

April to June 2018

“The Book of Daniel”

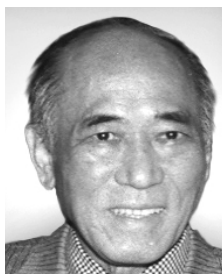
by

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About the Author



Dr John C. Whitcomb is internationally known as an author and teacher. He is best known for his role as co-author with Henry Morris, PhD, of *The Genesis Flood*, published in 1961. *The Genesis Flood* is considered one of the most influential books of the 20th Century, and marks the beginning of the modern creation movement. In addition to *The Genesis Flood*, Dr Whitcomb has published a number of books on science and the Bible, commentaries, and other works.



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INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF DANIEL

by Noah Quarshie

The book of Daniel has been considered the book of Revelation of the Old Testament.

An Old Testament hero, Daniel is the main character of the book that bears his name. Of noble or royal birth (Dan 1:3), he was taken captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in 605 BC with other Jewish youths of like ability and attainments (Dan 1:1-7), where he spent the remainder of his life and gained distinction as statesman and prophet.

Though Daniel lived during the Babylonian exile, yet it was not, as in the case of Ezekiel, in the midst of his countrymen who had been carried into the captivity, but at the court of the ruler and in the service of the state.

Although of a despised subject race (Israel), Daniel rose to a position of dominating influence under four kings of three different nations: Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar the Chaldeans, Darius the Mede, and Cyrus the Persian.

Daniel's youthful courage of conviction regarding the king's meat and wine and his willingness in later life to be cast into the den of lions rather than change his custom of prayer to Jehovah were not isolated incidents of his life, but rather fair samples of the stuff of which he was made: "*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it*" (Prov 22:6).

LORD'S DAY, APRIL 1
DANIEL 1:1-3
ACTS 4:12

*"Neither is there
salvation in any other ..."*

GOD IS MY JUDGE

In Bible times, the names of people were significant and meaningful. "Daniel" means "God is my judge." Do you believe in a God who stands ready to judge and/or vindicate you? We delight to think of God as our Father, and the fact that He is our Judge is included in that idea. He watches over us and protects us, but also deals with our sins! Any diligent student of the Bible cannot help but see the work of God as a Judge recorded there.

Throughout Bible history we note the reality of God's judgment upon the wicked and at the same time the absolute guarantee of the security of His people from ultimate harm. Only an infinite mind can do all of this. The patriarch Job discovered the truth of this the hard way, for just as his three "comforters" misjudged him, so he in turn misjudged God. That is why God challenged him, that if he could *"look on every one that is proud, and bring him low; and tread down the wicked in their place ... Then will I also confess unto thee that thine own right hand can save thee"* (Job 40:12, 14). Obviously, Job, a mere finite and sinful man, could not accept such a challenge. Only an infinite Mind can weigh every motive and attitude of men's hearts in order to provide perfect judgment and justice.

Someday, of course, man's judgment of himself and of others will come to a permanent end, and God will be the only Judge. For *"... when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness"* (Isa 26:9). Therefore, said Paul, *"... judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come ..."* (1 Cor 4:5).

THOUGHT: Is the coming Judge my present Saviour?

PRAYER: Show me Thy way and be my Judge that I may live a holy and upright life and trust Thee for full security.

MONDAY, APRIL 2

DANIEL 1:2

ROMANS 8:28

“... all things work
together for good ...”

WHO IS “THE LORD”?

“*And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand ...*” (Dan 1:2). Who is this “Lord”? The Hebrew name used here is Adonai, not Jehovah. “Adonai speaks of God as supreme master. The significance of using this name here is to say that, though outward signs did not seem to show it, God was the master of this situation, as Jehoiakim was given into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. It was not Nebuchadnezzar’s strength nor Jehoiakim’s weakness that really decided the matter, but God’s good pleasure. Kings like to think of themselves sufficient as rulers, but they are as much under the supreme control of God as any person. There is comfort in knowing that no governmental authority can go beyond the bounds permitted by God” (Leon Woods).

Too often we set out to accomplish our own plans, goals, dreams, and desires. The sovereign God who controls the affairs of nations also controls our affairs. He has a plan for our lives which is tailor-made to the way He has designed us. He knows our frame. What a comfort to know that God is there and that He is in control whether it be the death of a loved one, a broken engagement, or a flat tyre. God tells us exactly what to do when we are hurt. “*And call upon me in the day of trouble ...*” (Ps 50:15). That is, “Tell me all about it.” He promises to help you. He has an incomparably great reputation for not breaking His promises, whether His covenant promises to Israel or His promises to believers today who simply take Him at His Word that those who believe with childlike simplicity of faith in His Son Jesus Christ, not simply will have eternal life, but have it beginning now (John 5:24). Only Adonai, “the Supreme Master,” can guarantee this to sinful men in a changing world.

THOUGHT: It is good, when trials come, to keep a finger on the promise and an eye on the Promiser.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to know that Thou art always in control and therefore the outcome is assured.

TUESDAY, APRIL 3

DANIEL 1:3-4

PROVERBS 20:11

*“Even a child is known
by his doings ...”*

BY OUR FRUITS WE ARE KNOWN

The chief court official, Ashpenaz, was told by Nebuchadnezzar to search for top quality young men – the cream of the crop of Israelite prisoners – and to train them to serve in his court. To be sure, the experience of leaving their own culture, country and kin was traumatic. At the same time these youths could easily have become proud because of being selected by the king.

The requirements for selection were high. They were to be of noble birth, without defect, attractive in appearance, highly intelligent and mentally alert to learn to both speak and write the difficult Chaldean language.

Daniel was only about fifteen years old when he was deported from his home by the Babylonians. Once he was away from those who knew and loved him, he could have decided “to do his own thing.” Neither parents nor close friends would be likely to find out. He could have reasoned that since he had been chosen on such high merits, he could do as he pleased. But Daniel decided that he would not sin. He remained faithful and true to God.

God greatly rewarded Daniel for living for Him. God has promised that He will reward and care for any and all who put their trust in Him and seek to do His will. *“If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself”* (John 7:17). *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”* (Matt 6:33). But this is purely by His initiative and grace, not our merit. He is the One who had planned and provided to make us what we are – sinners saved by grace through faith (Eph 2:8-10). That is the only way we can effectively serve our God.

THOUGHT: Daniel was the product of God through faithful parents.

PRAYER: Teach me, Lord, to honour and to obey Thee and to teach my children to do the same.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 4

DANIEL 1:8a

PHILIPPIANS 3:14

"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

INFLUENCE AND DISCERNMENT

"But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself ..." (Dan 1:8). This Hebrew youth, in his middle teens, refused to defile himself with what God had forbidden. God had warned His people against all idolatrous practices including sacrifices to heathen gods (Exod 34:15). The king's choice food probably included the meat of animals that had been offered to the gods of Babylon.

Daniel quickly discerned that the Babylonian culture being imposed upon him was in conflict with the Word of God. How can we explain such discernment in a young man? One influence may have been the national revival under King Josiah (Jehoiakim's father). As a vigorous reformer, he had repaired God's Temple and decreed that the copy of God's Word discovered there should be read to all the people. As a result, a revival spread throughout the land. Though Josiah's own sons sought to undo their father's righteous acts (perhaps because God's people failed to pray for their national leaders sufficiently, even as we fail today), Daniel, at least, determined to be faithful to God.

Daniel must have been deeply influenced by godly parents also. He was diligently taught by them to hide God's words in his heart. God has commanded His people: *"And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up"* (Deut 6:6-7). "Daniel was given the most important thing to prepare him for life – a knowledge of God and faith to live by in any environment in which he would find himself" (Campbell). Daniel was a marvelous tribute to his godly upbringing.

THOUGHT: Am I helping to provide a deeply spiritual atmosphere in my home for God to shape a future servant in His kingdom?

PRAYER: Lord, help me to walk circumspectly before Thee so that others will be influenced by Thy Holy Spirit to do the same.

THURSDAY, APRIL 5
DANIEL 1:8a
DEUTERONOMY 31:6

*“Be strong and of a good
courage, fear not ...”*

COURAGE FOSTERS CONVICTION

Daniel was a young man who had convictions that were based on the instruction of God. This instruction was absolutely reliable and was thus to be obeyed without hesitation and without question.

Many of our experiences today cause us to awaken to the realization that we are influenced by more than one set of values and standards and goals. Thus, many apparently mature Christian adults find themselves gripped with uncertainty. They do not know how to fit into certain situations. Christian young people face even greater fears and frustrations when they sense that they are in many ways “different” from others.

It is the unusual teenager in “advanced” civilizations today who is not involved in drugs, premarital sex, or other activities that destroy their moral being. Sadly, the pressures are intensifying. Modern education focuses on a man-centered ideology that erases God and biblical values. Children from Christian homes are discovering that they must become modern-day Daniels or else sink into the morass of sinful worldliness that surrounds them. They must fear God and obey His precious Word in order to survive the tides of humanism that threaten to drown their budding faith.

Many Christian parents today want their children to be socially acceptable rather than being Daniels. Thus, they are an important part of the problem and will answer to their Lord at the Judgment Seat (2 Cor 5:10). True Christian parents must constantly pray that God may enable them to challenge their children: “Dare to be a Daniel; dare to stand alone; dare to have a purpose firm; dare to make it known.”

THOUGHT: “If we don’t worship God in our homes we may never prepare our families to live as effective Christians in our society” (Campbell).

PRAYER: O my God and my King, enable me by Thy grace to be a spiritual model to young people (including my own children) of deep courage and conviction.

FRIDAY, APRIL 6

DANIEL 1:8

PSALM 27:5

“... in the secret of his
tabernacle shall he hide me ...”

OUR ACTIONS WITNESS TO OTHERS

Daniel and his companions, from the very start of their training programme in Babylon, settled upon one policy from which they would not deviate; namely, submission without compromise. Daniel did not drop the matter with a shrug of the shoulders when Ashpenaz refused to grant his request to be excused from eating the king's food. He proceeded to the steward, asking for a temporary change of diet lasting a mere ten days. He believed God so explicitly that he fully expected their appearance to change within that short period! Later, he would request a permanent change of diet.

Daniel might have taken a compromising approach. He could have rationalized his way around the will of his God by asking, “We are to obey God's law in ordinary circumstances, but this is utterly abnormal. Surely, God would not expect obedience to His law in a situation like this! Look at the advantages that can be ours if we follow the king's directions! We can influence important people! God must be giving us this big opportunity! The Law isn't all that important. Let's act now!”

Thank God, Daniel acted on the basis of his convictions, and trusted Him to be faithful. He and his friends were not disappointed! *“Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not”* (Jer 33:3). No one disobeys the revealed will of God without some kind of excuse. But our Lord is not interested in excuses. He requires obedience, even if we do not understand the rationality of His commandments at the time. In the Upper Room, Jesus said to His disciples: *“What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter ... If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them”* (John 13:7, 17).

THOUGHT: Obedience to God and His Word produces several results. It gladdens the heart of God. It brings blessing to our own lives. It provides a witness and an encouragement to others, in order that they might do the same and receive God's blessing.

PRAYER: O Lord God, may I trust Thee for help to stand by my convictions today, in the midst of temptation, for Thy glory.

SATURDAY, APRIL 7

DANIEL 1:8, 12

MATTHEW 5:29

*“And if thy right eye offend thee,
pluck it out, and cast it from thee ...”*

OUR ACTIONS INFLUENCE OTHERS

There is a significant correlation between Daniel 1:8 and Daniel 1:12. Verse 8 says that Daniel *“purposed in his heart”* (i.e. his own heart) to stand firm on convictions that came from faithful instruction. In verse 12 he said, “Prove thy servants.” He spoke for himself plus his three companions!

May we not assume, then, that Daniel’s convictions, actions, and witness had a positive effect upon his companions? We do know that Daniel’s attitudes became the model for the behaviour of many Jews four centuries later when they suffered horrible persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes. This Syrian king realized that he would have to force the Jews to abandon their dietary laws, among other things, in order to destroy their distinctive witness to God and to be absorbed into his Hellenistic culture. “The contemporary writings tell us that many Jews refused to ‘defile themselves,’ and chose to die rather than give way on this issue” (Roland Wallace, *The Lord is King*, p. 43). The Book of Daniel was well known in Israel in those days, and the account of Daniel’s spiritual faith and obedience was greatly used by the Spirit of God to encourage many thousands of His people in times of severe testing.

In our society today there are many tensions that should force us to face moral issues squarely, take a firm stand, and state a definitive “No!” When we resist things that would ‘defile’ us, the outcome is twofold:

- (1) We are fulfilling the commandments of our Lord Jesus Christ with respect to the ultimate importance of the purity of our heart/mind.
- (2) We are encouraging others to live pure and holy lives that are pleasing to the Master we love.

THOUGHT: “You do not test the resources of God until you try the impossible” (F.B. Meyer).

PRAYER: My Lord and my God, help me through your Spirit to stand firm on the precepts of Thy Word!

LORD'S DAY, APRIL 8

DANIEL 2:1-3

PSALM 81:10

“... open thy mouth wide,
and I will fill it.”

WORLDLY WISDOM DOES NOT MEET HEART NEEDS

In 602 BC King Nebuchadnezzar had dreams which troubled him so greatly that he could not sleep. His heaven-sent insomnia caused him to investigate his court. He called before him those whom he expected could help him. “*Magicians*” were involved in religious ritual. “*Astrologers*” may have been fortune tellers. “*Sorcerers*” could refer to those who dealt with magic potions for spells and charms. The “*Chaldeans*” were a special class of wise men or priests.

The Babylonian astrologers kept very careful records of the movements of the planets and comets, and of the phases of the moon. These records were for the purpose of determining the influences these “gods” might exert upon men and nations. A Babylonian astronomer named Kidinnu (c. 390 BC) made some measurements that were more accurate than any known even in the nineteenth century AD!

This was the calibre of men Nebuchadnezzar had. Is not God showing us in a graphic way that input from the wisest of men is utterly insufficient to solve the most basic spiritual problems and needs of the human heart?

In company of dignitaries it is easy to feel inferior, insignificant and ineffective. What would have happened to Naaman if his servant girl had felt that way (2 Kings 5:1-3; Luke 4:27)?

It has been estimated that the average person speaks 30,000 words a day. But how many of these do we speak in loving proclamation of God's truth? Or do we struggle with the fear of being considered out-of-date, trivial, or stupid? We often resort to making excuses like Moses who said he was not eloquent. But God promised to use him. He promised the same for the apostles (Luke 21:15). We have the same God they did!

THOUGHT: God specializes in things thought impossible. He will do for me what no other power can do.

PRAYER: Enlighten my mind; encourage my heart; open my mouth, O God!

MONDAY, APRIL 9

DANIEL 2:4-9

1 CORINTHIANS 1:19-20

“... hath not God made foolish
the wisdom of this world?”

A CLEVER MONARCH AND FALSE MAGICIANS

For many centuries ancient near eastern kings had surrounded themselves with various types of wise men and magicians to provide counsel and proper relationships with the gods. With rare exceptions, they were wicked men who wielded great power through their manipulation of ignorant and superstitious kings.

But Nebuchadnezzar the Great was different! He had long observed the ways of these court flatterers during the reign of his father Nabopolassar. Now that a stupendous confrontation with the God of Israel occurred in the form of a mysterious dream, he was determined to test these magicians to see whether they truly had access to the gods of Babylon.

In Daniel 2:5, “*the king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me ...*” i.e. he had forgotten his dream. Far from forgetting the dream, Nebuchadnezzar was determined to discover, once and for all, whether these wealthy and powerful men were genuine mediators between heaven and earth or whether they had “*prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, till the time be changed*” (Dan 2:9). If they were genuine, they could surely tell him what he had dreamed. Then the king would be assured that their interpretation of the dream was valid as well.

Today also, highly educated young people are turning away from corrupt, superstitious, and traditional religions that offer no real assurance or meaning in life. And just as Daniel and his friends were ready to offer God’s marvelous alternative, so we should be ready, in the Holy Spirit, to make God’s glorious truth known to the empty and disillusioned generation into which He has placed us.

THOUGHT: Even godless men can often see through the hypocrisy of religions that have no message of hope.

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to clearly discern the false from the true in the Christian world today, through Thy precious Word.

TUESDAY, APRIL 10

DANIEL 2:10-11

ISAIAH 55:8-9

“... so are my ways higher than your ways,
and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

NO MAN ON EARTH CAN DECLARE IT

“There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king’s matter ...” (Dan 2:10). How true! Even if it were not for our sinfulness, the very fact that we were created as finite beings forever excludes us, even in glory, of knowing all the secrets of God! *“The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever ...”* (Deut 29:29).

The moment of ultimate crisis had come to these magicians. And it came in the form of a clever, brilliant, powerful king who demanded real proof that they had access to supernatural knowledge. In vain did they complain of the king’s unfairness: *“... there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean”* (Dan 2:10). Isaiah had predicted this 150 years earlier: *“Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth ... Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth ... Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee”* (Isa 47:11-13). Not only could they not save Babylon from the armies of Cyrus (Isa 45), they could not even save themselves from their own Babylonian king!

All of this gives powerful, yes, conclusive evidence that the difference between man’s corporate wisdom and the wisdom of God is infinite. Until we learn this, we will continue to be captivated and manipulated by the philosophies of sinful men. *“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ”* (Col 2:8). In every generation, Satan is ready to lead us away from God’s eternal and unchanging truth and to concentrate on the futile and changing opinions of men who are no better than Nebuchadnezzar’s magicians.

THOUGHT: One clear word from God is sufficient to dispel the fog of human opinions.

PRAYER: O God, help me to set my mind on Christ the Lord who is seated at Thy right hand in heaven.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11

DANIEL 2:12-24

JAMES 5:16

“... *The effectual fervent prayer
of a righteous man availeth much.*”

THE DREAM REVEALED

There are two great presuppositions or assumed truths taught in the Bible: (1) God exists, and (2) God reveals Himself to man. Hebrews 1:1-2 tells us that: “*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son ...*” And the only way men can respond to this stupendous reality is by faith. “*But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*” (Heb 11:6). In his own context, Daniel understood such spiritual principles, and Daniel chapter two shows how God intervened on his behalf to reveal and to interpret the king’s dream.

The true character of a person is surely revealed in times of pressure and crisis. Young Daniel faced a very great crisis, and his response is an example of how spiritually mature people behave: he trusted fully in his God. We can easily imagine what his fate would have been if he had failed God at this point and did not receive the interpretation!

Because he knew the God in whom he trusted, he took other meaningful and important steps. He prayed (Dan 2:17-19) and praised (Dan 2:19-23). He prayed with such confidence that he was able to go to sleep. In his praise he made God the true object of his worship. In this section, which is sometimes called “Daniel’s psalm,” there are seven ascriptions of praise. Can you count them?

The last ascription declares that “*the light dwelleth with him*” (Dan 2:22). The Babylonians considered their gods to be gods of light. But this entire event must have convinced Nebuchadnezzar and all of his court and nation that deep, hidden, secret things are fully and only known to the God of Israel. In fact, “*the light dwelleth (literally, is at home) with him.*”

THOUGHT: “It is not the circumstances of our life that gives it character, but our relationship to God under any circumstances.”

PRAYER: May my heart be the home in which Thou dwelleth, my God, so that I may ascribe praise to Thee.

THURSDAY, APRIL 12

DANIEL 2:25-28

1 CORINTHIANS 10:19-20

“... I would not that ye should
have fellowship with devils.”

ONLY THE GOD OF HEAVEN REVEALS MYSTERIES

Daniel (together with his three friends) was the only man in the court of Babylon who could rightfully claim access to supernatural power. But he exercised tremendous care, as a godly Jew, not to claim any of the glory to himself for such access. Thus, when Nebuchadnezzar directly asked him, “*Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof?*” (Dan 2:26). Daniel answered, “... *there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known ... what shall be in the latter days ...*” (Dan 2:28). Over a thousand years earlier Joseph, in the court of Pharaoh, had assumed a similar posture of genuine spiritual humility: “It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace” (Gen 41:16).

When Cornelius fell at Peter’s feet, the Apostle raised him up, saying, “*Stand up; I myself also am a man*” (Acts 10:26). Paul and Barnabas were horrified when the pagans at Lystra began to worship them as messengers from heaven, and tore their robes in protest: “*Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you ...*” (Acts 14:15). Paul later stated to the proud Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 12:7 that it was because of “*the abundance of the revelations*” God had granted to him as an Apostle that God also gave him “*a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.*”

We, too, are in serious danger. To the extent that we, as God’s people today, have the deep inner assurance of the possession of divine truth within the pages of holy Scripture, to that same extent we may fall into Satan’s trap of thinking of ourselves as intrinsically worthy or superior. That is why the Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 3:6 warned churches against putting “*a novice*” into positions of authority “*lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.*”

THOUGHT: Am I seeking after the righteous way?

PRAYER: O Lord, grant me the desire to fulfil all the righteous demands of Thy Word, the Bible.

FRIDAY, APRIL 13
DANIEL 2:29-45
ISAIAH 28:14

“... hear the word
of the LORD ...”

THE CRUSHING STONE

With great skill and with few words, Daniel described the prophetic dream. The king in his dream had seen a great and terrifying image of a man standing upright. It was a mighty statue of dazzling metallic construction.

Daniel first described the parts of the mighty statue: a head of fine gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron, and feet of iron and clay.

The figure stood motionless. Suddenly there was dramatic movement. A stone, supernaturally cut “*without hands*” (Dan 2:34) catapulted through the air, smote the colossus and pulverized it so that the wind blew it all away. Then “*the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth*” (Dan 2:35). What is the significance of this crushing stone? This is none other than the Christ, the “*one like the Son of man*” (Dan 7:13). The fact that the stone was “*cut out without hands*” (Dan 2:34) indicates its divine character and origin, as confirmed by the explanation in Daniel 2:45 that it was “*cut out of the mountain*” (= God’s heavenly kingdom; cf. Isa 2:2) and that “*the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and ... shall stand for ever*” (Dan 2:44).

Yes, this Stone is the Christ of the New Testament who declared Himself to be “*a stone of stumbling*” and “*a rock of offence*” (1 Pet 2:6-8). This spells doom for empires and individuals who take no account of Him.

He came into our midst in flesh and blood to cleanse us and to prepare us to live with Him in His kingdom. And He is coming again, not to crush us or to cast us away, but to gather us to Himself to dwell with Him forever (John 14:1-3), if we know Him as our Saviour.

THOUGHT: Jesus is the Cornerstone, He for sinners did atone.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, crush the sinful rebellion of my heart so that I may not be ashamed before Thee at Thy coming.

SATURDAY, APRIL 14

DANIEL 2:46-49

PSALM 40:1-3

“... he inclined unto me,
and heard my cry.”

GOD REWARDS THOSE WHO TRUST HIM

Nebuchadnezzar was so overwhelmed by Daniel’s super-natural knowledge that he fell down to worship him. This was an acknowledgement that God had truly spoken through him. It is evident that Daniel did not consider this royal homage to be idolatrous (contrast Acts 10:26), because the king immediately declared that “*your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldst reveal this secret*” (Dan 2:47). Daniel had previously explained to the king the vitally important fact that “*there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets*” (Dan 2:28), so this had doubtless prepared him for this act of worship.

The supernatural wisdom which God had given to Daniel in his academic tests (Dan 1:20) was now again vindicated by his promotion to serve as “*ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon*” (Dan 2:48).

According to the first chapter of James, there are several purposes in our times of testing. One of these is that we might trust our God for wisdom (James 1:5). We are promised a generous supply of wisdom if we ask Him in trusting faith. James 3:17 tells us how comprehensive and perfect such God-given wisdom will be.

It would indeed have been tragic if Daniel had compromised his spiritual convictions when he first arrived at the royal court. Since he stood firm, he came into a place of great honour and power in all of Babylonia, a place in which he could play a vital role in the history of his generation. His humble trust in God opened doors of wisdom to him that could not be shut, and brought divine truths that shall never pass away (cf. Matt 5:18). “*And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament ...*” (Dan 12:3).

THOUGHT: The wisdom of God may seem utterly foolish to sin-ful men, but in God’s perfect timing, it will be fully vindicated.

PRAYER: Help me to understand, my Lord, that in Thee alone are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

LORD'S DAY, APRIL 15
DANIEL 3:1-3
2 CORINTHIANS 5:10

*“... we must all appear before
the judgment seat of Christ ...”*

THE IMAGE OF GOLD

Both the second and fourth chapters of Daniel describe tremendous spiritual crises in the life of King Nebuchadnezzar. The first took place at the beginning of his reign (602 BC) and the last at the very end (568-62 BC). Therefore, it seems appropriate to assume that the crisis described in chapter three occurred about 585 BC, just after Jerusalem had been destroyed and the God of Israel presumably defeated by the gods of Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar's pride had now reached tremendous heights. Nothing seemed to stand in his way, just as Jeremiah had predicted (Jer 27:6-7). Instead of giving glory to the God of Jeremiah and Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar took it all for himself. It is entirely possible that he tried to duplicate the form of the image he saw in his unforgettable dream of several years earlier (Dan 2:1-3). Daniel, however, had said that only the head was of gold, and that *“another kingdom”* (Dan 2:39), inferior to his own, would follow and would be made of silver.

Nebuchadnezzar, probably rejecting the idea that any kingdom could follow his mighty Babylon, might have determined to show permanence of his golden kingdom by having the entire image covered with gold! Thus, he clung to the more flattering aspects of the interpretation given by Daniel and dropped the rest.

Many Israelites did this type of thing when they ignored Old Testament prophecies of divine judgment on the nation and of the sufferings of the Messiah, and concentrated on prophecies of millennial blessing. Christians today are certainly capable of this, too, when we shun the warnings of shame (1 John 2:28) and loss (1 Cor 3:15) at the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Cor 5:10), and focus on the glories of heaven. May our gracious Lord help us to learn from the sad consequences of Nebuchadnezzar's pride!

THOUGHT: Those who do not learn from history must repeat it.

PRAYER: “O, to grace how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be. Let Thy goodness like a fetter bind my wand'ring heart to Thee.”

MONDAY, APRIL 16

DANIEL 3:4-7

EPHESIANS 5:19

*“... making melody in
your heart to the Lord.”*

AT THE SOUND OF THE MUSIC

Music is a creation of God, but it can be used for His glory or for Satanic purposes. Something within the soul of man responds in a significant way to beautiful vocal or instrumental music. It is the will of God that we speak “... to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph 5:19). Stirring sounds from a marching band can motivate athletes and soldiers in a way that almost nothing else can. But rock music and sensual songs can also affect the soul of man, and can be powerfully used by the spiritual forces of darkness of this world.

What would be more effective, in this setting of idolatrous worship of the image (and thus, doubtless, of himself), than to permeate the atmosphere with spectacular sounds that would drown out any lingering doubts or hesitations to bow to the ground in abject surrender of heart and soul? Satan’s presence could almost be felt, as in false worship centres today. Probably the future worship of the image of Antichrist will likewise be accompanied by spectacular music appropriately perverted and manipulated for that occasion. Only by making melody in our hearts to the Lord can we effectively resist the power and influence of music that arises from the pit. As we learn of Christ and bring every thought into captivity to Him (2 Cor 10:5), the Holy Spirit will tune our hearts toward God and prepare us for an eternity of singing for His glory (Rev 5:9).

THOUGHT: Only God can drown out the music of the enemy.

PRAYER: Father, help me to delight in Thy heavenly perspectives.

TUESDAY, APRIL 17

DANIEL 3:8-18

1 JOHN 5:21

“... keep yourselves
from idols ...”

OUR GOD IS ABLE TO DELIVER US

The temptation to compromise with idolatry is always present with God's people (1 John 5:21). Usually it is not a temptation to bow down before a physical object as in the case of Daniel's three friends. More often (in the “civilized” world) it involves a direction of life and energy towards things that do not glorify our Lord or honour His revealed purposes for mankind and the Church.

Daniel's three friends, though highly honoured by the king perhaps fifteen years earlier (Dan 2:49), now discovered themselves to be under intense pressure to conform to a demonic, idolatrous hysteria that swept the entire nation. How easy it would have been to rationalize their conformity to the crowd by saying, “We are bowing to Nebuchadnezzar's idol physically, but inwardly we are worshipping the God of heaven!” Or, “If we honour the king in this significant way, we can witness for God!”

No, God's way is always best. Compromise is always wrong. Daniel's friends did not deliberately insult the king. In obedience to Jeremiah's admonition, in fact, they had prayed for the government of Babylon (Jer 29:7). However, they now had no choice but to obey their God rather than mere finite and sinful man (cf. Acts 4:19). “... *our God whom we serve is able to deliver us ... But if not ...*” (Dan 3:17-18). It was not God's power to save them that remained uncertain to them, but rather His perfect plan and will in this particular situation.

Today God does not owe us miraculous deliverance from each danger. But He does graciously provide for us confidence in His loving and providential care in our walk with Him (Rom 8:28). If we keep all of this firmly in mind, the heroism and faith of these men will stand out in almost unparalleled brilliance, and a valid example is provided for all of us as we face daily temptations to worship that which is not God Himself.

THOUGHT: Never will the guidance of God take me where the grace of God will not provide for me.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to fear Thee rather than man.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 18

DANIEL 3:19-23

2 CORINTHIANS 1:9-10

“... we should not trust in ourselves, but in God ...”

IN THE MIDST OF THE FURNACE

In ancient civilizations there were men who were very skilled at regulating the temperatures of blast furnaces for smelting various metals. Thus, for Nebuchadnezzar to command that the great furnace be heated seven times hotter than usual was not an impossible command to obey.

Nevertheless, it was a very foolish command. Because of the excessive heat, he not only lost some of his best soldiers, but also guaranteed that the three friends of Daniel would suffer less than they would have in a slow fire!

This vividly illustrates the utter inability of man to injure others beyond the limits which God has set. *“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell”* (Matt 10:28).

Also, we must not overlook the superb sense of drama depicted here. Not only did the three friends fall, but it was into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire! The utter helplessness of these men could hardly have been pictured more vividly. And the power of God to deliver His people from apparently hopeless situations is thereby magnified. In fact, He specializes in such situations in order that *“... we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead ... he will yet deliver us”* (2 Cor 1:9-10). It is only when we find ourselves to be helpless that we truly understand our Lord's reminder: *“... for without me ye can do nothing”* (John 15:5).

THOUGHT: “You do not test the resources of God until you try the impossible.” (F.B. Meyer)

PRAYER: Lord, help me to realize that in the daily furnace of testing and affliction, all things are possible with Thee!

THURSDAY, APRIL 19

DANIEL 3:24-25

MATTHEW 28:20

“... lo, I am with you always, even
unto the end of the world ...”

LIKE THE SON OF GOD

“Lo,” said the great king of Babylon, “I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God” (Dan 3:25).

Nebuchadnezzar could not have known this, of course, but the fourth person was probably the pre-incarnate second Person of the Triune God. In view of the fact that the Son of God had previously appeared in a burning bush (Exod 3), and had ascended in a flame of fire (Judg 13), there is no biblical reason why He could not have been the one who appeared in the furnace with the three friends of Daniel.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is “*the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever*” (Heb 13:8). Therefore, in any situation of life, no matter how terrifying or apparently destructive, He is with those who put their trust in Him. He walks with us in the midst of the flames of temptation and of persecution. God had announced to Israel long before Daniel’s day: “... *when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee*” (Isa 43:2). It is doubtful that Daniel’s friends expected their God to fulfil these words literally in their case, but we may be sure that they thought about this promise from a new perspective ever afterwards!

During the Church Age in which we now live, this same infinite Christ has promised us: “... *lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world ...*” (Matt 28:20). No circumstance of life can become too deep for Him to reach us, lift us, and then walk with us along the pathways of life. In Revelation 2:1-2, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands says, “*I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience ...*” That is sufficient for God’s children, even in our day.

THOUGHT: To ask God to use me means I must expect to pay a price.

PRAYER: My God, the Invisible One, help me to see Thy presence!

FRIDAY, APRIL 20

DANIEL 3:26-27

PHILIPPIANS 1:6

“... he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

NOT EVEN THE SMELL OF FIRE

Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon did all he could to destroy these men who had defied his decree. But by the infinitely superior power of their God, they were not only preserved alive, but at the king's command simply “*came forth of the midst of the fire*” (Dan 3:26).

When God performed sign miracles in Bible times, He did not do them halfway. Israel and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel discovered that to their amazement (1 Kings 18), even as Pharaoh had learned centuries before (Exod 7-12). Nor will there be any doubt among earth-dwellers during the Great Tribulation concerning the source of their judgments (Rev 6:16).

When Daniel's friends walked out of the furnace, there was not “*an hair of their head singed ... nor the smell of fire had passed on them*” (Dan 3:27). When our God delivers miraculously, He delivers completely! Not one Israelite perished in the Red Sea. Not one Assyrian soldier survived to attack Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah. Not one of the 144,000 will perish in “*the time of Jacob's trouble*” (Jer 30:7). In the many cases when our Lord Jesus Christ healed the sick and raised the dead, there was always complete healing, instantly.

All of this is of tremendous encouragement to us who, by the grace of God, are in the Body of Christ today. In spite of all our sin and spiritual failure, Christ is cleansing us from all sin by the application of the merits of His precious blood (1 John 1:9). Though Satan accuses us, and the world may hate us, He intercedes for us night and day (Rev 12:10). Someday, in our glorified bodies, not even “*the smell of fire*” will be upon us, to the praise of His glory! Because of His love, the Bride will have no “*spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing*” (Eph 5:27). Thank God, He who began a good work in us “*will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ*” (Phil 1:6).

THOUGHT: We have a God who knows how to make promises and has a fantastic reputation for keeping them.

PRAYER: Lord, may I sense the fragrance of Thy presence.

SATURDAY, APRIL 21
DANIEL 3:28-30
PHILIPPIANS 2:9-10

*“... at the name of Jesus
every knee should bow ...”*

BLESSED BE GOD

When the king of Babylon saw what the God of Israel could do for His servants, he experienced a profound change of mind! From asking, “... *who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?*” (Dan 3:15), he now confesses that he has found an answer far beyond expectation!

Needless to say, therefore, the pompous ceremony came to a sudden halt. Instead of worshipping the beautiful golden image, the people of Babylon were now commanded to honour the God of Israel under a threat identical to that made several years earlier to the court magicians (Dan 2:5).

This is the way all personal and corporate opposition to the God of Heaven must end. Job had doubted God’s wisdom, and ended on his face in deep repentance (Job 42:1-6). Saul of Tarsus had persecuted the Son of God by helping to stone Stephen, and finally cried out: “*Who art thou, Lord?*” (Acts 9:5). Later, this same Saul, now an Apostle of Jesus Christ, wrote by inspiration that “*at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*” (Phil 2:10-11).

This should also be the posture of every true Christian. If Nebuchadnezzar could make such a great pronouncement through observing a mere physical miracle of the God of Israel, how much more should we, the recipients of endless spiritual miracles, proclaim His Name to the ends of the earth! With vastly more revealed truth available to us in the completed Bible than Nebuchadnezzar had in his day, we should be making even greater decrees, as it were. We should be teaching all nations “... *to observe all things ...*” (Matt 28:20) commanded by Jesus, even “all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). May Jesus enable us daily to bow before Him in humility and thanksgiving, and then announce to all His true glory.

THOUGHT: It is better to bow to Him now than to be broken later.

PRAYER: “Oh God, Thou hast created us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee.” (Augustine)

LORD'S DAY, APRIL 22

DANIEL 4:1-3

PSALM 2

*“Serve the LORD with fear,
and rejoice with trembling.”*

SIGNS AND WONDERS

“How great are his signs! and how mighty are his wonders! his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation” (Dan 4:3).

These are the last recorded words of the greatest king of ancient Babylonia; for they were written after the events described in this chapter, and were designed to attract attention to his astounding experiences and discoveries during the last seven years of his life.

It is possible that the king enlisted the help of Daniel, his trusted minister in charge of Jewish affairs, to prepare a decree in words that would be honouring to the God of Israel and understandable to all Jews. The expressions are very similar to those of Psalm 145:13.

Great as this testimony was, it is tragic that it came forth from the king's heart only at the very end of a lifetime of resisting the God of heaven. If he had made this confession back in 602 BC, following Daniel's interpretation of his dream, and had served God faithfully thenceforth, he might have conquered the world, if it was God's will. Only our Lord Jesus Christ, among human beings, was a perfect servant to the Father, and therefore will be granted the entire earth as His domain at the time of His Coming (Ps 2).

Deathbed testimonies are indeed a marvelous evidence of the grace of God. But too many people live with that possibility in mind, and have no genuine assurance that it will ever happen. *“Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth”* (Prov 27:1). Every parent should trust God to help him lead his own children to Christ at an early age, with a lifetime to live for Him!

THOUGHT: “Only one life, 'twill soon be past; only what's done for Christ will last.” (C.T. Studd)

PRAYER: Lord, teach me to number my days, that I might devote my heart to wisdom.

MONDAY, APRIL 23

DANIEL 4:4-10

MATTHEW 5:14

*“Ye are the light
of the world ...”*

A SPIRIT OF THE HOLY GODS

The dream of the great tree, which God placed into the mind of Nebuchadnezzar, made him “*afraid*” and “*troubled*” (Dan 4:5). Intuitively, he called for the magicians of his court to give him the interpretation. But even though he divulged the full contents (in contrast to Dan 2:5), it was obvious that his court diviners had no consistent or credible interpretation. At this stage in his life and career, the king could not be easily deceived.

But why did not the king call for Daniel first of all? Doubtless, like Ahab who refused to call for Micaiah because he suspected that the message would be ominous (1 Kings 22:8), Nebuchadnezzar likewise feared that Daniel would neither distort nor modify the message!

Nebuchadnezzar had tremendous respect for Daniel. He referred to him as the one in whom was “*the spirit of the holy gods*” (cf. Dan 4:9, 18; 5:11, 14). Note Pharaoh’s similar evaluation of Joseph (Gen 41:38-39).

When God brings great tragedy into the lives of people, it is fascinating to see often they call for help from the very Christians whose testimony they had spurned and suppressed for years. What a supreme joy to be the bearer of Good Tidings to such softened and convicted hearts: instantaneous and permanent salvation is available to all who repent and believe in the Saviour of the world! Those who believe will also, then, like Daniel, possess the Spirit of the living God.

THOUGHT: Just as wicked men could not darken the light of Jesus, so our reflected light will penetrate the darkness around us.

PRAYER: Lord, help me to be a consistent bearer of the message of Thy salvation, love, and grace that those who see and hear may believe.

TUESDAY, APRIL 24
DANIEL 4:10-18
EPHESIANS 1

“... hath put all things under
his feet, and gave him to be the
head over all things to the church.”

THE MOST HIGH IS RULER

Even without Daniel's interpretation, Nebuchadnezzar must have sensed that divine judgment was imminent. The shocking contrast between the magnificent tree and the banded stump, to say nothing of the personalized judgment, “*Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him ...*” (Dan 4:16) must have struck deep into the conscience of the king.

Even worse, Nebuchadnezzar heard that the Most High not only rules sovereignly “*in the kingdom of men,*” but “*giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men*” (Dan 4:17)! Many Christians are shocked to learn of this fact too. How can a holy, transcendent God endanger His reputation and pollute His character by raising up evil men to positions of political power in the world?

Mysterious though this may be, the alternative is infinitely worse; namely, that Satan, or chance, rather than God, is ultimately in charge of the affairs of mankind. Without in any way compromising His holy nature, our great and glorious God can actually make “*the wrath of man*” to “*praise*” Him (Ps 76:10), and to enable Joseph to say to his wicked brothers: “*ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good ...*” (Gen 50:20).

Christians who have a deep knowledge of the Word of God gain tremendous comfort from inspired statements such as these. Nothing evil can touch them, nor even the world of mankind, apart from the sovereign control of our Lord. Hitler did not appear by chance; nor did Lenin and Stalin arise in Russia through Satanic strategy to the surprise and frustration of God! Let us be thankful to the core of our being: “*... the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men ...*” (Dan 4:17), and He will rule forever!

THOUGHT: “Jesus shall reign where'er the sun does his successive journeys run; His kingdom spread from shore to shore, till moons shall wax and wane no more.” (Issac Watts)

PRAYER: Teach me, Lord, to surrender voluntarily and daily to Thy sovereign rule in my life.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25

DANIEL 4:19

ROMANS 13

“Let us walk honestly ...”

A LOYAL AND DEVOTED SERVANT

Nebuchadnezzar surely suspected that Daniel would issue words of warning to his royal overlord because of the content of the dream. But he also hoped that Daniel could intercede for him before God and somehow modify the inevitable judgment because of his pride.

But he was mistaken. Nothing of God’s judgment warnings could be changed, for they were based upon perfect foreknowledge of Nebuchadnezzar’s fickle nature and shallow comprehension of God’s character. Therefore, with great remorse of spirit, Daniel answered: *“My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies”* (Dan 4:19).

Daniel’s loyalty to his aged king shines forth at this point. He was not blind to Nebuchadnezzar’s pride and spiritual shallowness. Nor was he ignorant of the hatred of large numbers of actual and potential enemies of this powerful and cruel ruler. Nevertheless, he refused to join the ranks of the rebels and the terrorists who would overthrow the government (cf. Jer 29:8-9, 21-23). Whenever a choice must be made between serving God and serving man, the issue is clear. But God’s people must also recognize that *“there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God”* (Rom 13:1). Peter said, *“... Fear God. Honour the king”* (1 Pet 2:17). Paul urged *“that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour”* (1 Tim 2:1-3). Daniel was a good servant of the king!

THOUGHT: Rebellion against human governments is an extreme measure that is almost never valid.

PRAYER: Help me to be gracious as I take a bold stand on the principles taught in Thy Word.

THURSDAY, APRIL 26

DANIEL 4:20-27

ISAIAH 1

“... they that forsake
the LORD shall be consumed.”

BREAK AWAY FROM YOUR SINS

When Daniel courageously announced to the king his horrible fate because of pride, he graciously advised him: “... *break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility*” (Dan 4:27).

But what did Daniel really mean? He certainly was not telling Nebuchadnezzar that righteous acts on a social and political level could bring salvation from the judgment of a holy God. Instead, he was warning Nebuchadnezzar that his life would be cut short if he continued his cruel and self-centred deeds. It is true, of course, that only genuine spiritual conversion can produce righteous conduct and God-honouring attitudes in the heart.

We may be sure that Daniel had been granted many opportunities by the king during their many years together in the court of Babylon to explain God's way of righteousness and eternal life. Doubtless like the Apostle Paul, Daniel often “... *reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come ...*” (Acts 24:25). And Nebuchadnezzar, like Felix the Governor, “*trembled*” and would say, “*Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee*” (Acts 24:25).

There is indeed a limit to God's longsuffering toward wicked and stubborn men, even as in the days of Noah and in the court of Pharaoh. “*He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy*” (Prov 29:1). May we as Christians learn to be sensitive to the need for daily repentance before our God for our sins against Him and that we might trust Him for strength to live a godly life!

THOUGHT: “... *thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory ...*” (1 Cor 15:57).

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to show in my daily conduct the fruit of a contrite and humble spirit toward Thee.

FRIDAY, APRIL 27
DANIEL 4:28-33
ISAIAH 11

*“And there shall come forth
a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and
a Branch shall grow out of his roots.”*

WHILE THE WORD WAS IN HIS MOUTH

Nebuchadnezzar the king completely ignored the ominous dream of the banded stump and the gracious warning of Daniel. History tells us that he launched a great and victorious campaign in Egypt during the twelve months mentioned in Daniel 4:29. Then, returning to Babylon, his beautiful city built with slave labour (including Jews, Jer 29:2), he exclaimed, *“Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?”* (Dan 4:30).

Such insufferable pride was instantly recorded in the third heaven and brought divine judgment before his words were completed: *“The kingdom is departed from thee”* (Dan 4:31). And, having lost his God-given sanity, he was led into a field and *“to eat grass as oxen”* (Dan 4:32).

Israel suffered similarly. In a rebellious spirit they demanded flesh in the wilderness, which God promptly gave them. *“And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed ... the LORD smote the people ...”* (Num 11:33). King Herod was instantly judged by God when *“he gave not God the glory”* (Acts 12:23) in his great oration to the people. Ananias and Sapphira dropped dead the moment lying words proceeded from their lips (Acts 5).

It is perfectly obvious, therefore, that our Lord does not need time and circumstances to detect the presence of sin and to deal with it. Especially in the coming Kingdom age, all men will see that He does *“... not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge ...”* (Isa 11:3-4).

THOUGHT: Only three words are needed to restore full fellowship: “I HAVE SINNED.”

PRAYER: May the words of my mouth reflect a heart of love and devotion to Thee, my Lord.

SATURDAY, APRIL 28
DANIEL 4:34-37
ROMANS .12:1-3

“...not to think of himself more
highly than he ought to think;
but to think soberly ...”

MY REASON RETURNED TO ME

“And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High ...” (Dan 4:34). During the seven years of the king’s madness, Daniel may have been the one who actually controlled the direction of the empire, for he was the only one who knew when the king would emerge from his insanity. It would have been embarrassing (to put it mildly) for any government official to speak against the king, if Nebuchadnezzar regained his sanity and was told what had happened. *“Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door”* (James 5:9).

At God’s appointed time, while Nebuchadnezzar was still in this condition of insanity, God had mercy on him, such that he raised his *“eyes unto heaven”* (Dan 4:34) and his understanding returned unto him. Then he gave God the glory due to His Name.

We face similar problems in our society today. To the extent that people think they have “all the answers” in business, government, psychology, the natural sciences, etc., they have really blinded themselves to God’s realities. *“... (T)he god of this world ...”* (2 Cor 4:4) blinds people to the enormity of their pride in the presence of a holy God. The only answer to our modern forms of spiritual insanity is to present our bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God. Then, when we are transformed by the renewing of our mind, we prove what the will of God is: *“good, and acceptable, and perfect ...”* (Rom 12:2). Those who experience this have every reason to bless the Most High and to praise and honour Him who lives forever.

THOUGHT: Compared to God’s thoughts, ours are utterly foolish because of sin.

PRAYER: O God of Daniel, and my God today, enable me to bring every thought into captivity to Thee at all times.

LORD'S DAY, APRIL 29

DANIEL 5:1-4

LUKE 12:19-2

“... *Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee ...*”

FEAST TO A THOUSAND

Today's reading takes us into the royal banqueting hall of the most magnificent ancient empire of Babylon. Some idea of its splendour may be gained from the record of the historian Herodotus: “The city walls were 56 miles in circumference, 335 feet high and 85 feet wide. A large part of the city consisted of beautiful parks and gardens. The chief building was the famous temple of Bel.” The Hanging Gardens of Babylon were one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

Babylon was a deeply idolatrous city. The chief deity was Bel, the Sun-god. The principal player in the drama recorded in today's reading is Belshazzar which means “Bel protects the king.” We suppose that besides duties of state, Belshazzar also assumed religious responsibilities. On this festive occasion King Belshazzar threw a huge banquet for 1,000 of his lords: VIPs (Very Important Persons). To be invited by the king or president you have to be somebody important!

Have you ever been invited to dine with your country's king, president or prime minister, where the nation's dignitaries will be present? How did you (or how would you) feel? What if the occasion falls on the Lord's Day, at the same time as your church worship service? What do you think is pleasing to your Lord?

THOUGHT: “... *take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry*” (Luke 12:19). Shall I?

PRAYER: Remind me, Father, that this world is not my home. Help me to live on earth as a citizen of heaven.

MONDAY, APRIL 30

DANIEL 5:1-4

LUKE 12:22-31

“... seek ye the kingdom of God;
and all these things shall be added unto you.”

WINE, WOMEN AND SONG

Let us take a peek into the goings on in the king's great hall. With traditional Oriental pomp and extravagance, we see endless bands of servants waiting and attending on the thousand lords, together with the king's wives and concubines. No doubt food and wine flowed freely amidst great merriment.

Uplifted in spirit, the king exalted his gods and began to desecrate the gold and silver vessels taken by his father Nebuchadnezzar from the Temple of Jerusalem. He commanded that those vessels be used for serving wine to his guests, aggravating the insult to the God of heaven.

So the thousand lords wine and dined, and “... *praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone*” (Dan 5:4), with the great gathering singing to the accompaniment of the royal orchestra. Classical writers and historians recorded that such festivities were occasions for wanton immorality, attended by the inferior class of women from the harems.

From the world's viewpoint: wonderful and pleasurable! Enjoy yourself, it is later than you think!

From God's viewpoint: abominable! “*For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever*” (1 John 2:16-17).

THOUGHT: “... *Take no thought for your life ...*” (Luke 12:22). Can I? Why?

PRAYER: Father, forgive me for my self-will. May I always seek to do Thy will that I may please Thee with my life which Thou hast given me.

TUESDAY, MAY 1
DANIEL 5:5-8
1 SAMUEL 5:1-5

*"... for I the LORD thy God
am a jealous God ..."*

THE WRITING ON THE WALL

God hates idolatry and He will not tolerate those who venerate idols: *"... for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God ..."* (Exod 20:5). He says, *"I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them"* (Isa 42:8-9).

The idolatrous king Belshazzar had blasphemed God and desecrated His holy vessels. The judgment of God was coming upon him. His name means "Bel-protect-the king," but Bel offered him no protection! God served a warning on the wall for He alone can tell the future.

Liberal scholars and sceptics scoff at the idea of a hand writing on a wall. Some even scoff at the record of the palace and the wall. But we believe and are confident that the Bible account is wholly trustworthy. We quote from a commentary on Daniel by Dr John Whitcomb: "In the ruins of Nebuchadnezzar's palace archaeologists have uncovered a large throne room 56 feet wide and 173 feet long which probably was the scene of this banquet. Midway in the long wall opposite the entrance there was a niche in front of which the king may well have been seated. Interestingly, the wall behind the niche was covered with white plaster as described by Daniel, which would make excellent background for such a writing."

For those who set themselves against God, the writing is on the wall. Be warned, the Lord says, *"My glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images."* For a time godless men may *"get away with it,"* but sooner or later, the Lord will vindicate His name. Without any visible instrument, the Lord overthrew the idol of Dagon which fell upon his face to the earth before the Ark of the Lord, with its head and both hands cut off (1 Sam 5:3-4). Our God is great!

THOUGHT: What language was the writing on the wall?

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to keep myself from idols.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 2

DANIEL 5:7-12

PROVERBS 2:1-9

"...the LORD giveth wisdom ..."

ASTROLOGERS, WISE MEN AND SOOTHSAYERS

Men in high places, faced with difficult decisions, commonly resort to the use of astrologers, wise men and soothsayers. It may be some very perplexing problem or the urge to know the future. In Bible times, these men were often engaged as advisers and counsellors in royal courts, i.e. largely a case of the blind leading the blind.

Pharaoh of Egypt had his wise men, sorcerers and magicians to help him in his confrontation with Moses and Aaron (Exod 7:11). They exercised certain occult powers, but against God they were powerless. They had no answer to the plagues sent by God.

Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey encountered a troublesome sorcerer at the court of the Roman governor Sergius Paulus, a certain Barjesus by name. For impeding the Gospel work, Paul pronounced a sentence on him, and he was struck blind (Acts 13:6-11). Barjesus' magic was of no avail.

Belshazzar had his band of wise men and fortune tellers, but God's writing on the wall defied their understanding. Not even the King's extravagant offers of reward could extract from them what they did not have.

THOUGHT: How do I make decisions, small and big?

PRAYER: Father, unto Thee may I always go, for Thou art wisdom and truth.

THURSDAY, MAY 3

DANIEL 5:7-12

PROVERBS 2:1-9

“Then shalt thou understand ...”

A MAN WITH UNDERSTANDING AND WISDOM

The failure of the wise men created an acute crisis at Belshazzar’s court. It threw the whole company into confusion. The King was deeply disturbed and the lords stunned. At that moment, the Queen Mother (probably King Nebuchadnezzar’s widow) who had known of Daniel’s extraordinary powers appeared on the scene with a piece of timely advice: Send now for this man Daniel, the chief of all wise men. He has the spirit of God!

Indeed, light, understanding, wisdom, knowledge — all these come from God. Daniel was God’s man for the hour. He had been faithfully serving the Lord, in a foreign land as an exile away from home. So, God’s Spirit dwelt in him. That made all the difference between Daniel and the Chaldeans.

It is foolish and hazardous to consult palmists, fortune tellers, soothsayers, and such like.

THOUGHT: Do I rely on any of these occult workers?

PRAYER: Lord, help me to seek Thy face only, always.

FRIDAY, MAY 4
DANIEL 5:13-17
TITUS 1:7-9

*"Holding fast the faithful word
as he hath been taught ..."*

NOT FOR GIFTS AND REWARDS

In his hour of crisis, the high and haughty Belshazzar sent for Daniel, the exile captive. His opening sentence seems to suggest that this was his first meeting with Daniel. "... *Art thou that Daniel ...?*" (Dan 5:13). Whitcomb commented: "It seems highly unlikely that Belshazzar had never personally seen Daniel before. But men do have an amazing ability to ignore completely the things that do not interest them ... After the death of Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel may have been demoted from his high position. Thus, instead of referring to him as '*chief governor over all the wise men of Babylon*' (2:48), Belshazzar speaks of him simply as one '*of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry*' (Dan 5:13). Perhaps Belshazzar himself had demoted him; but now, in the hour of his deepest need ... he calls upon Daniel's reputed skills as an interpreter of dreams."

One may be an exile, a captive, a servant, a mere nobody, but what a tribute for another to say, "... *the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee ... that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts ...*" (Dan 5:14, 16). The wise King Solomon says: "*Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold. For wisdom is better than rubies ...*" (Prov 8:10-11).

Now Daniel the man of God had the Spirit of God. He had the gift of interpretation of dreams. He had supernatural understanding. The king offered him rich rewards, but Daniel could not be bought or bribed. His service was above any material consideration. After all, the gift was from God, so he was different from all the court magicians who made their money out of their occult skills.

Let us learn a lesson, especially God's servants: God's gifts must not be made into merchandise. "*Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing ...*" (Dan 5:17).

THOUGHT: Daniel eventually accepted the king's reward. Why?

PRAYER: May my pastor feed the flock willingly, and not for filthy lucre.

SATURDAY, MAY 5
DANIEL 5:18-24
PROVERBS 15:25-26

*“The LORD will destroy
the house of the proud ...”*

PRIDE GOES BEFORE A FALL

“Like father like son” so the saying goes. Nebuchadnezzar had been a proud and pompous king in his time. Belshazzar his son was no less pompous and proud, but with a difference. Nebuchadnezzar excelled his son by far in majesty, glory and honour. He had been the founder of the empire and the master builder of the city of Babylon. When he was lifted up and his mind hardened with pride, God taught him a severe lesson. Nebuchadnezzar learnt his lesson well. Thus, God spared him when he finally acknowledged God as the Sovereign ruler over all the nations, including Babylon.

On his part, Belshazzar was nowhere near his father in power, ability and achievement. Nevertheless, he became puffed up with pride. He recognized not God, but his dumb idols, holding them in high esteem. His fatal mistake was this: despite the fact that he knew full well his father had been afflicted by God for his pride, Belshazzar had not learnt that lesson. “But he willfully rejected the spiritual message God provided through the seven years of insanity which his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar experienced (5:22). In fact, Belshazzar went far beyond the boundary lines of his own conscience in committing sacrilege with the sacred vessels of Israel’s God (5:23). Therefore his judgment and doom were sealed. No pardon was available at all (contrast 4:27 for Nebuchadnezzar), for his conscience had become hopelessly seared, and his heart was judicially hardened” (John Whitcomb).

God’s Word has further instruction for us all. *“Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall”* (Prov 16:18). *“For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low”* (Isa 2:12). Belshazzar was about to pay the price for his proud and unrepentant heart. For him there was no pardon, only stern condemnation from God.

THOUGHT: What might have contributed to Belshazzar’s defiance against God?

PRAYER: Teach me, Lord, to humble myself under Thy mighty hand.

LORD'S DAY, MAY 6

DANIEL 5:25-29

PSALM 139:23-24

"Search me, O God ..."

SUSPENSE AND SENTENCE

What suspense must have gripped the proud king Belshazzar as he waited for the inscription on the wall to be read. Have you been through something similar, such as waiting for examination results, having failed the last several times, or the doctor's diagnosis when cancer is suspected? The suspense could be worse than the sentence!

For Belshazzar, moments of suspense climaxed in a solemn sentence. There were three parts to the sentence:

1. MENE, MENE. "*God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it*" (Dan 5:26). Your kingdom's days are numbered, the end has come, the countdown has begun.
2. TEKEL. "*Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting*" (Dan 5:27). Calvin commented: "Thou thinkest thy dignity must be spared, since all men revere thee; thou thinkest thyself worthy of honor; thou art deceived says he, for God judges otherwise; God does not use a common scale, but holds his own, and there thou art found deficient."
3. PERES. "*Thy Kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians*" (Dan 5:28). "Your mighty kingdom of Babylon shall be brought to an end by the united power of the Medes and Persians under Cyrus."

GOD'S JUDGMENT SURE

God's sentence on Belshazzar must have come as a bolt from the blue, but he accepted Daniel's verdict, for he recognized that it was true, as it was from God. He could not escape His sure judgment.

Here is a lesson for all of us: King or commoner, no matter who you are, everyone will be weighed in God's scales. None can escape. Will you be found wanting? Can any of us be good enough in God's sight? The answer is: outside Christ, no. In Christ, yes.

THOUGHT: When God judges me, how will I fare?

PRAYER: Help me, Lord, to always judge myself against Thy Holy Word.

MONDAY, MAY 7

DANIEL 5:30-31

PSALM 119:125, 130

*“I am thy servant;
give me understanding ...”*

GOD’S WORD HISTORICALLY ACCURATE

One of the claims of modern critical scholarship is that the biblical records are inaccurate. For example, some critics charge that Daniel 5:30 is an error because secular history reveals that Babylon fell without a battle. But we see no contradiction in the verse, which does not say that there was any battle. It simply states the fact of Belshazzar’s death the same night.

What power was there that could overthrow the great Babylonian empire? Xenophon mentions the deflecting of a river which flowed through Babylon. When the Babylonians were observing a night festival with drinking and revelry, Cyrus turned aside the course of the river and his men gained an entry into the city. One of them named Gobryas entered the palace and slew the wicked king. (E.J. Young)

So Darius the Mede took the kingdom at about the age of sixty-two (Dan 5:31). Here is a significant comment by Whitcomb: “Who was this ruler? Negative biblical scholarship of our day insists that he was a mere figment of imagination ... But we may be perfectly sure that God permits no such errors and historical blunders in His infallible Word. ‘All Scripture is inspired by God ...’

Professor H.H. Rowley of England labored mightily to destroy the confidence of Christians in the historicity of *Darius the Mede*. He concluded his volume on Darius the Mede ... by assuring his readers that, in spite of all the errors, God still speaks through the book of Daniel ... Many prominent authors ... have thus rejected the historicity of major portions of the book of Daniel. But our Lord Jesus Christ exhibited a totally different attitude when He rebuked two disciples on the road to Emmaus: ‘*O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken (Luke 24:25).*’ Our Lord confirmed the historicity and accuracy of the Old Testament records.

THOUGHT: If our Lord did not question the Old Testament historical records, who are we to do so?

PRAYER: Lord, may I always love, believe and defend Thy Word.

TUESDAY, MAY 8

DANIEL 6:1-3

HEBREWS 11:32-34

“By faith ...”

DANIEL HONOURED AGAIN

The wheel of history turns ever onwards. None can stop it or reverse its course. Last night it was King Belshazzar banqueting with his lords. Today he has slipped into oblivion. In his place we see a new king, Darius. How uncertain is man's life! *“Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away”* (James 4:14).

Who is Darius? This is one of the unsolved puzzles of history. Daniel's record finds no parallel in secular literature. But we do not doubt the accuracy of Daniel's pen. One day fresh light will be shed, as it was in the case of Belshazzar. God's Word standeth sure. Men may question it but none can overthrow it.

In the new regime Daniel was reinstated to a position of honour. “In fact, the new administration of Medo-Persia highly honored him, having heard no doubt of his interpretation of the handwriting on the wall, which pronounced doom upon Belshazzar. Thus, even though the last kings of Babylon and most of the Babylonians ... had ignored Daniel for many years, God in His marvelous providence, saw to it that His faithful prophet received the honor that was due him” (Whitcomb).

Daniel must have been quite advanced in age. Did his honour come by age? For some men, perhaps, but not for Daniel. Honours attended his way from youth. As a boy and a young man Daniel had set his heart to serve the Lord and keep His holy commandments. So the Lord God of Israel says, *“... them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed”* (1 Sam 2:30).

Honour comes not from years, but from God. The way of honour is to put God first in our lives now. Young reader, take Daniel as your example and see God's honours come your way!

THOUGHT: Belshazzar deserved another chance. Do I agree?

PRAYER: Lord, Thou art the Judge, and I submit to Thee.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 9

DANIEL 6:4-9

PSALM 26

*“Examine me, O LORD,
and prove me ...”*

JEALOUSY AND INTRIGUE

When men’s hearts are overwhelmed by jealousy their intrigue and violence know no bounds. King Darius appointed 120 princes, and over them three presidents. The senior president was Daniel. Almost immediately, it became clear that he was “a cut above” the other two. So it was the king’s intention to elevate him to overall charge. This inflamed the passions of the other presidents who presumably began to instigate the princes. Together they schemed how they might get rid of Daniel.

How did Daniel distinguish himself above the others? We are told that *“an excellent spirit was in him”* (Dan 6:3). We do not doubt that Daniel was a man of purpose and determination, devoted and industrious. But the distinguishing feature was the spirit in him.

Calvin’s remarks are enlightening: “It does not always happen that those who are remarkable for prudence or other endowments obtain greater authority and rank.” We ought to recognize the hand of God in human affairs. God had put in Daniel His Holy Spirit. Hebrews 11:33 includes Daniel (though not by name) among the great heroes of the faith. Surely we recognize in Daniel a spiritual man, one whose highest ambition was to obey God and honour His name. Should it surprise us then that God gave him *“an excellent spirit”*? That made him outstanding.

When Christians excel and outstrip their non-Christian rivals, there will be trouble. Daniel’s rivals plotted his downfall but his conduct was faultless, beyond reproach in every way. Read Daniel 6:5. These words are a shining testimony of Daniel’s impeccable character and unquestioned integrity.

Every act of Daniel’s was lawful, beyond reproach. The only way to fault him was to have a new law to outlaw the worship of God. This, the plotters knew, Daniel would never forsake. So by a quick and smart move, they had the unsuspecting king to pass the deadly law.

THOUGHT: How can I be outstanding in God’s sight?

PRAYER: (Use Psalm 26:11.)

THURSDAY, MAY 10

DANIEL 6:7-10

PSALM 46

*“God is our refuge
and strength ...”*

THE ACID TEST

It was a cleverly contrived trap: no prayer or religious petition except through the king for thirty days. Penalty: into the den of lions! The presidents, governors and princes must have congratulated themselves and chuckled with devilish glee. Now, they thought, Daniel was finished!

The strange new law was signed and sealed, beyond alteration and recall. It would have come as a shock (or at least a surprise) to Daniel. It was a royal decree affecting everybody without exception. Despite his high position Daniel was not exempt. He fully realized the consequences of breaching the law. He knew the penalty and the method of execution. I dare say these thoughts and considerations went through his mind.

What would you have done, if you were in Daniel's shoes? What escape routes can you think of? Report sick, get hospitalised for thirty days? Run away on vacation to a foreign country? Petition the king with strong arguments? Take leave of God and refrain from praying for thirty days? Even simpler, pray in secret, with windows shut? All these come to mind as possibilities. Which one do you fancy?

Read Daniel 6:10 again. Daniel learnt of the new law, went back to his house and worshipped God as he was accustomed to do. Windows wide open, *“upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God as he did aforetime.”*

How could Daniel conduct himself so calmly? Surely he was very rash. To the man of the world, this was surely absolute foolishness, asking for trouble. But Daniel was not a man of the world. The Lord was with him. He was in close fellowship with God. God was very real to him. Had He not instructed him in interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dreams? Had He not delivered his three friends from the burning fiery furnace? Faith told Daniel: Your God is able! He is worthy of your trust!

THOUGHT: Fear goes out when faith comes in.

PRAYER: Forgive my fear of man, O Lord! Let me trust in Thee.

FRIDAY, MAY 11

DANIEL 6:10-11

PSALM 27:1-9

*“The LORD is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear? ...”*

DANIEL’S PRACTICE OF PRAYER

Let us look again at Daniel’s prayer. There are lessons for us all.

1. Normal daily habit: Daniel faced the crisis calmly. Without fear or panic he sought the refuge of his prayer chamber as his normal daily custom was. This is a good example for us. We should not wait until some disaster strikes before we will go on our knees before God. Let us all do this daily, and see how our faith will grow. Start today!

2. Toward Jerusalem: Why this “directional” prayer? Can we not pray without facing Jerusalem? Daniel and the Jews in exile had a special reason for doing so. At the dedication of the Temple of Jerusalem, Solomon foresaw the day of Israel’s captivity and God’s redemption. Therefore in his prayer he prayed for his people to return to God in their captivity “... and pray unto thee toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen ...” (1 Kings 8:48). Turning toward Jerusalem reminded the Jews of their God-given heritage. Jerusalem and the Temple lay in ruins, but Daniel’s faith was unshaken. He continued in faith, confident that Jerusalem was God’s abode, the theocratic centre of the earth. Today, our hearts should be directed always towards God’s throne of grace.

3. Three times a day: This is a good practice, according to David’s psalm: “As for me, I will call upon God; and the LORD shall save me. Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice” (Ps 55:16-17).

4. Thanks before God: Not only in peace but in trouble, let us give thanks to God. “... in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving ...” (Phil 4:6). “In every thing give thanks ...” (1 Thess 5:18). Gratitude does honour to God.

While his enemies pressed their charges against Daniel before the king, Daniel prayed on his knees before the Lord.

THOUGHT: How is my prayer life?

PRAYER: (Use Psalm 112:7.)

SATURDAY, MAY 12

DANIEL 6:12-17

LAMENTATIONS 3:50-58

*“Till the LORD look down,
and behold from heaven ...”*

SWIFT SENTENCE

The evidence was undeniable. The charge was energetically pressed. It could have been quite a crowd of accusers who had assembled to catch Daniel “in the act,” and now to appear before the king. It was a blood-thirsty mob, determined to see the last of Daniel.

The evil and despicable character of the accusers is seen in Daniel 6:13 by the way they made reference to “... *That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah*”

In their venomous hatred of Daniel, they ignored the fact that he was the “Head of the Civil Service,” chief of the three presidents.

“*That Daniel*” is a derogatory and insulting address. Instead of acknowledging Daniel’s high position, they reminded the king that Daniel was merely one of the foreign captive slaves, potentially troublesome and disloyal to the throne.

What a vile and evil band of accusers!

Have you encountered such people in the course of your work? Maybe even in the home? Or in church? What did you do? What do you think God wants you to do?

THOUGHT: (Read Psalm 2.)

PRAYER: Lord, may I always hope in Thee, even in the time of storm.

SUMMARY EXECUTION

Darius suddenly awoke to the folly of his action. He felt sorry for Daniel but the law was binding on him. He was powerless to undo it. Nevertheless Darius, caught between the horns of the dilemma, laboured his utmost to save Daniel, but without avail. He was utterly regretful for what he had done. If he had any idea of putting off the execution for a day, Daniel's enemies were quick to dispel it.

Apparently there was a Medo-Persian law requiring that a sentence had to be carried out on the same day. No sooner had the sun gone down than the accusers came to Darius and pressed for the execution of the sentence.

As Daniel was taken to face the lions, Darius made a statement of profound truth: *"Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee"* (Dan 6:16). It could have been that he had heard of the wonders of God wrought by Daniel's hand. In his heart was a glimmer of hope.

It was obvious that by his conduct and dealings with the king, Daniel had made a very favourable impression on Darius.

Man's extremity is God's opportunity. Daniel was consigned to the den of lions to the great regret of the king.

When the night is darkest God's light shines brightest.

THOUGHT: Did Darius harbour any hopes for Daniel?

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Lord, that Thy eyes are upon the righteous, and that Thy ears are open unto our cries. May I always turn my eyes heavenward to Thee, and continue to walk in Thy path.

MONDAY, MAY 14

DANIEL 6:18-23

PSALM 30:8-12

“... unto the LORD
I made supplication.”

SADNESS IN THE NIGHT

While we know little about king Darius, the little that we know shows him to be a man of tender heart, favourably disposed towards the servant of God. That he was also a just man was seen in his strenuous effort to save Daniel, whom he recognized was wrongly accused. Calvin's assessment of Darius does not do him justice. He thinks that the king wanted to save Daniel only because of the benefits which he had received from him.

Now the effect of Daniel's condemnation to the den of lions on the king is most revealing. He spent the night in deep mourning: no food, no sleep, no music. His heart went out to Daniel. The wildest fears tore at his bosom, racked his brain. It was probably his longest night.

GLADNESS IN THE MORNING

At first light, Darius made his way to the den of lions, and called to Daniel with tearful voice. Notice the king's words in Daniel 6:20.

Darius acknowledged Daniel as “*servant of the living God.*” His question had a ring of hope. Deep in his heart there was a ray of light, be it just a little ray. Nevertheless, it echoed his earlier utterance: “*Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee*” (Dan 6:16).

The king's heartfelt wish and longing was not in vain. His mourning was turned into dancing. What joy and gladness! No sweeter sound than Daniel's voice coming from the depths of the den of lions.

Hallelujah, our God is able! In every age, God has His faithful few who care not for life and limb or personal safety. Should we today not follow in their steps, and stand for God, by faith?

THOUGHT: “Faith of our fathers, living still. In spite of dungeon, fire and sword. O how our hearts beat high with joy, whene'er we hear that glorious word! ... We will be true to thee till death!” (Faber)

PRAYER: Help me, Father, to be a Daniel.

TUESDAY, MAY 15

DANIEL 6:24-28

PSALM 5

*“Hearken unto the
voice of my cry, my King ...”*

MEN'S PLOTS BACKFIRE

The story of Daniel's deliverance brings to mind a similar incident also involving Jews in captivity — in the land of Persia. The wicked Chief Minister Haman had plotted to massacre all the Jews and had built a gallows to hang Mordecai the Jew. By the courageous and timely intervention of Queen Esther, Haman's foul plot was exposed and he was hanged by the king on the gallows built for Mordecai. His evil plot backfired. God foiled his foul plot.

When Darius found Daniel safe and sound in the morning, he learnt his lesson. Daniel's God was a great God. No other god had ever saved anyone from the mouth of the lions. And if Daniel was held in such favour with his God, surely those who had plotted his death deserved to be fed to the lions! God was with Daniel to frustrate the evil plans of the accusers. By royal command Daniel was delivered, and reinstated to high honour while his accusers were sent to the lions.

May this account of God's deliverance of Daniel from the mouths of the lions truly have an impact on your life. God's record is meant “... *for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope*” (Rom 15:4). Are you comforted by this portion of scriptures about Daniel?

THOUGHT: How does God want me to respond to men's evil plots against me?

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Father, for giving me Thy Word which through patience and comfort I might have hope.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 16

DANIEL 6:24-28

PSALM 7

*“O LORD my God,
in thee do I put my trust ...”*

GOD’S OMNIPOTENT POWER

While God permitted His people to fall into captivity (because of their rebellion) nevertheless He did not forsake them. He continued to move among them and to manifest His wonder-working power, thus preparing them for eventual deliverance.

The lessons in these first six chapters of Daniel have a wider application beyond Jewry. The lessons are for God’s people everywhere. We quote from Thomas Myers, editor of Calvin’s commentary: “Throughout these lectures, we are ever taught that we can see God only by being pure in heart. The preparation for spiritual insight into holy mysteries is purity of conscience and singleness of eye ... Our lot on earth must be to walk more by faith than by sight. This is the chief exercise of the soul, which is essential to its vitality and growth ...”

Daniel’s life is our best example of serving God with a pure heart and walking by faith, not by sight. The walk of faith is a fearless walk. For he who fears God need fear nobody!

THOUGHT: What are some of the lessons that Daniel’s life has taught me?

PRAYER: Father, may I fear Thee only, and therefore I need fear no man.

THURSDAY, MAY 17
DANIEL 7
REVELATION 13

*“Arise, O LORD, in thine anger,
lift up thyself because of the
rage of mine enemies ...”*

PANORAMA OF WORLD HISTORY

Ordinarily, dreams are meaningless meanderings of the subconscious mind. Extraordinarily, dreams convey messages from God intended for the instruction, warning and comfort of His people, especially in respect of future events. These are prophetic and predictive dreams, such as those dreamt and interpreted by Joseph (the dreamer!) in Genesis chapters 37, 40 and 41.

Significantly, God confirms certain very important dreams by sending “duplicates.” Thus Joseph’s sheaves in the field were confirmed by the stars in the sky (Gen 37), and Pharaoh’s cattle from the river by the ears of corn on the stalk (Gen 41). Daniel’s dream in Daniel 7 duplicates Nebuchadnezzar’s in Daniel 2, with differences in some details which we shall see later.

That God Almighty should reveal the broad perspectives of coming world events should not seem strange to His children, although to the unbeliever it is utterly incomprehensible and even scornful. But the redeemed of the Lord respond when the King speaks: *“Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else ... Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure”* (Isa 46:9-10).

So it was, in one night’s dream more than 2,500 years ago, God revealed in one broad sweep the course of history’s four major world empires from the time of Daniel until the end of man’s dominion on earth. History’s four major world powers will each have its day, and no more. Man’s ambition to dominate and exalt himself has been part of his fallen nature since Cain’s day. Today we have East-West rivalry and struggle for world dominance. But man without God can do nothing. When God’s clock runs out, man’s regimes will end. Then God’s Kingdom will appear. Daniel saw all this during his captivity in Babylon more than 2,500 years ago!

THOUGHT: What is the purpose of biblical prophecies?

PRAYER: Father in Heaven, may I always remember that Thou art the God who declares the end from the beginning.

FRIDAY, MAY 18
 DANIEL 7:1-8
 DANIEL 2:31-45

*“The LORD shall judge the people:
 judge me, O LORD ...”*

“TWO ARE A CONFIRMATION”

God gave Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel two remarkable dreams, each confirming the other. The dreams convey a message to believers down the ages, a panoramic view of coming world events spanning twenty-five centuries and beyond. Different symbols are used in each dream, but the interpretation is the same. Four world powers were depicted. It was a spiritual message, and it must be spiritually discerned. God gave it as a riddle, but He also gave its interpretation. We are not left in the dark. Thank God for enlightenment. To be forewarned is to be forearmed!

Below are the two dreams analyzed.

Dream 1: Daniel 2		Dream 2: Daniel 7	Interpretation
A great image of four sections (Dan 2:31)		Four great beasts from the sea (Dan 7:3)	Four dominant world powers
1.	Gold head (Dan 2:32, 38)	Lion with eagle wings (Dan 7:4)	Babylon
2.	Silver breast and arms (Dan 2:32)	Bear with three ribs in mouth (Dan 7:5)	Medo-Persia
3.	Brass belly and thighs (Dan 2:32)	Leopard with 4 wings, 4 heads (Dan 7:6)	Greece
4.	(a) Iron legs (Dan 2:33)	(a) Beast with 10 horns (Dan 7:7)	Rome, ancient
	(b) Iron-clay feet, toes (Dan 2:33, 42)	(b) A little horn (Dan 7:8)	Rome, end time

In Daniel 7:2-3, Daniel saw the four winds of heaven striving upon the sea, the mighty unseen hand of God active at work among the peoples of the world, the sea of humanity. At God’s command, four great powers arise, each in its turn to dominate the world scene. While nations war, our God reigns supreme over all (Dan 4:17).

THOUGHT: Men’s kingdoms rise and fall. God’s Kingdom is everlasting.
PRAYER: In Thee alone, Lord, are hid all the treasures of wisdom.

THE FIRST THREE BEASTS

1. A Lion: Babylon (Dan 7:4)

This corresponds to the head of gold in the great image of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (Dan 2:38). Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar (604-561 BC) was a magnificent, dazzling and exceedingly prosperous empire. Hence the head of gold for opulence, and the lion for regal status! Because of his pride and haughtiness, God chastened him (wings plucked), drove him to live among the beasts of the field for seven years until he learnt his lesson (Dan 4:33-37). Then he was restored (a man’s heart given to it).

2. A Bear: Medo-Persia (Dan 7:5)

This beast has three ribs in its mouth between the teeth. It corresponds to the silver arms and breast (Dan 2:32) of the great image in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. It represents the Medo-Persian empire under Cyrus and Cambyses. A bear is less majestic and less swift than a lion. How do we interpret the three ribs held between the teeth? Some scholars think that they refer to the three major conquests: (a) Lydia in Asia Minor 546 BC, (b) Babylon 539 BC, and (c) Egypt 525 BC.

3. A Leopard: Greece (Dan 7:6)

This beast corresponds with the brass belly and thighs of the great image (Dan 2:32). It had four wings and four heads, indicating extraordinary speed and brilliance. We read in history that Alexander the Great’s exploits were pressed with lightning speed and great success. Within some ten years he had conquered Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and had marched on to the borders of India. Shortly after, Alexander died at age thirty-three. His empire was then divided among four of his generals (hence the four heads): (a) Babylon under Antigonous, (b) Egypt under Ptolemy, (c) Macedonia under Cassander, and (d) Thrace and Bithynia under Lysimachus.

Are you not simply amazed at the accuracy of God’s prophetic Word?

THOUGHT: (Read 2 Peter 1:20.)

PRAYER: “Open my eyes that I may see glimpses of truth Thou hast for me.” (Clara H. Scott)

LORD'S DAY, MAY 20
DANIEL 7:7-8, 19-22
DANIEL 2:33, 41

“... God is angry with
the wicked every day.”

THE FOURTH BEAST: ROME

Our special interest is in the fourth beast: the end time world power, Rome. At the height of power, Roman rule extended from Persia in the east to England in the west, and all those countries in between bordering the Mediterranean Sea in Asia Minor, Europe and Northern Africa. It was a vast empire spanning three continents. From the two dreams (Dan 2 and 7) we understand this fourth world power to be the most powerful. Read its description in Daniel 2:40 and 7:7.

The above is a vivid description of the Roman Empire of history (“Ancient Rome”) which existed from the first century BC to the fifth century AD (with an eastern residue continuing into the fifteenth century). Rome in its heyday was ruthless, exceedingly cruel and destructive. Its enemies/captives were crucified and fed to wild beasts in the arena for the entertainment and amusement of sadistic spectators. Emperor Nero’s cruelty and tyranny were unparalleled. When the Roman armies overran Jerusalem, they massacred over a million Jews.

Historically, Rome faded away after the fifth century. But if we read Daniel’s prophecy correctly, our Lord’s return will be during the time of Roman power. We must therefore look for the appearance of Rome in another guise. Let us call it “End Time Rome.” Thus:

Reference	Description	Interpretation
Dan 2:33, 41, 42	(a) Legs of iron (the first part)	Ancient Rome
	(b) Feet and toes (the last part) part iron, part clay	End Time Rome
Dan 7:7, 19, 20	(a) Fourth beast: dreadful, terrible, strong exceedingly, great iron teeth, nails of brass	Ancient Rome
	(b) Ten horns and a little horn	End Time Rome

THOUGHT: Read Genesis 40:8 and Daniel 2:45.

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Father, for the illumination of Thy spirit.

MONDAY, MAY 21

DANIEL 7:7, 19-25

DANIEL 2:33, 41-42

*“He hath also prepared for him
the instruments of death ...”*

MORE ABOUT THE FOURTH BEAST

As shown in yesterday’s reading, the last world empire is clearly of two parts, an initial part and a final. Today, let us focus our attention on the final or end time appearance of the Roman Empire. Ancient Rome ceased to be a world empire long ago but its civilization, culture, language, legal system and ethnic roots persist in the countries and peoples of Western Europe. So while the old empire as an entity is no more, a new grouping of the nations of Western Europe has gradually taken shape.

The concept of a United States of Europe had caught the imagination of men like Winston Churchill in Britain and others in Europe. The benefits from such a geographical and political grouping are beyond esteem. Politically, a banding together of Western Europe’s 200 million people will create a formidable power bloc to counterbalance the Communist bloc (Eastern Europe and Soviet Russia). Economically, the grouping will bring enormous advantages and benefits in finance, commerce, trade and industry. Since World War II this idea had gained increasing acceptance among the free nations of Europe.

By the 1958 Treaty of Rome, the blueprint for an economic federation of Europe was created. As a result the European Economic Community was born. Then on 1 November 1993, the European Union was formally established when the Maastricht Treaty came into force. Are these developments prophetically significant?

Such economic groupings may be seen as Rome revived: the final part of the fourth beast (the ten horns), corresponding to the feet and toes of the great image in the first dream. But there are inherent weakness in it as seen in the feet and toes of iron-clay mixture (Dan 2:42) and the ten horns which could not withstand the little horn (Dan 7:8, 20). We watch the future of the situation in Europe, and the world at large, with closest interest.

THOUGHT: Not all would agree with the interpretations of the fourth beast. Do I?

PRAYER: Father, grant me understanding as I read Thy Word.

TUESDAY, MAY 22

"Let no man deceive you ..."

DANIEL 7:8, 20-25

2 THESSALONIANS 2:3-12, REVELATION 1

THE LITTLE HORN

We now intrude into an area of predictive prophecy where even professors of theology fear to tread. The views here expressed must therefore be regarded as only tentative and not authoritative. After all, the writer is only a physician.

Our chief interest is the identity of the *"little horn,"* the eleventh, which grew up after the ten horns of the fourth beast. The *"little"* (Dan 7:8) refers to its being the last to appear (i.e. youngest, eg. little sister or little brother). Notwithstanding its youth, this *"horn"* or *"power"* excels its ten older fellows in brilliance, intelligence, knowledge (*"eyes of man"*), in domineering eloquence (*"mouth speaking great things"*), in size (eg. population and geographic size, *"more stout than his fellows"*).

Let us pause and piece together the scattered clues to the little horn's identity. It is a power (people or nation) of West European roots, appearing after its fellow European sister nations, but more brilliant and knowledgeable, bigger in population and geographic size than any of the ten. It has great dominance over the ten and has no difficulty dismissing or removing three of the ten-power Federation of Western Europe. What country or world power could it be? But there are more clues. The little horn also shall *"... speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High ..."* (Dan 7:25). His highhanded reign will last three-and-a-half years (*"a time and times and the dividing of time"*). He is also the man of sin (2 Thess 2:3-4), and also the Antichrist (Rev 13:5-8) who will be a man arising from a Western nation, satanically energized, setting himself up to be worshipped, working signs and wonders. He will set up a new economic order and a system of trading, so that *"... no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name"* (Rev 13:17). As for the Antichrist country, many clues point to one Western country which dominates the world, and is the mightiest nation in the world.

THOUGHT: If Antichrist is coming, can Christ be far behind?

PRAYER: Father, may I walk closely with Thee in these end times.

GOD'S EVERLASTING KINGDOM

While men fight war against each other to establish themselves and their selfish regimes, believers and servants of Jesus Christ await the coming of their Lord and King to set up His Kingdom. Men's kingdoms last for a few short years, but God's Kingdom is forever. Daniel's visions give us valuable information about His Kingdom.

1. God's Kingdom will come during the latter time of the fourth world empire (re: the feet of the great image, Dan 2:34; the fourth beast, Dan 7:11). This is the end time Roman power now taking shape.
2. God's Kingdom will cut short the reign of Antichrist (Dan 7:25-27) which will last seven years.
3. God's Kingdom will come supernaturally from heaven (stone cut without hands, Dan 2:34), when Jesus returns in the clouds (Dan 7:13).
4. God's Kingdom will fill the whole earth and all other kingdoms will be no more (Dan 2:34, 35, 44, 45; Dan 7:14, 27).
5. There will be a time of judgment. All earthly regimes will be destroyed (Dan 2:35, 44, 45; 7:10, 11, 26). From this judgment none can escape.
6. God's people will inherit the Kingdom (Dan 2:44; 7:14, 27). All peoples, nations and languages shall serve our Lord.
7. God's Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom (Dan 2:44; 7:14, 27).

God's judgment is coming. It will be sudden, supernatural and spectacular. It will be by fire: His throne was like the fiery flame and His wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him (Dan 7:9-10). In 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8, we see the Lord Jesus *“revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

One day, our Lord will come against all unbelievers with vengeance and judgment. Today, He welcomes *“whosoever will”* with compassion and love. Reader, be not still unbelieving!

THOUGHT: Have I come to the Lord already?

PRAYER: Father, I pray that today is the day of salvation for many.

THURSDAY, MAY 24

DANIEL 8:1-2

PSALM 42

"My soul thirsteth for God ..."

DANIEL IN HIS EVENING YEARS

The year was 551 BC. Fifty-five years had slipped by since Daniel was taken captive to Babylon. By now all hopes of ever seeing his beloved homeland had probably evaporated. Nebuchadnezzar had been dead ten years. With his passing, the kingdom had declined in power and glory. Belshazzar was a feeble ruler and the collapse of Babylon was visibly imminent. To the east the warlike Persians under Cyrus were raring for action. What lay in the future? In our troubled world today we ask the same question. Let us know this: the future is in God's hands.

God had used Daniel mightily in the past. Now in his evening years perhaps his best days were over and it was time to retire. Has the thought of retiring from the Lord's service ever crossed your mind? Are you discouraged, depressed, ready to give up? Daniel did not give up. Why should we in our far happier circumstance?

Thank God that Daniel persevered. God gave Daniel the stamina. Pray for stamina and perseverance in following the Lord.

Now we see Daniel on the move. On to Shushan, 350 miles to the east of Babylon. His "visionary" days were not over. God had another important prophetic vision for him at Shushan, the headquarters of Cyrus, and the birthplace of the Medo-Persian empire. Shushan was also the scene of the story of Esther and the early ministry of Nehemiah, the repairer of Jerusalem's broken-down walls.

Why did God choose Daniel to reveal His plans for the future? The answer: It was God's sovereign will and pleasure. God knew Daniel's heart. Daniel had followed the Lord and served Him with single-minded devotion from his youth. Even as a captive in a foreign land, Daniel did not falter or waver in his faith. God honoured Daniel because Daniel honoured Him. In Daniel we have a worthy example. Will you follow him?

THOUGHT: I must serve God faithfully wherever I am.

PRAYER: Father, may I persevere in my walk with Thee.

FRIDAY, MAY 25

DANIEL 8:1-4, 20

2 CORINTHIANS 4:16-18

*“... the inward man is
renewed day by day.”*

THE RAM WITH TWO HORNS

God’s Spirit came upon Daniel in the palace at Shushan and gave him a new vision. Notice that unlike in Daniel 7:1, this was not a night-vision in a dream, but a day-vision, fully awake. God can come to His servants whether asleep or awake, but they must be attuned to His Spirit to be the recipients of His message. What lay ahead? The answer was in the vision. Babylon’s days were numbered. A new power was rising in the east, a ram with two horns. It was an extraordinary animal, exceedingly ferocious and powerful. It advanced in three directions: to the west, north and south. Nothing could stand in its way, not even mighty Babylon.

Daniel was perplexed by the peculiar vision, so he asked and Angel Gabriel explained: The ferocious ram with two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia. The higher horn which came up last represents the Persians who, under Cyrus, were elevated above the Medes, the lower horn. This dual monarchy of Medo-Persia was the up and coming world power. Gabriel’s authoritative interpretation supplies the vital clues to the understanding of the two dreams (in Dan 2 and 7). The breast and arms of the great image (Dan 2:32, 39), and the bear with three ribs in its mouth (Dan 7:5) are clearly identified as Medo-Persia. Its conquest was in three directions: northward in the direction of Media, westward into Asia Minor and Greece, southward into Babylon and Egypt. Cyrus overran the great Babylonian empire and carved out for himself the greatest empire the near eastern world had ever known. Its territory was approximately double that of the Babylonian empire.

What lesson can we learn from the ferocious ram? It is a picture of unregenerate human nature: covetous, lustful, violent (James 4:1). A second lesson: men’s lusts know no limits. The second world empire exceeds the first, the third exceeds the second, and so on. A third lesson: no human empire stands for ever, it is only for a limited period before another takes over. Men’s empires are so fragile and transient. Ours too!

THOUGHT: What is my hope for the future?

PRAYER: Lord, fix my eyes on the unseen eternal things.

SATURDAY, MAY 26

DANIEL 8:5-7, 21

1 PETER 1:24-25

“... *The grass withereth, and the
flower thereof falleth away.*”

AN HE GOAT WITH A NOTABLE HORN

In this fast moving vision, and even as Daniel was contemplating the meaning of the powerful ram with two horns, there appeared a male goat from the west with a prominent horn between his eyes. Gabriel explained later: “*the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king*” (Dan 8:21).

The exploits of Alexander the Great stand unique in history. Taking off from the west in 334 BC, Alexander swept into Asia Minor with 40,000 men, overran the entire Persian Empire, crushing everything in his path and pressed on to the east, up to the borders of India. The speed of his advance is expressed in four words in Daniel 8:5: “*touched not the ground.*” It was so rapid that it appeared to be airborne! History records the unparalleled prowess of this military genius. “Alexander’s first victory against the Persians was at the Granicus river near the Hellespont (334 B.C.). After taking all of Asia Minor, he crushed the army of Darius III of Medo-Persia in northern Syria (the Battle of Issus, 333 B.C.). The island fortress of Tyre fell after a remarkable seven-month siege, and in 332 he conquered Egypt without a battle. Acclaimed as a deity, he founded Alexandria and moved on to Mesopotamia where he met Darius III again and defeated him (Gaugamela, 331 BC). Babylon, Susa, Persepolis, and Ecbatana fell before him (330). By now Darius III had been murdered, and Alexander pushed his armies into Bactria and Sogdiana, down through what is modern Afghanistan to the borders of India. There, in his final great victory, he overcame the war elephants of King Porus (Battle of the Jhelum, 326 BC) and led his exhausted and discontented troops back to Susa (324 B.C.). Truly, he was one of the greatest military leaders of all time.” (Whitcomb)

1 Peter 1:24-25 passes judgment on men’s achievements and accomplishments. The empires of men do not endure. And so with Alexander’s vast empire. It soon vanished away.

THOUGHT: Hitler declared that his empire would last 1,000 years. How many did it last?

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Lord, that Thy Word endureth for ever.

LORD'S DAY, MAY 27

DANIEL 8:8-12, 22

PROVERBS 16:8-19

*"A just weight and balance
are the LORD'S ..."*

THE GREAT HORN BROKEN

Read Proverbs 16:18-19. How true is God's unchanging Word.

How easy it is for achievements, talents, gifts, position and acclamation to go to one's head and corrupt one's outlook and attitude in life. For one to reach great heights of power and honour and remain humble, uncorrupted and just is certainly a rare virtue which Alexander lacked. His irresistible power ("*... there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand*" Dan 8:7) caused him to magnify himself ("*... the he goat waxed very great...*" Dan 8:8) and to be greatly puffed up. This was the beginning of his downfall.

Whitcomb further amplified: "Having carved out an empire of 1.5 million square miles, Alexander provoked many of his Macedonian leaders to rebellion by claiming to be a god, by merging Persian and Greek elements in his army, and by marrying Persian women. 'His mind full of new projects, Alexander built a fleet to explore the coasts of Arabia and Africa. He sailed up the Tigris to Opis, the ancient Assyrian city where Cyrus the Persian had defeated the Babylonians in 539. ... Alexander entered Babylon for the last time in the spring of 323. Worn out by wounds, hardship and overdrinking, he fell ill of a fever. Soon he could neither move nor speak. He was propped up and each officer and soldier filed past. He acknowledged each man with his eyes or a slight movement of his head. Within two days Alexander died. He was not yet thirty-three years old.'"

So, "*... the great horn was broken ...*" (Dan 8:8) and thus ended a meteoric career, now but a page of history. Just think of it, in ten fleeting years he had the whole world literally at his feet but before he could even sit back and savour the fruits of his exploits, Alexander's life was taken from him.

What do you say to all this? Read God's Word in James 4:14-15.

THOUGHT: Do I agree with Proverbs 16:32?

PRAYER: Lord, may I humble myself under Thy mighty hand.

MONDAY, MAY 28

DANIEL 8:8-14, 23-25

1 CHRONICLES 16:23-31

*“Sing unto the LORD,
all the earth ...”*

A LITTLE HORN ARISES

Alexander was a military genius, but poor in civil administrative skill. He won victories on the battlefield but failed to consolidate the peace. With his premature and untimely death, his vast empire disintegrated into four spheres of influence, divided among his quarrelling generals: Antigonus took Babylon, Ptolemy Egypt, Cassander Macedonia, and Lysimachus Thrace and Bithynia. Prophetically these events were described in Daniel 8:8.

We next turn our attention to a *“little horn”* which came out of them. This little horn appears to be the little horn of Daniel 7:8, but this is not so. Historically, there arose in a later day a notorious leader whose description fits well that of the little horn in Daniel 8:9-12, 23-26. His descent is traced to Antigonus who had taken over Babylon.

Within twenty years, Antigonus had lost Babylon to Seleucus I Nicator, the first *“king of the north”* listed in Daniel 11:5-35. The Seleucid dynasty continued in power. Over a hundred years later there arose a king by the name of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the eighth in that line (175-64 BC). He turned out to be one of the most vicious persecutors of Israel ever known, attacking and destroying the mighty men of God’s people (*“... cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them”* Dan 8:10; *“... destroy the mighty and the holy people”* Dan 8:24). His exploits took him to *“... the pleasant land”* (Dan 8:9), i.e. Israel.

Antiochus Epiphanes committed atrocious and abominable acts against God, His house and people. History records that he arrogantly entered the sanctuary and took the golden altar, lampstand and the holy table. He forbade the offering of sacrifices and drink offerings in the sanctuary. He profaned the Sabbath, defiled the sanctuary and built altars and shrines for idols, and sacrificed unclean animals thereon. Although he was not the *“little horn”* Antichrist, nevertheless he is a type and fore-runner of Antichrist (whose appearance is yet future).

THOUGHT: Why did God give me a glimpse of the future?

PRAYER: Lord, may I serve Thee with clean hands and pure hearts.

TUESDAY, MAY 29

DANIEL 8:13-19

LUKE 1:19-20, 26-28

*“O that my ways were directed
to keep thy statutes!”*

GABRIEL: MESSENGER FROM GOD

For a pleasant change from the abominable account of Antiochus Epiphanes, let us focus our attention on God’s other creations of the spirit world. Angels are His messengers, made a little higher than man (Ps 8:5; Heb 2:7) whose office is to do Him service in heaven, and by His appointment to succour and defend men on earth. There are many references to the work of angels in the Old Testament. In some passages the Angel of God speaks as the voice of God Himself (Gen 22:11-12; Exod 3:2, 6, 14).

Only two angels are mentioned by name in Scripture: Gabriel and Michael. Interestingly, their names both first appear in the Book of Daniel (Dan 8:16; 9:21; 10:13, 21; 12:1). To Daniel in exile God gave the unique honour of acquaintance with these two chief of angels.

None of us has had an encounter with any angel, so we can never know what it is like (until we arrive in heaven). However, we shall try and get a sense of it by reading Daniel’s account. From between the banks of the river Ulai, Daniel heard a voice (from heaven) calling: “... *Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision*” (Dan 8:16). That must have been the voice of God, for who else could have given a command to the mighty angel.

Gabriel then drew near to Daniel, his mere presence was awe-inspiring. While we do not understand angels’ language, angels certainly understand ours. Gabriel was able to converse freely with Daniel. Gabriel explained in no uncertain terms the prophetic nature of Daniel’s vision. Over and over, he emphasized to Daniel the eschatological focus of this part of the vision (Dan 8:17, 19, 23). At the conclusion of their encounter, Gabriel commanded Daniel: “... *shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days*” (Dan 8:26).

By Gabriel’s mouth and Daniel’s pen comes God’s infallible and inerrant Word to us, enlightening us to things to come at the end time.

THOUGHT: What was Gabriel’s role when he appeared on earth?

PRAYER: May Thy Word help me to view earthly things wisely.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 30

DANIEL 8:26-27

MATTHEW 13:10-16

“... it is given unto you to know
the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven ...”

THE VISION IS TRUE

Prophetic dreams and visions are not for the natural man, the man of the world, the unregenerate man, the unbeliever, for “... *the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*” (1 Cor 2:14). In a spiritual sense, they are like parables — incomprehensible.

Our Lord often taught His disciples in parables, because “... *it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given*” (Matt 13:11). The spiritual discernment to understand spiritual truths is not given to those outside the kingdom of heaven. Of these the prophet Isaiah said, “... *By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive*” (Matt 13:14; cf. Isa 6:9-10).

So it is with Daniel’s visions. Unbelievers, liberal and modernist theologians, apostate preachers and critical scholars reject the possibility of predictive prophecy and things belonging to the supernatural. To the believing reader the words of Gabriel at the conclusion of his interpretative speech bring encouragement and assurance: “... *the vision of the evening and the morning ... is true ...*” (Dan 8:26). Daniel’s visions were not bizarre and meaningless. They were doubly confirmed, and two are a confirmation.

THOUGHT: Do I “*know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven*”?

PRAYER: Father, help me to study Thy Word to show myself approved unto Thee “... *a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*” (2 Tim 2:15).

THURSDAY, MAY 31

DANIEL 8:26-27

PSALM 119:105

*“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path.”*

SHUT UP THE VISION

Gabriel’s final instruction to Daniel was: “... *wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days*” (Dan 8:26).

The prophecy was for a time yet many days future. Daniel was therefore commanded to seal it up carefully, and to preserve it for distant times. It would be a source of great strength and comfort to suffering saints of a later day to know that the God whom they worship and trust has everything under control and that nothing happens without Him. Believers in this day and age when the end times are upon us rejoice to see some of these predictions come true before our very eyes.

The profound impact of the visions so taxed the ageing prophet that it left him totally spent and exhausted. The burden for his own people destined for extreme atrocities in the future was apparently too much for Daniel to endure. The emotional and spiritual shock was such that it left him sick for days.

Does God’s Word affect you in any way? How?

THOUGHT: How can I understand Biblical prophecy?

PRAYER: Father, *“open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law”* (Ps 119:18).

FRIDAY, JUNE 1

DANIEL 9

DANIEL 2:34-36

“... a stone was cut out
without hands ...”

THE BOOK OF DANIEL: THE OT BOOK OF REVELATION

The significant part of the vision is the marvelous predictions of the coming of the Messiah and the Kingdom of God. “*The stone cut out of the mountain without hands,*” which represents the Kingdom of Christ, shall smite the composite image of the anti-Christ and destroy it and then increase into a mountain filling the whole earth. This is God’s plan whereby the “*kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ*” (Rev 11:15).

Another vision of Daniel, the fulfillment of which is still in the future, is that of “*the seventy weeks*” recorded in chapter 9. One has to read Revelation 11-19 to get a clearer picture of what is recorded in this section of Daniel. These “weeks” are weeks of years or seven years and are divided into three periods: (1) the “*seven weeks*” or forty-nine years which saw the restoration of Jerusalem recorded in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, (2) the three score and two weeks (62 weeks) or 434 years “*Unto the Messiah the Prince,*” that is, to the time of Christ, and (3) “*one week*” or seven years, a period still in the future, which will usher in at the events attending the second coming of Christ.

When this “*seventieth week*” of Daniel will begin, Christ said, “... *knoweth no man, no not the angels of heaven, but my Father only*” (Matt 24:36). But one of the signs of the end time Christ said would be “... *the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet ...*” (Matt 24:15). Both Daniel and Christ Himself prophesy His “... *coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory*” (Matt 24:30; cf. Dan 7:13-14).

The Lord Jesus said of this day, “*It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.*” So, we are not to set dates for His second coming, but be ready at any time to meet Him at His coming with joy and not with trembling. Meanwhile, Christ said, “*Occupy till I come*” (Luke 19:13). – Noah Quarshie

THOUGHT: “Holding forth the word of life...” (Phil 2:16). Do I?

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Father, for Thy Word which gives me hope.

SATURDAY, JUNE 2

DANIEL 9

PSALM 2

*“Ask of me, and I shall give thee
the heathen for thine inheritance ...”*

SKILL AND UNDERSTANDING

The last part of Daniel 9 is one of the most difficult and controversial passages in all of Holy Scripture. This is the famous “seventy weeks” prophecy revealed by the angel Gabriel to Daniel. Are the seventy weeks past, present or future? Are they literal weeks or are they something else? Who are the “*the people of the prince that shall come*” (Dan 9:26)? These are some of the perplexing questions.

How shall we approach this “spiritual jigsaw”? The first rule, as I see it, is we must read the entire chapter humbly and with an open mind. I do not have the answer, although I shall endeavour to present as clear and cohesive a view as I possibly can. The second rule is to pray for illumination. “... *Do not interpretations belong to God? ...*” (Gen 40:8). In answer to Daniel’s prayer, Gabriel said to him, “... *I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding*” (Dan 9:22). We shall not try to decipher every little detail, but with God-given understanding, we can all grasp the broad principles and spiritual thrust of the prophecy. The third rule is we must be humble enough, even after diligent search, to admit that we “do not know.” In such a controversial issue, we must not be over confident or dogmatic. Otherwise we may well fall into the sin of spiritual pride.

PERSEVERANCE AND HARD WORK

If Daniel 9 is recognized by theologians and Bible scholars to be an outstandingly difficult chapter, it should challenge us to more serious study and prayerful meditation. Superficial and casual reading will not get us very far, “like a galloping horse observing flowers.” So, may I urge you, encourage you, to “dig deep” into God’s Word, to study all relevant cross references to other passages of Scripture. Read the present chapter slowly and its difficult parts many times over, with the help of a good commentary. In case of doubt you should always consult your own pastor. Remember Paul’s instruction to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15.

THOUGHT: How should I study God’s Word?

PRAYER: (Use 2 Timothy 2:15.)

LORD'S DAY, JUNE 3
DANIEL 9:1-2
JEREMIAH 25:8-14

“... I will punish the king of Babylon,
and that nation, saith the LORD,
for their iniquity ...”

A SEVENTY-YEAR SENTENCE

Daniel 9 opens with a scene of Darius the Mede occupying the throne of the Chaldeans and Daniel contemplating God's dealings with his own people in exile. The year was about 538 BC, almost seventy years since the Jews were first taken captive to Babylon. As Daniel read Jeremiah's prophecy of God's sentence “... *in the desolations of Jerusalem*” (Dan 9:2), he was deeply moved on behalf of his people and his country. Although he had been in Babylon all this while, he had by no means forgotten his heritage and his status. Seventy years in exile, in a foreign land steeped in idolatry, with little prospect of ever seeing one's homeland again might well have destroyed one's faith in God. But not Daniel. Pray to be like Daniel.

What was God's word which came to Jeremiah? Jeremiah 25 takes us back to the year 605 BC when Jeremiah the “weeping prophet” declared God's solemn word to the evil king Jehoiakim of Judah. Read Jeremiah 25:9-10.

God's people were sentenced to serve the Babylonian king seventy years. In passing sentence on His beloved firstborn, it must have grieved God's heart known only to Himself. But in this we see His righteousness exercised.

Israel was the object of His special love, a people who had received the knowledge of God's Word, deliverance from bondage in Egypt and supernatural nourishment by God's almighty hand. (Read Deuteronomy 32:9-10.)

In spite of all that God had done for them, the king and people rebelled and sinned grievously against the Lord. They ignored God's warnings and spurned God's servants. Their sin was not one of ignorance. It was one of wilful disobedience.

When the king heard God's warning from Jeremiah, he flew into a rage, cut up the scroll of God's Word and cast it into the fire (Jer 36:23). The seventy-year sentence was fully deserved.

THOUGHT: “God cannot overlook sin.” Do I agree? Why?

PRAYER: Lord, help me to see things as Thou seest.

MONDAY, JUNE 4

DANIEL 9:3
JONAH 3:5-9

*“So the people of Nineveh
believed God ...”*

PRAYER AND SUPPLICATIONS

“... men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Luke 18:1). Daniel sets us the example. Not even the certain death of being thrown to the lions deterred him. He prayed three times a day with windows open, as he always did, in full sight of his enemies (Dan 6:10). Pray for faith and consistency in prayer, like Daniel’s.

FASTING, SACKCLOTH, ASHES

A grave crisis demands a grave spiritual response. Daniel’s contemplation on behalf of his people precipitated an acute awareness of their sad condition. As far as he understood, the seventy-year sentence had practically run out. It was close to seventy years since he arrived in Babylon. Had not the Lord promised to deliver His people? Daniel had waited patiently year after year. Where was the deliverance? How was it to come? And when?

Daniel was deeply stirred as he brooded over the matter. His people’s sin being the cause of the captivity overwhelmed him with grief and contrition of heart. He was moved to intense sorrow. If God was withholding His goodness and mercy from His people, what benefit was there in bodily comforts and enjoyments? Time for food and finery should rather be devoted to prayer and pleading before God. To go on pandering to the body when the soul was starved of God’s favour seemed so utterly ridiculous and absurd.

Daniel prayed in earnest before God. Well into his eighties, he humbled himself, and interceded for his people, “... with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes” (Dan 9:3). And God heard and answered his prayer. What a salutary warning to us who live in luxury and comfort, oozing fat around our waistlines from over-eating. No wonder there is little power in our prayer!

THOUGHT: Should present day believers fast sometimes?

PRAYER: Father, I come to Thee with a broken and contrite heart.

TUESDAY, JUNE 5

DANIEL 9:3-15

LUKE 18:9-14

“... every one that exalteth
himself shall be abased ...”

DANIEL'S PRAYER OF CONFESSION

True prayer is always in a spirit of humility. We see this in Daniel's supplication before God. Daniel's chief concern was that the people's sins be cleansed and forgiven, and favour with God be restored. That should be our concern no less. *“For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me”* (Ps 51:3). Can any claim to be more righteous than Daniel or David? We may also learn from the publican who *“... standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner”* (Luke 18:13).

In his prayer, Daniel identified with his people. He made confession of the people's sins as well as his own. In all of Scripture, nowhere can we find any blemish in Daniel's character. Yet, before God he was just another member of Adam's fallen race. But in God's sight, Daniel was “a man greatly beloved” (Dan 10:11), a truly godly man. True godliness is a constant sensitivity to sin and its awful consequence before our thrice holy God.

True confession does not allow for excuses or comparisons. Neither should one resort to much speaking or persuasive words of wisdom. Daniel's prayer of confession exemplifies this very well. He enumerated the people's transgressions thus: *“We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments: Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws ... all Israel have transgressed thy law ...”* (Dan 9:5-11).

If there is fault or blame, it is ours 100 percent! Never try to lay any of our fault on God. Daniel well expressed this truth in Daniel 9:7. The entire nation stood guilty before God. This is still so today. The full consequence of Israel's rebellion is yet to be seen, it is in the future. We who love the Lord should also love the Lord's people, the Jews. Should we not, like Daniel, also confess on their behalf?

THOUGHT: What are the ingredients of true confession?

PRAYER: Lord, I confess my sins, please forgive me.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 6

DANIEL 9:15-19

1 TIMOTHY 2:1-5

*“... supplications ... be
made for all men.”*

DANIEL'S PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Having made confession for the people's sins, Daniel began to plead on their behalf. Throughout his prayer, never was there even a hint that God had at any time been unkind to His people or failed them in anyway. Let us follow Daniel's line of argument as he presented his case before the Lord:

1. These are Thy people. Did not the Lord deliver Israel out of Egypt with a mighty hand so that all the world came to know the name of the Lord? (Dan 9:15).
2. Thy city and people are become a reproach (Dan 9:16). Because of God's anger and fury (which we justly deserve), Jerusalem and the Jews had become hated and despised by all our neighbours. Therefore, O Lord, according to Thy righteousness let thine anger and fury be turned away.
3. Thy sanctuary is desolate (Dan 9:17). God's house is broken down, in ruins. This cannot be a credit to Thy name. Now therefore cause Thy face to shine upon Thy own sanctuary.
4. For Thy great mercies' sake, listen and behold! (Dan 9:18). Pity our downtrodden condition, and look at the state of Jerusalem. We deserve it all, but be merciful, O Lord!
5. For Thine own sake (Dan 9:19). Because Thy city and people are called by Thy name, for them to go on being a reproach will not be a credit to Thyself. Therefore, Lord, forgive!

Notice Daniel's argument: it is the glory of God's name! Daniel's grief on account of his people's suffering, and his zeal for the honour of God's name gripped him with consuming passion. That was why he fasted in sackcloth and ashes. If God's glory was dimmed and God's name was tarnished, how could he go on living in comfort as though nothing had happened? If the spirit of Daniel should come over us, there would be a mighty Holy Spirit revival! How much we need to grieve over our own sins and the sins of our church members. How much we need to be jealous for the honour of God's name!

THOUGHT: Am I concerned over sin? If not, why not?

PRAYER: O Lord, open my eyes to behold Thy holiness.

THURSDAY, JUNE 7

DANIEL 9:20-24

ISAIAH 53:10-11

*“Yet it pleased the LORD
to bruise him ...”*

DANIEL'S PRAYER ANSWERED

If ever there was an instant and direct answer to prayer, we have just read it in today's passage. Even while Daniel was in earnest intercession, the heavenly messenger Gabriel was winging his way from the throne of God, bearing a message from the Lord. Daniel stood before the Lord “... *in his holy place ... He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully*” (Ps 24:3-4).

Dear reader, how is your prayer life? Are your prayers being heard and answered? Learn from Daniel the lesson of deep soul-rending prayer. Let us all appear before the Lord with “... *clean hands, and a pure heart ...*” (Ps 24:4). Then we may know that our prayers have ascended to God as sweet smelling odours “... *which are the prayers of saints*” (Rev 5:8).

God's response to Daniel's prayer was unique. The angel Gabriel had come from the very presence of God to impart to him understanding in a vital matter, even the consummation of God's salvation for His people Israel. Daniel was chosen for this signal honour because he was “*greatly beloved*” in the esteem of God. God loved Daniel and granted him steadfast fidelity through long years of trial and testing, even to his mid-eighties.

THOUGHT: How do I make sure that I come before God with clean hands and a pure heart?

PRAYER: Father, may I see my own unworthiness and my sin every time I come before Thee, the thrice holy God. And may I always come in the name of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

FRIDAY, JUNE 8
DANIEL 9:20-24
2 PETER 3:8-10

*“... one day is with the Lord
as a thousand years ...”*

THY PEOPLE AND THY HOLY CITY

Daniel's urgent burden was the restoration of the exiled nation and the rebuilding of the holy city Jerusalem. Their desolate condition was a great sadness in his heart. How long, O Lord, will it be before Thou wilt restore Thy people and city, and redeem the glory of Thy name?

Daniel's petition to God was for nation and city. God's message was directly in answer to his petition. Daniel 9:24 summarises God's answer which we rephrase below:

God has determined that in seventy weeks Israel and Jerusalem will be fully restored: the transgression finished, sins ended, iniquity reconciled. Everlasting righteousness will be established. The vision and prophecy will be sealed and the Most Holy One anointed.

In other words, within a seventy-week period God's redemptive purpose for Israel will be perfectly consummated and our Lord Jesus Christ enthroned as King of kings and Lord of lords.

What is your response to God's prophetic words? Are you excited? How will you live your life now knowing of what are to come?

THOUGHT: What is the speed of light? And the speed of thought?

PRAYER: Lord, help me to understand the spiritual truths in prophecy.

SATURDAY, JUNE 9

DANIEL 9:20-26

NEHEMIAH 2:1-8

“... So I prayed to the
God of heaven.”

DANIEL'S SEVENTY WEEKS

The present passage is of the utmost significance in shedding light on the future. The view expressed here is one among several. For the reader's own instruction, his pastor's advice should be sought.

Daniel's urgent plea to God: Lord, restore Thy people and Thy holy city. God's answer to Daniel: In seventy weeks Israel and Jerusalem will be restored. Some 2,500 years have passed and the prophecy is unfulfilled. Obviously the seventy weeks must mean something other than literal weeks. Most serious Bible expositors take the “*week*” to mean seven years, and not seven days. Thus, seventy weeks = 490 years. The problem now is to figure out how these 490 years fit into the prophetic jigsaw.

First, we must determine when the “countdown” began. The answer is in Daniel 9:25. A period of sixty-nine “*weeks*” or 483 years will stretch from the “*going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince.*” Here we have two historic landmarks:

- a) 445 BC (approx.) when king Artaxerxes gave permission to Nehemiah to rebuild and restore Jerusalem (Neh 2).
- b) AD 30 (approx.) when the Messiah, the Prince, our Lord Jesus appeared as King of the Jews, crucified.

Between (a) and (b) there are 478 years, five years short of the 483 years required to make Daniel's sixty-nine weeks. But the prophetic year is 360 days, not our normal 365 days. In support of this, Daniel 9:27 referred to “*the midst of the week*” which corresponds to 1,260 days or forty-two months (Rev 11:2-3, 12:6, 13:5). Using this calculation we arrive at approximately AD 30, the date of Messiah. Now Daniel 9:26 marks a distinct break between the end of the sixty-ninth week when Messiah is “*cut off*,” and the seventieth week when “*... the prince that shall come ... shall confirm the covenant with many for one week.*” This separation is of greatest prophetic significance.

THOUGHT: Prophecy is history on preview.

PRAYER: Lord, may Thy Word affect the way I live my life now.

LORD'S DAY, JUNE 10

DANIEL 9:25-27; 10:1-21

ROMANS 11:7, 25-26

*"For I would not, brethren,
that ye should be ignorant ..."*

DANIEL'S SEVENTIETH WEEK

Daniel's seventieth week must be read in the light of Daniel 2 and 7, and other related eschatological passages (Matt 24; 2 Thess 2; 1 Thess 4; Rev 11-13). The grand climax of the "end time":

- (a) world dominance by the fourth world empire (end time Rome)
- (b) destruction of (a), establishment of God's Everlasting Kingdom.

Daniel's sixty-ninth week is marked by Messiah's death ("*cut off*") followed by Jerusalem's destruction by the Romans in AD 70, divine retribution for crucifying the Messiah. For their blindness, Israel was laid aside ("*casting away*" Rom 11:15) and their witness for God was passed to the Gentile Church. Between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks (the Church Age) the nation Israel is partially and temporarily set aside in God's salvation plan. During the seventieth week, the world will be dominated by one supreme world power, Daniel's fourth world empire (Dan 2 and 7; Rev 13), led by a dazzling world ruler (Dan 9:27). It will be a time of worldwide oppression, turbulence, natural as well as supernatural, disasters (Matt 24). This period is generally referred to as the Tribulation (Matt 24; Mark 13).

This world ruler is referred to as the "*little horn*" (Dan 7:8, 25), "*the prince that shall come*" (Dan 9:26), "*abomination of desolation*" (Matt 24:15), "*man of sin*" (2 Thess 2:3), "*antichrist*" (1 John 2:18, 22), "*beast*" (Rev 13:4-5). His totalitarian and violent rule will climax in the second half of his seven-year reign; with merciless persecution against Israel (Dan 7:25, 9:27; Rev 11:2, 12:13-14, 13:7). His three-and-a-half years of diabolical dictatorship will be abruptly cut short by our Lord at His return in the clouds in power and great glory (Dan 7:13-14; Matt 24:30; 2 Thess 1:7-9; Rev 1:7, 19:11-16).

Two events will usher in this climactic seven-year period: the "catching up" of the believers, "the Church" (1 Thess 4:16-17); and the emergence of the Antichrist (2 Thess 2:3-7). Then God's salvation plan will revert back to focus on Israel and the seventieth week will begin.

THOUGHT: "O, can you say, you are ready, brother?" (Crosby)

PRAYER: May I live my life ever-ready to see Thee, Lord.

MONDAY, JUNE 11

DANIEL 10:1-4

MATTHEW 5:3-6

*“Blessed are they which do hunger
and thirst after righteousness ...”*

BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN ...

Modern living is increasingly pleasure-oriented. Physical and sensual appetites crave for satisfaction. Ease and enjoyment are the order of the day. The demand of society is for food, fun and fashion; the more the better. Even Christians and believers are caught in the web of a hedonistic existence. Our generation has an urgent lesson to learn from Daniel. This man of God had every excuse for self-indulgence and ease, a man in his mid-eighties and having earned his rest. But we see him in deep mourning!

Look at Daniel 10:2-3 again: “... *I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all ...*” Why did he mourn? Certainly it was not for himself. Some mourn because of business failure, handicaps in life, broken love affairs. Not Daniel. He mourned for one thing only. He was concerned for his nation, his beloved holy city, and the honour of his God.

Daniel's one consuming passion was the repentance of his nation from their sins, the rebuilding of God's holy city from its ruined condition, and the glory of God restored. These concerns weighed heavily on his heart. He had a sense of deep humiliation because the nation had dishonoured the name of God.

... FOR THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED

What a worthy example of godly sorrow. Our Lord promised comfort (Matt 5:4). Even as Daniel mourned, the Lord comforted him! Three times Daniel was called “*greatly beloved.*” For his godly jealousy for God's honour, he was greatly beloved of God. For his mourning, a visit by the Lord Himself! For his hungering and thirsting after the truth, God gave him yet another vision, and this with a difference: Whereas in previous times he was perplexed (Dan 7:15, 28, 8:27), on this occasion he “... *had understanding of the vision*” (Dan 10:1).

THOUGHT: When should Christians mourn?

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Father, for forgiving my sins.

TUESDAY, JUNE 12

DANIEL 10:4-8

MATTHEW 5:8

*“Blessed are the pure in heart:
for they shall see God.”*

BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART ...

The most blessed experience for mortal man is to see his Creator God. For the believer, redeemed and washed by the heart-cleansing blood of the Lamb, there is the sure promise that one day he will see God face-to-face. Read John’s timely message to believers in 1 John 3:2-3.

Daniel was one of the few privileged OT saints to whom our Lord revealed Himself in person. Exiled in the royal court far from home and all restraining influences, Daniel (with his three comrades in exile) chose to remain faithful to the God of their fathers. *“But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank ...”* (Dan 1:8). We have every reason to believe that Daniel’s “purpose” in his heart reflected the purity of his heart. It was natural and easy in his situation to “live it up” in the royal court, but Daniel stood firm in the faith. *“Blessed are the pure in heart ...”* (Matt 5:8).

... FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD

One day, in our transformed and glorified body, we shall behold Him, our Lord and our God. God came to Daniel as he was, in the flesh. That Daniel never expected to see God we may be sure. When the event happened it was awe-inspiring and devastating, for it left him almost limp and lifeless. Before the awful Majesty of the Most High, and His dazzling holiness and purity, Daniel’s *“... comeliness was turned ... into corruption ...”* (Dan 10:8). What “comeliness” can man boast of in God’s presence? Compared to some we may excel in moral conduct, charitable works, generous spirit and humane tolerance. But not before God. All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags (Isa 64:6). But the redeemed may rejoice in the Lord and say, *“... for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness ...”* (Isa 61:10).

Blessed are the pure in heart, like Daniel.

THOUGHT: How can I have a pure heart?

PRAYER: Create in me a clean heart, O God.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 13

DANIEL 10:5-9

REVELATION 1:9-18

“... for the word of God, and for
the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

THE VISION OF GOD

Some maintain that the heavenly being described in today's passage was an angel. But this interpretation cannot stand in the light of similar descriptions of the glory of the Lord in Ezekiel 1:26-28 and Revelation 1:13-16. A parallel analysis of the two accounts is most instructive:

Daniel 10:5-6		Revelation 1:13-16	
1	A certain man	1	One like unto the Son of man
2	Clothed in linen	2	Clothed with a garment down to the foot
3	Loins girded with fine gold	3	Girt with golden girdle
4	Body like beryl	4	Head and hair white as wool and snow
5	Face like lightning	5	Countenance as the sun in his strength
6	Eyes as lamps of fire	6	Eyes as a flame of fire
7	Arms and feet like polished brass	7	Feet like fine brass, burning in a furnace
8	Voice of a multitude	8	Voice sound of many waters

Daniel saw the Lord Jesus. This sort of appearance or revelation is called a Christophany, a pre-incarnate appearance of the eternal Son, the Second Person of the blessed Trinity. Ezekiel's vision was similar. Read Ezekiel 1:27-28.

THE AWFUL MAJESTY

When man appears before God, his first reaction is overwhelming awe and a feeling of utter unworthiness. John saw the Lord and fell at His feet as dead. Ezekiel fell upon his face. Daniel lost all strength and fell with his face toward the ground. Read Philippians 2:8-11.

THOUGHT: What is a “theophany” and a “Christophany”?

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Lord, that Thou knoweth I am but dust.

THURSDAY, JUNE 14

DANIEL 10:10-12

PSALM 40

*“But I am poor and needy;
yet the Lord thinketh upon me ...”*

COMFORT AND ASSURANCE

Daniel's experience reminds us of the Apostle Paul's on the Damascus road. There the Lord appeared to him as a bright light from heaven and spoke to him, but his companions hearing a voice, but seeing no man, stood speechless with fear (Acts 9:7, 22:9). Daniel's companions saw not the vision but shaking with fear they fled to hide themselves (Dan 10:7).

For Daniel, the voice of God and the vision were so overwhelming that all strength and courage drained from him, and he collapsed with his face toward the ground. Such a deep and acute consciousness of the holiness and power of God is what the lukewarm Christian sorely needs today. It will surely drive him to his knees in humble contrition of heart, and purge all self-sufficiency and pride from him.

Daniel 10:10 reminds me of the hymn by Charles Gabriel: “In loving kindness Jesus came. My soul in mercy to reclaim; And from the depths of sin and shame, Through grace He lifted me! From sinking sand He lifted me, With tender hand He lifted me; From shades of night to plains of light, O praise His name, He lifted me!” To the fallen Daniel, the Lord stretched out His hand, touched him, and lifted him upon his knees and hands. Then came words of comfort and assurance. Read Daniel 10:11-12.

“... *thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words*” (Dan 10:12). If only the same could be said of our prayers! But we fear, some of our prayers do not even rise to the ceiling. But for Daniel's, God heard and honoured his prayers. He first sent an angel Gabriel. Now, He sent the Lord Jesus. What a man! Daniel's prayers were in the spirit. He prayed toward Jerusalem (i.e. with heart turned to God's holy throne). He knelt three times a day. He prayed and gave thanks, always (Dan 6:10). Then Daniel made prayer and supplication, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes (Dan 9:3). Then the Lord came to him with comforting words and a reassuring touch.

THOUGHT: Why are my prayers so powerless?

PRAYER: Lord, grant me power in prayer.

FRIDAY, JUNE 15

DANIEL 10:13-21

REVELATION 12:7-12

“... Now is come salvation, and strength,
and the kingdom of our God ...”

CONFLICT IN THE SPIRITUAL REALM

Of the conflict between our Lord and Satan, we know little. But the little that we know tells us that Satan is a most dangerous adversary, and also very powerful. Our Lord calls him *“the prince of this world”* (John 12:31). He is also called *“the god of this world”* (2 Cor 4:4) and *“the prince of the power of the air”* (Eph 2:2). While he is a defeated foe because of Calvary, nevertheless his final judgment and destruction is yet future (Rev 12:12).

What comes rather as a surprise in today’s reading is that one of Satan’s demons (*“the prince of the kingdom of Persia”*) withstood the Lord for twenty-one days, the same period as Daniel’s fasting and prayer. Our Lord, to that extent, was hindered in His mission to Daniel, until Michael *“one of the chief princes, came to help me.”* Does this mean that our Lord is not all powerful? A comment by Whitcomb is helpful:

“Michael, disputing with Satan concerning the body of Moses, defeated him by simply stating: *‘The Lord rebuke thee’* (Jude 9). If one is shocked and offended at the thought of a demonic prince of Persia withstanding the Son of God for three weeks, what shall we think of Satan, likewise a mere creature of Christ, withstanding Him for thousands of years, until, at last, during the seventieth week of Daniel, Christ strengthens Michael to cast him down from heaven (where he has been accusing God’s people before God day and night) to the earth below (Rev 12:7-13)?”

Evidently, our knowledge of these matters is not complete! Satan’s rebellion, his continued defiance of God as the one *“which deceiveth the whole world”* and *“accuser of our brethren”* (Rev 12:9-10) remains one of the great mysteries of all time. Why God should temporarily limit Himself with respect to the operations of Satan in the affairs of men is entirely in the Sovereign will of our all-wise and all-powerful God. We cannot fathom the wisdom and judgment of God. He is ever and always victorious. Read Isaiah 46:9-10.

THOUGHT: When will Satan finally be defeated?

PRAYER: O, Lord Jesus, Thou art the power and wisdom of God!

SATURDAY, JUNE 16

DANIEL 10:14-19

ISAIAH 40:28-31

“... *there is no searching
of his understanding.*”

THOU HAST STRENGTHENED ME

No man has seen, nor can see, God (Exod 33:20). Our God is a consuming fire (Heb 12:29). To Daniel, the Lord appeared as the pre-incarnate Christ. The devastating effect on Daniel was such that “*there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me*” (Dan 10:17). Daniel even became dumb.

But the heavenly Messenger brought healing in His touch. First a touch to the lips, and Daniel opened his mouth and spoke. Then a second touch and Daniel’s strength returned to him, completing his recovery. Does this not remind us how our Lord healed the sick on earth? Then notice the divine salutation:

1. “*O man greatly beloved.*” Three times Daniel was so addressed by his heavenly Visitor. What greater honour can any man ask from God? Will He say that to you and me? Yes, if we would love Him as Daniel loved!
2. “*Fear not.*” John the Apostle was comforted with the same words on the Isle of Patmos. The Risen Lord said, “*Fear not; I am the first and the last*” (Rev 1:17).
3. “*Peace be unto thee.*” Again these were the words of the Risen Christ to the sorrowing disciples on the first Easter night.
4. “*Be strong, yea, be strong.*” The injunction was uttered twice for emphasis. God’s servants should be strong to serve Him better.

As He said, it was so! Only a word and Daniel’s strength returned. Remember what a certain centurion said to Jesus in Matthew 8:8. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour! So it was with Daniel. Read Isaiah 40:29.

Only a word from Him is enough! God will strengthen us to understand His will.

THOUGHT: Do I desire to have greater strength/endurance for God’s service?

PRAYER: May I too “mount up with wings as eagles” (Isa 40:31).

LORD'S DAY, JUNE 17

DANIEL 10:20-11:1

REVELATION 12:11

*"And they overcame him by
the blood of the Lamb ..."*

A CONTINUING CONFLICT

Having strengthened Daniel, our Lord announced to him His continuing struggle with the prince of Persia, and a later conflict with the prince of Grecia. From this we see that there are supernatural and demonic forces supporting and energizing the heathen nations (through their national gods and idols). These nations are in truth captive pawns of the supreme evil angel Satan. The "*prince of Persia*" may properly be called the "guardian spirit of Persia." Through these evil angels, Satan directs the nations to oppose God's people on earth. Satan's one object is to obstruct and defeat the purposes of God. Hence the statement: "*Now will I return to fight ...*"

In our struggles against the wiles of Satan, we may derive comfort and courage in the knowledge that our Lord and His holy angels are on our side. Has not our Lord said, "*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth*" (Matt 28:18)? So while the forces working against us may appear fearsome and formidable, nevertheless we may face the foe with confidence. God's Word assures us: "*Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world*" (1 John 4:4). On our side is the risen Lord who makes war on behalf of His own against the hostile spirits of the invisible world.

Of all the countless millions of angelic beings serving God, we are told the name of Michael the archangel. Thank God for this loyal and mighty angel also called "*one of the chief princes*" (Dan 10:13) and "*Michael your prince*" (Dan 10:21). In Revelation 12:7-11 we read of the final battle of Michael and his angels against Satan and his evil angels, a battle whose outcome has been sealed at Calvary, for Michael and his angels overcame Satan "*by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony*" (Rev 12:11). In the conflict with the princes of Persia and Grecia, our Lord revealed to Daniel: "*... there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince.*" (Dan 10:21). Our Lord could always depend on him.

THOUGHT: Can my Lord count on my loyalty?

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, strengthen me for the conflicts of my day.

MONDAY, JUNE 18

DANIEL 11:2

ISAIAH 46:9-10

“... I am God, and
there is none like me.”

THE KINGS OF PERSIA

“*And now will I shew thee the truth ...*” (Dan 11:2). What truth? Modern scholars and theologians of the liberal school deny the truth of these prophetic passages. With unbelieving hearts and higher critical attitude they have written off those parts of God’s Word which their unregenerate minds cannot harmonize with natural and rationalistic thinking.

But our God declares “*the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done ...*” (Isa 46:10). Is anything too hard for the Lord? To Daniel and future readers of his book, God made the statement quoted above in order to emphasize the divine infallibility of the amazing predictions about to be given. “It is true! Doubt not!”

Who were the four kings who followed Cyrus? History has records of them: (a) Cambyses, 530-522 BC, (b) Smerdis, 522 BC, (c) Darius Hystaspes, 521-486 BC, (d) Xerxes, 486-465 BC.

The fourth is singled out for special mention as the one “*far richer than they all,*” who would stir up the whole empire against Greece. The accuracy of this prophecy is seen in the record of the Greek historian Herodotus, describing the elaborate plans of Xerxes involving the noblest Persians in the land scheming together for six months before a great expedition of conquest was launched against Greece. The avowed intent was to avenge the humiliating defeat suffered by his father Darius I at the battle of Marathon (490 BC).

Xerxes then mounted a great operation against Greece (481-479 BC) with a vast army estimated at 200,000, and a navy of hundreds of ships. Despite all his planning and greater preparedness, the forces of Xerxes were decisively crushed: the army at the battle of Plataea (479 BC) and his navy at Salamis. But behind the scene was the hand of the Almighty!

THOUGHT: What is the purpose of prophecy?

PRAYER: Lord, grant me a believing heart and a discerning mind.

TUESDAY, JUNE 19

DANIEL 11:3-4

DANIEL 8:5-7

“... *there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand.*”

A MIGHTY KING SHALL STAND

The name Alexander the Great must rank among the greatest of military geniuses. Within a ten-year period he had conquered the entire civilized world stretching from the Mediterranean shores of Europe and Africa through Asia Minor, the Middle East and on to the doorsteps of India. At the age of thirty-two, he had become the undisputed master of a vast empire.

Daniel's prophecy described him as a “*notable horn*” (Dan 8:5) of the male goat. Whitcomb's comment gives us a proper perspective: “Behind Cyrus, Darius, Xerxes, and other Medo-Persian kings was a satanic prince against whom the Son of God waged effective war on behalf of Israel, with Michael the righteous archangel (10:13). Then, ‘behold, the prince of Greece is about to come’ (10:20). Under God was Satan. Under Satan was the demonic ‘prince of Greece.’ And under this fallen angel, assigned by Satan to manipulate the kingdom of Greece against Israel, was a man, Alexander. The secular historian, of course, is preoccupied with the earthly scene of kings and battles. But ... God's written and infallible Word gives us, through the Holy Spirit, the full cosmic perspective that we so desperately need to grasp the significance of visible events (cf. Gen 32:1-2; Job 1; Eph 6:12; Rev 12:7-9).”

If the earthly kings of Medo-Persia and Greece reflect their demonic counterparts in the invisible world, so also does Alexander the Great anticipate the final mighty and wicked earthly ruler, who will be neither a mere king of ‘the north’ or of ‘the south’ but will, like Alexander, ‘rule with great authority and do as he pleases’ (cf. 11:36-39).”

The meteoric career of Alexander is simply expressed (and quite accurately so) by Daniel 11:4: “*And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken ...*” Then the kingdom was “... *divided toward the four winds of heaven ...*” (Dan 11:4). But Daniel saw it before it happened, for he “... *had understanding of the vision*” (Dan 10:1). God's Word stands for ever.

THOUGHT: How far into the future can I see?

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Lord, all Scripture is given by Thy inspiration.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 20

DANIEL 11:5-9

PSALM 75:1-7

“But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another.”

PREVIEW OF HISTORY THIRD CENTURY BC

In the remainder of Daniel 11 we have a detailed prophecy of the 150-year struggle between the inheritors of Alexander's empire. Over 100 prophetic details were all fulfilled, for God's Word never fails. "It is perhaps significant that this climactic vision of the book moves away from symbolic figures to plain words. Even when God did use the audio-visual method, the audio always seems to have the priority over the visual. Also, even though it is unusual in the Bible for distant history to be foretold so accurately in such lengthy catalogues and with such minute details, we do find similar details in prophecies concerning Joseph and the brothers (Gen 45:5-8) and in the career of Absalom the son of David (2 Sam 12:11; 16:22) ..." (Whitcomb).

The "... *king of the south* ..." (Dan 11:5) was Ptolemy Soter, an extremely talented general of Alexander, who ruled Egypt from 322 to 305 BC. And "... *one of his princes* ..." was Seleucus Nicator who founded the Seleucid dynasty in Syria, 312 BC. The "... *daughter of the south* ..." (Dan 11:6) was Berenice who married Antiochus II in a political alliance (although he was already married to Laodice). When Berenice's father Ptolemy died, Antiochus divorced her for political expediency and returned to Laodice. Laodice seized the opportunity to consolidate her own position by having her husband poisoned. Then her son Seleucus, through her instigation, murdered Berenice and obtained the throne of Antiochus for himself.

A "... *branch of her roots* ..." (Dan 11:7) was the brother of Berenice, Ptolemy III of Egypt. He came with an army, invaded the stronghold of the north successfully and avenged the death of his sister by executing Laodice. Daniel 11:8 describes the vast successes of Ptolemy. The Egyptians celebrated this by calling their ruler Euergetes ("well doer"). Ptolemy's success over the gods of Egypt was regarded as a great victory, for the gods were supposed to be protectors of the land. Daniel 11:9 refers to Seleucus Callinicus who mounted a campaign against Ptolemy in 240 BC, but this ended in total failure.

THOUGHT: All human intrigues subserve God's divine plan.

PRAYER: Lord, Thou art the Sovereign God! What shall I fear?

THURSDAY, JUNE 21

DANIEL 11:10-20

PSALM 130

“there is forgiveness with thee ...”

MORE HISTORICAL JIGSAW

Daniel 11:10: The sons of the king of the north (Seleucus Ceraunus and Antiochus the Great) stirred themselves for battle. Seleucus Ceraunus having perished in battle in Asia Minor, Antiochus alone pressed on with an overwhelming mass of warriors in an irresistible advance.

Daniel 11:11: The king of the south Ptolemy Philopator was enraged at the approach of Antiochus coming with a mighty force of 70,000 infantry, 5,000 cavalry and seventy-three elephants. In the ensuing battle, Ptolemy emerged the victor and the invading forces fell into his hand.

Daniel 11:12: The multitude of Antiochus was carried away by Ptolemy, whose heart was then filled with pride. In that battle at Raphia, Antiochus lost 10,000 infantry, 300 cavalry, five elephants and 4,000 captives.

Daniel 11:13: About thirteen years later, Antiochus having recovered from his defeat, returned again with a large army, greater than before.

Daniel 11:14: The “*many*” refers to the forces of Antiochus: the “*robbers of thy people*” were the disloyal Jews who betrayed their country by aligning themselves with foreign powers.

Daniel 11:15: The “*king of the north*” Ptolemy came and besieged the fortified city of Sidon. Ptolemy’s forces failed to lift the siege and were defeated by Antiochus near the headwaters of the Jordan river.

Daniel 11:16: Antiochus was at the height of power, sweeping all before him with irresistible force, and occupied the land of Israel.

Daniel 11:17: Antiochus by treaty betrothed his daughter to Ptolemy in a plot to destroy his enemy. The plan proved to be a failure because his daughter took her husband’s side against her father.

Daniel 11:18: The territorial ambitions of Antiochus were foiled by a “*prince*,” Lucius Scipio Asiaticus, who brought about his downfall.

Daniel 11:19: The haughty and overconfident Antiochus withdrew to his own land in shameful defeat and faded from the scene.

Daniel 11:20: Then arose in his place Seleucus Philopator who sent Heliodorus as tax collector for the kingdom. Shortly after, Seleucus was suddenly and mysteriously removed, probably poisoned.

THOUGHT: “All may change but Jesus never. Glory to His name.”

PRAYER: Father, all praise to Thee, the Sovereign King, over all.

FRIDAY, JUNE 22
DANIEL 11:21-29
MARK 13:14-16

“... (let him that
readeth understand) ...”

THE RISE OF ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES

Are you a little tired, perhaps puzzled, by the dry historical details? Whitcomb's words will encourage the flagging spirit. “Old Testament predictive prophecy does not indulge in irrelevant minutiae but rather in persons and events that are significant in the outworking of God's purpose for the world through His people Israel, just as biblical history is highly selective ... and thus truly ‘prophetic’ in character, bringing rich rewards to those who search out and ponder God's precious words.”

Today's passage concerns a most vile enemy of Israel, Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Whitcomb commented: “The importance of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-64 BC) in prophetic Scripture is very great. ... he gained eternal notoriety through his devastating attack upon the people of God and their religion. Thus he prefigured the final Antichrist. Seizing the Syrian throne illegally from the son of his murdered brother, Antiochus soon demonstrated his qualification for the nickname ‘Epimanes’ (madman). ... His ultimate goal was to hellenize his empire thoroughly in order to unify it against Rome. Only Judea resisted him in this, though some Jews acted *‘wickedly against the covenant’* (11:32) and even murdered the high priest Onias III, *‘the prince of the covenant’* (11:22). After a successful invasion of Egypt in 169 BC, he plundered the Temple in Jerusalem and carried the spoils off to Antioch (11:28). But it was his second invasion of Egypt (168 BC) that brought him into deep frustration ... he was met by the Roman general, Gaius Popillius Laenas, who demanded that he abandon his Egyptian campaign (11:29-30). ... he vented his rage upon the holy city, slaughtering and enslaving as many as 80,000 Jews. ... a systematic desecration of the Temple, including the erection of *‘the abomination of desolation’* (Dan 11:31), probably a statue of the Olympian Zeus with the features of Antiochus. Torah scrolls were destroyed, the Sabbath and circumcision forbidden, swine's flesh forced upon the population, and the official sacrifices abolished. Some historians believe this was the first time in history that religious martyrdom occurred.”

THOUGHT: (Read John 16:33.)

PRAYER: Lord, history is within Thy control. I will not fear.

SATURDAY, JUNE 23

DANIEL 11:30-35

MARK 13:17-20

*“For in those days
shall be affliction ...”*

TRIALS FOR A TIME APPOINTED

For all their ingratitude and rebellion, God's people were destined for bitter trial and testing. While the suffering will be inflicted by the hands of their earthly enemies, behind it all is their real adversary the devil, intent on destroying the nation which brought forth Jesus. Whitcomb comments:

“But even as the final wrath of Satan through his Antichrist will be limited *‘for the elect’s sake’* (Mark 13:20), so now *‘they shall be holpen with a little help’* (11:34). This is clearly a reference to the Maccabean revolt led by the elderly Mattathias and carried on by his son Judas Maccabaeus and other sons, which eventuated in the spectacular cleansing of the Temple in 165 BC.”

“The Maccabean revolt, however, was basically a twofold tragedy. First, it quickly sank into carnality and cruelty. ... God ominously predicted that *‘many shall cleave to them* (i.e., the early Maccabean leaders) *with flatteries’* (11:34). Second, they lack the supernatural presence of the Messiah ... to provide the direction and discipline ... Thus, the Maccabean revolt, spectacular in its early years for dedication to the God of Israel, even unto death, soon lost those essential qualities and fell into the hands of the Romans by 65 BC.”

“God makes no mistakes with His people. Nothing is left to chance, *‘because it is yet for a time appointed’* (Dan 11:35). And thus the Lord of all history and destiny lifts Daniel's eyes to see the coming centuries (omitting the age of the church entirely) down to the seventieth week, which is introduced next in terms of the Antichrist and his global dominion. The message of the chapter stands out clearly: history as it moves towards its end can be seen to have no clear meaning. Nor will it ever be seen to have any purpose or meaning till we are able to look back on it from the standpoint of what has happened at its end and climax ... Daniel helps us to see the nonsense of trying to have faith unless at the same time we have hope in what is going to be *at the time of the end.*”

THOUGHT: Live today with the end in view.

PRAYER: (Use Psalm 56:11.)

ANTICHRIST PREVIEWED

From Daniel 11:36 our attention is focused on the end time Antichrist of whom Antiochus was a type. This is one school of interpretation. According to Whitcomb, verses 36-39 speak of events which will occur during the future Great Tribulation, for two main reasons:

1. The chronological reference of Daniel 12:1 (*"And at that time ..."*) places the events of verses 36-45 into the time of the final resurrection and the judgment.
2. The transitional events of verses 35-36 continue *"even to the time of the end"* (Dan 11:35).

From as long as 1,500 years ago, Jerome (AD 347-420) had the view that "those of our persuasion believe all these things are spoken prophetically of the Antichrist who is to arise at the end time. ... Antiochus is to be regarded as a type of the Antichrist, and those things which happened to him in a preliminary way are to be completely fulfilled in the case of Antichrist The Jews believe that this passage (Dan 11:36) has reference to the Antichrist. ... We too understand this to refer to the Antichrist." Daniel 11:36 is of special interest and importance. Whitcomb commented: "... this king will attempt to control both the bodies and the souls of all human beings on earth. Satanic pride and blasphemy, shockingly present in Antiochus, will reach their ultimate expression in this 'wilful king.' He is surely the final Antichrist of 1 John 2:18a and 4:3, because *'the beast'* that dominates the central section of John's final book (Rev 11-13; 17) not only fits the description of Daniel 11:36-39 but also the picture of the *'little horn'* of Daniel 7:25 (including the chronological framework). ... this Roman *'beast out of the sea'* comes into focus either explicitly (Dan 11:36-39) or implicitly (Dan 11:40, 44-45; 12:1). What Antiochus Epiphanes foreshadowed, he embodies." The unchallenged and undisputed supremacy of the future Antichrist will deceive the world into believing that he is indeed the Saviour. In the midst of rebellion, let us see the hand of our God in absolute and overall control.

THOUGHT: Will Antichrist be a Jew or Gentile?

PRAYER: Father, Thou art still on the throne.

MONDAY, JUNE 25

DANIEL 11:40-43

EZEKIEL 8:8-13

“... for they say, The LORD
seeth us not ...”

THE MID-TRIBULATION CRISIS

This is another difficult and controversial passage, but Whitcomb's interpretation sheds much light. “*The time of the end*’ is a clear eschatological reference in the book of Daniel (cf. 11:35; 12:4, 9). The king of the south must therefore be a yet future Egyptian monarch ... Presumably in alliance with a king of the north ... the eschatological Egyptian ruler will launch a diversionary thrust ... (Dan 11:36).”

“It is important to note that the antecedent of ‘*him*’ (used twice in this verse) must be the Antichrist, whose location at this time will be somewhere between the ‘north’ and the ‘south,’ presumably Palestine.”

“How does the Antichrist finally attain global authority? The clue comes from Revelation 13 and 17: ‘*his deadly wound was healed*’ (Rev 13:3, 12, 14; cf. 17:8, 11). This thrice repeated statement may presuppose an interpretation of Daniel 11:40-45 that sees the Antichrist ... killed by the irresistible king of the north, sweeping through countries in his southward thrust into ‘the glorious land.’”

“The entire passage (Dan 11:40-45) describing the king of the north thus constitutes a parenthetical background explanation of the stupendous rise of the Antichrist to world supremacy after both king of the north and the king of the south are removed as threats to his demonic and blasphemous ambitions ... But then, a totally unexpected and electrifying event occurs that eventuates in his complete destruction.”

The above is one interpretation. Whatever the interpretation, we may rest confident that none is given more power than is permitted by our God. Men's desperate struggles for power all contribute toward the fulfilment of God's ultimate and eternal purpose.

THOUGHT: What country might Antichrist come from?

PRAYER: Thy Kingdom come!

TUESDAY, JUNE 26
DANIEL 11:44-45
REVELATION 13:1-4

“... and all the world wondered
after the beast.”

EXIT KING OF THE NORTH

We now come to a crucial phase in the power struggle between the emerging Antichrist and his arch enemy on earth, the King of the North. In a decisive action, the King of the North is destroyed. The beginning of the final phase of Antichrist's career is preceded and surrounded by a number of astonishing happenings. Whitcomb give us the following six points:

1. The Antichrist receives “*the wound by a sword*” which nearly kills him (Rev 13:14).
2. He thus enters into the realm of the dead and “*is not*” (Rev 17:8, 11).
3. He then is enabled to ascend “*out of the bottomless pit*” (Rev 11:7; 17:8), to begin as the eighth and greatest enemy of Israel (having previously been the seventh, Rev 17:10-11).
4. He immediately kills God's two witnesses (Rev 11:7), suggesting that his apparent death and return to life occur in Jerusalem.
5. The false prophet then erects an image of the Antichrist (Matt 24:15, “*the abomination of desolation ... stand in the holy place*”), is enabled to give it the breath of life and the power to kill all opponents (Rev 13:14-15), insists that the Antichrist is God Almighty (2 Thess 2:4), and brings down fire from heaven to demonstrate it (Rev 13:13).
6. The Antichrist breaks his seven-year covenant with Israel (Dan 9:27) and begins a forty-two-month persecution of the believing remnant of Israel (Rev 12:6).

How is the mighty King of the North destroyed? Ezekiel has the prophecy: “*I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone ... upon the mountains of Israel ...*” (Ezek 38:22; 39:4). With this King of the North removed out of the way, the Antichrist Beast gains full control of the world. We see, then, God's hand removing the great King of the North, and setting up the Antichrist Beast at the midpoint of the seventieth week.

THOUGHT: Every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

PRAYER: Grant me understanding, Lord, as I live in these last days.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 27

DANIEL 12:1

REVELATION 12:7-12

“... *the accuser of our
brethren is cast down ...*”

A TIME OF TROUBLE

End time events are rapidly drawing to a climax, “*the great and the terrible day of the LORD*” (Joel 2:31), even “*the time of Jacob’s trouble*” (Jer 30:7). Daniel foresaw the same (Dan 12:1).

“*The time of Jacob’s trouble*” speaks of a final mobilization by Satan of his evil forces to exterminate the nation Israel. Israel is depicted as a woman oppressed by “*a great red dragon*” (Rev 12:3, Satan) and taking refuge in the wilderness 1,260 days (i.e. forty-two months or three-and-a-half years). At that time Michael and his angels shall fight for Israel against the dragon and shall prevail (Rev 12:7-8).

Daniel 12:1 speaks of this time of Jacob’s trouble when the Jewish nation will face destruction on a scale not experienced before in their entire turbulent history. This unprecedented affliction will come upon them by the hand of the dreaded end time ruler, Antichrist. Paul calls him “... *that man of sin ... the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God ... shewing himself that he is God*” (2 Thess 2:3-4). John calls him “*the beast*” (Rev 13:4-5).

NOW IS THE ACCEPTED TIME!

“To be forewarned is to be forearmed.” God’s Word persuades all to prepare for that terrible day of the Lord, and to flee from the wrath to come. Signs all point to the nearness of the time of Jacob’s trouble. Israel’s enemies will not rest until Israel is destroyed. Israel stands beleaguered, surrounded by hostilities. The stage is being prepared for the emergence of Satan’s masterpiece for world dominance – the Antichrist. If Antichrist is almost here, can Christ be far away? The Gospel sound welcomes all: “... *behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation*” (2 Cor 6:2). Call on the name of the Lord, and be saved today! Go now and share the gospel!

THOUGHT: Do not delay in receiving Christ -- it may be fatal!

PRAYER: Lord, help me to live for eternity, and not for this earth.

THURSDAY, JUNE 28

DANIEL 12:2-4

JOHN 5:24-29

“... they that have done evil,
unto the resurrection of damnation.”

THE TWO RESURRECTIONS

In Daniel 12:2, “*awake*” refers to bodily (not spiritual) resurrection. God had revealed this to Job in Job 19:25-26. How marvelous that the Holy Spirit gave Job this spiritual understanding in that early age. Read also our Lord’s words to the Jews in John 5:28-29.

This doctrine of the resurrection of the body is one that comforts and encourages the believers. To all others, it is a solemn warning that death does not end all. “*And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment*” (Heb 9:27). “*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad*” (2 Cor 5:10).

The two events described in Daniel 12:2 are not simultaneous. There is first the resurrection of believers, followed by a thousand-year interval (the Millennium), then the resurrection of damnation for unbelievers. This is recorded in Revelation 20:5-6.

Only believers have a part in the first resurrection. “*For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming*” (1 Cor 15:22-23). The resurrected believers “*lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection*” (Rev 20:4-5).

At the end of the Millennium there will be the Great White Throne judgment. All the dead who had no part in the first resurrection will be resurrected at that time, when “*the thousand years were finished*” (Rev 20:5). They will then face judgment before God. Our God is perfect and just. He offers us a choice. Believe on Jesus and be saved, and have a part in the first resurrection. This is the resurrection of life (John 5:29). Everlasting life!

THOUGHT: Choose life, not condemnation!

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Lord, for giving me eternal life.

FRIDAY, JUNE 29

DANIEL 12:5-7

MATTHEW 23:37-39

“... *Blessed is he that cometh in
the name of the Lord.*”

HOW LONG SHALL IT BE?

As we follow the fascinating unfolding of Daniel's prophecies, one question must constantly come to mind: “How long shall it be?” Two heavenly visitors, one on either side of the river Tigris, were similarly interested. One of them addressed the one clothed in linen, “*How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?*” (Dan 12:6). Back came the answer: “... *it shall be for a time, times, and an half ...*” (Dan 12:7). By this we are further reminded that the duration “*of these wonders*” (Dan 12:6) will be three-and-a-half years (i.e. the duration of the Antichrist and his atrocities against God's people).

The second part of the answer (in Dan 12:7) from the man clothed in linen revealed that when “*the power of the holy people (Israel)*” has been completely shattered, then it will be the end. This means that the end will come with the complete destruction of the power of God's people during the Great Tribulation.

For all their sins, God would reward them with fearful retribution as foretold by Moses, and by the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah and Zechariah again and again. The prophetic events of Daniel's seventieth week are not a random happening, but divinely foreordained in the mind of God. Our Lord confirmed all that the OT prophets foretold. His Olivet Discourse (Matt 24-25) is unmistakable. Finally, John's Revelation climaxes with the same message to end-time believers.

Our Lord wept for His people and city (read Matt 23:37-39). The Jews stoned their prophets, crucified their Messiah, crying “*His blood be on us, and on our children*” (Matt 27:25). Indeed they shall pay dearly for these words. God's instruments of chastisement shall scatter all their power of pride and self-sufficiency, and cause their eyes to be opened (Rom 11:26).

THOUGHT: How long shall it be to the beginning of the end?

PRAYER: Father, I pray for the salvation of Jerusalem.

SATURDAY, JUNE 30
DANIEL 12:8-13
MATTHEW 25:31-46

“... he shall separate them one from another,
as a shepherd divideth
his sheep from the goats.”

THE END OF THESE THINGS

Through Daniel God reveals the “Grand Finale” of world events. To the world’s wise men, spiritually blind, Daniel’s book makes no sense. We need the spiritual insight which God gives to the humble.

1,290 DAYS

Daniel 12:11: 1,290 days will elapse. The starting point: when the daily sacrifice is taken away and the abomination of desolation set up in the Temple of God in Jerusalem in the middle of the seventieth week. This marks the beginning of Antichrist’s rule of 1,260 days. The end point stretches thirty days beyond the end of Antichrist. What is the purpose of these extra thirty days? Antichrist’s rule will terminate abruptly at Jesus’ glorious return (1,260 days from the beginning of Antichrist’s rule). The thirty days will be for the restoration of the Temple of God. A similar period of cleansing and purification was observed by King Hezekiah (2 Chron 30:2-4).

1,335 DAYS

Daniel 12:12: The 1,335 days exceed the 1,290 days by a further forty-five days, after the cleansing of the Temple. Whitcomb commented: “Surely this period ... is necessary for the judgment of the living nations to determine publicly who is qualified to enter Messiah’s Kingdom. Prophetic Scripture has much to say about this confrontation. Joel placed this future judgment in ‘the valley of Jehoshaphat (Kidron),’ where Gentile mistreatment of Jews will finally be dealt with (Joel 3:1-17) ... The clearest New Testament passage describing this event is Matthew 25:31-46. Here Christ tells us that Gentiles will be judged in that day according to their treatment of Israelite witnesses (*‘these my brethren,’* Matt 25:40). The fate of those who reject God’s messengers ... is stated in terms of death and eternal judgment (Matt 25:46). What then? Then Christ’s Millennial Kingdom begins!

THOUGHT: Do I have a place in that glorious Kingdom?

PRAYER: Father, I thank Thee for revealing the future to me.

Notes

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