

MEDITATIONS ON DANIEL

by James Boyd

Boyd's devotional and expository meditations on the Book of Daniel, examining the prophet's faithfulness in exile, the prophetic visions, and the sovereignty of God over the nations and the course of history.

10 Chapters

Table of Contents

1. 00 Meditations on Daniel
2. Chapter 1. The Captives in Babylon
3. Chapter 2. Nebuchadnezzar dreams
4. Chapter 3. Nebuchadnezzar's Image
5. Chapter 4. The Humbling of Nebuchadnezzar
6. Chapter 5. The Judgment of Belshazzar
7. Chapter 6. The deceived king, and the servant of the living God
8. Chapter 7. The Four Beasts
9. Chapter 8. The Course of Empire
10. Chapter 9. God's Word and Daniel's Confession

00 Meditations on Daniel

Mediations on Daniel by James Boyd.

Chapter 1. The Captives in Babylon

Chapter 1. The Captives in Babylon With what sorrow of heart for the degraded condition of the people of God, and with what holy and wholesome fear, we contemplate this judgment of the almighty Lawgiver, in reading the opening verses of this prophecy of Daniel! At the same time we cannot but with worshipful hearts pay tribute to the patience and righteousness of the God of Israel: patience in His bearing for so many centuries with a people that, in spite of all the mercy and grace exhibited on their behalf, only knew how to be obstinate, thankless, contentious, and rebellious, from the hour in which He took them up when they were slaves in Egypt, until the day in which His sanctuary became defiled by the enemy, who poured through the gates of Jerusalem, his victorious armies: righteousness that could not go indefinitely with a people that joined hand in hand with the nations that were the original inhabitants of the promised land, and whom they were to dispossess, on account of the abominations that they had practised. The patience of God may for a little while hold back the righteous judgments demanded by the wickedness of the creature, for though judgment is His strange work, a work in which He has no pleasure, still it is His work and when the time arrives in which, were there any longer delay, an impression might be given to His intelligent creatures that rebellion against His authority was neither offensive to Him, nor ruinous to the rebel, He is certain to show His wrath, for a false impression to His universe He can never give. He can no more act a lie than He can speak a lie. The lesson we have to learn is the truth, and no other lesson is set before us. The order of creation may appear to us in a way that is not really what it is, but this forms no part of the lesson that God is teaching us, and our ignorance of such things is no loss to us, neither is our knowledge of them the slightest gain. The natural impression we have from the order of creation is, that the earth is a fiat plain, and in the heavens above our heads are stored the light, the warmth, and the refreshment, that make life possible upon earth. And when we come to the Scriptures we find no absolute contradiction of this. We are left, as far as these things are concerned, in our native ignorance. By the way in which He has placed us with respect to these things we are taught moral lessons, which are of more importance to us than astronomy, however interesting a subject it be. By the way in which the universe presents itself to our gaze we learn that every good and perfect gift comes from above, from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning (Jas 1:17). The lights in the heavens give us, as I have said, light and warmth; and they are for signs, seasons, days, and years; and the clouds drop down the rain, and water the earth, and therefore there is seed for the sower, and bread for the eater, and men's hearts are filled with food and gladness. When man learns the great truth as to the universe he is not morally bettered. The study of astronomy has made infidels, never believers; and there is nothing to hinder the greatest astronomer upon earth being the most immoral. The Scriptures are well piloted through numberless questions that are of no value to the soul of man. It is by the Lamb without blemish and without spot, who shed His blood for our redemption, that we believe in God, not through the knowledge of the starry vault. Astronomers have been infidels, and astronomers have been believers in Jesus; but it was not astronomy that made those infidels, but rather the conceit with which his little discoveries filled his foolish heart; neither was it astronomy that made these believers. It was pride of heart that made

the infidel, and it was the grace of God that made the believer. The eternal power and divinity of God are witnessed in creation, but His heart of love is declared in redemption; and we love Him, not because He made the worlds, but because He first loved us (1Jn 4:19). And, indeed, the better we know the work of His love, the more we shall appreciate the work of His hands, and it is the knowledge of the work of His love that calls forth the worship of our hearts. The long-suffering of the Lord with that guilty nation had come to an end. They had failed Him completely. In His purpose, with respect to His government of the earth, He had marked out a position of distinction and great honour for them, but they had proved themselves to be a foolish people, a nation void of understanding, and utterly unworthy of the trust He had purposed to commit to them, and which He had made known to them by His servant Moses. Their spot was not the spot of His children. They rather bore the marks and characteristics of the ancient and primal rebel. They were a perverse and crooked generation, children in whom there was no faithfulness. They had proved themselves to be all this before they ever entered the promised land. Of them He says, "Their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter: their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps" (Deu 32:32-33).

Yet had He marked out a great place for them, as I have said. He calls to them in the love that they had so wantonly despised, and He says, "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will show thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee. When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people [the Gentile nations] according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance" (Deu 32:7-9). Israel was to be the centre of the nations, a kingdom of priests, God's peculiar treasure, through whom the nations would get light and nourishment; with God in their midst they would bear rule over the whole earth. But all this failed through their going after strange gods, and now in Daniel's day power was in the hands of the proud Gentile. The throne of government was now in Babylon, and not in Jerusalem, and the people that should have borne rule over the whole earth were slaves by the streams of that idolatrous land. They might hang their harps on the willows and shed bitter tears as they thought of Zion, but they were back once more in the house of bondage, and wider the iron rule of the heartless oppressor, and tears availed them nothing. The time to weep is when the evil presents itself to us, and when we feel within us the tendency to gratify our carnal desires, for then we may expect the intervention of God in our deliverance, that our feet may be kept in the pathway of His will. It is late, though not surely too late, to weep before the Lord when we have fallen under the power of the evil, and the hand of God is upon us in the way of chastisement. I say it is not too late even then to mourn before the Lord, but it would have been better and happier had we mourned before Him, when we felt the tendency to give the flesh a little gratification. If we weep and chasten our own souls we are not likely to require to come under the chastening of the Lord. At the same time, the circumstances into which our waywardness has brought us we cannot always expect to be altered, but if our souls are truly restored to Him we can count on His presence with us in the circumstances.

It was true for the captives brought to Babylon from the hills and valleys of Judea, the penitent and the faithful amongst them enjoyed no less the favour of God in captivity than they did in their own beloved land, for the compassions of God are above and beyond the best thought of even the

human heart renewed by grace. Was it nothing to Him to behold the walls of Jerusalem broken down by the proud idolater, the holy vessels of the Sanctuary in the house of the idols, as trophies of their victories, and the people of His choice either slaughtered unmercifully or in the chains of slavery? From what spring did the lamentations of Jeremiah the prophet flow but from that of divine affection produced by the Holy Spirit of the living God? And what were such lamentations compared with the tears of the rejected Messiah, and the cry that came from His lips as He contemplated the sorrows that were yet to fall upon the beloved city? “How often,” He says, “would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not.” The woes that fell upon Israel were from a human standpoint heartbreaking, but from a divine standpoint infinitely more so.

God had brought the people out of the land of Egypt, and from the house of bondage, where they were compelled to make bricks, and find the straw for that work wherever they could. For the moment they were glad to escape the drudgery and cruelty to which they had been so long subjected, but before they had crossed the Red Sea their thankless and faithless hearts were crying out bitterly against the God of their salvation. He divided the sea before them, so that they crossed into the desert on dry land, and He overthrew the host of Pharaoh in the waters that had been their salvation. He bore with their rebellious ways in the wilderness for a period of forty years, and eventually brought them into the land, driving out the nations from before their faces, and that by signs and wonders innumerable. But what their fathers had been in the wilderness the sons manifested themselves to be in the land—a generation of rebels. But for centuries in the land He bore with their lawless behaviour. He pleaded with them by the love He had manifested to them from the beginning of His intervention on their behalf. He hewed them by His prophets, He slew them by the words of His mouth, He chastised them with the rod of the original inhabitants of the land, who were pricks in their eyes and thorns in their sides, He scourged them by means of the attacks of the nations, until from the head to the feet they were wounds and bruises and putrefying sores, which had not been bound up, neither mollified with ointment, and all to no purpose. He has to say to them, “Why should ye be stricken any more ye will only revolt more and more” (Isa 1:5). And now they were captives in a strange land, outwardly disowned by the God of their fathers, to be dealt with according to the caprice of an autocratic and idolatrous monarch, and to shed fruitless tears at every remembrance of Zion. Surely the way of transgressors is hard. Yet is the Lord righteous, for their rebellion against His commandment had been great. The king and the seed-royal in the hand and under the power of the Gentile monarch, and the holy vessels in the idol’s temple, bear witness to the righteousness of the God of Israel. But the God-fearing remnant, while they have to suffer along with the rebellious on account of the sin of the nation, and indeed much more than the rebellious, for their faithfulness to Jehovah brings upon them additional suffering, are not left without the protecting hand of the God whom they serve; and in the case of Daniel and of his compatriots this fact is abundantly verified. They more than all others seem to have to suffer, but their sufferings only serve as an occasion for the manifestation of the power of God on their behalf. If the face of the Lord is against them that do evil, His eyes are over the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry (see 1Pe 3:12). Whatever may be the external circumstances of the professed people of God, and however terribly His hand may seem to be against them, those that are faithful to His name and interests are ever the special objects of His protecting care and guardianship. Therefore we may boldly say, “The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb 13:6).

Neither Daniel nor his three friends will defile themselves with that meat that was furnished to them from the table of the king. The nation of Israel had been put under certain laws that regulated the food they were to eat, while the Gentiles ate whatever their souls lusted after. The Jewish food regulations had a typical bearing, and now that that order of things is over we are told by the Spirit in His Word that, "Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer" (1Ti 4:4-5). But this liberty was not accorded to the nation of Israel, who were still under the shadow of good things to come, while we have come to the substance.

Therefore these captives, at whatever cost to themselves, are determined to obey God rather than men. It might have endangered their heads thus to set the king at defiance; and this unquestionably would have been their fate, if it had come to the ears of the king that they had so done. Nothing but the direct intervention of God could have saved them. But their minds were made up, and they were thoroughly agreed that it was better to part with life than that they should trespass against the distinct commandment of the living God. This might have been viewed by those set over them by the king as stupid obstinacy at the very outset of their captivity, and by it they might have made enemies of those with whom they seem to have found favour. Besides all this, those who were responsible for their healthy appearance, when the day would come in which they would have to stand before the king, might have been condemned to death. But it was no accident their being in Babylon, and He who brought them there was watching over them, and had in His hand the hearts of those set over them, and their request for a time of trial with pulse and water for their nourishment was granted. And in the end, through the rich mercy of God, Melzar had no reason to regret the leniency he exercised on their behalf; they were fairer and fatter than all those who had eaten of the king's meat. They were in the hand of God, who took care of their bodies, for He had a purpose with regard to their presence in Babylon, and until that purpose was accomplished they were as safe from harm as are the elect angels in heaven. God filled the vision of their souls, and not Nebuchadnezzar. The king's wrath may be like the roaring of a lion, but when it is a question between him and the living God, the roar of the king is not heard in the soul of the faithful believer. The witnesses for God in this world are never thrown upon their own natural resources. He maintains His own testimony by whomsoever He will, in His own method, and by His own power, for the natural resources of the creature are valueless in the struggle between light and darkness. We have only to do what we are told in His Word, and leave the consequences to Him. He is well able to take care of His own interests, and nothing that is left in His hands can go wrong. The difficulty is, that we get nervous about ourselves, and wonder what is going to happen to us; while if we only could leave ourselves and everything that concerns us to His care, and in obedience to His revealed will attend to His interests, how peaceful and happy we should be! A sparrow cannot fall to the ground without our Father; and we are of more value than many sparrows. If He is determined to have us here for Himself, an army of murderers could have no power against us; if it were His blessed will that we should seal the testimony committed to us with our blood, what does it matter? "Whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's" (Rom 14:8).

He had need of Daniel and his companions in Babylon, and whatever dangers might menace them as His witnesses, in Babylon they were to abide. And all the equipment that was necessary for the service with which they were to be entrusted came from Himself, "God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams." By divine

teaching these servants of the living God left far behind, in wisdom and understanding, all the magicians and astrologers that were in the whole realm of the king. No man goes a warfare at his own charges. In the service of God we have not to make bricks without straw. A man may be very clever, but his natural cleverness would be very little service to him in conflict with the devil; in that conflict his cleverness goes for nothing Paul says, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (1Co 10:4-5). The carnal weapon was of no value in the work of the Lord, and therefore was it discarded by the Apostle. He had learned that all that is done for God in this world must be done in God's power, and therefore did he glory in infirmities, that the power of Christ might rest upon him. The disciples, though they got their commission clearly from the Lord before His ascension, were told to tarry at Jerusalem until they would be endowed with power from on high (Luk 24:1-53); and Peter speaks of those who had preached the Gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven (1Pe 1:12). God's testimony is maintained by God's power.

It might have been thought that the subjection of the earthly people of God to Gentile domination was as truly a loss to Jehovah as to the people, for the destruction of their city, and all else that happened to them, gave a kind of warrant for the notion that the gods of Babylon had triumphed, and that the God of Israel had suffered a humiliating defeat. When He spoke of destroying the people in the desert for their refusing to go up into the promised land, Moses pleads against it on the ground of the disastrous effect such a thing would have upon His name among the nations of the earth, who would say that He had destroyed the nation because of His inability to bring them into the land (Num 14:1-45). Also in Deu 32:26-27 we read, "I said I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men: were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, Our hand is high, and the Lord has not done all this." He will not act in a way that shall give a false impression to His creature, and thus increase the darkness in which that creature walks. To enable the soul to find its way to God there is enough light in the darkest corner of the earth. Where men are in darkness it is because they prefer the darkness to the light, and not because there is no light shining. God never leaves Himself without witness. Surely there are greater and lesser degrees of light, but the least light in which men may be found, is sufficient to lead them to feel after Him, and if they do, they will find Him; for He is not far from every one of us (Act 17:27). The people of Israel were God's witnesses in the midst of a world wholly given to idolatry (Isa 43:10), but because of their unfaithfulness they had been removed from the exalted position in which they had been set to shine for Himself. But He never was left without a small remnant that were true to His name and interests, and here, in the capital of this benighted monarch, four of these lights are found brightly gleaming. The light that was despised in Jerusalem is now radiant in Babylon. Not that it was more welcome here, but one cannot doubt that some of those poor Chaldeans were illuminated by it; indeed we may be confident that the king himself came under the power of that heavenly radiance. The refusal of one nation to have the light may create the opportunity for another nation to be tested by it. The descendants of those people who, on account of their rebellion against the authority of God, were made to suffer such terrible evil at the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, are seven centuries afterwards told by the great Gentile Apostle, when they had violently opposed the Gospel, "Seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Act 13:46).

God is in no way dependent upon the good-will of the creature for the effectuation of His own gracious purpose. He can use the failure of the creature, his rebellious behaviour also, as well as his faithfulness, for the carrying out of all that He has in view, for defeat He has never known, nor can know. John the Baptist says to the proud Pharisees, "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham" (Mat 3:9). Daniel and his companions are outwardly in the darkness of idolatry, and in the hands of the Gentile autocrat; but inwardly they are in the light of heaven, and in the hands of the living God, His servants accomplishing His gracious will, and giving light that down the centuries has illuminated the souls of the faithful until this present day, and that will continue to do so, until the Son of Man shall come in His glory. Chapters 2-6 bring to our notice the prominent place in which these four light-bearers were placed, and how brightly that light shone in the midst of the prevailing darkness.

Chapter 2. Nebuchadnezzar dreams

Chapter 2. Nebuchadnezzar dreams In Dan 1:1-21 Daniel and his three friends are introduced to our notice as captives in a strange land, and under Gentile oppression. Their faithfulness to God, and His overruling providence exercised on their behalf, are brought before us in few words, but with great encouragement for our naturally timid souls; mention also being made of the fact that Daniel continued unto the first year of King Cyrus. In Dan 6:1-28 we are told that "This Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian." He and his three companions were of a hated, and at that time a humbled, race, and the high positions held by them in the kingdom, as well as their faithfulness to the God of their fathers, the only true God, increased to a very large degree that insane and bitter odium. They were endowed by the favour of God with more wisdom and knowledge than all the learned men in Babylon, and for this reason they ranked high among the lords of that mighty empire, and this itself was a sore grievance to those proud men. But they were there under the protection of God, and while He had need for them in that place, nothing could harm them. In Dan 2:1-49 the time arrives when the testimony of these witnesses is to be brought under the notice of the king. What effect their faithfulness may have had upon Ashpenaz or Melzar is hidden from us, but that which is done in the presence of the throne cannot so well be hidden. Through these servants of the Lord the conflict between light and darkness begins in that idolatrous empire; and in the engagement the light-bearers seem to be in danger of destruction, along with the instruments of the power of darkness. But the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and underneath them are the everlasting arms. He will keep His servants in the background, until the utter worthlessness of the king's wise men has been manifested He will not compete with those wretched imposters. He will let them exhaust the resources of their ingenuity. Then, when it is all over with them, and they are doomed to destruction by the fiat of the king, He will take the matter in hand. It is ever so with God, and this principle of His intervention shines upon every page of the Divine revelation. Man's complete failure is first manifested, and then, and only then, is the power of God brought to light We see this principle exhibited, among many other places and ways, at the Red Sea, at the Jordan, in Ephesdammin, but above all in the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ; for it was when we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. God's activities cannot be mixed up with man's puny efforts. Light cannot mingle with darkness.

Nebuchadnezzar has a dream. One may be sure that he had had many a dream that had caused him little uneasiness, before this one came in to disturb his tranquillity. This dream, however, was like none of the others. It troubles his spirit, and causes his sleep to depart from him; and yet he cannot bring it to his remembrance. As usual, he has recourse to his considerable band of magicians, star-gazers, and dream-readers, that they might unravel this mystery, convinced that if any one could really interpret the dream, he would also be able to call it back to his remembrance. The interpretation of the dream was no more within the compass of the mind of man, than was the ability to make the dream known to the dreamer. These were his conclusions, and they were both just and logical. He is quite certain that, had they known the dream, they could have trumped up

some artificial interpretation of it, with which the king would have had to be content, though often he seems to have been made painfully conscious of the bogus character of their interpretations (Dan 2:8-9). The truth is, this was but a challenge thrown down by the God of heaven before these men, who represented the wisdom of the devil-deceived world, as His challenge goes forth verbatim in Isa 41:1-29, "Produce your cause, says the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, says the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and show us what shall happen; let them show the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods; yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together. Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work of nought: an abomination is be that chooses you." Who will enter the arena against Jehovah of Hosts? Who will pick up the gauntlet of the Almighty, thus thrown down in the courts of the Gentile autocrat? The magicians of Egypt tried a venture with Him in the courts of Ham, and suffered a humiliating defeat in the presence of their sovereign. Nearly six hundred years afterward, four hundred and fifty of the prophets of Baal entered the lists against one solitary servant of the Lord upon the crown of Mount Carmel, and after having been ignominiously defeated, fell under the righteous judgment that their sin merited, at the brook Kishon.

Nebuchadnezzar had sacked the holy city Jerusalem, had pillaged the glorious temple of Jehovah, and had carried away captives innumerable to his own land; but in his royal palace he is made to find himself in the presence of the One who turns wise men backward, and makes their knowledge foolish, and who frustrates the tokens of liars, and makes diviners mad (see Isa 45:25). Whatever he may have thought about his wars and conquests, he is now faced by something that baffles the whole resources of his kingdom. He cannot dismiss his dream from his thoughts, neither can his wise men help him to have the mystery unravelled. Filled with the fury begotten by defeat, and by a suspicion that his wise men are a pack of deceivers, he will destroy them, as fell weeds that do nothing but corrupt the ground. And the decree goes forth from his presence, that all the wise men are to be slain. The powers of darkness have had their opportunity. From its foundation they had had undisputed sway in Babylon. The present monarch had as well served their purpose as had his predecessors, and the siege and destruction of Jerusalem by his armies, placing the people of Jehovah at the disposal of the proud Gentile, had been the greatest of all their victories. There is now no power under heaven that would dare to stand at issue with Nebuchadnezzar for the empire of the world. But after all how short is the triumph of the wicked! If the captive people are in Babylon, the light of God is there, also. If the supremacy of the Gentile is established in the city of the Great King, the supremacy of the servants of God is established in his presence. In bringing the holy people into Babylon they brought there the living God, and on this the powers of darkness had not reckoned. But in every instance defeat dogs the footsteps of the enemy of God. And this should not surprise us. We should only be surprised if it appeared to be otherwise, for it never is otherwise, however we may be deceived by appearances.

We are told that "Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams." This was the gift of God to Him. It was not any inborn ability, as he himself acknowledges in Dan 2:30. God had His own wise purpose in speaking to the king in a dream and vision of the night, and in allowing him to forget it, while leaving an impression upon his mind regarding it, that allowed no rest to come to his troubled spirit. God will give him to understand, that if he has triumphed over the people with whom He has

identified His name, it has been with His permission, and not because He had not power enough to defend His name and interests. His infinite superiority, when compared with the gods in which the proud monarch had put his trust, must come clearly into evidence, and they must be seen to be defeated in every engagement. The Chaldeans were very confident that the king was making a demand that could not be met by any man upon earth. They are sure that no man existed who could show the king's matter. None but the gods whose dwelling is not with flesh could meet the demand of the king: this is their final word to the man whom they feared above all men upon earth. Let come what may, they are compelled to admit their defeat, and thus, though unwillingly, add their testimony to the wisdom and might of the God of Daniel, when through him the king has both the dream and the interpretation made known to him. They have to acknowledge their helplessness. The whole resources of the king fail him. He may be angry, he may resort to violence, he may kill without mercy; but how will that avail him? When all the wise men in his kingdom have been slain, he will be no nearer the object of his pursuit than he was at the beginning.

How weak the most exalted creature is! and how apparent that weakness is, when the circumstances arise that bring the helplessness of the poor mortal to light! King David could slay the lion and the bear and the giant Goliath, but he could not save the life of Abner, nor punish his murderers, and he has to own it with sorrow, and say, "I am this day weak, though anointed king, and these men the sons of Zeruah be too hard for me" (2Sa 3:39). The rulers of Israel could crucify the Saviour when God permitted it, in order to bring into effect His own gracious purposes, but they could not keep Him in the sepulchre; and the precautions they took to keep Him there only made more manifest the power of His resurrection. When the cripple was healed by the disciples, through the power of the name of Jesus, they had to confess their helplessness before such a testimony to Him whom they had crucified, and at the same time the unabated and incorrigible wickedness of their godless hearts, saying, "What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle has been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it" (Act 4:16). Why should they have wished to deny it? They had set themselves in opposition against God and His Christ, and like Nebuchadnezzar they can do nothing but manifest their impotent fury. "Power belongs unto God" (Psa 62:11), and it is at the disposal of all who are in the pathway of His will, and who feel their own weakness (2Co 12:9; Php 4:13).

Daniel soon learns of the sad predicament in which, not only the Chaldeans, but himself and his three friends, were placed, but instead of being excited and nervous in the face of the death that threatened them, he discerns the purpose of God in this unusual circumstance. He sees that whatever impressions the nations of the earth may have received, through the apparent defeat of the God of Israel, and that by the gods of the nations—for in that way would the success of the armies of Nebuchadnezzar be viewed—his God was quite able to take care of His own glory, and the present circumstance was one created by God Himself, to show, for the blessing of those who were not wholly given up to the service of demons, His infinite superiority to the gods of Babylon. Hence the only request he makes of the king is for time, and says that he will discover the interpretation. He does not say he hopes to be able to unravel the secret, or that he thinks he will be able; not he says he will, for he sees the intention of God in raising this question in the stronghold of idolatry. We are told in Pro 25:2 that, "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the

honour of kings is to search out a matter.” But here is a mystery that neither the king nor his wise men can penetrate.

Daniel takes up the matter, being perfectly persuaded as to the result. But though he can speak so confidently regarding the elucidation of this secret, his confidence is not in his own power to penetrate into hidden mysteries, but in the living God who for His own glory will enable him to make known to the king what his visions were and the interpretation of them. Therefore he goes straight to his three friends, and requests them to desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret, that neither he nor they should perish with the wise men of Babylon. He shrank from being involved in the destruction of those wise men, who, as Nebuchadnezzar told them, were in the habit of deceiving him, by the use of lying and corrupt words. If a servant of the Lord must by the command of his sovereign be put to death, he must surely desire that the cause for which he has to suffer may be well known, so that no one may be left under the impression that he suffers because he has been convicted of corrupt practices. Paul was exceedingly thankful that it had become well known that he was in prison for Christ, and not because he was an enemy of righteous laws (Php 1:12-13). The wickedness of the rulers of Israel numbered our Lord with the transgressors, and put Him on a gibbet between two thieves. It was then that Jesus said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luk 23:34). “Therefore,” says God, “will I divide Him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He has poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (Isa 53:12). This, the crowning act of man’s wickedness, can never be forgotten by God. Moreover His followers are privileged to be despised and rejected as He was, but it is all joy when it becomes manifest that it is for Him that they are called upon to suffer. But when the witness for Christ is treated as a brawler, or a disturber of the peace, and to real cause of his suffering is hidden underneath a flourish of false accusations, the cup is a bitter one to drink. The secret is made known to Daniel in a night vision. It is not a favour accorded to saints of this dispensation only, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us (1Jn 5:14), but was always true for the soul desiring to be faithful to God. “We know that God hears not sinners,” says the blind man, “but if any man be a worshipper of God, and does His will, him He hears” (John 9:1-41). Daniel knew that he had the gift of interpreting dreams, but his reliance was not in the gift given to him by the favour of God. He does not fall back upon the understanding that God had given Him, as though having obtained the gift He could dispense with the Giver. He is as dependent upon God in the exercise of the gift, as he would have been had no such gift been bestowed upon him.

What a lesson this is for us! The gift conferred upon the servant, if it is to be rightly exercised, must be exercised in dependence upon the Giver. There must be no confidence in self. The blessed Lord gave power to His twelve apostles, to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast out demons (Mat 10:1-42), and yet in one instance we find a demon refusing to recognize their authority (Mat 17:1-27). The Lord lets them know that fasting and prayer are necessary for the successful exercise of the power He had bestowed upon them. I understand by fasting the most absolute distrust of self, and by prayer the most absolute dependence upon God. Which of us will question the ability of our Lord Jesus? Raising the dead seems to have been an everyday miracle of His. But at the grave of Lazarus we learn in what spirit He performed those works of power. We read in Joh 11:41-42, “And Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank Thee that

Thou hast heard me. And I know that Thou hearest me always; but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me.” Though God over all, yet had He taken the place of a servant, and His almighty power was therefore subservient to the will of the Father. The gift of God, whatever it may be, is not given to us to make us independent of Himself, but is to be used according to His direction; and every servant has to learn this, if he is to be a good and faithful workman. The answer of Daniel to the favour bestowed upon him and his three companions is very beautiful. He blessed the God of heaven. His spirit is broken. It is no longer the God of the whole earth (Jos 3:11), the God of Israel, or the God of Jacob, but the God of heaven. In this expression is buried for the moment the glory of Zion, and of the people of His choice. But whatever be the power He may establish in Babylon, He will never take the whole earth through the Gentile. He would have taken it through the nation that He brought up out of Egypt, had they been faithful to Him; and through that nation He will yet take hold of the earthly inheritance, though for the moment power has passed out of their hands. This Daniel humbly acknowledges in the title by which he addresses God.

All wisdom and all might Daniel attributes to God. Folly resides with the creature. His very angels have been charged with folly. But all the activities of God spring from the wisdom and the love of His blessed heart. Man’s ways are erratic, changeable, and capricious, for he is naturally void of understanding, and having broken loose from his Creator he is out of all proper control, and is the sport of every evil influence. Therefore man’s recovery for God is brought about by the entrance of wisdom into his heart. The witnesses of God in this world are never thrown upon their own resources. He maintains His own testimony by whomsoever He will, in His own method, and by His own power, for the natural resources of the creature are valueless in the struggle between light and darkness. It is true, as we read here, that He gives wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding; for until divine wisdom is implanted in the soul by the Spirit of God any endowment with which a man might be entrusted would only be used as a decoration for himself, and not for the glory of the Divine Giver. “To him that has shall be given.” But what he has, he has by the grace of God. The very beginning of wisdom for man is in his coming to a sense of his accountability to God, and how he has failed to answer to that accountability; and as a consequence he fears to meet Him, yet because there is forgiveness with Him, he hastens to meet Him in a day of grace, rather than delay having to do with Him until a day of judgment. His sinful condition stares him in the face, and he owns that in the dust is his true place before God. This is excessively humbling to the pride of the natural heart, but it is a triumph of Divine grace over the conceit that is ruin to the creature. Apart from this work of grace in the soul there is no ability in us to receive Divine communications. Our Lord says to the Jews, “Why do ye not understand My speech? even because ye cannot hear My word” (Joh 8:43). They had no spiritual capacity for receiving spiritual communications; and besides this, there is an inborn aversion in the natural human heart to everything that is of God, and this militates against the understanding of the simplest words of eternal life. The Lord says to the Jews, “If ye were blind, ye should have no sin” (Joh 9:41). If men only took the place of poor, ignorant, misguided know-nothings, it would be the beginning of light, life, and infinite blessing; and sin, to which they were subject, would lose its dominating power. But if people are determined to trust in their own ability to judge of all that comes before them, and that in spite of the warnings of their Creator, they must remain in their natural blindness, and in the bondage of sin. John says to the babes in Christ, “I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it” (1Jn 2:21). Where there is found

distrust of self, and a teal desire to be taught of God, the state necessary to the reception of divine communications has been created, and progress in the knowledge of the Word may be anticipated.

It is this trust in the competency of the natural mind that explains how deplorably ignorant of the mind of God are the great majority of learned men who take the place of spiritual leaders in Christendom. They seem to have overlooked the fact that the things of the Spirit of God are hidden from the wise and prudent, and that not many wise men after the flesh are called, but that God has chosen foolish things to confound the wise, in order that no flesh should glory in His presence (1Co 1:26-29). That which is preached in the Gospel to unconverted men—repentance and remission of sins, on the ground of the work of the Cross—may be understood by anyone to whom it is declared, and were it not for the hold the world has upon men it would be believed; but to enter into the deep thoughts of God, in which lies true and eternal wisdom, requires a work wrought in the soul by the Divine Spirit, and also that Spirit's indwelling.

Daniel is brought in before the royal dreamer, and the first thing he does is to direct the attention of the king to the God of heaven. By Him wisdom is given to the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding. He knows what is in the darkness, and the light itself dwells with Him: He dwells in it (1Ti 6:16): He is it (1Jn 1:5), and He alone can command it to shine (2Co 4:6). Daniel is in communion with the One who knows all things, and therefore the dream and its interpretation are no secret to him. From the captive brought out of Judea, Nebuchadnezzar is now to learn something of the God of heaven, who had not formed one of the gods to whom he had previously done reverence. This God is the revealer of secrets, and makes known to the king what shall take place at "the end of the days." The days of Nebuchadnezzar were not of so much importance as were the days that were yet to come. The days in which Nebuchadnezzar exercised the despotic power, and the days that were yet to come before the presence of Christ, were days in which man was being tested in various ways. Nothing was being permanently established in the hand of man. Death had removed all whom God had raised up into a special place of prominence, and not only that, but it became manifest through the failure of all such, that no man was able to bear the weight of the responsibility of the position in which he was set, and as to men like the Babylonian monarch, their ignorant and idolatrous hearts made them willing tools of the devil.

It is thus the world goes on in its blind unbelief, transgression, and rebellion against the authority of God, always confident that it is making decided progress toward an ideal state of glorious prosperity, unspeakable happiness, and permanent tranquillity. Man, according to the conceit of his own heart, has embellished the world; against certain pestilences he has waged successful warfare) he has so used the resources of nature that a famine in one part of the world can be supplemented by the abundance to be obtained somewhere else, and the facilities for the transport of commodities have very nearly reached perfection. He is determined to reach that which he is pleased to call "The Millennium"—though without God and without Christ—by his own efforts, and of success he is confident. "The end of the days," in his judgment, is to be the end of all his toil, the fulfilment of his lofty ambition, and the peace and contentment of the human race. But is this the picture that the living God brought before this proud monarch when sleep had sealed his eyes to the glory that surrounded his royal bed? Is it a vision of man crowned with the glory of his achievements be is made to witness? Or is it that which is the result of the wicked will of the rebellious creature, when power is placed in his hands by God? Is it progress upward to the

very mountain of God? Or is it the downgrade of corruption, disappointment, dishonour, and final destruction?

“The end of the days” I have no doubt refers to the closing days of this present age, and the introduction of the Messiah, by whom the intervention of God in righteousness and power will take place for the bringing in of an order of things in which He will have His satisfaction and rest (Job 19:25; Deu 31:29; Num 24:15-25; Isa 10:1-34, Isa 11:1-16, Isa 12:1-6; Mal 4:1-6); and this all the prophets have foretold. And what would take place in these latter days, God was about to make known to this Gentile king. But it must be through one of God’s own servants that the communication comes. The wise men must now take a back seat, and hide their heads. What had they to do with the God of Daniel? But first of all must Nebuchadnezzar learn that not only is his dream well known to Daniel, but also the thoughts of his heart before the vision was given to him. He had evidently been pondering upon what might be the future of his great kingdom in the hands of those who would succeed him. His gods had, in his estimation, shown him great favour, and even the God of Israel had been compelled to own their power and the might of his armies. But the future held mysteries. Who could throw light upon things yet to come? Was it not possible that this mighty power might yet crumble to pieces, and pass away like a dream of the night?

Daniel brings these thoughts of the king’s to his mind, “As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter; and He that reveals secrets makes known to thee what shall come to pass.” So the dream is the answer given to those thoughts, and Nebuchadnezzar gets a complete survey of the character and career of the colossal empire, which was the pride of his vain and foolish heart. And he has to witness it, in its last and strongest, if not most glorious, form, broken to pieces by a power greater than itself, and scattered like the chaff of the summer’s threshing-floor. And in the destruction of this pagan monstrosity, the nightmare of Gentile oppression shall pass away for ever.

Universal dominion is the purpose of God, and belongs, as far as the earth is concerned, to the Twelve Tribes, and they shall have it in the day of the manifestation and glory of their Messiah. But it has always been the dream of “The man of the earth,” whatever might be his nationality. The first man we read of who sought to bring to pass this idea of world-empire is Nimrod (the name meaning Valiant, or Rebel, and the beginning of his kingdom was Babel (Gen 10:1-32). But “when the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel” (Deu 32:8). Israel set up in responsibility failed to secure the inheritance that was promised them on the ground of their obedience, but God will once again take them up, not on the ground of responsibility, but in grace, and they will inherit by the mercy and grace of God that which they could never have inherited by their own faithfulness, and with Christ in their midst they will answer to the purpose of God (Eze 37:21-28; Jer 51:19-23).

How many men since Nimrod have sought to dominate the whole earth, and perished most miserably in the vain attempt? The lust of power is deeply inherent in the nature of the child of Adam. And if he could seat himself upon the throne of the world would he be satisfied with it? No, he would not be content with anything short of the throne of the Omnipotent, nor would he with this be satisfied until he had destroyed every creature that God had made. Man is capricious in his ways, insane in his desires, cruel and merciless in his actions. Give him unlimited and

irresponsible power and he will murder all about him, and in the end immolate himself. This image gives us a picture of the whole times of the Gentiles, that is, the time during which the government of the world would be in the hands of the Gentiles, the Jews being scattered throughout the earth, and subject to Gentile domination. Nebuchadnezzar has the power directly from the hand of God, and therefore the head and beginning of Gentile rule is represented by gold. To him only is the kingdom said to be thus given. To Nebuchadnezzar the prophet says, "Thou, O king, art a king of kings, unto whom the God of the heavens has given the kingdom, the power, the strength, and the glory; wheresoever the children of men, the beasts of the field, and the fowl of the heavens dwell, He has given them into thy hand, and has made thee ruler over them all: thou art this head of gold." Except the fish of the sea everything is put under the sway of this pagan ruler.

We may safely conclude that Nebuchadnezzar never truly apprehended the extent of empire that was put into his hand by the God of heaven, and that it never really dawned upon his proud mind that he had not his empire by right of conquest, by his own excellent generalship, and by the valour of his mighty army. To take his high position as a gift from a God who had hitherto been unknown to him, and of whom he was no servant, and to thus set at naught his own prowess in the field of battle, was more than his proud spirit could at present stoop to. But for the moment this cold douche of unacceptable truth could be overlooked. The prophet had told him his dream. The spectre of the night that had disturbed his tranquillity, but which had faded away from his memory, stood out once more in all its grim reality before his mental vision. Here was a man, as the Chaldeans had said, who had to do with "The gods whose dwelling is not with flesh," and a very god he seemed to the king, though by his own confession his God had placed him at the disposal of his own capricious disposition. He can, however, now be certain that the interpretation of the dream shall be worthy of his whole trust. In the image these kingdoms are not represented in their rapacious and destructive character, nor according to the special power that distinguishes them, but according to the different degrees of splendour that marked them. We see in each successive kingdom a gradual decline of earthly grandeur and glory, though no deterioration of strength, except in the feet and toes, in which clay was mingled with the iron; this mixture considerably weakened the strength of the last kingdom. It is, I do not doubt, the introduction of the democratic element that today so enfeebles the whole fabric of law and order, that things do not hold together as they once did. To go on the principle that the people are able to govern themselves, and to put the government of a nation into the hands of the people, is to plan and invite the nation's destruction. One has only to look abroad, and the unrest, disregard of authority, existence of associations of men that set the law of the land aside, so that it has become a greater crime and more perilous to the safety of the individual, to attempt to ignore those associations than to break the laws of the kingdom, and along with this the robberies and murders that daily and nightly abound, the perpetrators of which are never brought to justice, crowd the vision. The believer in Christ is not a politician. He is not of this world, even as Christ is not of this world. He does not interfere with its plans, its purposes and its governments. He belongs to another world—the Father's world, a world of light, life, holiness, righteousness, peace and love. To this world he has been called by the grace of the Gospel, and is being conducted by the power of God's Holy Spirit. He passes through man's world, a world that stands guilty of the murder of the Son of God, and which is amenable to the judgment of God. The devil is the god of it religiously, and the prince of it politically (2Co 4:4; Joh 14:30; Joh 16:11), and the follower of the rejected Christ refuses to defile himself with it. He only desires a passage through it, for his way home to the Father's house lies

through it. He is willing to pay for all he gets on the way. He pays "Tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour" (Rom 13:7). But his separation from the course of this world does not embarrass his perception regarding its true moral condition before God. Indeed it rather clarifies his mental vision, and gives him a more just estimate of its true condition, and of the sure judgment that awaits it. Who but a devotee of dumb idols, and who thought that God was such an one as himself, could suppose this world to be anything but a hold of rebels against the authority of God? Who could suppose that He would allow a world like this to go on for ever?

No, the true believer in Jesus is the one, and the only one, who truly knows what the world is, and how sure the judgment is that awaits it. God may bear long with it—has borne long with it—but its judgment is not slumbering. The Judge is near at hand, "Behold, He comes with clouds; every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him" (Rev 1:7). When He appears it will not be a day of grace and Gospel activity, but a day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. For that day the follower of Jesus waits with patience, for he knows that in the end He who executes the just judgment of God upon the evildoer will bring in a new heaven and a new earth, in which shall dwell righteousness, and in that eternal home of peace and love he will find the consummation of all his desires and hopes and expectations.

Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold: God had made him a king of kings, and the power and splendour of the kingdom centred in himself. Little is said of his kingdom; much is said of himself. As to the others that arise after him, nothing is said of the rulers; the kingdoms themselves are more in view. "After thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee." Though the kingdom eventually comes into the hand of the son and also the hand of the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, yet neither of these are the head of gold, nor have they any place in the vision.

"After thee shall arise another kingdom." It is not said "another person." And after that another, and yet another. But all inferior to the first. The second is clearly the Medo-Persian, the third the Grecian, and the fourth the Roman. But none of them, though all powerful kingdoms, comes up to the first in royal splendour and glory. The Persian king was himself under the laws of his kingdom, which could be enforced in spite of his desire that they might in certain cases be set aside. The Grecian king was not altogether beyond the control of his generals. But Nebuchadnezzar was himself above all the laws of his kingdom. His rule was altogether despotic. "Whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would be set up; and whom he would he put down (Dan 5:19). And this power he had directly from God, to whom alone he was answerable, though he knew Him not. God, who takes account of the actions of men, could deal with him if he abused the power that was committed to him, and with that proud monarch He did deal with a very strong hand. The fourth kingdom, as represented by the feet and toes, refers to the Roman empire in its last form, when it shall emerge out of the abyss (Rev 17:8), and its end is to go into perdition, because as then established it is satanic, and beyond everything hitherto seen on earth idolatrous. In the League of Nations we see a foreshadowing of that coming empire. Men have no idea of the source and nature of the thing they are striving after in their efforts to bring wars to an end. If the Gospel of the grace of God were believed, if professing Christians had any liking for the truth, they would not be deluded by the insane notion that democracy, and a confederacy of nations, could be the hope of the world. But having torn the Bible to pieces and cast it on the rubbish heap, and

degraded the Christ of God to the level of heathen philosophers—as the Philistines placed the ark of the covenant beside the idol in the temple of Dagon—the divine decree is that they shall be given up to a strong delusion, to believe a lie, that they all may be judged who obey not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness (2Th 2:1-17). If men will not have the truth of God, they cannot complain if He does not preserve them from the devil's lie.

Upon the feet of this imperial monster the judgment of God falls. The stone cut out of the mountain without hands smites the image on the feet, and the clay, the iron, the brass, the silver, and the gold, are broken to pieces, and become as the chaff of the summer threshing-floors, and the wind carries them away, so that no place is found for them, and the stone itself becomes a great mountain, and fills the earth. Whoever falls upon this stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall it will grind him to powder (Mat 21:44).

We see this coming to pass in Rev 16:13-21; Rev 16:19, and Zec 14:1-21. These passages all refer to the day in which the stone shall smite the image, and break it to pieces. It is the great day of God Almighty; and the place in which the battle shall be fought, and where the kings shall receive their righteous reward, is called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. It will be the day of Jacob's deliverance, and of the utter destruction of all his enemies. It will bring to an end the times of the Gentiles, and introduce the reign of the Messiah. And now the king has both the dream and the interpretation made known to him. In the midnight of his idolatrous career he is brought under the dealings of the living God. God speaks once, yea twice, yet man perceives not, in a dream, in the vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction, that He may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man (Job 33:1-33). And this does not always do, and therefore, to effect His own purpose of blessing, He has recourse to more severe measures. If we were wise we would at once respond to the touch of His hand. But we are not wise, but very foolish indeed, and in our state by nature neither know Him nor the touch of His hand, and therefore must we often go on in our own way until a staggering blow leaves us writhing in the dust, and then, and only then, it may be, we shall wake up to the eternal danger to which in our headlong career we were hastening, and to which we certainly should have come had it not been for His merciful interposition in that which at the moment may have seemed to us a hard and unmerciful manner. He knows what He is doing, and He knows the kind of material He has to work with in us, and only the sorrows that are absolutely necessary to effect His purpose concerning us are we made to suffer, for He does not afflict willingly and grieve the children of men. May we know that however heavy His hand may seem to us to be, it is moved by a heart of the most infinite and tender love, and guided by a mind of unfathomable wisdom.

Chapter 3. Nebuchadnezzar's Image

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What a poor, weak, foolish, and conceited creature man is at his best estate, altogether vanity (Psa 39:5)! Not always the wise and noble of the earth are set over the kingdom of men, but God gives it to whomsoever He will, and sets over it the basest of men (Dan 4:17). It might have been supposed that this proud autocrat had been taught a lesson, by means of the defeat of his magicians, that he would not readily forget, and that henceforth the God of Daniel would be the only God that would have place in his thoughts. Abundant testimony had been given to the supremacy of the living God above all the gods that he had previously served, but yet will he venture into the arena in a trial of strength with the God he had acknowledged as “a God of gods, and a Lord of kings.” The madness of the human mind away from God is incomprehensible. Now all the dealings of God with the mere child of nature bear witness to the great fact, that “except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”! Where there is no moral foundation in the soul how easy it is to quiet conscience, and to forget the reality and power of the Most High, even after He has brought Himself manifestly before our mental vision! Nebuchadnezzar is bowed at the feet of Daniel today, as a slave before his master, acknowledging Daniel's God as the God of gods, and tomorrow he will set up a god of his own, and will cast the three friends of Daniel into a furnace of fire, because they refuse to do homage to this nothing that he in his ignorance and pride has created. This is man! It is both reader and writer. By nature we are all clay of the same lump—poor dupes of the devil, and in the things that relate to our responsibility to God as ignorant as the beasts of the field. For a moment we may be overawed, as we are confronted by some special manifestation of the reality of His existence, and of the fact that He takes account of our doings in this world, but the natural heart refuses to receive any lasting impression, and we quickly drop down into our normal state of God-forgetfulness. A God all-powerful, and who had wisdom beyond the gods with which he was accustomed to have intercourse, was all that the God of Daniel was in the estimation of Nebuchadnezzar. He was awed in the presence of the wisdom with which Daniel was endowed, by that Being of whom hitherto he had no knowledge. But his accountability to that God for the way in which he conducted himself down here does not seem to have entered into his darkened understanding. His return to his dumb idols is both rapid and thorough. The impression made upon him by this signal intervention of the God of heaven is soon gone, and when gone it is as completely gone as though it never had been.

“Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold.” He is completely in the hands of the devil. In committing dominion to the Gentiles, which in the purpose of God belonged to Israel, He makes known to the king the changes that would take place while the times of the Gentiles were running their course, until the Christ should take the government of the world into His own hands. God does not usually put people into a place of privilege and responsibility without telling them how things are likely to turn out in their hands. When He had brought Israel out of Egypt, and when they were about to enter into the land of promise, he makes known to them how thoroughly they would corrupt themselves, and how their abominable behaviour would compel Him to drive them out of

the land, as He was about to drive out the nations that had the land in possession, and how He would scatter them among the nations of the earth. And before the apostles of our Lord had left this scene, He has put it on record how that the professing Church would depart from the faith, and in the end would have to come under His judgment. So also must this proud Gentile hear of the judgment by means of the stone cut out of the mountain without hands that would bring Gentile dominion to an end upon the earth. But though the dream and the interpretation were both given that the king might know that Gentile domination must one day cease to exist by the judgment of God, no lasting good seems to have been effected by means of the light granted to him. The devil uses it as a means of increasing the natural pride of his heart, and of giving his headlong career on the way to perdition a greater impetus. He used the serpent of brass, which was made by Moses in the wilderness, and which typified the lifting up of the Son of man on the cross, to lead the wayward people into idolatry. And by engaging the vain thoughts of this monarch with the glorious position he occupied, as represented by the head of gold, and hiding from his mental vision the deterioration of the successive kingdoms, as well as the utter destruction of all by the judgment of God, he leads him to make an image to the empire over which he had been placed, and to compel under pain of the most horrible death every one to do homage to it. And when we turn to the Apocalypse we find this thought conceived in the head of gold coming out into manifestation in the feet of iron and clay. There an image is made to the beast—the revived Roman Empire—and every one who will not do homage to the image of the beast must be killed (Rev 13:1-18). In the thought of the Gentile rulers nothing is of any importance but the kingdom. Everything must be sacrificed to the expansion, grandeur, and greatness of the kingdom under which men live. God and the relation of men to Him are of no account. A religion is of course felt to be a necessity. In an autocracy it must be a state religion, and individual conscience is little, or not at all, tolerated. Generally speaking where democracy prevails men may have whatever religion they like or none at all where this is preferred. But whether the government is autocratic or democratic religion must be subservient to the state. It is a kind of decoration for the kingdom, and is used by the devil as a silencer to the conscience, for man must serve a God of some sort. But, regarding the individual's relations to the powers that be, conscience toward God cannot be tolerated. The conceptions of the head become conspicuous in the feet. But in carrying out the projects and purposes of this world the witnesses of God have always to be reckoned with. They are the irritating substance that vexes the godless fellowship of the world. Its best laid plans are either frustrated or marred by their obstinacy. They are always in the way, a brake upon the wheel, or a barrier in the path of human prosperity, as this is understood by men. They are not governed by the same thoughts that govern the rest of men. And the worst of it is that they seem to be insensible to the praise or blame of the multitude. They do the best they can for the country in which they live. They pray for kings and for all that exercise authority. They cannot be accused of riot, nor are they movers of sedition. They are quiet, inoffensive, and law-abiding, if the law does not come in between their conscience and God, but, if it does, their subjection to it comes abruptly to an end. At all cost they will obey God rather than men. In all this I am speaking of the people of God as in complete subjection to His holy Word. Alas! not as many are actually found in the disorder that exists in the professing church of today. In the chapter before us we have a fine example of this determination to be true to the living God whatever might be the consequence to themselves. These three men along with Daniel were resolute against partaking of the food from the king's table; if anything they are more resolute now in the matter of the idol. The appalling insolence of the man, in whatever exalted position he

might be found, who by the threat of a horrible death would attempt to drive them from their allegiance to their Creator, produces nothing but abhorrence in the souls of these three faithful men of God. The outrageous, ignorant, and wicked conceit of this crowned worm of the dust, instead of terrorizing them into obedience, so bedwarfs both himself and his little brief authority, that they tell him plainly that they are not even careful to answer him in the matter, and they also declare their determination neither to serve his gods, nor to worship the golden image that he had set up. God would have every man honoured to whom He commits power and authority. We are to honour the king, and in this neither Daniel nor his three friends were found at fault. But when to obey and serve the king would sever my relations and responsibility to God, he loses his position as king to me, and becomes in my estimation nothing but a poor slave of the devil, and to his commandment I have no respect. The boldness of the apparently weak servant of God, when his loyalty to his Master is put to the test, has always been an astonishment to the mere worldling, and exasperating to the rulers with whom he has to do; and the very helplessness of his position has the tendency of making his insubjection all the more aggravating, because it is powerfully forced home to the souls of those that exercise authority over him, that it is not he that is powerless but themselves. The silent dignity with which our Lord met the accusations and the insults of His persecutors caused the Roman governor no little astonishment, and it was not the Divine Prisoner but the judge in his judgment-seat that felt how utterly weak and contemptible he was. And when, in a later day, the rulers of the Jews were confronted by Peter and John, the two “unlearned and ignorant” disciples of the Lord, they marvelled at their boldness (Act 4:13). And now, when three of the servants of the same Master have in manifest friendlessness and weakness to stand for the truth of the one living God, and that in opposition to the most powerful monarch in the world, threatening with the most awful death that his infuriated mind could invent, they avow that they have no need to study the answer they are to return to such a demand on his part. Upon his own head must fall the consequences of his diabolical act. And all that he could do was little compared with the power of Him against whom he was waging his insane warfare. He could at the utmost but kill the body, but God would destroy both body and soul in hell (Mat 10:28). And even the body is beyond his power to injure, unless it is allowed by God.

Here is the will of this conceited idolater thwarted. Here is rebellion lifting its head in his otherwise peaceful kingdom. If it had not been for these three, in his estimation, fanatical obstructionists, everything would have freely moved along to the goal at which he determined to arrive. They were the brake upon the wheels of his universal empire, that was peacefully rolling onward to glory. The bare audacity of these three recalcitrants fills the king with madness, and he gives commandment that the furnace of fire shall be made seven times hotter than it had been made. And into the furnace the most mighty men of his army cast the three witnesses of the living God. This he, no doubt, supposed would be the end of the present opposition to his will, and would furnish an object lesson for others who might afterward be mad enough to dispute his authority. Our Lord has forewarned us that in this world we shall have tribulation. It cannot be otherwise, for the believer is here in subjection to the will of God, and on earth, as I have already indicated, whether the form of government be autocratic or democratic, it is the will of man that is dominant. In the former it is the will of one man that is dominant, and in the latter it is the will of the people that is supposed to rule. With neither is it the will of God. We are told that whoever resists the power resists the ordinance of God (Rom 13:2), but that is in things within the sphere of its authority. It has no right to force the subject into rebellion against God. When the time comes that Antichrist will attempt to force all

men to worship the image that he shall set up to the Roman empire, God declares that “If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascends up for ever and ever, and they have no rest day nor night who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receives the mark of his name” (Rev 14:9-11). In every kingdom upon earth throughout the whole history of the world, the servants of God have had to make their decision between obedience to certain enactments of the state under which they lived, and the specific commandments of the living God on whose behalf they were here below. And this must always be until the kingdom of God shall come in power, and His Christ shall reign, and then “Judgment shall return unto righteousness, and all the upright in heart shall follow it” (Psa 94:15). But until then the servants of God must find themselves, if they are faithful, subjected to persecution, imprisonment, and even death itself.

Laws are made for the safety of the community, and in making them it is no question with the legislators what the will of God is, but what they themselves consider good. But with the servant of God it is altogether the Divine will that is to be the rule of his life. He also knows right well that this is best for the creature; hence in every way he is encouraged to travel on this line whatever it may cost him to do so. He can very well afford to leave the results in the hand of the righteous Judge of all. It may entail imprisonment and even death itself to him, but if that be the will of God for him, he will be supported through it, and the Lord will be with him in the trials he may have to undergo. Flesh may well tremble at the thought of that torture which the ingenuity of the fallen creature, under the inspiration of the devil, can invent, and the heart may faint at the bare prospect of having to undergo the horrible ordeal, but when the dread moment arrives, and we find Him by our side, the chariot of fire that is to transport us to our heavenly home becomes the most welcome sight that ever gladdened our vision. In the midst of the furnace of fire the three witnesses walk unharmed in the company of the Son of God. Surely to them this must remain a never-to-be-forgotten moment. Never previously had they been so wonderfully privileged and so highly honoured. How veritable, indeed, is His holy Word which says, “In all their afflictions He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them” (Isa 63:9). When in front of that fiery furnace they were being bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, to be consigned to that raging volcano that opened its mouth to devour them, they had the support of the Almighty God; but in the furnace itself they had not only His support but His company. The cords that bound them and the men that gave them to the fire were both consumed. The fire did nothing but set them free from their bonds. And now, instead of three men being quickly reduced to ashes in the flames, Nebuchadnezzar sees four men walking about loose in their midst, and the form of the fourth, he says, is like the Son of God.

Thus is Nebuchadnezzar faced with the intervention of the living God on behalf of His faithful and beloved servants and smitten upon his brazen forehead by the gauntlet of the Almighty in answer to his impudent challenge, “Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hand?” In this battle he is utterly defeated. He has lost some of the best men of his army. He himself is humiliated in the presence of his nobles, he has to accept defeat in the sight of the representatives of the various dependencies, who were gathered together to do homage to his god of gold, which is now fit for

nothing but the melting-pot. He sees himself beaten and abased in the plain of Dura; and he is compelled to accept it, and to confess, "There is no other God that can deliver after this sort." He sees how well able the living and true God is to safeguard His own glory in a world of rebels, who are blinded by the very darkness in which they love to walk, and who are driven by the devil into insane conflict with Omnipotence. Surely His compassions are the wonder and study of all who know Him, and the way in which He gives witness to all men of His power and goodness of heart, and of His long-suffering toward those whose evil ways are to Him a constant provocation, is marvellously astonishing. The trial of strength in this instance, as in all others, was between God and Satan. But the spectators are numberless, the celestial hierarchy, the denizens of the infernal regions, and those over whom the proud Gentile monarch had sway. And all this spiritual drama is enacted in the province of Babylon, for the enlightenment of a world steeped in ignorance of the true God, and which desired none of His ways. The light of God came into Babylon with His afflicted, down-trodden, and captive people, and brightly it shone in the midst of the deep darkness. What effect may have been produced in the souls of the multitude who were gathered together from every quarter, we know not. It may be that many, when they saw the hand of God, and knew that now the golden image must be consigned to the crucible, that the precious metal may be put to other and better uses, may have welcomed the saving light, and have cast away their idols as things of naught and for ever after bent their knee to Jehovah only. If this good effect followed, Daniel does not put it on record. As to Nebuchadnezzar, the decree that goes forth from him is indicative of nothing but a mind overawed by the unexpected and marvellous intervention of God on behalf of His devoted servants, and of a heart unaffected by the mercy extended to him and his kingdom. With him the true God is as yet nothing but one with the many, though the most powerful of all. But God has not yet finished with this idolatrous autocrat.

Chapter 4. The Humbling of Nebuchadnezzar

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Nebuchadnezzar has another dream, and this time it remains so deeply engraven upon his memory that he is able to tell it to his wise men just as it had appeared to him when he lay asleep on his bed. But they were no more able to interpret the dream now that they had heard it, than they were able in the first instance to make known the dream. God was speaking in a language that they understood not, however learned they might be; neither did God intend that they should understand Him. The interpretation of the language in which God was speaking to the king was not to be understood by men steeped to the centre of their souls in the worship of demons. What had such men to do with the living God? Is He going to give them the impression that they can have to do with demons one moment and with Himself the next?

Rather the opposite: He is letting them know that He cannot allow Himself to be mixed up with their abominations. He has His own in Babylon who fear and reverence His name, and these must be the interpreters between Himself and their king. "His secret is with the righteous" (Pro 3:32), and "He reveals His secret unto His servants the prophets" (Amo 3:7). But how could an idolater be in intimacy with the living God?

It is astonishing how quickly the faithful servant of the Lord passes out of the minds of the great people of the earth. The worldling does not understand the man of God, and therefore is he out of mind almost as soon as he is out of sight. One would have thought that the fact that Daniel was able, not only to interpret the king's dream, but to bring it back to his memory after he had forgotten it, a feat which was admitted to be beyond all human power, would have ensured his remembrance by the king, should a similar circumstance ever arise again. But it was not so in this instance, and it was not so when the writing on the wall terrified his grandson. The men of this world will avail themselves of all the help that the man of God may be able to give them in the things of earth, but with him they can never feel themselves at home. There is a great gulf between the worldling and the man of God, and neither of them is perfectly happy in the company of the other. Hence whatever service the servant of the Lord may be able to render in a moment of difficulty, both himself and the service rendered are soon forgotten. If the world could only serve as well, or half as well, its service would be greatly preferred. The man of God cannot be well brought to mind without God Himself being also brought to mind, and this fact awakes the conscience and disturbs the tranquillity of the soul, and therefore only in the greatest extremity is the servant of the Lord appealed to. At other times he is utterly forgotten.

Hence Nebuchadnezzar's wise men must first have a try at the interpretation of the dream, and only upon their manifest failure does Daniel come into the mind of the king. And in the ways of God this strange oversight only serves to bring into greater prominence the solemn truth that the God who put this monarch into such a position of power and splendour is the one true and living God, who raises up, and casts down, and does what He pleases in His own universe. It is only when all human resources fail that God comes in with deliverance for His fallen and devil-oppressed

creature.

Nebuchadnezzar tells the tale of the pride of his heart, of his utter abasement, of his bestial condition, and he tells it with a brokenness of spirit that manifests a soul subdued in the presence of God. And he tells it to “all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth.” He does not hide the humiliation to which he was subjected by the God he had dishonoured and despised. He would have the whole earth know the signs and wonders that the high God had wrought toward him. And he seems to tell it with a heart grateful for all the sorrows through which he had been called to pass. We do not read of any human being that, either previously or since, has been ever reduced to such a state of bestiality. In the mercy of God a limit was placed to his madness, and his kingdom was made sure to him “with a band of iron and brass.” By the power of God, who at the beginning had given him the kingdom, it was securely held for him while its degraded ruler, with a beast’s heart given to him, herded with the cattle of the field, his hair like the feathers, and his nails like the claws, of a fowl. And thus for seven years he continued to exist, until he was ready to own “That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He will.” The kingdom would be restored to him when he learned that the heavens rule. “All this happened to king Nebuchadnezzar.” No wonder Daniel seemed to be stricken dumb when the royal dreamer had set before him the visions of his head. For one hour he was astonished, and his thoughts troubled him. How was he to tell this proud potentate of the evil and degradation that was ready to fall upon his crowned head? He has to be encouraged by the king to open his mouth, and disclose to his unhappy listener the doom that awaited him from the hand of God. But he was there as the mouthpiece of God, and the language in which He was speaking to the king must be faithfully translated, whatever the result might be. But he cannot allow all this to come upon the haughty despot without tendering him some wise and wholesome advice. If he is in the presence of the king in the stead of God, he will faithfully present God to him in His true character as merciful and gracious, and as One who does not afflict willingly, and as One who has no pleasure in the execution of righteous wrath. “Wherefore, O king,” he says, “let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.” We have no evidence that the king paid any attention to this faithful and friendly advice, advice that put his head in danger, for it was a reflection upon the way in which the king had used the power committed to him by God. Still he must be made to feel that the evil comes upon him on account of his own conduct, and that he might find a way of escape from it, by moderating his wilful and merciless ways, and ruling according to righteousness and kindness of heart.

If God causes counsel like this to be given, we may be certain that He does not intend to proceed to execute the threatened judgment if the counsel is taken to heart and the ways of the sinner become agreeable to His gracious mind. Nebuchadnezzar must be made to see that God takes account of all that goes on upon earth, and that He holds all accountable for the way in which they act in the various relationships in which they are placed by Himself. Surely it was just as true in Nebuchadnezzar’s day as it is today that He desires that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth (1Ti 2:4), but it sometimes takes very severe measures to bring men to a sense of their own sinfulness and nothingness, and to lead them to the understanding that they cannot be allowed to assume that they are masters of their own actions, and responsible to no one; for unless their responsibility to God were admitted they could never be brought to

acknowledge themselves transgressors.

Nebuchadnezzar had gods many, who by himself and his subjects were worshipped and served; and yet when his idolatrous will was thwarted by three of the servants of the living God, the state of his proud spirit is manifested, in that he says to them, "Who is that god that shall deliver you out of my hands?" At the bottom of his heart there was the conceit that no god existed that was stronger than himself. The dream and its interpretation do not seem to have had any very lasting effect upon the proud monarch, for at the end of twelve months he seems to be as full of his own self-importance as ever, "At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon." His heart and mind were full of his dignity and grandeur, and of the glory of his kingdom. The fell weed of his own miserable vanity still flourished in the congenial soil of his corrupt ambitious nature, "The king spake and said, Is this not great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?"

How utterly infidel and degraded the human heart is! Perhaps he thought that the consequences of his iniquitous career, of which he was forewarned by his dream and the interpretation by the prophet, would never come. Long it seems to have been delayed; perhaps it will never come at all! It is a dishonour to the Lord, and destructive to our own souls, to suppose that because God is infinitely patient, and gives men an opportunity to repent, He is indifferent to a life of evil-doing. Yet this is often the natural thought, "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Ecc 8:11). The lesson set before him by the living God has not been learned, nor does the king seem to have applied his mind to the task, and now the hour has struck for the execution of the sentence that has been so long delayed. The height of his ambition has been reached, and from the giddy eminence he surveys the greatness of his inheritance, which was committed to him by the Sovereign of the universe, and attributes it all to his own creative genius. He will rob God of the glory that is rightly His, and now the proud position in which he stands does nothing but make his fall all the more terrible. "While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; the kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He will. The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men: and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws."

Suddenly had the bolt from the blue struck that imperious ruler. Suddenly was he headlong hurled from his proud position. His gods have to stand by and witness the almighty blow, that strikes their devoted servant upon his forehead, and sends him reeling down into the deepest depths of degradation; a degradation into which, possibly, no human being had ever previously been stricken. His kingly honour was departed from him. His lords and courtiers are aghast at the violence of his terrific fall, the meanest of his subjects stare in wonder at the abasement of their monarch; high and low give him a wide berth; the beasts of the field alone give him companionship, and he finds them congenial company. The dews of night, the winter's frosts and snows, the summer's heat, and all the changes of the seven years must be known by him ere the day of his redemption shall come to pass. Let him tell the tale of his own recovery, return to

reason, and reinstatement in his kingdom.

“At the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes to heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured Him that lives for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He does according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou? At the same time my reason returned to me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment: and those that walk in pride He is able to abase.”

What a magnificent recovery! The hand that smote him, and hurled him from his proud position into the dust of degradation, is the very hand that lifts him up out of the mire of the bestial condition into which he had been made to sink for his eternal good, and that reinstates him in his former earthly glory, but with the light of the knowledge of the Most High in his heart, which was infinitely better than all the riches of the universe, even if those riches could have been granted to him.

“At the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven.” To what other place could he lift them? The God against whom he had so fearfully offended is the only One to whom he can look with any degree of confidence. Would he not have fled to hide his wretched condition from one of the meanest of his slaves? Whither under heaven dare he direct his gaze? Were there no place but earth from which to expect consolation and encouragement, would his degradation not have been utterly insupportable? The dark cloud that had for seven years rested upon the heart and mind of this merciless autocrat is at last dispersed, and while yet in the midst of the beasts of the field his understanding returns to him, and he comes to realize that however heavy upon him the hand of God had been, it was all for his good; and with a will subdued, a mind enlightened, and a heart softened by grace, he blesses the One who had smitten him. Is it not so with us all, when in our natural state the light of God penetrates into conscience and heart? And what a faithful picture of this, and of the grace of God that gives a glorious welcome to all that turn to Him, even when still bearing all the tokens of the degradation into which their rebellion against Himself had brought them! Brought to the realization of the wretched state in which all by nature are, his first thought is to return to the God he has sinned against. Valueless are all his boon companions to him now. No one can help him but the God he has slighted and despised. He says, “I will arise and go to my father.” Blessed resolution! He comes, and is received into the arms of eternal love. The path that Nebuchadnezzar had to tread to the end that he finally reached was rough, thorny, and humiliating, but it led into the region of everlasting light; and here all the darkness, the stumbling, the fighting against God, came to an end. If the previous part of his reign was gloomy, turbulent, oppressive, self-willed and superstitious, the remainder could not be but calm, cloudless, refulgent in the light of the knowledge of God, at least as far as he himself was concerned. He had learned something of the infinite compassions of the God he had so grievously insulted. And it is with such a God as this we have to do; cruel for a moment, in order that He may be henceforth and eternally kind. He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men; and if He is compelled to afflict, it is His love that compels Him, for it is to do good in the latter end to those over whom His rod had been lifted. In this madness of the king we have powerfully

forecasted the true character of the succeeding Gentile monarchies; they neither recognize, nor have they knowledge of the true God. Their eyes are not lifted to heaven, from whence, and from the One who sits there, they derive their kingly authority. In their judgment, they have acquired their royal inheritance, and their autocratic position, by virtue of the prowess of their armies, and by the same means they retain all that they have won! All that they can stretch their sceptre over upon earth is their inalienable right, and they owe it to no higher power than the power that lies in their own right arm! The three powers that succeeded the head of gold—the Medo-Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman—were all pagan, and though there be in that which represents the Roman at this present moment an acknowledgement of God, the assertion is made that the ruler holds his position by no other power than the will of the people, which goes to prove that the madness of the powers continues; and it will continue until the lesson is learned “That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He will, and sets up over it the basest of men.” Then autocracy and democracy shall both come to an end together as far as the kings of the earth are concerned, for the now rejected Christ shall then sit upon the throne of His glory as King of kings and Lord of lords. In that day democracy shall have vanished for ever, for above every other form of government it is the most infidel. As regards the kings of Israel, they were chosen of God, and responsible to rule in the acknowledgement that they held their kingly authority from Him, and if they did evil He made them to suffer for the evil that they did. They were to have the law of the Lord ever before them, and they were to read therein all their days, in order that they might learn to fear Him. The heart of the king was not to be lifted up above his brethren, nor was he to turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left (Deu 17:14-20). But in committing authority to Nebuchadnezzar, God does not enter into relationship with Him, nor with the people over whom he ruled. He had used him as a rod, wherewith He had chastised His wayward people; but He does not directly undertake to instruct him in the laws of His kingdom. He is kept pretty much at arm’s length, and not even told that he has the kingdom from God, until by Daniel, who interprets his dream, he is informed of the fact. He was given no book of instructions, as though he were the servant of Jehovah. The true God is the God of Daniel and his friends. It is a hard lesson for a proud heart to learn that his relations with God are of such a nature that he must be kept at a distance until he learns how utterly unsuitable he is to the holiness of the Divine presence. But if a soul is ever to be in right relations with God, this has to be learned. God will not associate Himself with the demons that were served by this king and his courtiers, nor will He give either him or his miserable hucksters of lying inventions the impression that they can be rightly, viewed in any other light than in avowed antagonism to Himself. It is impossible that God should lie. Nor is it different in regard to the succeeding monarchies. Lust of conquest and the rapacity of wild beasts characterize every one of them, and when they are portrayed before Daniel in the visions that were granted to him, they exhibit nothing but the characteristics of the wild beasts of the earth, without any sign of a recognition of God or of responsibility to Him. Their state is set forth in the madness of the head of gold.

Read the history of the kings of Israel and Judah, and you will find that though rebellion against God and abominable idolatry were a constant provocation, yet in His infinite grace He ceased not to strive with them by His prophets and to discipline them by the incursions of the surrounding nations: rebuking, chastising, forgiving, pleading, until they had so wearied Him with their sins that He was compelled to remove from them the kingly authority that He had so graciously bestowed upon them at the beginning, and to put it into the hand of the idolatrous Gentile. But with the

Gentile He does not connect His name, His throne, His prophets, His interests, nor His authority. The king is not “The Lord’s anointed.” God is not in any public way the God of the earth but the God of heaven. He is certainly not the God of the Chaldeans nor has He His seat in the city of Babylon. It is the times of the Gentiles, with the beast’s heart, and the beast’s characteristics. And this state of things must continue until “The Lord has performed His whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem” (Isa 10:12), then, “The heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity: because they trespassed against Me, therefore hid I My face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies: so fell they all by the sword” (Eze 39:23), “and the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore” (Eze 37:28), and “I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord” (Eze 38:23). This shall be the result of the dealings of God with the nations. They shall know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He will. Viewed from the human side, kingdoms are generally laid hold of by corruption, violence, bloodshed, and of often murder; but behind the scenes, into which the gaze of man cannot penetrate, the purposes of God are being accomplished, and that even by the wickedness of the ambitious creature, instigated by the devil. Neither the cunning and malice of Satan nor the guilty ambition of man can counteract the intention of God, but everything that they do must serve to bring it to pass.

He would not be God if His poor erring creature could circumvent His wise resolve. The way in which men may arrive at the height of their ambition may be, and often is, very reprehensible; but he could not arrive there at all if it was not allowed of God. It may result in the condemnation of the apparently triumphant creature, and it will if the position has been gained in dishonest ways, but no power of the creature could successfully militate against the express will of God.

Jacob got the blessing by deceiving his blind father, but he could not have secured it had it not been the will of God that it should be his. Had he known God better he would have left all in His hands, and he would have saved himself many a sorrow of heart.

What peace have all those that leave the ordering of their circumstances for time and eternity in the hands of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our God and Father through grace!

Chapter 5. The Judgment of Belshazzar

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If God put power into the hand of the Gentile, and granted success to his armies, even against the nation His choice, and to the overthrow of Zion that He loved, He does not overlook the pride of heart, the lust of power, the self-will and violence of the rod that He uses for the correction of His erring people. The nations that time and again invaded His land, and wantonly destroyed life and property, were His instruments for the correction of His obstinate and stiff-necked people; but to do the will of God was far from the thought of any one of them.

God takes into account not only what men do, but their object in doing it. Jehu executed the judgment of the Lord on the house of Ahab, and on all his guilty partners, until not one of them remained alive. By his means also was the wickedness of Jezebel punished in Jezreel. But the severity in which he executed the just judgments of the Lord, and his own selfish reasons for his harshness, were far from being acceptable. Hence by the mouth of the prophet Hosea He says, "Yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu" (Hos 1:4). Assyria was the rod of His anger, by which He chastised Israel. But the rod boasted itself against Him who lifted it up, and hence do we read, "Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord has performed His whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of His high looks. For he says, By the strength of my hand have I done it, and by my wisdom" (Isa 10:12-13). Nor will the repentance of the sinner, and his subsequent humble walk before God, always avert the governmental consequences of his misdeeds. That king David deeply repented of his sin in the matter of Uriah the Hittite is to the glory of God plainly stated in His Word; but he has to suffer in his own family for that cruel exhibition of autocratic power. Manasseh may have found mercy and forgiveness of his wickedness, but Judah, as contributory to his provocations, must suffer the consequences from the hand of God, as it is written in 2Ki 23:26-27, "The Lord turned not from the fierceness of His great wrath, wherewith His anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked Him withal. And the Lord said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there." In the government of God, children have to suffer for the sins of their parents, and nations for the sins of their rulers. Men may murmur against this, and characterize it as injustice, but the fact remains, that should a man squander his inheritance and abuse his body, his children will have to suffer for it in want and weakness. But this does not extend beyond this present life, and the sorrows here on earth are but short lived. No man will be made to undergo the judgment of Gehenna for the sins of others, but only for those he himself has committed. And as a way of salvation has been opened up for all, and entrance into a sinless, sorrowless world of unspeakable happiness, what else can be done with the man who refuses to avail himself of a place and portion there, but cast him out? Any observant soul can see the fact verified in numberless instances, that the iniquities of the fathers are visited upon the children, and that mercy is shown to the descendants of them that love God and keep His commandments. The

dynasty represented by the head of gold comes to an end in the death of Belshazzar. It is not only that the king himself is judged on account of his profanity, but an end is brought to the kingdom in its primitive and superlative glory. The way in which Nebuchadnezzar abused the authority that was committed to him by the God of heaven could not be forgiven. In unfathomable grace and as regards eternal relationship with God, it could be, and was I feel persuaded, but the kingly position could not be continued beyond his grandson. God had promised that the kingdom would be continued in his family unto the third generation (Jer 27:7), and He keeps His word, patiently bearing with their oppressive and idolatrous ways, until to bear any longer would have been to give the impression that He was indifferent to their flagrant acts of conscienceless tyranny and wickedness; and at the last it was only when openly insulted and challenged to combat with the powers of darkness that He intervened in judgment.

It is impossible to imagine that the dreadful sins of which Nebuchadnezzar was guilty could have been overlooked by God, for the Judge of all the earth will surely do right. For his devilish idolatries, his determination to destroy out of his kingdom every faithful witness of Jehovah, as well as on account of the atrocious deeds of his successors, his dynasty had to be brought to an end, though the sin of which Belshazzar became guilty was sufficient of itself to bring down the judgment that fell from heaven upon his insolent head. The ways of God in His providential dealings with men are both wonderful and untraceable. But if we were only able to search them out we would see how accurately all the actions that men do are weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, and how a fitting and just chastisement is meted out to every offender; and how, though it be true that the iniquities of the higher authorities are often visited upon those over whom they are placed, each human being receives according to his works. And in His government He makes no distinction between His own people and the godless world, except that the judgment may be more severe upon the former, for He had taught them better. But no judgment for His own reaches into eternity.

Ten of the Tribes of Israel were rent from Rehoboam, and in 1Ki 11:11 we are told it was for the sin of Solomon, but 1Ki 11:33 says it was for the idolatry of the people, and in 1Ki 12:1-33 we find the exciting cause was the tyrannical spirit in which the imperious Rehoboam met the people, when they prayed him for a more gentle rule than that which had been imposed upon them by his father. Had we only that which is said in 1Ki 11:11, we would conclude that it all came to pass on account of the sin of Solomon, and had we only 1Ki 11:33 we would conclude that it was for the sin of the people, and had we only that which is recorded in 1Ki 12:1-33 we would be certain to put the evil which befell the nation to the despotism of Rehoboam. The fact is the sin of any one of the three parties named was quite enough to bring all the mischief that was done, and therefore is the responsibility of the matter left at the door of each. Let me, however, say again that this judgment is only governmental, and does not always reach into eternity, though in some cases no doubt it does, for "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after. Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand, and they that are otherwise cannot be hid" (1Ti 5:24-25).

Belshazzar was well acquainted with the dealings of God with his grandfather, and this fact makes him all the more responsible. Where much has been, much must surely be required, and as Belshazzar began his reign with a greater degree of light than did his grandfather, his godless conduct becomes all the more reprehensible. Except the testimony rendered by the heavens and

the earth, and whatever might be gathered from the providential dealings of God with the creature, Nebuchadnezzar had no light whatever, until He brought the captive Jews from Jerusalem, and came into contact with Daniel and his three confederates. But this could not be said of Belshazzar, for the ways in which God had brought Himself to light through these His servants was not hidden from him. Therefore must more be expected from him. But his evil doings witness to the sorrowful fact, that he had not in the least profited by the things of which he was made cognizant. But does man ever really profit by light graciously given by his Creator? What effect upon Israel had the mighty works that they had witnessed in the land of Egypt, or in the wilderness, which were done in their sight by the mighty hand of God? Except where divine and sovereign grace wrought in the hearts of men like Joshua and Caleb, as far as any lasting and good effect was produced, the works might just as well have never been done. And what has the Spirit of God to say regarding the descendants of that people, when the Saviour had been in their midst doing works that no man had ever previously done? This only, though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him" (Joh 12:37).

"Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand." Was he not every inch a king? Was he not head and ruler of the most powerful kingdom on earth? Was he not supreme even among his assembled lords? Had not his gods been most favourable to him? Was he not firmly established upon his glorious throne? Who could estimate the wealth with which he was surrounded? Had not the God of Israel, that once had triumphed over the Egyptians, been utterly defeated before the gods that he honoured? Then he would celebrate the discomfiture of that God, whose devotees he held as slaves to the praise of his gods throughout his vast dominions!

"Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein." The gauntlet is thrown down before the throne of Jehovah. The carousal is intensified as the holy vessels of the living God are borne into the vast assembly. The noise of the intoxicated singers praising the gods of gold, silver, brass, iron, wood, and stone, rises like a mighty hurricane, and the house trembles with the roar of drunken revelry. The drunken revellers thought not of the madness of Nebuchadnezzar and of the humiliation which he suffered at the hands of the God of Israel! They did not recall the fiery furnace and the contempt thrown upon the wrath of the king by that same God whom they despised! We may picture that assembly of drunken sensualists, brutalized with the gratification of their sensual appetites, applauding the coarse and blasphemous boasting of the crowned autocrat and director of their debauchery. And yet all that this man possessed, from the throne on which he sat to the breath that was in his nostrils, he owed to the clemency of the One whose glory he was so terribly and provokingly outraging. The madness of Nebuchadnezzar expressed itself in one way, the madness of this monarch in another. But suddenly a firm and throttling grasp is laid upon the king's revelry; and the silence of death falls upon the whole terror-stricken assembly. Upon the wall before the king the part of a man's hand is seen tracing letters and words upon the plaster. The countenance of the king is changed from boastful hilarity to abject terror; trembling lays hold of him, and his knees smite one against the other. He cannot read the writing, nor can any of the company that feast with him. In vain are the Chaldeans, soothsayers, and astrologers called in; they could neither read the writing nor make known the interpretation, though for the man that

could do this there was scarlet clothing, a chain of gold for his neck, and a position of third ruler in the kingdom. But help is at hand. That which God had caused to be written was not to remain on the palace wall as an unmeaning and undecipherable spectre of fear. It was meant to be read and understood. But the king and his nobles must also learn whose hand it was that traced those words on the plaster of the king's palace. They must also be brought to a sense of the madness of their carousals, and of the gravity of the insult offered to the Writer, in bringing the holy vessels taken from His temple, and putting them to such corrupt uses, as to drink wine out of them to the honour of their gods, and they must learn how powerless are the gods whose prowess they had been praising, when met by the might of the Most High, and when the hour for the execution of judgment upon the workers of iniquity has struck. The tidings of this terrible apparition, the consternation of the king, and his lords, and the failure of the wise men to throw any light on the matter, reaches the ears of the queen, who at once thinks of the Hebrew captive Daniel, and coming into the banqueting hall, reminds the king that such a person still exists in the kingdom. She says, "Let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation." Evidently whoever else had forgotten him she had not, nor was her confidence in his ability to unravel the mystery in the least shaken by his present obscurity. Then was Daniel brought in before the king. The indignation of that devoted servant of the Lord is aroused, as he witnesses the insult that had been offered to the God of Israel by this inflated worm of the dust. He does not make the slightest attempt to conceal his contempt both for him and his gifts, as in his ears are recited the honours that are to be heaped upon the man who will interpret this startling and terrifying mystery, that had so abruptly intruded itself into their midst, and so completely put an end to their intemperate gaiety. He answers with an abruptness that betokens a mind incensed, saying, "Thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another, yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation." Not thus had he answered Nebuchadnezzar. As he contemplated the dark and distressful shadow that was to fall athwart the life of that monarch he was filled with compassion, and says, "My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies." But in this case his indignation is so aroused by the dishonour done to the living God that for the moment the imperious and autocratic position occupied by this monster of iniquity seems to be lost sight of. But just on this account is his behaviour in the most perfect harmony with the judgment that was at that moment hanging over that trembling sinner. Nebuchadnezzar had been in gross darkness, and therefore to be pitied; but Belshazzar was sinning against the light that had shone in God's dealings with that king. And all this is brought to the mind of this unhappy monarch. The high position into which his grandfather had been lifted by the grace of the Most High, his subsequent degradation on account of the pride of his heart, are briefly and graphically described, as is also the end and object of all the dealings of God with him, "till he knew that the Most High God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that He appoints over it whomsoever He will." Then the profanity of Belshazzar is forced home upon his conscience, and then what made his sin all the more flagrant, "Thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this." "And the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified: then was the part of the hand sent from Him; and this writing was written." His kingdom was numbered and finished, he himself weighed in the balances, and found wanting; the kingdom divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. A veil is drawn over his last moments. God fulfils his word to Daniel, and "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain." The judgment of heaven follows hard upon the sentence inscribed upon the palace wall. Its execution was swift, sure,

merciless, and thorough. His gods cannot save him, even if they would, though the devil shows no compassion even to his most devoted servants. With what pomp had Belshazzar come into that banquet hall! Secure in his proud position the crowned centre of the thousand satellites gives the order for the banquet to begin. They eat and drink to the honour of the king and of the gods that he served, while almost within earshot a mighty foe is approaching, that will turn their intemperate boasting into shrieks of terror and the groans of dying men.

How marvellous are the ways of God! How righteous are His judgments! And what a sense of security and rest of heart the knowledge of his intolerance of evil gives! Rebellion against His authority, oppression by those in high position, and the lawlessness of those who rise up against lawfully constituted rulers, must ever be met by the judgment deserved, though long and patiently He may bear those evils. His hand had fallen heavily upon His people, who were raised up to be His witnesses in an idolatrous world, because of their faithlessness. But He knew how to safeguard His own name and reputation, and how to preserve His glory from going to another. The Gentile was but the rod by which He disciplined His people, and if that rod boasted itself against Him that lifted it up, He knew how to show it that it had no power of its own. He will have the Gentile authority obeyed even by His own people, for that authority was set up by Himself, but if in his pride of heart the Gentile will oppress that people, or seek to turn them away from Himself, he must suffer the consequence. In this present day the gods of the Chaldean may be scoffed at, and those who serve such deities may be viewed as in gross darkness, and doubtless they are. But are not many returning to this state of things with terrific speed? What about all the honour that is being given to crosses, crucifixes, images, saints and angels, and baring the head to a building set apart for the service of God? I am likely to be told that this is practised because of that which is represented by such things. But did the images of silver and gold that the Chaldeans bowed to mean nothing? Was there nothing represented to the mind by such things? To put confidence in anything but the living God is idolatry. Even covetousness is said in Scripture to be idolatry (Col 3:5), for it is an evidence that something has displaced God in the affections of the heart. It is God who puts down one, and sets another up, though to put trust in Him is contemptible in the estimation of this godless world. To bring God into anything today is viewed by most people as a remnant of bygone dark ages. Belshazzar may have tried to make himself believe that the ascription of dominion, honour and power, rendered to the living God by his imperial grandfather, was but a remnant of the madness of those seven sorrowful years, during which he was driven from the dwellings of men, and that the gods that countenanced and ministered to his degraded appetite were the only gods that were to be served by king or people. It is difficult to believe anything that is objectionable to one's nature, but exceedingly easy to believe that which testifies of a god endowed with passions like ourselves, and who therefore cannot judge them, or even rebuke them, in the creature.

Chapter 6. The deceived king, and the servant of the living God

Chapter 6. The deceived king, and the servant of the living God The various phases of the times of the Gentiles; as set forth in the image that Nebuchadnezzar saw in the night vision, are seen in the power and splendour that are theirs according to the thought of God, and not in the decay into which some of them eventually fell. Belshazzar was a poor creature compared with Nebuchadnezzar; and though he became heir of the inheritance that was his grandfather's, and that, as we have seen, by the will of God, he is not said to be the head of gold. The first ruler seems to have been that, "Thou art this head of gold" (Dan 2:38). Anyhow we see that dynasty, which is represented by the head of gold, set aside in the death of the King Belshazzar, and the kingdom taken by the Median Darius, a man far advanced toward the ordinary limit of human life. As regards the account we have of his doings, he does not seem to have been a man of evil disposition, or such a slave to the idolatry that characterized the Gentile nations, though far from possessing the forceful character of the head of gold. It could not be said of him "Whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive." He seems to have been as truly bound by the laws of the kingdom as was the meanest of his subjects. He was not altogether an autocrat; hence it was not impossible for his lords to get the better of him, if he were not extremely watchful. He seems to have had some insight into the character of men, for he set Daniel above all the subordinate rulers in the kingdom, "and thought to set him over the whole realm." This at once aroused the envy of the princes, and they set about to compass his ruin. But as far as the business of the kingdom was concerned their plotting was fruitless, "They could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error of fault found in him." He did the business of the king as under the eye of God, and therefore was he no eye-servant, but realizing that in all that he did he was serving the Lord, he did it from his heart, and did it well. May we not take a lesson from this? A captive taken out from the midst of the flames that destroyed the house of God, and that reduced the best part of the beloved city to ashes, and brought in chains to a foreign land to be dealt with according to the humour of the monarch who held him captive, and yet faithfully serving the king that had done this evil, and now, after many years of captivity found serving his successor—what an example for the people of God in all ages, and in all circumstances! In whatever circumstances we may find ourselves, if we are there through no fault of our own we may rest assured that those are the best circumstances that we could be in for the glory of God, and for our own advancement in the knowledge of Himself; and in such circumstances we can always count upon Him for grace to sustain us in them, and to enable us to serve Him. We may not think our lot a favourable one for service in the interests of our Lord, but we could not be anywhere without His permission, and we may be confident it is just where He wants us. Paul might have supposed that a Roman prison was but a poor place for the exercise of his apostolic gift; but the service that he was enabled to render to the saints of God in that prison has enlightened, encouraged, and flourished the people of the Lord for nigh two thousand years. John might have thought, when carried a prisoner to Patmos, that the hope of serving the Lord was now at an end; but from that lonely prison came The Revelation of Jesus Christ, that not only sets before us the history of that which professes Christ's name, from the hour of its fall until it becomes

so nauseous to His palate that He will spue it out of His mouth, but also shows us the whole history of His dealings with this evil world until it all disappears in the judgment that He executes, and a new heaven and a new earth is brought in, in which righteousness shall have its everlasting dwelling-place

If we could only realize the great fact that He has His people here for His own ends, and that we are here as His witnesses, to be here just as long as He desires, and in whatever position in life that in His infinite wisdom He considers best, be that master or slave, prisoners or free men, sickness or health, poverty or riches, there would be no dissatisfaction with our lot, no murmuring nor complaining, but, knowing that His way is best, we should go on with contentment and rest of heart.

There seems to have been many an up and down in the life of Daniel at the king's court. He is brought into a position of importance when something comes to pass in the life of the king of which his wise men have no solution; and then he becomes greatly honoured. But again he seems to be unknown until another similar circumstance arises, and once more the wise men are baffled regarding the interpretation. But every means is tried before he comes into mind, and then he appears as one comparatively unknown. One would have thought he would have been the first to be called in to meet the difficulty. In certain occasions he was indispensable, but he was not the kind of man that suited the godless court of the idolatrous Chaldean. He was not at home with the lords of Babylon, nor were they at home with him. He was no companion for such men. The living God, who was everything to Daniel, was utterly unknown by them. All that Daniel did was done with reference to Him, and all that they did was done with a view to their own selfish interests, "What concord has Christ with Belial or what part has he that believes with an infidel?" (2Co 6:15). Surely none at all. In connection with the affairs of the kingdom those satraps and presidents could not very well act apart from Daniel, for he was in high favour with the king; but when business was done, he, I can imagine, was done with them. He doubtless would have as his friends the godly among his own nation, but apart from them he would plough a lonely furrow. And this must be so in every dispensation: the friends of God and the friends of the world cannot go on together. You cannot mix oil and water. In this chapter we have a faint foreshadowing of the man who is spoken of in 2Th 2:1-17 as "The man of sin" and "The son of perdition," who is to arise after the church has been called away. He is said to oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. This man will be the masterpiece of the devil. His coming, we are told, "is according to the working of Satan in all power and signs and wonders of falsehood, and in all deceit of unrighteousness to them that perish, because they have not received the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this reason God sends to them a working of error, that they should believe what is false, that they all might be judged who have not believed the truth, but have found pleasure in unrighteousness" (N.Tr.). Tested by the truth of God, they refuse it; tested by the lie of the devil, they receive it.

Men, even with the Bible in their hands, know very little of the evils that lie before them. They fancy that they are quite competent to take care of themselves, and they will have none of God's interference. They have done without Him in the past, they are doing very well without Him today, and they will let the future take care of itself. A few are not absolutely irreligious, but still may be found on the first day of the week at some so-called place of worship. But what do they hear when they get there? the Gospel, thank God, in some instances, but more often a political

harangue—the Bible torn to pieces—the rights of men defended—creation queried—the fall of man ridiculed—the atonement blasphemed—accountability to God derided evolution affirmed: and every other abomination of infidelity set forth by men who are as ignorant of the Word of the living God as they are of their own nakedness in His presence. The truth they had no love for, and when the lie comes they will receive it with ready heart and mind. But of all this departure from God and the Word of His grace we have been well warned, so that it cannot take us by surprise. Paul tells Timothy to “Preach the Word: be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2Ti 4:2-4). But the greatest fable that ever existed, or is possible to exist, and for the reception of which Christendom is today preparing itself, and under the power of which it shall fall, is that which shall be introduced by that lawless one, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming (2Th 2:8).

Shadows of that coming evil are thrown upon the prophetic page in many places, and they are not wanting in this book of Daniel. In chapter 3 we get one phase of that terrible day depicted. When that day comes an image shall be set up of the revived Roman empire, and the king in Jerusalem, who shall be false prophet to the head of that empire, is the one who shall cause that image to be made; and he shall give breath to that image, so that the image shall speak, and cause those who do not worship it to be killed. This false prophet shall deceive those that dwell on the earth by reason of the signs and wonders that he shall do, even to that of calling down fire from heaven in the sight of men. And all shall worship the beast whose names have not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the slain Lamb. In Scripture we have stated the great bold facts of the case without the political reasons that men may give for the introduction of such a state of affairs. Very plausible reasons, I have no doubt, men will be able to advance on behalf of all this, so that those who refuse to submit to such idolatrous practices will be considered, and that by sober-minded people, as stupid, obstinate, and unreasonable; and their extermination be regarded as well-merited punishment, or at least a political necessity. This certainly would be the judgment of all who recognized no higher power than that of the state.

Let no one imagine that in the days described in Rev 13:1-18 every human being will have gone stark mad, and that there will be no sober judgment anywhere on earth. The safety and welfare of the community, the binding of the people together as one man in the defence, and for the advantage of the state, the subordination of individual conscience to the will of the majority, and in that case to the will of the rulers, and to all that they may feel free to introduce, flattery, it is difficult to refrain from aping Deity, where an opportunity is furnished for so doing. But the path of the servant in the presence of all this is exceedingly simple, though in appearance it may seem to be bristling with insuperable difficulties, appalling dangers, and even death itself. But this is just wherein the faithfulness of the Lord is proven by the trustful saint. Our Lord calls the attention of His friends to the only fear that should govern their lives, when he tells them not to fear them that kill the body and can do no more, but to fear Him who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell (Luk 12:4-5). In the presence of the most appalling circumstances that we may be called upon to face, we have only to go forward in the pathway of the will of God, as though there were no opposing forces marshalled against us, leaving Him to carry out His gracious will, well assured that

whatever then takes place is from His own hand, and is always best.

Daniel, well knowing that the decree had gone forth, goes on as usual. His demeanour is not marked by insolent swagger on the one hand, nor by any nervous timidity on the other. He went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime. By his manner of life no one could have learned that such a statute existed. The matter was between God and Darius, and there he leaves it, as one that was in no way concerned about it. It could make no alteration in the ways of this servant of God; he did as he had done aforetime.

He could serve the king, and do all as though doing his work to God Himself. But the privilege of communion with God regarding His interests upon earth, and his prayer for the holy city, towards which his windows were opened, were not to be relinquished at the bidding of any human being, however exalted he might be. In the favour of the king he might, if he set God at defiance, live his little earthly life in comparative happiness and questionable honour, but that would be poor compensation for the loss of the favour of Him whom he delighted to serve, and to whom both the king and himself were accountable. The enjoyment of the favour of God now, and the imperishable joys of eternity, were not to be bartered for a proud position at the court of this Median monarch; and therefore he wisely concludes that to love his life now would be to lose it, but to hate it now would be to keep it to life eternal (Joh 12:25).

Well would it be with us were we always so definite in our decision for Christ! This present life has a powerful hold upon our souls; and the enmity of the world against the Son of God, of which we are very well aware, and which we fear to arouse, causes us many a difficulty regarding the line of conduct we on certain occasions should pursue, which we would not have were we more whole-hearted for Christ. Where the eye is single the whole body is full of light (Luk 11:34), but where the eye is evil—has a cast in the direction of this garish world—all is darkness within, and the path of the Divine will is hidden from us. This is a sorrowful state to be in, but it is, I am persuaded, well known to both reader and writer. How sad it is to have to make such a confession!

Now those spies of the prince of darkness have found their opportunity. Their plot has worked magnificently! The foremost man in Babylon, the servant of the living God, the favourite of the king, is a law-breaker. He is numbered with the transgressors. No power on earth can save him. The king may weep in secret, but his tears serve but to manifest his own helplessness. He is powerless as is the meanest slave in his kingdom. The law of the Medes and Persians has been the undoing of him. He can now see through the villainy of those unscrupulous men. By his own act he is bound hand and foot. The thirty days of his godhead has but begun when he finds himself a helpless slave in the merciless hands of knavish and unprincipled men, men who delight to remind him of his impotence, and who have no sympathy with him in his miseries. The sin of the king was great, and he must learn that, in the government of God, sin is sure to bring its own punishment upon the head of the guilty, whoever that guilty person may be. He may be angry with himself, angry with the laws, and doubly angry with those wretched men who had brought him into such a perplexing situation. But what avails it all? His anger, no more than his regrets, can put away his guilt, nor can it relieve him from the consequences of his evil act. Daniel must be given to the lions. This is the inflexible law of the Medes and Persians, this the law-abiding mind of the monarch gives assent to, this the whole body of the plotters insist upon: the king has to give way.

But his resource, and he has a resource, is not where we should expect such a man to have it. He says to Daniel; "Thy God whom thou servest continually, He will deliver thee." The testimony that Daniel was, through the grace of God, privileged to render in the court of this monarch had borne fruit, and in connection with this sorrow that had fallen upon Darius the fruit is brought into evidence. He is assured that Daniel's God will not now abandon His faithful servant. Could we think that there was no element of faith in this man's confidence in the God of Daniel? But the law must be vindicated. The degree of the king cannot be set aside, or altered in the least, even though it be the death of the most faithful servant of the state. By the king's own commandment Daniel is brought, and cast into the den of lions. And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel. And can we read all this without thinking of One who in a later day, and on account of His faithfulness to His Father and God, was numbered with the transgressors, and went down among lions (Psa 57:4; Psa 22:13), but who, when pierced through by the horns of the unicorns, was saved from the lion's mouth by the same power that delivered Daniel? Surely we have here a faint foreshadowing of our Saviour's night of sorrow, when He was delivered into the hands of sinners, and when the dark cloud of Divine judgment swathed itself about His cross of woe; and when, with never a comforter, and God-forsaken, He drank the bitter cup of wrath to the dregs, went down to the grave that was closed with a stone, and sealed with the signet of recognized and God-given authority.

We are not told what kind of a night Daniel had in the den. This we do not require to be told, for with the light of Divine favour in his soul, the angel of God standing guard upon the safety of his person, and the wild beasts of prey crouching at his feet, we can well imagine the volume of praise that would be poured forth from his heart, so truly satisfied with favour, and full of the blessing of the Lord; and if for a time, as sleep passed over his wearied frame, his prayers and praises were silenced, it was only to awake again and find the angel of the Lord still on guard, the wild beasts still in the dust before him, and the den filled with the evidences of the presence and loving-kindness of God. It was surely a night never to be forgotten by this beloved servant of the Lord. And what kind of a night was passed by his diabolic accusers? Of this we have no record. It may well have been a night given over to revelry and rejoicing. The hated witness of Jehovah was now a repast for the hungry lions: his day was over! The favourite of the king would no more be a constant irritation to them, as he had been. A night of great gladness it would indeed be to them. But what about his royal master? In fasting, restlessness, and sleeplessness he passed the dark and weary hours. Accused by his conscience, wounded in his spirit, betrayed and humiliated by his trusted servants, trapped by his own hell-invented decree, and become murderer of the most important and best beloved minister in his kingdom, he tosses upon his bed in the most wretched condition imaginable, and by the first streak of day he is found at the mouth of the lions' den, crying with a most lamentable voice: O, Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" And Daniel, "O king, live for ever. My God has sent His angel, and has shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before Him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt." What a glorious morning for the unhappy king! and what a morning of bewilderment, humiliation, and terror for Daniel's foes! They had travailed with iniquity, conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. They made a pit, and digged it, and fell into the ditch that they had made. Their mischief returned upon their own head, and their violent dealing came down upon their own pate

(Psa 7:14-16). They fell easy victims to the rapacity of the hungry beasts of prey. How true it is that "He takes the wise in their own craftiness" (Job 5:13). And does not this second decree of Darius give us good reason for hope that, like Nebuchadnezzar, he also was brought to the knowledge of the true God? He calls the whole earth to witness his decree, "That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: FOR HE IS THE LIVING GOD, and steadfast for ever, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivers, and rescues, and He works signs and wonders in heaven and in the earth, who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions." His confession of Daniel's God as the living God is marvellously encouraging. And this but shadows forth the day when the deliverance of Daniel's people shall bring the nations to the knowledge of Jehovah (Eze 37:21-28). Indeed, this will be the result of all the dealings of God with His earthly people, for yet the rejected Christ shall have the throne that is His by right, and His name in that day shall be excellent in all the earth. "His name shall endure for ever; His name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him blessed, Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only does wondrous things. And blessed be His glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with His glory; Amen, and Amen" (Psa 72:1-20).

All the petitions of the Son of Jesse shall then be fulfilled. He asked life, and got it, even length of days for ever and ever (Psa 21:4). He asked concerning His own, the men the Father gave Him out of this world (John 17:1-26), and Him the Father hears always. And He shall yet ask concerning the world, and shall have the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession (Psa 2:1-12). Then shall He sit securely upon the throne of His glory—and "The prayers of David the Son of Jesse are ended." Lord, hasten that glorious day!

Chapter 7. The Four Beasts

Chapter 7. The Four Beasts In the dreams and doings of those “three Gentile kings, is brought to light that which would characterize the whole times of the Gentiles, and the way in which the faithful witnesses of God would be tried and tested by the idolatry, profanity, and blasphemy of those whom God had raised up into the throne of the world, and also the ability of God to deal with those crowned potsherds of the earth, and to deliver His afflicted servants, when His ways with the various self-willed monarchs have been accomplished, and His beloved people have learned their lesson. And a record is made of all these doings for the encouragement, not only of our poor faithless and timid hearts, when we might find ourselves in similar circumstances, but also for the enlightenment and confidence of those who shall be similarly tried, after the present dispensation has passed, and the church of God is no longer here. Then shall the descendants of those very people, who found themselves under the godless domination of Nebuchadnezzar, find themselves under the authority of a more idolatrous and blood-thirsty autocrat than was this vain-glorious head of gold. Such will require all the consolations of God, as recorded in this book, and all other books of Holy Scripture; and I have no doubt they will, by the Spirit of God, be turned to these writings. Meantime are our hearts encouraged and strengthened, as we witness the moral courage and unconquerable determination of those Hebrew captives in a strange land, and under the authority of one who had absolute power over life, and everything that was theirs, except their immortal souls. And when we witness the spiritual vigour with which those feeble few stood in the path of these crowned vessels of self-will, and how utterly gone from their hearts was the fear of anything they could inflict upon sensitive flesh, are we not ashamed of ourselves that shrink from an evil word or a scornful look? With all our hearts we can, and I trust do, thank God for the peace and the privileges we enjoy in this favoured land; but we must remember that the natural, fertile, and fruitful soil of Christian life is in the sphere of this world’s enmity, and in suffering for Christ. Just as faith is the gift of God to us, so is also suffering for Christ (Php 1:29). May we ever do our best to live at peace with all men, but may we, along with this, esteem it an immense privilege, if through grace it be granted to us, to suffer a little for His sake.

It is only in the first six chapters that we have recorded the dealings of God with those Gentile monarchs, and the way in which He speaks to them through His witnesses. Nebuchadnezzar is apprised of the passing away of the kingdom given to Him by the God of heaven; and in his seven years’ madness is intimated the atheistical character of governments during the time of Gentile rule. He himself, under the mighty hand of God, becomes truly humbled, and learns his lesson, “That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He will.” The profane and presumptuous Belshazzar, detected in the midst of his accursed revelries, falls upon the sword of the victorious Mede and dies without mercy. Darius, who was entrapped by his wicked advisers, seems to have learned that the God of Daniel is “The living God,” while those who sought to destroy the servant of the Lord die like Belshazzar, in their sins and without mercy. In all these things we may learn what a wretched creature man is without the knowledge of God; and how utterly foolish and presumptuous to pit his finite wisdom and strength against His, whose

wisdom and power are infinite. And the folly of this shall still more be seen when the work of God is ended, when His rest has come, and we have entered into it. How fully shall then be manifested how infinitely superior He has shown Himself to be, and that throughout the whole history of the fallen creature, to all the puny efforts that have been made by the enemy to circumvent His plans! When all is over both friend and foe shall have learned that the creature, however powerful he may seem, is nothing but a creature, and that God is God.

Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, have all passed away, and their glory and greatness have disappeared with them. They appear for a little moment before our mental vision, not that we might learn something about them that could not be found in others of the race of Adam, but that we might see the shadows of the events that shall come to pass immediately before and at the appearing of Christ, when He shall come to judge this world in righteousness; and that seeing those shadows we might learn to keep ourselves apart from this present course of things, and that our confidence in God might be greatly increased. Nothing that transpires in the whole creation disturbs the serenity of His presence, who dwells in light unapproachable, and nothing can disturb the peace of him who commits the keeping of his soul to God.

If anything could have disturbed the eternal tranquillity of that holy sphere in which He dwells, it would have been the conceit, presumption, and wicked daring of Nebuchadnezzar, whom He had raised to such an eminence of earthly splendour, and of those who followed him. The victory He had allowed Nebuchadnezzar to gain over Jerusalem was, in the estimation of that monarch, nothing but an indication of his own military skill, and the superiority of the god he worshipped over the God of Israel. Therefore the vessels of the house of the living God must be laid at the feet of the god who had helped him in his wars. And in the presence of this blasphemous affront the living God is absolutely quiescent. No angry lightnings shoot forth their fiery arrows. No earthquake threatens the destruction of throne and city. Everything goes on as usual. The tranquillity of heaven is undisturbed. God sits above the water-flood which foams at His feet, and when He is pleased He can bring its raging to an end. He well knows how to handle His own creation, and how to humble the pride of His creatures, and He can well afford to wait His own time, so that His purposes may be accomplished, while His impatient people may be murmuring against. His inactivities and seeming indifference regarding their destiny, so that they may be ready to cry out, "Carest Thou not that we perish?" The provocation that He receives from the rod wherewith He chastises His wayward people, though He cannot view it with anything but abhorrence, cannot hasten by one moment the judgment by which He will avenge the insult. What a God He is with whom we have to do, and who has made Himself fully known to us in His Son Jesus! From this chapter until the end of the book, the communications of which we have a record, are made to Daniel himself, not by means of the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar, of which he became interpreter, nor foreshadowed by the persecutions to which he and his three friends were subjected. The dreams of the first king set before us the times of the Gentiles, portrayed in the four kingdoms that represented those times under the eye of God. And one can very well understand the uneasiness that must have filled the mind of Nebuchadnezzar when He contemplated that "Great Babylon" falling into other hands than those of his descendants. But the exercise of soul produced by the communications of the Lord is often of very short duration. After being made aware of the fleeting character of all human glory, he is found wallowing in his wretched idolatry worse than ever. The kings and rulers of the various kingdoms in the sphere of Christian profession have an open Bible

in their hands, that tells them of the sin of this world in the rejection and murder of the Son of God; of the world as now under judgment, and of the appointed day in which that judgment shall be executed; of the Gospel which is God's way of delivering souls out from this world, and from the impending judgment; of the great fact that believers are a heavenly people, and not of this world any more than Christ is of it; of the fact that friendship with this world constitutes one God's enemy: and though all this is brought continually to the notice of the earthly authorities, how quickly does it pass away from heart and memory! Not a vestige of it seems to remain, except the shadow of a fear that darkens to an extent the joys of life. This was so with the Gentile monarch, it was so with the Roman governor, Felix (Act 24:25), and the tendency with every human being is to slip away from the revelation of God. This we should lay to heart, and seek grace from God that we may be able to hold fast His word. In the great image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream the four kingdoms are presented according to the splendour that characterized each of them, distinct deterioration in grandeur and glory is manifested from head to feet, except that in the last mentioned not splendour but strength is attributed to it. But the first, or head of gold, is directly set up by God, while the others take the kingdom by right of conquest. But in this chapter they are viewed according to their own true origin, nature, and propensity. They are wild beasts. They have no living link with God. They are without any intelligent relationship with Him. They arise out of the tumultuous agitation of the population of the world, and that agitation the work of the prince of the power of the air. The four winds of heaven, we are told, strove upon the great sea, and out of that storm-tossed waste of lawlessness arise four beasts different one from the other; all beasts, the various characteristics of which are well known to us, though with endowments not natural to the beast itself.

I do not doubt there is a certain element of truth in the devil's assertion, that the kingdoms of the world are at his disposal, and that to whomsoever he will he gives power and kingship. Our Lord does not dispute his audacious claim, but He will have nothing from the devil. Power and glory He will have from the Father, but from no one else. That the devil is a powerful being, and that he can give power to others, we see from Scripture. I need scarcely say that God does not give power to any creature to do evil, or to use it just as he pleases. Satan has not one atom of power but what God has given him, neither has any other creature; but that power is to be used in the service of God who gave it. The adversary can do nothing except by the permission of the Lord, and only that His wise purposes may be carried out with regard to individuals or nations is this permission given. Therefore must the thought of the heart be manifested in the day of judgment, for one might have in his heart to serve God, and might be hindered by the devil; another might be on his way to do evil, and God might turn him away from his object. To build a house for Jehovah was a good thought of David, and he is commended for it; but he was not allowed to carry out his thought. Solomon was the man chosen for that work. Sennacherib, King of Assyria, and his servant Rab-shakeh, thought to work evil against Jerusalem, but the Lord turned both of them back by the way which they had come, and the king comes to his end as he was engaged in worshipping his god, being slain by his two sons (2Ki 18:1-37, 2Ki 19:1-37). The liberty granted to Satan shall soon be brought to an end. At the present time, for the accomplishment of the all-wise purposes of God, his sphere of action is a wide one, and he uses it with all the craft and subtlety with which he is endowed, and his wisdom seems to be beyond that of any other creature. But his wisdom became his folly when he matched his creature might with his omnipotent Creator. When permitted of God he can raise up tribulation for the saints, and bring them into deep waters, but beyond a certain

limit he cannot go. And just because the saint knows that power belongs to God, and that no adverse power can do anything but contribute to the carrying, out of the mind and thought of God, he can view all the evil that crosses his path as coming directly from the hand of God, leaving Satan out of his reckoning altogether. How good it is to be in the hand of One who is infinite in wisdom and might, and to realize that He is our Father, and that He loves us with a love that is both boundless and eternal!

It is not difficult to see that the four beasts that come up out of the sea are the four kingdoms that are set forth in the image of gold, silver, brass, and iron. The first was like a lion and had eagle's wings. The kingdom embraced the majesty of the lion and the swiftness of the eagle, with the might of both combined. None of the powers that arose after Nebuchadnezzar could equal that which God gave into his hand, and set him over. It takes the head among wild beasts, and the head among the fowls of heaven to set forth the might of the kingdom that was his. But the eagle's wings were eventually plucked, and the wild beast lost its ferocious and terrifying appearance. There came a day in which Babylon lost its power among the nations of the earth. The second beast was like a bear, higher at one side than the other, for though at the first the Mede was the leading power, the Persian very quickly became dominant. Because of this it is presented as rising above its primitive level. Cyrus the Persian raised it into a position of great prominence by his clever generalship, and by his conquest of Babylon. But the bear, while its ferocity is clearly depicted by the fact that in the mouth of it are three ribs, has neither the majesty, the activity, nor the dash of the lion. It is more unwieldy and awkward in its movements, but characterized by insatiable conquest and rapacity. It was said to it, "Arise, devour much flesh." The third beast does not lack rapidity of execution, for it has upon its back four wings of a fowl, but its flight is not the sublime and lofty flight of the eagle, but that of a much meaner bird. It has, however, four wings instead of two. It has also four heads; absolute authority was not vested in one head only. To it dominion was given.

Whatever be the nature and character of these beasts they are as truly ordained of God as was David, the King of Israel, who was anointed with the holy oil. As energized by their own self-will and rapacious disposition, they devoured countries, subdued kingdoms, and possessed thrones. But behind all that man could see, there was the hand of God working toward the fulfilment of His wise designs, and neither they nor their armies could go one inch beyond what was permitted to them by Him. In putting upon the throne of Egypt the Pharaoh who oppressed the children of Israel, the devil may have supposed that himself was the instrument that brought such a thing to pass, but God says to him, "For this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth" (Exo 9:16; Rom 9:17). This rebel against the authority of God, and oppressor of his poor people, was raised up to the throne by the intervention of God, being one, I suppose, who had no title to it. Neither man nor the devil has power to accomplish anything apart from the permission of God. What a comfort this truth is to our cowardly souls! As to the fourth beast, there was not any beast in field or forest that resembled it. It is like nothing that ever was created. As regards political and kingly power, it is the devil's masterpiece, as popery is his masterpiece religiously. It is the same beast that in Rev 13:1 is said to arise out of the sea, and in Rev 11:7, and Rev 17:8, is said to ascend out of the bottomless pit. To him the devil gives his power, seat, and great authority. He combines in his own person all the brutal characteristics of the first three beasts. This beast was like a leopard, his feet

like a bear's, and his mouth like a lion's (Rev 13:2). Both in Daniel and in Revelation it is said to have ten horns, but in the latter Scriptures it is also said to have seven heads, and upon the horns ten crowns, thus manifesting it as an empire composed of ten kings, with an emperor in the midst possessed of despotic authority.

I have no doubt that the little horn spoken of in Daniel, which came up among the others, and before whom three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots, is the beast to whom Satan gave his power, seat, and authority. It is the one that dominates the empire, and that is the beast of Revelation. The beast is said to arise out of the sea (Dan 7:3) and out of the earth (Dan 7:17), but added to these apparently conflicting statements, we have in Revelation that he ascended out of the abyss. How are we to reconcile these seeming contradictions? The power of the devil acting upon the masses, who are always in opposition to whatever government may exist, produced a state of things that favoured the rise of such a person as is described as the beast. By the people he would be hailed as just the sort of person needed to bring order out of chaos.

Man in his natural fallen condition will not, if he can help it, be in subjection to any authority. Hence there has always been a good deal of murmuring against the existing government. Every man wants to rule over all the others, but not to be ruled over himself. And all this comes from the notion begotten in the heart of man at the outset, and which occasioned his fall. The devil suggested to man that he had a selfish and jealous-minded Creator, and that to rebel against His authority, act on his own behalf, take of the fruit of the forbidden tree, would be to thus exalt himself to equality with God. And though his attempt to exalt himself brought him under death and the domination of the devil who had deceived him, nevertheless the notion that he is his own master, or at least should be, has never left him.

I do not suppose there ever was a day in which the masses were so hard to rule as the day in which we live. Russia groaned under the iron rule of the Czar, and now under the rule of the Soviet their cry of distress is heard throughout the whole world. Everyone wants to rule, and everyone wants that which others have, and if they cannot get it by legal means they will take it by a bloody revolution. But when the revolution has come to pass, how is peace to be established, seeing that the revolution has only brought about a more terrible state of oppression?

Jude in his short epistle speaks of the state of things that subsists today, and we see that the evil that abounds is traceable to the same source that brought about the fall of Adam and the ruin of his race. Jude traces the evil to those who denied the only Despot and Lord, Jesus Christ. The next thing we find is, they despise earthly authorities and rail against dignities. You may be perfectly persuaded that if a man will not submit to the authority of the Lord, he will not submit to any other authority, if he can avoid it. The whole world is seething with rebellion at this present time, and no one can tell what a day may bring forth.

What is wanted is a man that can tame, or at least subdue, the savage nature of the people; who will be able to take up the various questions that vex the world, and who shall compel everyone to submit to his dictation. And such an one shall be found in this beast, whose voice shall be like the roar of a lion, striking terror into the heart of the hearer; for we are told that his mouth was like a lion's. He shall have plenty of wisdom to deal with difficult questions, and power enough to cause his judgments to be respected; for his teeth shall be of iron and his nails of brass; He will devour, break in pieces, and no one shall be able to resist him. This is the man the world is looking for, and

this is the man the world shall get. He rises out of the sea, from the populace in agitation. But he is also said to rise out of the earth, for the whole four kings and their kingdoms also are of the earth. They are not kingdoms that have had their origin in heaven. They are earthly, and belong to this present order of things in which the pride and self-will of man displays itself, and refuses to have any connection or relationship with heaven. God has His own sphere, and they have theirs! If He has interests upon earth, those interests are in their territory, and must, like everything else, come under their authority. As cradled in these principles the four beasts come to their thrones. But as we have seen, in Revelation the beast is said to arise out of the abyss. Its origin is satanic. This is not said of any other kingdom that I am aware of. Of course this that we have here is a picture of the Roman Empire in its revived and last condition. It comes out of the abyss, and goes into destruction (Rev 17:8). When it arises it shall dominate the earth; and all those who have settled down in earth, and have made their home here, in contrast with those whose hopes are all centred in heaven, and who look for the establishment of God's kingdom upon earth, shall fall utterly under its power, and shall do it homage. And we must not forget that the British Isles are in the sphere of that empire; and how soon most of the inhabitants shall be in the midst of this terrible state of things no one can tell. At present things in the political world seem shaping in the direction of the rise of this empire, and of the man who shall guide and control it.

Soon the saints of the Lord shall be called up to meet Him in the air, and the Spirit, who has been here on earth since Pentecost, shall leave the earth along with them. The devil and his angels shall then be cast down from their heavenly positions, and this empire shall become the sphere of their accursed operations. The beast, the willing tool and vessel of their devilry, shall open his mouth against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, and those that dwell there.

There is another beast that rises out of the earth, who is not mentioned in Dan 7:1-28, but comes before us in Dan 11:36. He is the one spoken of in Thessalonians as the man of sin, the son of perdition; "who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2Th 2:4). He is spoken of in John's first epistle as the antichrist, and we have his rise and his activities in Rev 13:11-16. He is evidently the king in Jerusalem, and he plays into the hand of the Roman emperor. Thus in that day there shall be a trinity of evil, all completely of one mind, and determined to banish every recognition of the true God from the earth. The objects of his special animosity and persecution will be the believing Jews, who then shall be God's witnesses in a world from which the saints of this present dispensation have been withdrawn to heaven, and, as I have already said, the Holy Spirit shall have gone with them. From heaven where he now has his seat, the devil shall have been cast down, and his angels along with him, and he full of great fury, knowing that his day of liberty to do evil is very near its close. In that day shall be woe to the earth as under stable government, and also to the lawless masses that revolt against all authority; "Woe," says the Spirit of God, "to the earth and to the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great rage, knowing he has a short time" (Rev 12:12 N.Tr.).

It has been said that wickedness never is wise. We might add that this goes without saying, for the extreme height of folly is for the creature to set himself up against his Creator. The fallen creature, whether man or the devil, has often shown himself very crafty and inventive, and often his inventive powers have been so astonishing that they have staggered himself, though the inventions of men have often been the result of mere accident; but whatever they be, the result is

to exalt man in his own imagination, and to make him think he is himself a kind of God, if not the only creature that is altogether supreme.

How appalling it is to contemplate a creature, once as perfect as infinite wisdom and goodness could make him, fallen so low as to be the incorrigible enemy of God (Ecc 3:11; Eze 28:11-19); his wisdom corrupted, his beauty disfigured, and his primitive position absolutely irrecoverable! "A short time" to carry on a losing battle with the almighty God! "A short time" to work wickedness in a world that he has already plunged into ruin! "A short time" to destroy the creature made in the likeness of God! "A short time" in which to spread brutality, bloodshed, and murder in the earth! "A short time," and then, what? A millennium in the abyss; and after that another "short time" in which he shall lead the whole world in revolt against God: after that "the lake that burns with fire and brimstone" for eternity. And this is the being that men follow! This is the being with whom the king of Jerusalem, and the emperor of revived imperial Rome, shall form their infernal alliance! And all for "a short time" in which to wear a crown, rule a kingdom, oppress the world, and compel a little worship from their fellow-men! O, the utter insanity and wickedness of it all! Eternity! Eternity, sunless, moonless, starless, Godless, Christless, joyless, hopeless! And how terrible to have to contemplate the awful certainty, that two men at least shall come into it a thousand years before the devil and his angels for whom it is prepared! When this terrible Roman Empire is revived it will be the pride and boast of its citizens. It will be dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly. The people of the empire will turn devil-worshippers, because the devil shall give his power and authority to the beast. The little horn that shall eventually rule the empire will, I have no doubt, be the very kind of man the world is in quest of. He will have intelligence, power of penetration, and his words like the roar of the lion. He will be well to grapple with the questions that agitate the minds of men today. He will not have any great difficulty in dealing with either the capitalists or the labourists. The action will as quickly follow the word as the sound follows the explosion of a magazine, and woe betide the soul that resists his authority! Men are seeking such a man today; and in that day, which is not far distant, he shall be found. But God is the special object of attack by this trinity of evil. This evil man shall speak words against the Most High. Great things and blasphemies shall proceed out of his mouth. As regards the other kings, the first three, God was not so much the object of attack as were His people; but here it is directly against God in the heavens that this man's railing is directed. He does persecute the saints that stand for the rights of God during this time of trial, and who are spoken of as "the saints of the most high places," as it has been pointed out that "Most High" in Dan 7:18, Dan 7:22, and the first mentioned "Most High" in Dan 7:25 are plural. These saints stand for the rule of God in the heavens during the time in which this is denied by the earthly rulers, and that which Nebuchadnezzar had to learn was "that the heavens do rule" (Dan 4:26); and in the end all the nations of the earth shall have learned this. Against the witnesses to this truth, which in that hour will be of most vital importance, the wrath of this trinity of evil is mainly directed, and under the persecutions to which they will be subjected they shall be worn out. It seems as though none would be left alive. But then it shall be, "Blessed are the dead which the in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them" (Rev 14:13). But the wrath of this fourth beast is altogether directed against God, though the saints have to suffer because they are His witnesses upon earth. He opens his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven" (Rev 13:6). The heavenly saints having now their dwelling-place in heaven, and the devil having been cast down to the earth, he is absolutely

powerless to reach them. He can only open his mouth and include them in the blasphemies that he utters against God. But determined to have his revenge, and having no longer access to heaven, he will put forth all his power to prevent God having any place upon earth. He makes war with the saints, prevails against them, destroys the saints of the high places, changes times and laws which are connected with Jewish worship, and seeks to destroy out of the earth both the Name of God, and everything that relates to that Name. And for the moment it will seem as though he would accomplish his infernal will, for everything on earth that does not submit to his authority falls before his merciless sword. Our Lord tells us that "except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Mat 24:32). If those days were lengthened out over the twelve hundred and sixty days, there would be no saints of God to enter the millennial earth: all would be destroyed. But the coming of the Ancient of days, judgment committed to the saints of the high places, the arrival of the appointed time, and the kingdom taken possession of by the saints, shall put an end to the reign of this terrible trinity of evil. The kingdom and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heavens, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most high places; that is, I have no doubt, the Jews shall be given the authority of the kingdom under the reign of the Messiah, and peace shall be brought to the earth. The advent of the Ancient of days puts an end to kingdom and reign of the fourth beast. The Stone cut out of the mountain without hands strikes the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream upon the feet of iron and clay, and the glory and power and strength of them are in a moment reduced to powder, and are as the chaff of the threshing floor, which is carried away by the winds of heaven, and the remembrance of them ceases from the earth. A kingdom is established under the reign of the Son of Man, and the wearied earth is rejuvenated by His glorious administration. The trinity of evil is no longer dreaded. The head of the Roman Empire and the anti-Christian king of Jerusalem, or, in the words of the Apocalypse, the beast and the false prophet, are both cast alive into the lake of fire, and the devil that deceived them is imprisoned for the space of a thousand years in the abyss. The nations also must give account to the King for the way they behaved toward the servants of the Lord who had gone out with the Gospel of the kingdom during the terrible reign of the beast. Their attitude toward God and His Christ is seen in the way they treated His messengers, and by this are they judged. His enemies perish in the everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels. Those who at the peril of their lives cared for those messengers, and thus manifested their affection for the coming Messiah, are saluted as the blessed of His Father, and called to inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the world's foundation. His enemies get that portion which was never contemplated they should merit, and His friends that which had been prepared for them, when the foundation of the earth was laid. How thoroughly the ways of the creature justify the counsels of the Creator! Every way that the responsible creature takes has its legitimate end, and is unalterable in its consequences; for in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, according to the Gospel preached by Paul, God shall render to every man according to his deeds, "To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and incorruptibility, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that does evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that works good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: for there is no respect of persons with God" (Rom 2:6-11). Grace that saves the believing sinner does not alter this principle, which is inherent in the very nature of God.

How it comes to pass, where there is none righteous, and none that do good, any can be found characterized by patient continuance in well doing, might well seem to be a mystery, but this is fully gone into in the rest of the Roman epistle, in which the believer is seen, not only to be justified but to have justification of life (Dan 6:18), that is, to be in the life of the One in whom we are justified, also by the death of Christ to have got our freedom from sin's domination, so that we have the privilege of reckoning ourselves dead to sin and alive to God (Dan 6:1-28), and also the Spirit given to us as the power of the new nature and life, in order that we may produce righteousness. The truth is, the salvation of God is a perfect salvation, a work worthy of Himself. It is not a patchwork of the old order; there is no tinkering with the old nature, no attempt to disinfect the evil from the flesh: it is new birth, new life and nature; sins put away, and the nature that the sins sprang from condemned in the unsparing judgment of the cross; it is life, relationship, and being, in the last Adam the heavenly Man, with the Holy Spirit given to dwell in us, as the power by which all our new and eternal relationships with God are enjoyed. By this work of God, both for us and in us, power is given to us that enables us to seek by patient continuance in well doing the glory, honour, and incorruptibility, that are set before us in the Gospel; and thus by the practice of righteousness we have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life (Rom 6:22). Truly that which we are we are by the grace of God; but those that are saved by that grace come under its blessed teaching, and are characterized by denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world (Tit 2:1-15). Where people do not submit to the Gospel they remain under sin's dominion, and by such nothing but sin is produced, and therefore in the judgment they cannot escape the consequence of such a life, for God does not depart from the principles that must ever characterize a righteous judge. The way of escape is through faith in Christ; for Him who knew no sin God made sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him, and such do not come into judgment, for . . .

“Payment God will not twice demand

Once at my bleeding Surety's hand,

And then again at mine.”

Chapter 8. The Course of Empire

Chapter 8. The Course of Empire When we come to this vision that appeared to Daniel we find that it was given him in the third year of the reign of Belshazzar, and that in the vision he is away in the province of Elam, in the fortress of Shushan, and by the river Ulai. The river here seems to symbolize the armed forces of Persia in their restless energy of imperial conquest. The ram which he saw, which symbolizes the Medo-Persian kingdom, stands before the river, observing and directing its movements. The ram is seen pushing westward, northward, and southward, and no beast could stand before it, neither could any deliver out of his hand. Moreover he did according to his will, and became great. There does not seem to be in him any recognition of God, or of one supreme Being, whose rights should be respected upon the earth. One is in measure astonished at reading this, because of the honourable mention that Cyrus has in Isa 45:1-25, though there He does say, "I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known Me." Later in his career than the point in which Daniel is made to see him, he may have been brought into the light of the knowledge of the Lord. And this thought gets some confirmation from what is said to him, with reference to his assault and capture of Babylon, "I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel." Here, anyhow, the ram that symbolizes the kings of Media and Persia (and Cyrus the Persian was the higher horn) does according to his will: no higher authority seems to be recognized. The first king we read of in the Word of God is Nimrod, and the beginning of his kingdom was Babel; and it seems as though his ambition was universal dominion, for the object in view in the building of the tower of Babel was to have a centre of government, control and supervision. The tower was never completed, nor shall universal dominion ever be achieved by any man, until He comes to whom the whole creation of right belongs. To Him, and to Him alone, shall every creature in heaven and on earth be made subject. The thoughts of kings from the beginning have always run in this channel of world empire; but so far every attempt to reach this coveted position has resulted in disaster to the aspirant. The greatness, the influence, the honour, the dignity, and the glory of the various kingdoms of the earth have been that which rulers have ever sought to safeguard and advance, and hence come the wars and fightings, the bloody battlefields and broken hearts. And sometimes when success seems to have crowned the efforts made to secure the sceptre of the world, and the hand has been stretched out to grasp the prize, it has been dashed aside by some unforeseen event, and he who grasped at too much has lost everything. Nimrod could not battle against the confusion of tongues, nor keep Asshur from going out and building Nineveh (Gen 10:9-11). And the devil is very well aware of what men are after, and he has not a little to do with the disposal of the thrones of this world. The prospect of an easy method by which our Lord might possess the kingdoms of the world was the bait he used in attempting to decoy Him from the path of obedience, which He had taken for the glory of the Father. He showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, "and says unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me" (Mat 4:8-9).

It might be thought that the devil was in this instance over-estimating his powers, but our Lord does not dispute the pretension he makes. He may have a hand in the setting up of by far the greater number of those that have reigned, but I question that he had any hand at all in placing either David or Solomon on the throne of Israel. Nor can he place any monarch upon a throne without the permission of God. And God has His own wise purpose in view even when he allows Satan to have his way in putting a sceptre into the hand of a man. In whatever way we see a man rise up to occupy a throne upon earth, it is our privilege, and bounden duty, to recognize that ruler as established by God in the place of supremacy, irrespective of the means he may have used to arrive at that exalted position. He will have to give account to God for the way in which he exercises the authority that has been placed in his hands, but our position is to recognize him as God's minister, set there for our good, and as one that does not bear the sword in vain. The conquest of Babylon by the Medo-Persian is passed over here, for we have it in Dan 5:1-31. The Persian empire is successfully assailed and overthrown by the king of Greece, the he-goat that came from the west, and which is characterized by a notable horn between his eyes, and by rapidity of movement, also by the fury with which he attacked and destroyed the power of the ram, casting him down to the ground and trampling upon him. An old grudge against the ram was what evidently led to this terrible exhibition of hostility. Not with the history of the numerous wars in which the ram or the he-goat had engaged does the Spirit of God occupy us. The only things regarding the ram thought worthy of record are his ambition, his might, and the fact that his activities were the result of his own will. And as to the he-goat, he is said not to touch the ground in his going. As this feature indicates, he leapt from victory to victory, and became exceeding great. But just when he had reached the zenith of his power, the great horn becomes broken, and in its stead came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven. But in the interpretation of the vision we are told these were not in his power.

Out of one of these four horns there arises a little horn, which became great, and which the Spirit of God at once shows us is engaged with the people of God, and with the land of that people. And here where we might least expect it, the people are designated "The host of heaven." They may have fallen into a weak, humble, and down-trodden condition, but we must take His estimation of them, nor judge of them as they appear before the eyes of men. The moment they crossed the Jordan, the angel with the drawn sword in his hand spoke of them as the Lord's host, of which he was captain (Josh. 5:24). They have ever the supreme place in the mind of God, as far as the earth is concerned. It was the purpose of God that they should occupy the supreme place in the government of the world, and they shall yet have it. It was this fact that sustained the faith of David, when Goliath struck terror into the hearts of the people, when gathered together to war with the Philistines. He is utterly astounded at the fool-hardiness of a man who, whatever he might seem to be in the eyes of men, was in the estimation of faith but a poor worm of the dust, who had defied "the armies of the living God" (1Sa 17:36). The people might be trembling in their armour, but they were the Lord's host, and that was enough for David.

We get the same power of faith in Joshua and Caleb, who saw the sons of Anak as grasshoppers, because they viewed them in relation to God, whereas the rest of the spies, who went up with them to search the land, saw themselves as grasshoppers in the sight of the sons of Anak (Num 23:1-30). In all cases it requires faith in God, if we are to lay hold of the high position to which His grace has called us. The privileges of His people are always great, for with lavish hand He gives

His blessings, but it has ever been very little that they have been able to lay hold of and enjoy their privileges. Israel were told that one of them would chase a thousand (Jos 23:10), through faith in the living God, who fought their battles. But through their departure from God they were to find themselves to be very much weaker than their enemies, for one of their enemies would chase a thousand of them, and two would put ten thousand to flight (Deu 32:30).

Still are they His chosen people, and when His own time comes He will turn them to Himself; and they shall be manifestly His host, when the day arrives in which they shall have to deal with His and their enemies. Then “the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep; who, if he go through, both treads down, and tears in pieces, and none can deliver” (Mic 5:8). But this time has not yet come; for however great the sorrows of this people have been, and are, the waters they shall have to pass through shall be still deeper than anything which they have hitherto met. This little horn casts down some of the host, and also of the stars to the ground. The rulers of the nation become obnoxious to this man’s pride of heart, who like every other autocrat is unable to bear the slightest resistance to his will from any over whom he is victorious. Nor does he stop with this exhibition of his despotic tyranny. He sets himself against the prince of the host, and takes away from him the continual sacrifice, and casts down the place of his sanctuary. By reason of transgression a time of trial is appointed to the continual sacrifice. The truth also is cast down to the ground, for nothing seems to withstand this little horn. Were the people of God in a state pleasing to the Lord this would not happen to them, but the time referred to here has the last days in view, though that which happened to them by the cruelties inflicted by Antiochus Epiphanes may serve as a foreshadowing of the things that will come upon them with greater severity under the Antichrist. For their rejection and crucifying of their Messiah they shall be made to pass through unparalleled sufferings, though they seem as though they already had suffered more than falls to the common lot of men.

I have no doubt that Daniel was very confident there was much underlying this vision, much that did not appear on the surface, about which God would have him greatly enlightened. Hence his desire to know its meaning. And this is conveyed to him by the angel Gabriel. In the interpretation we learn that the doings of the little horn in the vision are but a faint foreshadowing of that which shall take place through the conduct of a power that shall be established in the east, as the Roman power shall be in the west, and by means of another power, not his own, he shall prosper and destroy. An offspring of the great destroyer, the devil, his object shall be to destroy every vestige of the name of God upon the earth, but he shall be broken without hand. Christ will deal with him at His appearing. No human hand shall deal with him. The sword that shall lay him low shall proceed out of the mouth of the Lord. What a life of rebellion against God! and what a solemn ending to the life of a responsible creature! May our ways upon earth not be directed and energized by our own wills, but by the holy will of God. This only is the safe and happy way for the creature.

Chapter 9. God's Word and Daniel's Confession

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It is rather astonishing that in both the seventh and eighth chapters the vision is given to the prophet, and yet afterwards he required an interpreter that he might understand its meaning, though he is said to have had "understanding in all visions and dreams" (Dan 1:17). As regards the visions and dreams given to the Gentile, this is easy to be understood, for we would not expect God to put Himself in direct communication with an idolater. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him" (Psa 25:14), and "He reveals His secret unto His servants the prophets" (Amo 3:7). But here is Daniel, a man greatly beloved, and he has to be made to understand the vision that has been given to him!

God was bringing before him, by means of this vision, the history and behaviour of certain powers that would have in some way to do with his people, and hence there was still something to be understood by him, that did not lie on the surface of the vision. God loves to interest the hearts of His people in the things that are of interest to Himself. It was surely a grief to the heart of the Lord to witness the indifference manifested by His disciples regarding the place to which He was going, when He has to say to them, "Now I go My way to Him that sent Me; and none of you asks Me, Whither goest Thou?" (Joh 16:5). They were more concerned about the place He was leaving, than they were about the place to which He was going; but as soon as the Lord was glorified, the place to which He had gone was everything to them.

Daniel knew that God had little interest in the warlike activities of the kings of the earth, whoever they may be. That all men are responsible to Him for the way in which they behave themselves in whatever position they may be found in the providence of God, is a solemn fact, whether the position be one of authority, or of subjection; whether it be of poverty, or of wealth; and for their behaviour in the circumstances in which they may be found, they must give account to Him; for in whatever way, or by whatever means, they may have reached the place in which they are, they are there by the ordering of God, though on their side it may have been by wickedness they arrived there.

God takes account of the doings of all His creatures whom He has set in relationship with Himself, but this does not mean that the behaviour of a king has more interest to Him, than has the behaviour of the subject. A position of authority may, and does, carry more responsibility with it, for in such a position there is more power for doing either good or evil, than there is in the position of the subject; but God has no more interest in the life of the one than in that of the other, though in His government of this world He has more to say about the life of the king than He has about the life of the subject; neither does He put on record the histories of kings or of kingdoms, any more than He does the histories of the common people, except where they may be found connected with His interests upon earth, which largely centre around the nation of Israel; and where this is the case He has much to say about them, whoever they may be, and will have more to say about them in the day of judgment.

Daniel was a man “greatly beloved,” and one to whom great understanding was given, and wisdom also, and to whom wonderful revelations were made; yet we learn from God’s ways with him that what we can learn by the study of His Word by means of prophetic writings, we cannot expect to receive in any other way. God has put on record the things He desires His people to know and understand; and to us has been graciously given the Holy Spirit, who inspired His servants to put on record these communications, and who is the power by which we may become acquainted with them. He has not cast us upon our own fancied ability to receive them intelligently, even when He has so wrought that a record of them has been made. In Daniel’s study of the sacred Word, while under the domination of the proud and victorious Gentile, he, by the leading of the Spirit, had been directed to the prophecy of Jeremiah, where he found that seventy years were to be accomplished in the desolations of Jerusalem. And here we may learn a very valuable lesson. Most of those who have been brought to faith in Christ would be glad to be better acquainted with the Holy Scriptures, and perhaps we have cried to God about it, and desired to be led into deeper knowledge regarding the thoughts of His heart. But we may not have taken the means that He has placed before us, that we may lay hold of the coveted treasure. We are informed that “the soul of the slothful desires, and has nothing”; and how constantly are we being made to experience the truth of the saying? But “the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.” God has, in His great grace and love to us, made manifest the thoughts of His heart; and we have a record of them, and if we desire to know them, according to the strength of that desire will be our study of them. Let us learn a lesson from Daniel. The captive finds from the holy Word, that the time for the ending of the desolations of the city of the great king had drawn nigh, and he turns to God in prayer that there might be a fulfilment of that which was written. Not that he had the least doubt about it, but he was in the mind of God as to the accomplishment of His ways upon earth, and how His acts, either for blessing or otherwise, are consequent upon the prayers of His people. I will not weary the reader with many passages of Scripture, but will refer him to Eze 36:37; Zec 12:10; Rev 8:3-5. One might have supposed that the time for confession of sins, and for prayer for deliverance, was now too late, that God would carry out His purpose, and fulfil His Word apart from the prayers of His people. But these are only the thoughts of a careless heart. He has set man in dependence upon Himself; and that dependence is expressed in prayer, though none but His own people acknowledge this fact. He also carries out His gracious purposes with regard to His own, or with reference to His dealings with the nations, in answer to the expressed desires that ascend to Him from faithful hearts; and in His dealings with this world He does not set aside those that are His witnesses on the earth. His spiritual people are in His mind, and that which they see needful for His honour and glory, they appeal to Him about, and the answer comes in His own way, and sometimes in a way in which it is least expected. Still, it does come, and in response to their fervent supplications. May we ever keep this in mind. We are here on earthy and in one way very much like other men, but we are in the mind of heaven, and in charge of His interests, and His ears are open to our supplications. But it is only as we prayerfully study His holy Word that we can approach Him with any measure of intelligence. But if Daniel approaches the heavenly throne, realizing that the bright sun of deliverance for the holy city was about to break through the dark cloud of his people’s captivity, and if a joy fills his heart at the prospect, he must take into consideration in the presence of God that which had caused the vapours of the Divine displeasure to spread themselves so thickly across the azure dome of heaven. He cannot take the deliverance as a matter of course, any more than he could take that which had befallen his people as being the

result of the fitful humour of a capricious autocrat. He is before the throne with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes, ascribing righteousness to God, and sins to himself and his nation. He ascribes righteousness to Jehovah, and confusion of face to the people to whom such favours had been shown.

Let us here learn our lesson. Daniel was a man greatly in the favour of God, and he was also a doer of His will, ready to give up life rather than disobey the Divine command, and yet is he very conscious of his imperfections and failures, though he is one of the very few of God's people whose errors are unrecorded. Still, of this I have no doubt: he was well aware of the evil that lay in his fleshly nature, and that whatever he was, as a faithful servant of Jehovah, he was that by the favour of God. Hence he takes his place along with the sinners of his nation, not towering above them as a faultless exception, but placing himself among them as clay of the one lump of fallen humanity, and as a fruitless branch of a degenerate vine, "We have rebelled against Him; and we have not hearkened unto the voice of Jehovah our God." He fully identifies himself with the nation.

There is a wholesome flavour about this confession coming from such a devoted servant of the Lord. There is no, "I thank Thee that I am not as other men." Such words would not fit into the lips of a man like Daniel. God, who "desires truth in the inward parts," finds it in the honest and heartfelt acknowledgments of this poor captive, and they are grateful to His holy ear. He has not one word to say on behalf of himself or of his nation, but he has a great deal to say on behalf of God and on behalf of the honour and glory of His holy Name. That which he desires to have done for his nation in the way of deliverance is for the Lord's sake. He says, "Defer not, for Thine own sake, O my God! for Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy Name." Splendid!

Heaven is moved! The ear of the living God is reached! The heart of the God of Israel responds to the cry of His faithful and devoted servant. He says, "Whilst I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation." How perfectly fulfilled to Daniel was the promise, "While they are yet speaking I will hear" (Isa 65:24)! Gabriel is caused to fly "swiftly." Daniel is not to be kept waiting. The assault upon the throne of the Highest is too resolute and powerful to be set aside. The agony of the pleader is not to be despised by a God of infinite, compassion and of holy love. Swiftly is the messenger despatched with a message that gives a vision of the future until the day in which the Messiah, shall take the throne of the world. He is told that seventy weeks are apportioned out upon Daniel's people, and upon the holy city, to finish transgression, make an end of sins, make expiation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the holy of holies.

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