God”. The mountain where the city of God and the house of God are, are the cause of his supplication. He keeps it personal by talking about “my God” once

more. We will only be able to share in God's feelings about His dwelling place if we have such a personal and profound relationship with God. If we look at God's church with His eyes and if we know God's heart about it from His Word, our prayer for God's church will increasingly resemble that of Daniel for God's people of that day.

In verse 21 it is again said that Daniel is still busy expressing his prayer, to which is now added that this is the moment he gets a visit. This underlines the value of his prayer to God. This prayer is a prayer according to His will. God is quick to answer that prayer.

The timing of the response is also significant and interesting. It is "about the time of the evening offering", that is to say the time when the daily burnt offering was brought in Jerusalem. This is not happening literally at that moment, because there is no temple and no temple service anymore. But faith does think about what is due to God and what God takes into account. Daniel lives in it and thinks about it. The same applies to us. When God intervenes through our prayer, it is always in connection with His Son and His work on the cross, of which the sacrifices are a shadow.

There are some remarkable events in Scripture associated with this "time of the evening offering". So it is at this same time that Ezra is appalled by the sin of the people (Ezra 9:4). It is the hour of prayer, the hour when Cornelius receives an answer to his prayer (Acts 10:3; 3:1). God likes to hear at that hour. The reason for this is that at that hour He did *not* listen to Someone else. The ninth hour is the hour when the Lord Jesus was not heard for our sake (Mt 27:45-46).

Daniel is so much in prayer that Gabriel must touch him to let him know he is there. Gabriel could also have made his presence known by speaking a few words. But the touching shows that the angel is actually personally present with Daniel. The touch means the end of Daniel's prayer. To God it is sufficient. He knows the desires of his heart.

Gabriel tells Daniel that as soon as he has started praying, a word of God has gone out in heaven. That word was addressed to Gabriel and contained the instruction to go to Daniel and teach him and to give him insight into what he has heard and seen in the vision. Here we see how God is ready to answer a prayer of His own. Sometimes the answer can be stopped for

some time, as we will see in the next chapter (Dan 10:12-14). This does not mean that the answer does not take place, but that the answer is postponed. We may know that this also fits into God's plan.

It is not enough that Daniel has received revelations about future things. What he also needs is insight into its meaning. Only then will he benefit from it. The Lord Jesus also opened the Scriptures, and He opened the disciples' understanding to understand the Scriptures (Lk 24:32,45). We also need an opened understanding, as well as an opened Scripture. Thus, Paul says to Timothy: "Consider what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything" (2Tim 2:7).

If we want to understand the thoughts of God, we have to reflect on them. . We need to focus our attention on them, ponder them and compare Biblical texts with each other. That the revealed will of God is so often unknown to us, and that we err in it, is because there is so often a lack of real attention and thoughtfulness on our part.

Our understanding is opened and we are given insight into the meaning of God's Word when it also can be said to us that we are "highly esteemed". All the children of God may know that they are "esteemed". Every child of God may know that he is in God's favor (Rom 5:1b-2a). That is not because of who he is in himself, but because he is favored "in the Beloved", that is the Lord Jesus (Eph 1:6). But there are children of God of whom He says they are "highly" esteemed. These are those children who desire to act and to walk in everything according to His will and to His honor.

It will be clear that He looks at them with greater pleasure than believers who are unfaithful. Abraham and Lot are both believers. However, God cannot share His thoughts with Lot, but He can share His thoughts with Abraham (Gen 18:17-19). Daniel is one in whom the fear of the LORD is and with whom the LORD can therefore deal confidently and make known what is on His mind (Psa 25:14).

Dan 9:24 | The Seventy Weeks

24 *"Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity,*

to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy [place].

The verses we now come to, verses 24-27, are called 'the ABC' of the prophecy. First a short overview:

In verse 24 we read about

1. the duration of the period: seventy weeks,
2. who it is about: your people and your holy city, which are Israel and Jerusalem and
3. what happens during that period: finish the transgression, etc.

In verse 25 we learn that the first and largest part of the seventy weeks is divided into two periods: seven weeks and sixty-two weeks, which is sixty-nine weeks together. The events in these sixty-nine weeks are described. These weeks are concluded with the mention of one person: Messiah the Prince.

In verse 26 it is said that after sixty-two weeks, so in total after sixty-nine weeks, the Messiah will be cut off. This is followed by the announcement that Jerusalem will be destroyed.

In verse 27 we are informed of the events that take place in the remaining week, the seventieth. We also read there about the division of this week into two halves with an indication of what happens halfway the week and what the consequences are for the second half of that week.

After this overview we will look at the meaning of each verse. The weeks mentioned in verse 24 are not weeks of seven days, but periods of seven years. The seventy weeks are a total of four hundred and ninety years. This number of years will pass before the full blessing can come for "your people and your holy city". Before that happens, a few things have to happen:

1. First, "transgression" must have finished, that is to say, the people and the city no longer live in rebellion against God, but are obedient to Him.
2. Then "an end of sin" must be made, that is to say that they are no longer committed.
3. Also "atonement for iniquity" must be made. God can pass by the iniquity of His people only when atonement has been made for it.

These events are negative, they have to do with what has to stop and be removed because it cannot exist before God. The following events are positive. In them we see God's work for the benefit of His people and His holy city.

1. He will "bring in everlasting righteousness". That indicates the kingdom of peace, under the government of the Messiah.
2. Sealing up "vision and prophecy" means invariably recording what has been shown by and on behalf of God in the vision and said by the prophet. Both vision and prophecy bear the stamp of God's work in its fulfilment.
3. The last event is the anointing of "the most holy". What this refers to is not immediately clear. Several possibilities have been suggested. Some possibilities are that it can refer to the most holy of the temple or to the whole temple or to the city of Jerusalem or to the Lord Jesus, the Messiah. In any case, this is something that is sanctified for God by a special ordination and will have a special place in the realm of peace, to the glory of God.

Dan 9:25 | Seven Weeks and Sixty-Two Weeks

25 So you are to know and discern [that] from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince [there will be] seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.

Now Daniel is told – and we are told – when to start counting the seventy weeks, that is to say the four hundred and ninety-year period. We have to "know and discern" that, otherwise we will miss the meaning. The counting should start at "the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem". This cannot refer to what Cyrus ordered, for he did not command to rebuild Jerusalem, but to rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:2). Only a hundred years later has permission come to rebuild the city and that is what this verse is about. Artaxerxes is the king who gives Nehemiah the permission to rebuild the city, in the fourth year of his reign (Neh 2:1), that is the year 445 BC. Then the four hundred and ninety years begin.

Then an intermediate event is given, namely the coming of the Messiah. When He comes, sixty-nine weeks have passed. This period of sixty-nine weeks is divided into a period of seven weeks and a period of sixty-two

weeks. The first period, that of seven times seven weeks, that is forty-nine years, is the period in which the restoration of Jerusalem takes place. The second period of sixty-two weeks is linked to this period in one breath. The end of those two periods – that of seven weeks (forty nine years) and that of sixty-two weeks (= four hundred and thirty-four years), that is four hundred and eighty-three years together – is connected with a person: “until Messiah the Prince”.

A certain characteristic of this time is given: “It will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.” This shows that Jerusalem has been rebuilt, but that in those four hundred and sixty-three years (sixty-nine weeks) it is always under pressure from foreign peoples.

Dan 9:26 | The Messiah Is Cut Off

26 Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end [will come] with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.

The end of the period of sixty-nine weeks in total is not only linked to the Person of the Messiah but also to an event. This event is the cutting off of the Messiah. “Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing.” As we can see from the number of weeks that have passed, since Nehemiah Jerusalem began to rebuild, four hundred and eighty-three years have elapsed at the moment that the Messiah is cut off.

Then we have entered history at the time of the walk of the Lord Jesus on earth. He is the ‘Messiah’ or ‘Anointed One’. He comes to fulfill the last week to complete the period of seventy year-weeks and to establish the kingdom of peace. But what happens? His people reject and murder Him. Being innocent – ‘while there is nothing against Him’, as can also be translated – He is put to death. It also means that He has “nothing”. He didn’t get what He came for: His people as His kingdom. At the same time His death on the cross is the basis for the fulfillment of God’s plans for His people.

A simple calculation shows how accurate God’s Word is. The years in the Bible are years of 360 days. The period of 483 years is $483 \times 360 = 173,880$

days. This means that, counting from the date of the order to rebuild the city, we arrive at the Lord Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, the Sunday before the Friday on which He will die the death of the cross. For an exact calculation see *Jerusalem – Hindernis für den Weltfrieden (Jerusalem, obstacle to world peace)* by Roger Liebi.

This is how the sixty-nine year-weeks end. Because the people reject their Messiah, that last, seventieth, year-week cannot directly connect to the sixty-nine already expired year-weeks and the kingdom of peace cannot be established. Are the plans of God thus annulled? No, it means that the seventieth year-week is yet to come, because the sealing of the prophecy (verse 24) concerns seventy year-weeks and not sixty-nine year-weeks. 'Sealing' means that everything, including the seventieth year-week, comes true and that everything that has been communicated in visions and by the prophets is fulfilled. It means a postponement of the fulfillment, for that the fulfillment comes, is certain.

What now happens between the sixty-ninth and seventieth year-week? Important events take place during this indefinite period. Daniel, and therefore we too, are further informed about this by the angel. The sixty-nine year-week ends with the death of the Messiah, as stated in the beginning of verse 26. He is cut off "and have nothing". This means He is leaving earth without receiving the kingdom He came for.

Then the interpretation continues and Gabriel speaks of "the people of the prince who is to come". He also says what that people will do: they "will destroy the city and the sanctuary". Also the end of that people is made known by Gabriel: "And its end [will come] with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined."

Here it speaks of a people of a prince who is to come. That people are the Romans. In the year 70, the Roman armies, led by Titus, destroyed Jerusalem as God's punishment for the rejection of the Messiah. God gives up the city to the nations. Luke gives more details about this in his account of the speech on the end time by the Lord Jesus (Lk 21:20-24). The Lord Jesus says there: "And Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (Lk 21:24).

When the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, comes what Gabriel here calls “the end”. “The end” is the end time, the return of Christ and the related events. In the middle of this verse 26 a big leap is made from the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in the year 70 to the return of Christ in the end time. The destruction of Jerusalem and of the Roman empire, both then and in the end, are determined. The people, the Romans, have been there and have come to their end. Germanic tribes have destroyed the empire. Europe has disintegrated into many different countries.

But the *prince* of that people is yet to come. He will also come. About him is written in verse 27. The events of then, in the year 70, are a foreshadowing of the events in the end time, events that directly precede the establishment of the millennial empire of peace. The events of the end time are the events of the seventieth year-week. These are described in verse 27.

Dan 9:27 | The Seventieth Week

27 And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations [will come] one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

The second part of verse 26 gives the transition from the situation in the year 70 to the situation in the end time or the seventieth year-week. That seventieth year-week is what we are talking about in verse 27. During the seventieth year-week, Israel is back in its land. This is demonstrated by the fact that sacrifices are being made again. There is a temple service again.

The “he” of this verse is the prince of the previous verse who will come. It is the ruler of the restored Western Roman empire, the fourth world empire, the united Europe that gave its power into the hands of a single dictator, the beast from the sea (Dan 7:3,7; Rev 13:1-10). It points to the time when the Roman empire is again present and Israel is again present and both empires have a ruler.

The covenant that he makes firm is the covenant that he, the autocrat of the united Western Europe, will make with the unbelieving mass of the Jews, “the many”, possibly under the leadership of the antichrist. Seen

from the Jewish side, it is a treaty with death (Isa 28:15a,18). The apostate mass of the Israelites will do this to defend themselves and protect themselves against the enemies surrounding them, of which the greatest enemy is Assyria. By Assyria we can understand Syria in an alliance with some other Arab states. Assyria is so strong because it is supported by the mighty Russian empire that lies north of them. That is what the prophetic word shows and what we see confirmed in current events.

“In the middle of the week”, however, a dramatic change takes place. This change heralds the most terrible time the earth has ever experienced. This time is called the “great tribulation” (Mt 24:21) and also “the time of Jacob’s distress” (Jer 30:7). This period will last half a year-week, i.e. three and a half years.

In that time an unprecedented suffering will affect mankind. What people will do to each other defies any description. Violence of war and natural disasters will uninhibitedly cause their slaughter. The spiritual torments to which men are exposed will drive them to insanity. An impressive description of it can be found in Revelation 6-19. The introductory event is the casting of the devil from heaven to earth, knowing that he has little time, i.e. three and a half years (Rev 12:9,12b).

His first activity is to put an end to the Jewish religion, which we see in the prohibition to sacrifice. Through his servant, the Roman ruler, who is supported by his ally the antichrist, he puts an end to worship in Jerusalem. The Roman ruler and the antichrist establish their own idolatrous religion. The antichrist will erect an idol of the Roman ruler, the beast out of the sea, in the temple (2Thes 2:3-4), most likely the court of the temple.

This image is intended as protection against the enemies. As a result, the antichrist will propagate the alliance with Western Europe. He will convince the remaining mass of the Jews to expect their salvation from that great power when they are threatened by Assyria and all Arab countries. He will make sure that people worship the image and even let it speak. He who withdraws from this mass psychosis and does not worship the beast will be killed (Rev 13:15).

God calls it “the wing of abominations”. A wing indicates protection and an abomination is an indication for an idol image (Mt 24:15a). But instead

of protection, this abomination will bring destruction to Israel. There “[will come] one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate”. It is an abomination that will lead to destruction, that is God’s judgment on the apostates, on the most horrible idolatry that has ever happened. This destruction happens because it is decreed by God.

The one who will come and “who makes desolate” is the king of the North, the ancient Assyrian empire, supported by Russia. This is the beginning of the last world war. The destroyer will quickly pour himself out “on the one who makes desolate”, that is Jerusalem. It will happen so quickly that the alliance turn out to be no protection at all. Jerusalem will be taken and the inhabitants will suffer terribly (Zec 14:2a).

This brings the angel to the end of his teaching (verse 22). It seems to be an abrupt end, where judgment seems to be the last word. But we have to think of two things. The fact that the explanation about the future ends here means that it is not about the continuation, but about the elaboration of what has been announced. What does it do to me that I know how it will go? The other is that the angel said at the beginning of his statement that “everlasting righteousness” will come when the seventy weeks have passed (verse 24). After the judgments follows the glorious kingdom of peace under the reign of the Messiah, the Prince of peace.

Daniel 10

Introduction

The last three chapters form a whole. We find historical information about the dealings of pagan powers with God's earthly people from the time of the reign of the Medes and Persians until the final liberation under the reign of Christ. The key verse is: "Now I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to the days yet [future]" (Dan 10:14). This shows that is about what will happen to Israel "in the latter days". We will see that these "latter days" for Daniel concern both the near and far future.

1. Daniel 10 is the introduction. In this chapter we are told about the time in which Daniel receives the messages, the circumstances in which he finds himself and what the effect is on himself, what it does to him.
2. In Daniel 11 a prophetic sketch is given of the events that take place in connection with the kings of the countries north and south of the holy land. The areas north and south of Israel are the two most important areas of the four into which the Greek-Macedonian empire has fallen apart.
3. Daniel 12 shows God's actions with a faithful remnant of the Jews at the time when the people went through the great tribulation of three and a half years. This period precedes the establishment of the kingdom of Christ.

Dan 10:1 | A Message Revealed

1 In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel, who was named Belteshazzar; and the message was true and [one of] great conflict, but he understood the message and had an understanding of the vision.

We find ourselves "in the third year of Cyrus king of Persia", which is the year 536 BC. It is the time that a first part of the people, a remnant, has returned to the land. That happened in the first year of Cyrus (Ezra 1:1-3,5). However, Daniel did not go along with them. That will undoubtedly be because God has told him to stay in Babylon. But his heart is with the

returnees. Despite his old age, his interest and involvement in the ups and downs of God's people has not disappeared, but is as great as ever.

A message is revealed to him. In the joy that he will experience about the return of (a small part of) the people, there is also insight with him about how the people will be doing. He knows that the return will not bring the promised blessing for the land. The restoration of altar, temple and city will only apply to a small part of the people and will also only be temporary.

The remark "the message was true" shows the deep conviction that the revealed message will definitely happen. There is no doubt in his mind that this is so, although the time of fulfilment will be long in coming and will not take place until long after his death. This certainty will be of great use to the consolation of the Jews who will have to go through the foretold time of great fight that will come upon the people.

Unlike other visions, about which he has questions and which he also asks, he understands what is revealed to him now. What is being presented to him is clear.

Dan 10:2-3 | Daniel Mourns

2 In those days, I, Daniel, had been mourning for three entire weeks. 3 I did not eat any tasty food, nor did meat or wine enter my mouth, nor did I use any ointment at all until the entire three weeks were completed.

Daniel receives this revelation of the message while humbling himself (verse 12). Why does he do that? Is there no reason to be happy about the partial return of God's people to the promised land? Surely it means a new start in their spiritual history, would it not? Are expressions of joy and celebration not more appropriate? But the man of God feels the sinful past and the present weakness and he also foresees the great misery that will come upon God's people in the future.

Among those who have returned, the young people have indeed expressed their joy because of the rebuilt altar. That joy is fully appropriate for them. At the same time, the elderly weep, for they have the memory of the former glory of God's house, from which the restored altar stands out sharply (Ezra 3:12; Hag 2:3).

It is good when a revival that takes place by God's grace offers space for both expressions of feelings. The young people will experience a revival as a refreshment and the elderly as well. For the elderly, however, there will be an additional awareness that the perfection of honoring and praising God will only become a reality when Christ comes. They will therefore be characterized more by prayer and confession at every revival than by joy, although there will also be room for joy among them.

Daniel's feelings show that he knows the people. He also knows the people who have returned and what they will still experience in the future. That now prevails with him. That makes him mourn. His humbleness is not only a matter of his mind. His body also shares in it. For three weeks he takes nothing tasty. He only takes what is necessary. He even refrains from taking care of his body. He is so busy with God's people, with whom he feels so much connected, that all that is pleasant, permissible and also necessary for life is pushed into the background.

Dan 10:4-6 | Daniel Sees the Lord Jesus

4 On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, while I was by the bank of the great river, that is, the Tigris, 5 I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, there was a certain man dressed in linen, whose waist was girded with [a belt of] pure gold of Uphaz. 6 His body also [was] like beryl, his face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, his arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a tumult.

Through the mind and attitude that Daniel has, he is able to receive communications from God. He is even shown in a vision an appearance of the Lord Jesus. The description given here is at least reminiscent of Him. This description resembles the description of the Son of Man in Revelation 1 (Rev 1:13-15). It is about Him in prophecy and He will fulfill everything.

His whole appearance radiates overwhelming glory, holiness, majesty, strength and authority.

1. He is "dressed in linen", which speaks of purity and cleanliness, of perfect righteousness (Rev 19:8).

2. His "waist", a picture of the power of the walk, is girded "with [a belt of] pure gold", which speaks of Divine glory.

The different characteristics of His Person are further compared each time with an element from nature, which is indicated by the word “like”.

3. “His body”, His stature, is reminiscent of beryl. This precious stone can be red, blue, green, yellow and also colorless.
4. “His face” has the appearance of lightning and “His eyes” are like flaming torches. This speaks of His all-pervading and judgmental abilities, where nothing can escape His attention.
5. “His arms and feet”, speaking of his acts and walk, are like the gleam of polished bronze, which speaks of an unbreakable exercise of right. His judgment is perfectly righteous.
6. Finally, His voice is reminiscent of the sound of a tumult. “His words,” which He pronounces, overpower any other sound.

Dan 10:7-11 | Powerless

7 Now I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, while the men who were with me did not see the vision; nevertheless, a great dread fell on them, and they ran away to hide themselves. 8 So I was left alone and saw this great vision; yet no strength was left in me, for my natural color turned to a deathly pallor, and I retained no strength. 9 But I heard the sound of his words; and as soon as I heard the sound of his words, I fell into a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground. 10 Then behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. 11 He said to me, “O Daniel, man of high esteem, understand the words that I am about to tell you and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you.” And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling.

What Daniel sees makes a great impression on him and takes his strength away. We see something similar with John on Patmos when he sees the Son of man (Rev 1:17a). Thus the Lord also shows Himself to us as we concern ourselves with His future and that of His people. When we see Him in His majesty and think that He holds the future in His hand and governs it, we too are filled with awe, and will fall down before Him.

The appearance of the Lord Jesus is to Daniel personally. The men who are with him do not see Him. Yet His appearance to Daniel also affects them. They feel the presence of an impressive heavenly figure, without being

able to touch, see or hear anything. That fills them with dread. They flee and hide. It is similar to what happens to Saul and his companions when the Lord Jesus appears to Saul (Acts 22:7-9).

Daniel remains alone, while all his strength has flowed out of him. He feels totally without strength. It's said here twice. Also, all color has gone out of his face. When he hears the sound of the words of the Lord Jesus, he falls asleep. He is so exhausted, both physically by fasting and mentally by what he sees and hears, that he becomes unconscious. He lies with his face on the ground, indicating that he did not fall asleep in the usual way.

With Daniel we see what the effect on a person is when the Word of God comes to him with power and enters into him. The words of the Lord Jesus and His appearance have the same effect. The Word of God and the Lord Jesus are identified. The words of the Lord Jesus reveal Who He is. His words reflect His Person.

Then a hand touches Daniel. This is not the hand of the Lord Jesus, but of an angel. The sequel shows that it is no longer the Lord Jesus Who acts and speaks, but an angel. But there is power in the touch because it is thereby that Daniel, though still trembling, sets from his lying position on his hands and knees. Then the angel encourages him by naming his name and adding that he is a "man of high esteem".

This tells him that he is in God's favor (Dan 9:23). He is therefore able to pay attention to the words the angel will speak. He has to stand up for that. The standing position is the right one to listen attentively to what the angel has to say, because that is what he had come for at that moment. Daniel does what the angel says and stands up trembling. He is still impressed by everything he experiences.

Here too we see that prophets are ordinary people. They do not always immediately recover from a shocking experience, even if they are very much encouraged. It is not about fear of God, but about the reaction of body and mind to what they experience. Prophets are not supermen who receive and pass on messages unaffected. Their whole being is involved in the service they do.

So it will be with us when we read and hear God's Word and when we are in prayer. What comes to our attention does something with us if we really

desire to know the meaning of God's Word and have in mind the welfare of His people, the church.

Dan 10:12-13 | The Battle Behind the Scenes

12 Then he said to me, "Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding [this] and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words. 13 But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia.

As a special consolation, Daniel is told that he does not have to be afraid. The words "do not be afraid" have been a great encouragement to many believers in difficult circumstances over the centuries. It seems that Daniel has become afraid that his prayer would not be heard. This can be deduced from the word "for" that follows. It took a long time before an answer was received.

But his fear is unfounded, "for" he is told now, his prayer has come before God from the first day. It also brought God directly to action, for He sent an angel to respond to Daniel's words. The fact that it took so long to get an answer does not mean that God would not have heard his prayer or would not want to answer it.

What is said here to Daniel may also encourage us with regard to our prayers. We may know that our prayers are heard by God at the same time we say them. Even if we have to wait for an answer, we may know that our prayer has 'arrived' with God and is given full attention by Him.

If we have to wait, that is an incentive to persistently pray for a matter. At the same time we may know that from the very first time we prayed for a matter, God is busy answering us. The delay in the answer is a test of our faith and tests our perseverance in trusting Him. If the matter for which we pray really occupies our hearts, we will take the word to heart: "Pray without ceasing" (1Thes 5:17).

Before the angel tells the answer that he is coming to bring to Daniel, the angel lifts the veil of an event in the invisible world. What he says about this is unique and extremely instructive for us. This gives us insight into

the struggles that are being waged in the heavenly places. Here we look behind the veil. Through what the angel says, it becomes clear that behind the earthly powers lie spiritual powers. It is as if Paul speaks to us about the real power we have to deal with. That is not flesh and blood, but these are the rulers, the powers, the world forces of this darkness, the spiritual [forces] of wickedness in the heavenly realms, so not on earth, but in the air (Eph 6:12).

Every war on earth is the result of an agreement in the invisible world between devilish powers. In the invisible world, there are no distinctions between rival parties. The force ratios in the world, for example, between east and west, are not determined by the parties or countries on earth, but in the spiritual world. In the spiritual world there are no contradictions among the powers of darkness, there is no struggle, but complete demonic unity. The dark powers work together to destroy mankind, focusing above all on God's people.

The prince of the kingdom of Persia is not the earthly prince, but an angelic prince. An earthly prince could never resist an angel on his way with a message from God to one of His own. Demonic princes, however, are so powerful that they are even able to stop an angel of God for so long. This demonic prince, who especially influences the kingdom of Persia, is so powerful that the archangel Michael has to come into play. Michael is the prince of Israel. In verse 21 Daniel is told that Michael is "your prince". The people of God have their own angel. Michael is here called "one of the chief princes" and in the last chapter he is called "the great prince" (Dan 12:1).

We know that angels are used by God in a special way for the protection of His own (Heb 1:14). Here we further learn that they are the executors of the will of God in His provident actions with people. They communicate to people what God tells them. We also see here that chosen angels help each other in their fight against the apostate angels. Michael was sent to help the angel who was sent to Daniel. This one was stopped by the angelic prince of Persia, which made it impossible for him to carry out his mission. He stayed behind and stood before other angelic princes who had Persia under their sphere of influence. These evil powers were concerned with thwarting God's work in Persia.

Dan 10:14 | The Content of the Prophecy

14 Now I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to the days yet [future]."

This verse gives us an important clue about the main purpose of prophecy. We could call it a key verse because it opens the door to the content and purpose of prophecy. The angel says that he has come to Daniel to give him "an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days". This is about the people of Daniel, that is the people of the Jews. All God's plans for the earth are connected with His earthly people, the Jews. The next chapter should also be seen in this light. Then we will be kept from all kinds of misinterpretations.

The main purpose of this prophecy is to show what will happen to God's earthly people, Israel, in "the latter days". As noted at the beginning of this chapter, "latter days" means both events in the near future and events in the distant future. In the continuation of the angel's communications on this subject, our attention will be drawn to events that have been predicted and which were fulfilled fairly soon afterwards. There are, however, other events that point forward to the distant future and are still future today. We have to think of the revelation of the antichrist and the great tribulation that will come over all the earth.

God's thoughts and plans have Israel as their goal and center, in connection with their Messiah, the true center of all God's plans. With the nations it is first and foremost about Israel and not about the kings of the north or the south. All the players on the final stage are in a way actors to let all light fall on the protagonist. Then it will become clear that the main actor, Israel, will shine, because this people represents the brilliance of the Director.

Dan 10:15-19 | Daniel Is Strengthened

15 When he had spoken to me according to these words, I turned my face toward the ground and became speechless. 16 And behold, one who resembled a human being was touching my lips; then I opened my mouth and spoke and said to him who was standing before me, "O my lord, as a result of the vision anguish has come upon me, and I have retained no strength. 17 For how can

such a servant of my lord talk with such as my lord? As for me, there remains just now no strength in me, nor has any breath been left in me.” 18 Then [this] one with human appearance touched me again and strengthened me. 19 He said, “O man of high esteem, do not be afraid. Peace be with you; take courage and be courageous!” Now as soon as he spoke to me, I received strength and said, “May my lord speak, for you have strengthened me.”

Daniel is once again overwhelmed by what he has heard. He bends his head and can no longer utter a word. In the light of the communications that have been made to him, he feels his unworthiness and powerlessness. He feels, as it were, the whole weight of the future rests on him and does not know what to say. It is as if contractions have overtaken him when he sees the vision, as he says after his lips have been touched and he can speak again.

His lips are touched by “one who resembled a human being”. That seems to be someone else than the angel who has spoken to him so far. If so, there is much to be said for saying that we have here an appearance of the Lord Jesus. He touches the lips of Daniel, so he can speak again (cf. Isa 6:6-7). But it may also be that it is the angel who has spoken to him. Daniel addresses him in a respectful manner and addresses him with “lord”, that is ruler, master. He acknowledges in the angel his superior. He also confesses to him his powerlessness because of everything he has seen.

The reason that all power has flowed out of him is that Daniel has fully empathized with the vision. He was fully involved and it has taken all his strength. He even has no power left to speak to this mighty angelic host. A subject that involves a person’s whole personality cannot be discussed on an intellectual level only. The emotions are also addressed. A subject can be so intense, that someone full of emotion feels incapable of saying anything about it. Breathing can be difficult for someone when he thinks of something poignant and even more so when he thinks about saying something about it.

Then the heavenly being touches Daniel for the second time and strengthens him. This seems to indicate that we are dealing with the angel who came to Daniel. When the Lord Jesus in Gethsémané was in a heavy prayer struggle, there also “an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthen-

ing Him”, i.e. physically (Lk 22:43). Again Daniel hears the encouraging words that he is a “man of high esteem” (verse 11) and “do not be afraid” (verse 12). Then he is told the wonderful word “peace be with you”.

There is not much which is greater than living with the peace of God in the heart. If the peace of God is in our hearts, we will not be discouraged by the circumstances because we know that God has them in His hand. And does He get restless about anything? Is there anything in the universe that can take His peace away from Him? Of course not. Well, if that peace He has is in us, it will keep our hearts and thoughts in Christ Jesus Who is our peace (Phil 4:6-7).

The result is that there is power to do what is asked of us. Daniel is reminded of this (cf. Jos 1:9). He is already strengthened by the touch (verse 18). By the peace it can be said to him that he must be strong (verse 19a), that is to say that he must also use the obtained power. Now it is said in addition (verse 19b) that he is strengthened, while being spoken to him. That indicates the effect that good words have. Good words give strength. When we are told something that makes us happy, it gives us new energy. At the same time, there is the desire to hear more of these reinforcing words. Daniel expresses that desire.

Dan 10:20-21 | The Writing of Truth

20 Then he said, “Do you understand why I came to you? But I shall now return to fight against the prince of Persia; so I am going forth, and behold, the prince of Greece is about to come. 21 However, I will tell you what is inscribed in the writing of truth. Yet there is no one who stands firmly with me against these [forces] except Michael your prince.

From this point Daniel becomes a listener. The angel informs him that he will soon return to fight against the satanic angelic princes of Persia and Greece. The battle is always that between demons and the angels of God, with the faithful remnant as the stake of that battle. The change of power on earth is the result of a battle in heaven. To see that, our eyes must be opened (2Kgs 6:15-17). Our real opponents are in the invisible world. The real opposition is against the people of God.

Before the angel enters into this new battle with spiritual forces of wickedness, he will tell Daniel “what is inscribed in the writing of truth”. The writing of truth is what is known to God. God writes the history and the course of events, that is to say, it is fixed with Him, it is recorded in His heavenly history. The angel will tell us in the next two chapters what is written in it with regard to the latter days. For us, “the writing of truth” is the Word of God. Everything is inscribed in it. That is why we have to read and study that Book. God’s Spirit wants to guide us in this and make the meaning clear to us.

Daniel is assured that “Michael your prince” will firmly stand with this angel in the task assigned to the angel. The angel is facing force majeure. This force majeure consists of the princes of the empires of Persia and Greece, i.e. the demonic powers that govern these empires. Through these empires, these evil spirits seek to destroy God’s people. They will do all they can to ensure that the angel does not fulfill his service towards Daniel and the people of God. But with the help of Michael, the angel will be able to fulfil his task towards Daniel and the people of Daniel.

Daniel 11

Introduction

Before I start with the explanation of this chapter, I would like to share something with the reader. I have always been told, and I say this myself, that the explanation of a part is given by the Scriptures themselves. In order to grasp a portion of God's Word, I depend on the Holy Spirit and must also have the right mind. I also need the help of other teachers. This is how the Lord Jesus meant it, and He gave His gifts for it (Eph 4:11; cf. Acts 8:30-31).

Is it not a form of pride, and perhaps even a contempt for the Lord's gifts, if we think we can understand the truth of a portion of it exclusively by ourselves? However, we will have to think for ourselves about what others tell us, and then come to the acceptance of an explanation before God (Acts 17:11). In this way, the meaning of a truth of Scripture becomes our own spiritual property and not the plagiarism of someone else.

In the portion we have before us now, however, I seem to be unable to find the explanation within Scripture, but only outside of it. The first part of this chapter deals with events that were then still future for Daniel, but that have already been fulfilled. However, I cannot find that fulfilment in the Scriptures. In all the explanations I have at my disposal and which I love to consult, reference is made as to how this first part was fulfilled in the course of history. It means that I still need to know something about the history that is described outside of the Bible. I once presented this problem to the aforementioned Bible teacher and historian Gerard Kramer. He wrote to me the following in response:

In any case, the non-biblical history can never be in conflict with the prophecy. And why should it not even be helpful in explaining prophecy that has already been fulfilled and has thus become history? With Daniel 11, the prophecy even turns out to be so correct in details and to correspond with the non-biblical sources, that unbelieving scientists say that Daniel 11 is retrospective historiography in which the events are shrouded in the

literary genre of prophecy. The latter, of course, will never be said by trustworthy biblical interpreters. Daniel 11 is now fulfilled up to verse 34 and therefore is history. I have no problem wandering through the non-biblical history if I cannot fully understand or fill in a detail in Daniel 11:1-34. It becomes interesting from verse 36, because some of the things mentioned there, according to historical sources, can certainly be attributed to Antiochus IV Epiphanes, but this section clearly has an end-time perspective, through which it also speaks of the future Antioch, or the king of the North, and – curiously enough – also of the antichrist. [End of quotation]

This answer encouraged me to call upon the Bible teacher and historian Roger Liebi from Switzerland, whom I consider trustworthy and competent, to explain this chapter. In his book *Weltgeschichte im Visier des Propheten Daniël* (*World history from the point of view of the prophet Daniel*), he gives a clear and compact explanation of Daniel 11:2-35. My explanation of these verses will therefore mainly consist of a translation of his explanation. Some interpreters may give different explanations for some verses. That I will not pursue that, does not mean that I claim that the explanation of my preference is the only correct one. For me it is the most likely, but it is up to the reader to do further research into this.

After studying this section on the basis of the book I mentioned, I have become even more impressed by the truth of God's Word. It is amazing how every detail mentioned in these verses has been fulfilled. That applies at least to the details that have become clear to me, for there are still aspects that I am not sure about.

I would like to point out once again that for Daniel the events he saw in the vision were all still future events. The exact fulfilment of what is communicated to us in verses 2-35, which we know from historical facts, is yet another guarantee that everything that is yet to become history will also be fulfilled. God's Word is absolutely trustworthy in all its parts!

Dan 11:1-2 | From Cyrus till Xerxes I

1 *"In the first year of Darius the Mede, I arose to be an encouragement and a protection for him. 2 And now I will tell you the truth. Behold, three more kings are going to arise in Persia. Then a fourth will gain far more riches than*

all [of them]; as soon as he becomes strong through his riches, he will arouse the whole [empire] against the realm of Greece.

Verse 1 of this chapter still belongs to Daniel 10 and is actually the last verse of that chapter. After the angel has said that Michael has stood with him, he says that he himself once “arose to be an encouragement and a protection” for Michael. He also mentions when that was. It was at that time when the Medo-Persian empire conquered the Babylonian empire and thus gained control over the Jews. This seems to indicate that the spiritual war was waged with a view to the departure of a remnant to the promised land. Satan will have mobilized his demons and try to stop that.

Satan knows that in Israel the promised Seed, the Messiah, the Son of God, will be born from the people of the Jews to the blessing of God’s people. He will want to prevent this at all costs. To prevent that birth, he has always wanted the destruction of God’s people. He does not know all the plans of God, but he does know that the Messiah will bring the promised blessing and that with it his own reign is over and his destiny is sealed.

In verse 2 the angel tells Daniel that he will tell him the truth about future events. It is the truth, for what the angel reveals comes from the “writing of truth” (Dan 10:21) written by God. As said, God writes history and therefore it’s going to be like this.

The angel tells Daniel that there will be four more kings in power in Persia. Three are mentioned without further indication. The fourth is said to be rich and to fight against Greece. As we read in Daniel 10, in the third year of Cyrus, Daniel receives the message revealed containing the future events described here (Dan 10:1). That means that the four kings who will still come to power after Cyrus are the next ones:

1. Cambyses (530-522 BC)
2. Gaumata (Pseudo-Smerdis) (522 BC)
3. Darius I Hystaspis (522-486 BC)
4. Xerxes I (486-465 BC)

Xerxes I is known to have acquired fabulous wealth. Through him, the realm of the Persians reaches the peak of its power. Xerxes would also like to conquer Greece and bring it under his authority. To achieve this,

he mobilized almost the entire then Asia. In the famous naval battle of Salamis (480 BC), however, he suffered an insulting and deeply humiliating defeat. This war brings him enormous losses, both of human lives and of treasures.

[NB On the Internet, interested readers can find out more about the four kings mentioned above and also about the following rulers.]

Dan 11:3 | Alexander the Great

3 And a mighty king will arise, and he will rule with great authority and do as he pleases.

The “mighty king” referred to here is Alexander the Great. In history we make a jump of about one hundred and thirty years. That is the time between Xerxes I and Alexander the Great. The Greeks may have caused the Persians a resounding defeat, but the hatred against the Persians is deep with the Greeks. Alexander avenged himself on the Persians and ruled with great dominion. He has not taken any notice of God or the commandment, and has acted as he pleases. That he, by breaking the power of Persia, has participated in God’s plan, is therefore exclusively a matter of God’s sovereignty. God knows how to fit man’s arrogant actions into His plans.

Dan 11:4 | The Greek Empire Divided Into Four Parts

4 But as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom will be broken up and parceled out toward the four points of the compass, though not to his [own] descendants, nor according to his authority which he wielded, for his sovereignty will be uprooted and [given] to others besides them.

Alexander the Great’s heyday lasted only a little over ten years. In the year 323 BC he is believed to have died of malaria. When he dies, he leaves behind a son named Hercules. A second son is born shortly after his death. They are both murdered. His four generals and their successors, after a hard battle, divide his great inheritance among themselves (cf. Dan 8:8,22). The division is as follows:

1. Seleucus gets Syria in the east,
2. Lysimachus gets Asia Minor in the north,

3. Ptolemy gets Egypt in the south and
4. Cassander gets Macedonia in the west.

Thus the Greek empire is “parceled out toward the four points of the compass”, where the four points of the compass are seen from the position of the Persian empire.

Dan 11:5 | Two Kings

5 “Then the king of the South will grow strong, along with [one] of his princes who will gain ascendancy over him and obtain dominion; his domain [will be] a great dominion [indeed].

From this verse onwards Daniel’s prophecy is only concerned with the king of the South and the king of the North. They are the kings who rule over Egypt in the south and Syria in the north. It is because these two countries have an important place in the history of Israel that these countries are the only ones mentioned. The ‘south’ and ‘north’ must be seen from the position of Israel. From this perspective, the king of the South means the Greek general ruling Egypt, Ptolemy, and the king of the North means Seleucus, the ruler of Syria.

One of Alexander’s former generals, Seleucus, makes himself independent from him and gains control of Syria. His empire will be the largest of the four empires that were created after Alexander the Great’s death. Thus Seleucus becomes the king of the North.

Dan 11:6 | An Agreement

6 After some years they will form an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the South will come to the king of the North to carry out a peaceful arrangement. But she will not retain her position of power, nor will he remain with his power, but she will be given up, along with those who brought her in and the one who sired her as well as he who supported her in [those] times.

In verse 6 it is no longer about the kings, Ptolemy and Seleucus, mentioned in the previous verse, but about their descendants: Ptolemy II and Antiochus II. This transition is noted in the first words of this verse “after some years”. To put an end to the bloody war conflicts between Egypt and Syria,

an attempt is made to have the two royal families enter into “an alliance” with each other. That agreement consists of a marriage. Around 252 BC Antiochus II divorces his wife Laodice and marries Bernice, the daughter of the Egyptian king Ptolemy II.

However, this attempt to achieve peace is a catastrophe. Out of revenge Laodice has her former husband Antiochus II poisoned a few years after his marriage to Bernice. She does the same with the little son from that marriage. Afterwards Bernice flees with a few faithful to a city near Antioch. Seleucus II, the son of Laodice, follows her there, takes her into the city and kills Bernice and her entourage. During this time also Ptolemy II, the father of Bernice, dies.

Now that we know the history, we can fill in the following names in verse 6b:

“But she” – Bernice – “will not retain her position of power,” (that is, she has to flee) “nor will he” – Antiochus II – “remain with his power, but she” – Bernice – “will be given up, along with those who brought her in,” (the faithful who followed her) “and the one who sired her” – Ptolemy – “as well as he who supported her in [those] times” – Antiochus II.

Dan 11:7-14 | The King of the South

7 But one of the descendants of her line will arise in his place, and he will come against [their] army and enter the fortress of the king of the North, and he will deal with them and display [great] strength. 8 Also their gods with their metal images [and] their precious vessels of silver and gold he will take into captivity to Egypt, and he on his part will refrain from [attacking] the king of the North for [some] years. 9 Then the latter will enter the realm of the king of the South, but will return to his [own] land. 10 “His sons will mobilize and assemble a multitude of great forces; and one of them will keep on coming and overflow and pass through, that he may again wage war up to his [very] fortress. 11 The king of the South will be enraged and go forth and fight with the king of the North. Then the latter will raise a great multitude, but [that] multitude will be given into the hand of the [former]. 12 When the multitude is carried away, his heart will be lifted up, and he will cause tens of thousands to fall; yet he will not prevail. 13 For the king of the North will again raise a greater multitude

than the former, and after an interval of some years he will press on with a great army and much equipment. 14 "Now in those times many will rise up against the king of the South; the violent ones among your people will also lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision, but they will fall down.

(Verse 7) Ptolemy III Euergetes takes over the reign of his father Ptolemy II. As Bernice's brother – he is "one of the descendants of her line", that is, from the same family – he wants to avenge her. He mobilizes a powerful army and defeats the king of the North Seleucus II in a series of battles. Ptolemy III also conquered the Syrian fortress Seleukeia.

(Verses 8-9) When Ptolemy III returns to Egypt, he takes a huge booty with him. This booty consists of immeasurable treasures, countless sanctuaries and idols. He is also transporting a large number of prisoners from Syria, who have taken a prominent place there. After that, there are a few years of rest without a battle between Syria and Egypt.

(Verse 10) The two sons of the king of Syria, Seleucus II, Seleucus III and his brother Antiochus III, want to continue the war against Egypt. They recruit masses of mercenaries to mobilize a huge and war-qualified army.

In the second part of the verse it suddenly concerns only one of the sons. This is because Seleucus III is killed by poisoning around 223 BC. Therefore, what follows further in the description refers only to Antiochus III. Around the years 221, 219 and 218 BC he attacks Egypt three times and crosses the border.

(Verses 11-13) During the third offensive of Antiochus III, in which he also conquered part of the land of Israel, a special outburst of wrath from Egypt occurs. Ptolemy IV strikes back and defeats Antiochus III about 217 BC in the decisive battle of Raffia near Gaza. This conquest gives him a great multitude of the enemy in his hands.

This great victory makes him proud. However, he does not know how to exploit the "fall" of "tens of thousands" to strengthen his power. He simply lets Antiochus III move away with what is left of his army. Antiochus III can therefore recover from his defeat at Raffia. Thus, "after an interval of some years" i.e. sixteen years later (verse 13), he can start a new attack on Egypt. The army which he then has is larger than the previous one. Also materially he is very well equipped.

(Verse 14) The time Antiochus III chooses to start a new offensive against Egypt is well chosen. The king of the South has to deal with revolt in his country. Egypt is weakened by internal unrest and the fight for the throne.

Then all of a sudden there is the question of “the violent ones among your people”. “Your people” is the people of Daniel, Israel. Here we hear for the first time in this chapter about God’s people. In Israel, which falls under the authority of Egypt, some of the Jews enter into an alliance with Syria against Ptolemy V, the son and successor of Ptolemy IV. These are “the violent ones” from Israel.

They will revolt against the king of the South, but will stumble, that is, they will not succeed and die. Their uprising contributes to the confirmation of the vision. Here again we have to deal with what man does in his responsibility on the one hand and that God uses this to fulfill His plans on the other hand, while not reducing man’s responsibility to the slightest extent.

We must understand that Israel, which lies between the two warring parties, is always involved in this war. Israel is the area where many a war between the two countries was fought. They are alternately dominated by Syria and Egypt, depending on who emerged as the winner. The suffering that all this has brought for Israel has been great.

Dan 11:15-20 | The King of the North

15 Then the king of the North will come, cast up a siege ramp and capture a well-fortified city; and the forces of the South will not stand [their ground], not even their choicest troops, for there will be no strength to make a stand. 16 But he who comes against him will do as he pleases, and no one will [be able to] withstand him; he will also stay [for a time] in the Beautiful Land, with destruction in his hand. 17 He will set his face to come with the power of his whole kingdom, bringing with him a proposal of peace which he will put into effect; he will also give him the daughter of women to ruin it. But she will not take a stand [for him] or be on his side. 18 Then he will turn his face to the coastlands and capture many. But a commander will put a stop to his scorn against him; moreover, he will repay him for his scorn. 19 So he will turn his face toward the fortresses of his own land, but he will stumble and fall and be

found no more. 20 "Then in his place one will arise who will send an oppressor through the Jewel of [his] kingdom; yet within a few days he will be shattered, though not in anger nor in battle.

(Verse 15) The king of the North, Antiochus III, wins a great victory over Egypt around 198 BC. The commander of the Egyptian army, who had repelled an attack by Antiochus III years earlier, flees to Sidon. Antiochus III chases him and takes over the city after a siege. Antiochus III drives back to their country the special forces of the king of the South who came up to break through the siege. They have no strength to hold out.

(Verse 16) Antiochus III is supreme. He can do whatever he wants. No one is able to stop him. At that time he subdues all Israel, "the Beautiful Land" (cf. Dan 8:9), to himself. From that moment on, Israel is under Syrian rule for a long time, a rule that weighs more heavily on them than the rule of Egypt. They are under a ruler who has the power to destroy whatever he wants to destroy.

(Verse 17) Around 194 BC Antiochus III tries to gain Syrian influence in Egypt by means of a marriage. He gives Ptolemy V his daughter Cleopatra to be his wife. Antiochus III promises to give her a few countries as a gift, including Israel. The further course of history makes the plans to increase his power fail, among other things, because Cleopatra immediately after her marriage takes the side of her husband.

(Verse 18) An area to which Antiochus III then sets his mind is "the coastlands", of which he "captures many". This relates to the conquest of a large part of the Greek islands. However, because of his greed for conquest to the west, Antiochus incurs the wrath of the Romans. "A commander" of the emerging Roman empire stops this king of the North. In 190 BC Antiochus III is completely defeated by the Roman commander Lucius Scipio in the decisive battle of Magnesia in Asia Minor. He must withdraw from Greece.

He is forced to give up all the elephants, pay a high war compensation and also give twenty hostages. Among these hostages is his younger son, who later becomes significant and known by the name Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The Romans also impose a very high annual tax on him.

With a remnant of his defeated army Antiochus III then returns to his country. All his pride, fame and ambition have been dragged through the mud. He must accept to be defamed, without any possibility of retaliation for what has been done to him.

(Verse 19) In order to pay the high taxes imposed on him, Antiochus III robs the fortresses and temples of his own country. When he wants to plunder the temple in Elymaic in 187 BC, the population revolted against him. Enraged the crowds come to defend their sanctuary and kill their king.

(Verse 20) After the death of Antiochus III his son Seleucus IV takes possession of the Syrian throne. Through his tax collector Heliodorus he demands high taxes in order to pay the imposed taxes to the Romans. For this he also sends him to Jerusalem to take the temple treasures.

“Within a few days”, i.e. twelve years, of rule (while his father has ruled for thirty-five years), Seleucus IV is killed. This does not happen through the wrath of an angry mob or through war, but through poisoning by his own tax collector Heliodorus. The latter hopes to gain power himself through this.

Dan 11:21-31 | Antiochus IV Epiphanes

21 In his place a despicable person will arise, on whom the honor of kingship has not been conferred, but he will come in a time of tranquility and seize the kingdom by intrigue. 22 The overflowing forces will be flooded away before him and shattered, and also the prince of the covenant. 23 After an alliance is made with him he will practice deception, and he will go up and gain power with a small [force of] people. 24 In a time of tranquility he will enter the richest [parts] of the realm, and he will accomplish what his fathers never did, nor his ancestors; he will distribute plunder, booty and possessions among them, and he will devise his schemes against strongholds, but [only] for a time. 25 He will stir up his strength and courage against the king of the South with a large army; so the king of the South will mobilize an extremely large and mighty army for war; but he will not stand, for schemes will be devised against him. 26 Those who eat his choice food will destroy him, and his army will overflow, but many will fall down slain. 27 As for both kings, their hearts will be [intent]

on evil, and they will speak lies [to each other] at the same table; but it will not succeed, for the end is still [to come] at the appointed time. 28 Then he will return to his land with much plunder; but his heart will be [set] against the holy covenant, and he will take action and [then] return to his [own] land. 29 "At the appointed time he will return and come into the South, but this last time it will not turn out the way it did before. 30 For ships of Kittim will come against him; therefore he will be disheartened and will return and become enraged at the holy covenant and take action; so he will come back and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant. 31 Forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation.

(Verse 21) However, after the death of Seleucus IV power does not come into the hands of Heliodorus, but into the hands of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. This man is one of the greatest enemies of God's people about whom is written in the Old Testament. He is released by the Romans and returned to his country. The kingship is not something that awaits him. The sons of his brother Seleucus IV, Demetrius and Antiochus, are the first right-holders to the throne. Yet Antiochus IV knows to seize the kingdom by flattering and played friendliness. Heliodorus also has to give way to him.

(Verse 22) Everything that stands in the way of this conqueror Antiochus IV Epiphanes, any opposition, is removed by him. Nothing can hinder him in his progress. The "prince of the covenant" is the high priest Onias III who was deposed by Antiochus IV in 175 BC and sent away into exile ("flooded away"). In 171 BC Onias III is murdered ("shattered").

(Verse 23) In Jerusalem exists an orthodox party which is apostate from Judaism and which is Hellenistic minded. This party is led by Jason, the brother of Onias III. The party's influence in Israel is strong. Thereby they manage to make an alliance with Antiochus IV Epiphanes. They want to introduce pagan lifestyles in Israel and hope that this will make their communal life with other nations more peaceful and pleasant. But the exact opposite happens! The initial kindness of the Syrian king Antiochus Epiphanes stands for nothing but lies and deceit.

After completing his first campaign against Egypt, Antiochus Epiphanes travels home through Israel on his way back. There he goes to Jerusalem to

establish his power in that city, because when he is in Egypt, there is great military unrest in this city. The Jews have to pay for that! Although he has only few people, he takes the city without difficulty. The Hellenistic minded party of the Jews open the doors for him. Once in the city Antiochus plunders the temple and causes a horrible massacre.

(Verse 24) Antiochus IV Epiphanes plunders Israel more than his ancestors had done. The members of the Hellenistic party of the Jews supporting him are rewarded by him with gifts and the granting of jobs. Greek officers and civil servants also benefit from his booty. The fortified city of Jerusalem has suffered indescribably from his atrocities. But to their consolation it is added that this suffering will not always continue. We know that God has determined its time.

(Verses 25-26) The events described in verses 25-27 are before the events described in verses 23b-24. The events of verses 23b-24 take place in the time from 175 BC. In verse 25 we are back in the year 170 BC. In his thirst for expansion of his empire Antiochus Epiphanes starts in that year with a large army the so-called 'Sixth Syrian War' against "the king of the South", that is Egypt. At that moment his still underaged nephew Ptolemy VI is sitting on the throne of Egypt. That seems to Antiochus Epiphanes a favorable opportunity to expand his empire.

Ptolemy tries to stop the aggressor with an extremely large and mighty army, but loses the battle. He tries to flee, but fails to escape from his uncle. The city of Alexandria, which in contrast to a great part of Egypt cannot be conquered by Antiochus Epiphanes, surprisingly proclaims the younger brother of Ptolemy VI as king. These are the plans that are devised against Ptolemy by those "who eat his choice food". They will "destroy him". This internal betrayal is the cause of his defeat.

(Verse 27) When the two kings, Antiochus Epiphanes and Ptolemy, sit together at the table after the war won by Antiochus, it is as if they deal with each other in peace. Ptolemy VI negotiates a treaty with Antiochus Epiphanes, with the intention that he subjects himself, but does not abide by it. Antiochus, in turn, is out to submit to himself the whole of Egypt and therefore pretends he wants to help Ptolemy against his brother who

has been proclaimed king in Alexandria. Both kings act according to their own false nature.

However, the agreements between Egypt and Syria are not achieving their goal. The reason given is that “the end is still [to come] at the appointed time”. That is to say, developments must continue because the end that God has in mind cannot yet come. It means that the time of the end of the oppression of Israel has not yet come.

(Verse 28) Antiochus Epiphanes leaves Egypt with an unprecedented plunder of war. He would have liked to have taken Alexandria as well, but reports of riots in Syria force him to withdraw from the war scene. His hatred of the faith in the God of the Bible is enormous. When he passes Jerusalem on his return trip, he commits the greatest atrocities there and brags the most shameful language. The objects of his hatred are those who live according to the “holy covenant” and remain faithful to God in secret. After giving free rein to his hatred of God and what is His, he returns to his country.

(Verses 29-30) In 168 BC Antiochus Epiphanes started a new war against Egypt. One of the reasons for this is the news of the reconciliation of his two cousins. But this attack, in contrast to the other times, is only half successful. There are “ships of Kittim” coming against him. “Ships of Kittim” seems to refer to Cyprus, but can also be understood in a broader way and then includes the countries of the Mediterranean Sea that are under the rule of the Romans. The arrival of the Romans causes the king of the north to recoil and to return. For this he must pass through Palestine. On the way he vents his rage on the remnant. At the same time he connects himself with those who forsake the holy covenant, these are the unfaithful, apostate Jews.

In history we see that when Antiochus Epiphanes and his army advance to Alexandria, he meets a Roman envoy, led by the consul Gajus Popilius Laenas. The latter hands him an ultimatum with the instruction to leave Egypt within a certain time. When the Syrian king, full of tricks and schemes, asks for time to reflect, the consul draws a circle around him in the sand with a stick and says: ‘Decide here.’ With gnashing teeth and

filled with powerless anger, Antiochus Epiphanes is forced to submit to the iron and rigid will of the Roman power.

Deeply humiliated Antiochus Epiphanes returns home. On that return trip, he passes through Israel again. There he gives free rein to his anger and wrath and pours it out on the God-fearing Jews. The apostate party of the Jews, who are described as “those who forsake the holy covenant”, is again of great use to him.

(Verse 31) Around 167 BC Antiochus Epiphanes sent his tax collector Apollonius to Jerusalem with a powerful army. This one raids Jerusalem from a vicious ambush, plunders the city, ignites fires, murders countless Jews, has women and children – as far as they have not been able to flee – taken away, pulls down the city walls and exercises a reign of terror in Jerusalem. He turns the city of David into a fortified city and places an occupation force there.

Then the worship in the temple is abolished. This happened in December 168 BC. On pain of death, the keeping of the commandments of the Old Testament is forbidden. The burnt offering altar is renamed and called Zeus altar. In doing so, an idol of Zeus, who has facial traits of Antiochus Epiphanes, is set up.

Dan 11:32-35 | Those Who Have Insight

32 By smooth [words] he will turn to godlessness those who act wickedly toward the covenant, but the people who know their God will display strength and take action. 33 Those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many; yet they will fall by sword and by flame, by captivity and by plunder for [many] days. 34 Now when they fall they will be granted a little help, and many will join with them in hypocrisy. 35 Some of those who have insight will fall, in order to refine, purge and make them pure until the end time; because [it is] still [to come] at the appointed time.

(Verse 32) Antiochus Epiphanes tries not only through violence, but also through flattery to bring the Jews to become apostate from the God of the Bible. With those who have already shown no decisiveness about Divine revelation, he will succeed in so doing. He not only abolishes the religion of the true God, but also involves the apostate Jews.

However, there are a large number of Jews in Israel who want to remain faithful to their fathers' God even in the greatest need. Here we meet the Maccabees. They oppose the horrific practices introduced by Antiochus Epiphanes and fight for the restoration of the temple service. The priest Mattathias, together with his five sons, resist the apostasy.

With his sons and all those who join him, he goes into the wilderness and from there fights a guerrilla war against the Syrian occupation forces and also against the apostate Jews. They also destroy, as far as possible, the idol altars. After the death of the priest Mattathias, his sons Simon and Judas decidedly continue the struggle.

The revolt of the Maccabees has a phenomenal result. The law-keeping Jews beat the Syrian armies so far back in many battles that they regain control over Jerusalem. On December 4, 164 BC, the temple is also rededicated. Its commemoration is mentioned in the New Testament (Jn 10:22).

(Verse 33) The law-keeping Jews, "those who have insight", are keen to call upon the masses of the Jewish people to be faithful to the living God and His Word. In these confused times, however, very many have to pay with death for their devotion to God. The cruelest and most varied torments are inflicted upon them. "Sword" and "flame" and "captivity" and "plunder" make their lives unbearable. This situation is referred to by the author of the letter to the Hebrews in the chapter of the heroes of faith, which includes these "who have insight" (Heb 11:35b).

These "who have insight" are the Maccabees and those who help them. Much has been accomplished by them with regard to the service in the temple. They have been strengthened by God. The Hebrew word for those who have insight, *maskilim*, means 'those who have got insight through education'. They have been in the school of God and are formed in wisdom and understanding. It is experience gained in practice. Wisdom is knowing by experience, knowing how to behave, especially in the end time.

Those who have insight and act are formed in secret. You don't have to be old to have insight. Daniel is already as a young man someone with insight or understanding (Dan 1:3-6,19-20). God begins in the end time His work of restoration among His people through those with understanding. They

teach in righteousness. Those who understand are a remnant. In the great tribulation they are of great significance (Hos 14:9; Psa 107:43; Jam 3:13-18).

(Verse 34) The faithful Jews have, as we have seen, gained enormous military successes, although many of them in that time had to suffer and die as martyrs. "A little help" refers to these successes and also to Mattathias' revolt. The 'great help' will only come when the Messiah intervenes in world affairs and establishes a worldwide rule of peace.

It is clear that the prestigious victories of the Maccabees led many unfaithful Jews to join them. This is done with insincere motives and without their hearts having become warm for the truth of the living God. These opportunists only join, because this seems the most favorable choice for them.

(Verse 35) Those who have insight also have to be refined and purged and made pure or white themselves. Refining is what happens with a view to their insight and purification has to do with their behavior, their appearance (cf. Pro 25:4; Mal 3:3a). The result is pure whiteness, both of the mind and of the behavior. The persecutions of that time do not in any way achieve the purpose of the Syrian power.

The faithfulness of those who have to endure martyrdom leads much more, in many cases, to a reconsideration and an even more decisive attitude towards the revealed will of God in Holy Scripture. It makes their faith even purer. Throughout the centuries and to this day, the faithfulness of the Jews in this period has become an incentive for many believers to persist in persecution and difficulties!

The second part of the verse makes it clear that the persecutions in the time of the Maccabees did not yet usher in "the end time". The similarities with the end time are great, but after the persecutions the worldwide rule of the Lord Jesus has not yet come. Time still has to pass until the promises of the LORD in connection with the end time are fulfilled.

Dan 11:36-39 | The Antichrist and His Religion

36 *"Then the king will do as he pleases, and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods; and he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done. 37 He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the desire*

of women, nor will he show regard for any [other] god; for he will magnify himself above [them] all. 38 But instead he will honor a god of fortresses, a god whom his fathers did not know; he will honor [him] with gold, silver, costly stones and treasures. 39 He will take action against the strongest of fortresses with [the help] of a foreign god; he will give great honor to those who acknowledge [him] and will cause them to rule over the many, and will parcel out land for a price.

(Verse 36) In this verse a leap is made to the end time, that is to say that the events described from this verse will have their full and real fulfilment in the end time. The expression “the king” without addition appears here for the first time in this chapter. Previously, there has always been talk of the king of the South or of the North. “The king” is still Antiochus Epiphanes. However, the term “the king” is used here because from this verse on he is clearly a type of the antichrist. What is said here about Antiochus Epiphanes, in reality applies in the full sense to the antichrist.

If we look at what is said in this verse and we know somewhat the character of the antichrist, we see how these things apply fully to him. To some extent what is said here is also true of Antiochus Epiphanes, but we have seen that he was forced by the Romans to retreat. We don’t see anything like that with the antichrist. The antichrist acts at his own discretion. This means that he acts completely independently and of self will. God is not mentioned at all. He is ignored.

The second characteristic of the antichrist is that he exalts himself and magnifies himself above every god. He does not tolerate anyone else being given honor other than himself. After ignoring God, he puts God aside and makes himself god instead of God. The third is that he speaks monstrous things against the supreme, and only, true God. Here he defies God. What Paul writes about the antichrist to the Thessalonians corresponds to what we read here in Daniel about “the king” (2Thes 2:3-4; Rev 13:11-18).

It seems that no one can stop him in his wickedness and silence him. It seems that he can go on doing his business undisturbed. But God’s judgment on him will come at the time appointed by God. The antichrist will be able to go his own way until what God has decided about His people is fulfilled. The wrath mentioned here is the wrath of God over His people

because of their idolatry and the rejection of His Son. The antichrist is just like Antiochus Epiphanes a rod of discipline in the hand of God which he uses in His wrath (cf. Isa 10:5).

(Verse 37) This verse is also about Antiochus Epiphanes, but above that it is about the antichrist. The antichrist is a Jew, but he does not heed the God of his fathers. By “the desire of women” is meant the Messiah, of Whom every Jewish woman wished to become the mother. So he also ignores God’s Messiah, because he will present himself as such. It is only about him. He claims all honor for himself. Once again it is emphasized that he sees himself as a god. He demands the upper place and tolerates no one beside him, let alone above him.

(Verse 38) While on the one hand he tolerates no one above or beside him and wants to be the only object of worship himself, he himself also has an object of worship. His homage goes out to “a god of fortresses”. This refers to his military power. This god his fathers did not know, for they relied on God and not on their military strength.

The antichrist worships his military power as a god. That is his strength. He relies on that. This makes him the master of the surrounding hostile countries. In order to provide this god with the necessary supplies, he invests in it with all valuable materials. He has the technological knowledge and buys what is necessary to equip himself with the most advanced weapons.

(Verse 39) Besides his own military apparatus, the antichrist also receives support from the autocrat of the restored Western Roman empire, the united Europe, with whom he will forge an alliance. As we have already seen, this will prove to be a covenant with death (Dan 9:27; Isa 28:15a). He will reward all those who defend his politics. They will be given a considerable position in which they can exercise power over others.

To his faithful followers he “will parcel out land”, which is Israel, as a reward for their complicity. Only those who openly engage in idolatry and acknowledge the antichrist can buy and sell (Rev 13:16-17). The most loyal servants receive great rewards. As far as the application of the end time is concerned, we now find ourselves in the second half of the last year-week.

Dan 11:40-45 | The Future King of the North

40 *“At the end time the king of the South will collide with him, and the king of the North will storm against him with chariots, with horsemen and with many ships; and he will enter countries, overflow [them] and pass through. 41 He will also enter the Beautiful Land, and many [countries] will fall; but these will be rescued out of his hand: Edom, Moab and the foremost of the sons of Ammon. 42 Then he will stretch out his hand against [other] countries, and the land of Egypt will not escape. 43 But he will gain control over the hidden treasures of gold and silver and over all the precious things of Egypt; and Libyans and Ethiopians [will follow] at his heels. 44 But rumors from the East and from the North will disturb him, and he will go forth with great wrath to destroy and annihilate many. 45 He will pitch the tents of his royal pavilion between the seas and the beautiful Holy Mountain; yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.*

(Verse 40) History continues here. The king of the South will collide with “him”, that is the king of the previous verses. When we think of “him”, we first think of Antiochus Epiphanes as the king of the North. But even more clearly than can be seen in the previous verses, we see here that it is about the end time, because in this verse we read that it is about an event “at the end time”.

In verses 36-39, the characteristics mentioned there, we see the clear parallel between Antiochus Epiphanes and the antichrist. It is worth recalling that verse 36 refers to “the king” and that up to and including verse 39 it is always about “the king”, without the addition “of the North” which is always used in the verses before. The thought of “the king of the North” has therefore faded and disappeared into the background, leaving room to think of the antichrist.

As a type of the antichrist Antiochus Epiphanes has made the religion of the Jews a religion of apostasy of God. With this he has brought the apostate masses to a worship of the dictator of the restored Western Roman empire for whom he has erected an idolatrous image in the temple. The antichrist is the enemy *inside* of the people of God.

From verse 40 onwards, however, there is again talk of “the king of the North”, but now explicitly linked to the end time. This means that we

should no longer think here of the historic Antiochus Epiphanes, but of someone who in the end time will behave like the enemy from *outside* of the Jewish people. Here Antiochus Epiphanes is seen from a different angle. He is not only the *religious* enemy of the Jews, he is also their *political* enemy. As the king of the North, he is out to wipe Israel from the face of the earth.

That is what we have before us in verses 40-45. In it we no longer see the historical Antiochus Epiphanes, but the future king of the North. This person will, as we have seen in the antichrist, perform entirely in the spirit of the historic Antiochus Epiphanes.

The reason for the revelation of his enmity against the Jewish people is an attack by the king of the South on "him", the king of the North. It may also be that "him" means the antichrist. In any case, the initiative for this confrontation between the two kings in the end time comes from the king of the South. Any movement of the king of the South in the direction of the king of the North will be seen by the king of the North as a declaration of war.

The king of the North will mobilize his armies and also deploy his fleet and with a great display of power attack Egypt. He will also visit other countries and tie them to his triumph chariot. He will "overflow" these countries like an overwhelming flood (cf. Isa 8:7-8; 10:22; 28:17; Dan 9:27).

(Verses 41-43) In his bellicose actions in reaction to the attack of Egypt Syria will, besides many countries, also enter the land of Israel, which here is called "the Beautiful Land" (cf. Dan 8:9; 11:16; Eze 20:6). Three countries, however, will escape the king of the North's desire to conquer: Edom, Moab and the foremost of the sons of Ammon. These countries are located in the area of present-day Jordan.

One reason these countries do not come under the power of the king of the North may be that God will judge these old enemies Himself. He will then do so by the God-fearing who are in the land (Isa 11:13-14). In this way God ensures that the former enemies of Israel receive their rightful retribution from the hands of the people they have tried to resist and disadvantage.

The king of the North then moves further south to attack Egypt. Unlike the three countries just mentioned, Egypt will not escape the grip of the king of the North. Egypt has great material wealth because of the country's natural resources and also because this country has become the major center of western and eastern trade in that part of the world. Of all this wealth, the king of the North takes hold. Libya and Cush (or Ethiopia), Egypt's southern allies, will share in the fate of Egypt and will be subjected to his power by the king of the North.

(Verses 44-45) While the king of the North is waging war, he hears rumors from the East and from the North. What these rumors are is not entirely clear. However, there are some indications as to what these rumors might be. We read elsewhere about "the kings from the east" (Rev 16:12). There is also something to be said for the suggestion that the rumors from the east are caused by the return of the fled remnant into the land driving back the occupying forces (Zec 12:4-6; Joel 3:11; Mic 5:4-8; Zec 10:3,5-6a).

The rumors from the North can be attributed to the arrival of allies, who are rushing to Israel's aid. We can think of the armies of the restored Western Roman empire, that is, the united Europe, which will come to the aid of their ally Israel and enter the land from the north. The armies of the united Europe will advance to Har-Magedon (Rev 16:16).

They believe they are going in their own power, but it is the mysterious power of God that leads them there to judge them there. Har-Magedon is a plain in the north of Israel, a plain that is very suitable for a great battle. What will be presented by the news media as a relief operation for the threatened Israel, is in reality an advance to wage war against the Lamb (Rev 19:19).

Because of these rumors, the king of the North will interrupt his triumphal march in the south. Roaring with rage, he will return to Israel to beat down the uprising that is going on there. He will spare nothing and no one. He intends to destroy many and neutralize them.

Then we read that he "will pitch the tents of his royal pavilion", which is his headquarters, "between the seas and the beautiful Holy Mountain". The king of the North will establish his headquarters "between the seas" – meaning the Mediterranean Sea, which in the Hebrew is called "seas" as

a designation for “the great sea” – and the “Holy Mountain” – that is the temple mountain in Jerusalem.

When he besieges Jerusalem for the second time in this way, the need of the faithful remnant will come to a climax. They suffer enormous losses from the antichrist in the land and they are now also threatened by the king of the North. They share this last threat, the threat from outside, and the resulting battle with the godless masses. The faithful remnant has a double enemy to endure: one inside, the antichrist, and one outside, the king of the North.

But if the need is greatest, for the remnant the salvation and for the godless masses the final judgment is near. Salvation comes from the air, for this is the moment when the Lord Jesus comes to earth and puts His feet on the Mount of Olives (Zec 14:3-4a). Then He kills the king of the North. It is not said in so many words here. It says simply and therefore penetratingly: “Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.” He who has been so boasting of his strength and thought he could do anything he wants, is killed without anyone standing up for him. No one is able to avert his judgment.

The fact that the future king of the North is killed near Jerusalem is further proof that it cannot be the historical Antiochus Epiphanes. According to non-biblical history, this historical figure was not killed in Jerusalem, but died of a disease in Persia.

Daniel 12

Dan 12:1 | A Time of Distress

1 *“Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands [guard] over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.*

The words at the beginning of the verse, “at that time”, make it clear that we are still in the same time of the previous verses, that is the end time. At the end of the previous chapter, we saw how much “the sons of your people”, the people of Daniel, the faithful remnant, will be oppressed. On the one hand, they are severely persecuted by their apostate fellow countrymen, which are the antichrist and the unbelieving mass. On the other hand, life is made unbearable for them by an enemy outside the people, the king of the North, who besieges and distresses Jerusalem.

This oppression is called here “a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time”. It will be a time of unprecedented distress. The Lord Jesus, who calls this time the time of “a great tribulation”, also speaks of the fact that this time is unparalleled in world history (Mt 24:21; Jer 30:7).

While the distress of the faithful remnant is great because of the siege, that remnant receives support from the invisible world. To his encouragement, Daniel was told that his hard-tested fellow countrymen were being assigned someone who “stands” over them. That he ‘stands’ there, means that he is reliable and makes their case his own. He is there for them and is committed to them. They are not alone. With this announcement it becomes clear that the faithful remnant is not a plaything of the evil powers, although it may seem so. The actual warfare takes place in the heavenly places, as we saw in Daniel 8.

The outcome for “your people” is also given: they will be rescued. That too is a great encouragement. The salvation from all misery will happen. However, this salvation does not apply to all those who belong externally

to God's earthly people. The wicked mass will perish. The salvation, the rescue, is only the part of "everyone who is found written in the book". These are those who are known to God as His own and whose "names are recorded in heaven" (Lk 10:20), "in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev 21:27; 13:8).

Dan 12:2 | The Resurrection

2 Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace [and] everlasting contempt.

In the previous verse it is about the people of God in the land in the end time and especially about the faithful remnant. It is about the Israelites in the land who have escaped persecution and who will enter alive the kingdom of peace. It is also indicated that they are known by God. He wrote them in His book. That segregates them from all those who are not written in His book: that is the unbelieving, apostate mass.

In verse 2 it is about those of God's people who "sleep in the dust of the ground" outside the promised land, that means, that they have died (cf. Gen 3:19; Psa 22:15b). Here it says "many", because it is not about all deceased people, but about the deceased from Israel. They all will awake. But we also see a division in that group. This division appears when they "will awake", i.e. when they arise. There are "these" who awake "to everlasting life" and there are "others" who awake "to disgrace [and] everlasting contempt" (cf. Mt 25:46).

These who awake to everlasting life will share in the blessing of the kingdom of peace (cf. Psa 133:3b). Everlasting life here is the atmosphere of life, life in a fearless glory, without pain and sorrow, with only pleasure in fellowship with the Lord Jesus, the reigning Prince of peace. These awakened ones are not in the earthly part of the kingdom of peace – that is for those who enter the kingdom of peace alive – but in the heavenly part of it (Mt 13:43a).

By describing the part of the unbelievers as "to disgrace [and] everlasting contempt" the contrast with that glory is presented in the sharpest and most poignant way. The fate of the lost is as everlasting as that of those who have been saved. And as glorious as the destiny of the elect is, so terri-

ble is the destiny of the lost. On the basis of this verse, both the doctrine of universalism or universal salvation and that of the annihilation of the soul is clearly contrary to God's Word and therefore reprehensible.

It is important to point out that the resurrection to everlasting or eternal life and the resurrection to everlasting or eternal contempt will not take place at the same time. There is no such thing in Scripture as a general resurrection of believers and unbelievers together at the same time. On the contrary, Scripture speaks of a "first resurrection" (Rev 20:5b), making it clear that there is another resurrection.

The first resurrection is in phases: first Christ, "then those who are of Christ, at His coming" (1Cor 15:23). The coming of Christ also takes place in phases. He first comes to take His own unto Himself in the air (1Thes 4:15-18). On that occasion, all believers who have slept since Abel are raised up and the living believers are changed. Then the wedding of the Lamb takes place (Rev 19:7). Then the Lord Jesus comes for the second time from heaven, together with the church and the other believers, to defeat His enemies and establish His kingdom. That is the moment when the martyrs killed during the last year-week will rise up to also participate in the reign of Christ (Rev 20:4). Then the first resurrection is complete. The unbelievers will only become alive after the kingdom of peace and be judged before the great white throne, before which only unbelievers stand (Rev 20:5a,11-15).

There are two resurrections. Thus Paul says to Felix, "that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked" (Acts 24:15; Lk 14:14). There is a period of a thousand years between the two resurrections. The same applies to what the Lord Jesus calls the "resurrection of life" and the "resurrection of judgment" (Jn 5:29).

Dan 12:3 | Those Who Have Insight

3 Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

Among those who form the faithful, God-fearing remnant, "those who have insight" have a special place (Dan 11:33,35). During their lives they

have taken that place among the people and they take that place in the heavenly part of the kingdom of peace when it has come. We can see that from the way they are presented. They “shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven” and “like the stars”. This place they will receive as a reward for their service on earth. They will also be signposts in the firmament in the kingdom of peace, giving directions for life on earth.

Through their service on earth “those who have insight” have led “the many to righteousness”. They were taught by and from the Lord Jesus, and by this they got insight and obtained understanding and wisdom. This understanding and this wisdom have been of great importance in a time of enormous trials and temptations of all kinds. They have been able to teach the believers the right way, that is the way of the righteous. Leading the many to righteousness means that they have taught many how to live righteously.

It will be clear that the leading to righteousness of others is not meant to teach the way in which one can be justified before God. How a man can be righteous with God is discussed in detail in the letter to the Romans. But the doctrine of righteousness before God does not stop with the knowledge a person has that God no longer sees sin in him. The latter is an important and necessary teaching and must first be known and accepted. But it must be followed by a righteous life, which is a life in which God gets what He is due and in which people get what they are due. It is about the teaching by those with insight and that they show how to live in a world in which doing *unrighteousness* is the most natural thing, must live as one for whom doing *righteousness* is the most natural thing.

Understanding and wisdom are especially needed in the end time, that is the time in which we live. That is why it is also important for us to let our minds be shaped by and be taught in wisdom. This is only possible at the feet of the Lord Jesus. He is the perfect Understanding and Wise. Those who have insight are also those who can teach others, who can pass on their wisdom to others. Paul writes in his second letter to Timothy, a letter about the end time, that people are needed who are able to teach others (2Tim 2:2).

Those who have insight are people who have been taught and who also teach themselves. The end time is so corrupt that we need God-fearing people more than ever who can make a distinction between good and evil. In the end time in which we live, these things are reversed. Evil is called good and good is called evil (Isa 5:20). If we think we can decide for ourselves, we have already been affected by this reversal (Isa 5:21). This difference must be made clear to us. We only learn this in the presence of God.

With this announcement about those who have insight, the explanation to Daniel about the things to come has come to an end. The kingdom of peace as such is not a part of what Daniel has been told. He is the prophet in the times of the nations. What concerns him is how his people will fare during those times. That is what has been told to him and that is what we have been told by him. The comments that follow are instructions to Daniel on what to do with what has been made known to him. A few more questions arise from that and there will be an answer to that as well.

Dan 12:4 | The Book Must Be Sealed Up

4 But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase."

Daniel is ordered to keep secret what he has heard by concealing the words and to seal up the book. This means that the time of fulfilment of these things has not yet arrived. The fulfilment will take place in the end of time. Then many will go back and forth and examine what has been said here to Daniel. This will increase their knowledge and give them insight into the circumstances of the end time. This book will give them enormous support in the time of the end.

For us, New Testament believers, the book is not sealed up. We live in the end time (2Tim 3:1; 1Jn 2:18a). In addition, the Holy Spirit has come Who discloses what is to come (Jn 16:13). Future things are explained to us in the book of Revelation. For us, the words about the future are not sealed up. From the book of Revelation we know that time is near (Rev 22:10), while it will take a long time for Daniel and his people.

Dan 12:5-7 | How Long?

5 Then I, Daniel, looked and behold, two others were standing, one on this bank of the river and the other on that bank of the river. 6 And one said to the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, "How long [will it be] until the end of [these] wonders?" 7 I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time; and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these [events] will be completed.

When the angel has finished his announcements to Daniel, Daniel sees two other angels together with the Man about Whom has been reported before (Dan 10:5-8). One of the angels asks the Man about the length of history shown in the vision. He most probably expresses the question that lives in the heart of Daniel. He speaks of these "wonders". Everything that is shown in the vision is a wonderful development of the events. These events lead to the entry into the promised blessing of God's people, after they have experienced the salvation from the time of great distress.

The Man to Whom the question is asked can be none other than the Lord Jesus. He knows the answer and gives it. Before He does so, it is still mentioned of Him that He was "above the waters of the river". This place seems to indicate symbolically that He is above all circumstances and also controls them. He will put an end to all the suffering of His people at the appointed time, after the period appointed by Him. He will do so by judging His enemies, after which He will establish a glorious realm of peace and righteousness and joy.

The duration of the time from suffering to liberation is fixed at three and a half years: "a time" is one year, "times" is two years and "half a time" is six months. That time will not be exceeded. Rather, that time has been shortened to three and a half years, for otherwise no one would survive (Mt 24:22).

That this is so, He confirms with an oath. He does so to give His own the greatest assurance that it will take so long, and not a day longer. He swears by Him Who lives forever and is not bound to time, but Who at the same time holds time in His hand. At the end of the great tribulation He returns

Who here raises His right and left hand to heaven. His return to earth will have many consequences.

But here His coming is mainly related to the place He has always wanted to give His people in the world system. He will make them “the head and not the tail” (Deu 28:13). That the reverse has become the case is because of the unfaithfulness of the people (Deu 28:44). He will fulfill His plan in the “holy people”, which is the God-fearing remnant. They form all Israel, as it is written: “So all Israel will be saved” (Rom 11:26).

All hatred of the surrounding peoples has always been and will be directed to “shatter the power of the holy people”. Through His intervention He will make His people, “the holy people”, the people who belong to Him and are devoted to Him, the heads of the nations. Israel is hated by all the surrounding peoples because of his power. That power has been shattered time and again in the past, sometimes by the king of the North, sometimes by the king of the South. In the time of the end his power is shattered once more by the king of the North. But when this hostile power has been judged by the Lord Jesus, “all these [events] will be completed”.

Dan 12:8-12 | Last Teaching

8 As for me, I heard but could not understand; so I said, “My lord, what [will be] the outcome of these [events]?” 9 He said, “Go [your way], Daniel, for [these] words are concealed and sealed up until the end time. 10 Many will be purged, purified and refined, but the wicked will act wickedly; and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand. 11 From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, [there will be] 1,290 days. 12 How blessed is he who keeps waiting and attains to the 1,335 days!

Daniel does not quite understand the message yet. He would like further clarification. He has not yet understood what we can understand, about these appointed times. Nor is it clear to him how things will proceed. Here again we see how fearless Daniel asks about the meaning of what is not clear to him.

That is an example to us. We may go to the Lord with all our questions, whether they relate to our daily needs or God’s plan with the world. If our

hearts desire fellowship with God, we will submit all our questions to Him and look forward to His answer (Hab 2:1). The heart that lives in fellowship with God is interested in all things God is interested in.

Daniel is told that these communications are not intended for him (cf. 1Pet 1:12). He will not experience that time, at least not in his life. He will be one of those who have insight who shine in the sky. It will be a long time before the end will really come for him. When that time will have come, it will be a time of purging, purifying and refining (cf. Dan 11:35).

During this time of trial, which has a purging, purifying [literally: white making] and refining effect on the remnant, the wicked will increasingly act wickedly (cf. Rev 22:11). The apostate Jews seem to have been meant with the wicked here. They have no understanding of the seriousness of the time in which they live: that the coming of Christ is imminent and that for them this means judgment. However, there are those who have insight into the times in which they live. They know that when Christ comes, this means judgment for their enemies and that this results in their liberation. This prospect will lead them to a life of purity and holiness (cf. 1Jn 3:3).

Then Daniel receives an additional communication on the duration of the period from half of the last year-week. Two events are mentioned as the time from which the calculation is to be made: the removal of the regular sacrifice, i.e. the daily burnt offering, and the setting up of the abomination of desolation i.e. an idol image instead of the regular sacrifice. The first is the removal of God's due and the basis on which He can dwell with His people. But a person cannot do without an object of worship. This is provided for by the second event: the placing of an idol image. With this God is not only removed, but replaced, so that there will be no more thought of Him.

We have already come across these two events before (Dan 8:11; 11:31). They introduce the time of great tribulation, which we have seen will last three and a half years, or "forty-two months" (Rev 13:5), or "twelve hundred and sixty days" (Rev 12:6), which is forty-two months times thirty days. Now we read here about a period that lasts thirty days longer, while counting from the same time. That means that, after three and a half years

of great tribulation have passed, there will be another 30 days with a special purpose.

The great tribulation is over when the antichrist and the king of the North are judged by the coming of the Lord Jesus. That means liberation for the people. But it does not mean that all enemies have already been defeated. There are still enemies, especially the enemy from the remotest parts of the north with his allies, who are so audacious as to attack Israel when it has entered the promised rest of the Messiah (Eze 38:2-6,15-16). But that will be to their own destruction (Eze 39:1-4). "The power of the holy people" (verse 7) can no longer be broken because the Lord Jesus is their King.

We see an example of these things in the government of Solomon, the prince of peace. During the first days of his reign as the prince of peace, the last stumbling blocks of his kingdom were removed by him in judgment.

Then there is another additional period of forty-five days. Probably this is about the completion of the restoration of the entire people after the great tribulation. Then all enemies will have been dealt with, and all the people will live in the land in peace and serve God. That is what the faithful Jew looks forward to. That is the blessing that is part of everyone who keeps waiting. Perseverance is the proof of faith that is severely tested (Rev 13:10; 14:12). That perseverance will be richly rewarded.

Dan 12:13 | A Word for Daniel Personally

13 But as for you, go [your way] to the end; then you will enter into rest and rise [again] for your allotted portion at the end of the age."

Daniel has come to the end of his life. He may enter the rest of God. At the same time he is assured, as a personal promise, that he will rise at the end of the days and receive the reward of the LORD: the fulfilment of the promises made to the fathers. He knows nothing about the interim situation. We know that the believers who have fallen asleep are with the Lord Jesus (Lk 23:43; Phil 1:23b).

Daniel will rise at the coming of the Lord Jesus as one of "the dead in Christ" and with all the fallen asleep and living believers "meet the Lord in the air" (1Thes 4:16-17). He will be present when the Lord "comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who

have believed" (2Thes 1:10). He is one of "His saints" and one of "all who have believed".

When Christ appears as "the Sun of righteousness" (Mal 4:2), Daniel will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and like one of the stars (verse 3). He will contribute to the reflection of the glory of Him about Whom it is all about: Christ, God's Anointed One.

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