

**The Book of**

**DANIEL**

Father Tadros Y. Malaty

**Translated by  
Ferial Moawad**







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## **The Book for every believer**

The book of Daniel has a special significance in the life of believers, for it is not a record of Daniel's life nor to an era of the history of the Israelites during the Babylon captivity, but rather it is a divine book, which the Holy Spirit offers us to instill hope in the hurt souls. Sometimes, God allows throwing us in the fiery furnace of trials, yet He changes the nature of fire for our comfort and peace.

From one aspect, this book reveals to us that God is the Controller of all history, who does for the edification of his faithful believers in any place. From another aspect, this book reveals to us that God is glorified in the very few whom are sincere to Him. He is their support in sanctifying their lives and a fiery fence that protects them and He arranges everything for their salvation.

Since God allows his believers to go through tribulations, as He allowed Daniel while still a youth, yet He elevated him to the highest level so that the greatest king at that time came and worshipped him, realizing that the Spirit of the Holy One is inside him. God enlightened his vision to grant him not only wisdom so he may know the king's dreams and explain it to him, and not only to conduct all the matters of the kingdom wisely, but rather to enjoy the surpassing mysteries of God, so the Spirit may reveal to him the future and eternal work of God with humanity.

It is the book of **divine friendship**, which can elevate the believer's heart to a surpassing heavenly life, even if he lived as a captive in his sojourn.

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

Lastly, this book is directed to every believer to realize his living role in the church life as well as the life of all the human race, for Daniel was not devoted for the ministry and prophecy, but rather he was like the prime minister in a country which dominated the whole world. He knew how to give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. Daniel did not go back to Jerusalem like those who came back from the captivity, and did not participate in building the gate of Jerusalem, and did not restore building the temple with Zorbabel, but he was the first man who worked in secret in these matters. He influenced the kings of Babel and Persia; he offered a great service through his holy life and his faithfulness in his work.

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

Father Tadros Yacob Malaty

## Introduction to the book of Daniel

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

### **Daniel:**

This book offers us Daniel's unique character:

1. He was a prophet occupied with administration. However, he knew how not to mix between the administration and his prophetic spiritual work, for his position in administration did not make him lose his heavenly vision and his concern for the salvation of his soul and the salvation of his people, and even the salvation of the kings who dealt with him. His high position in the largest pagan empire did not prevent him from witnessing to the true God and from keeping His commandments, not violently but with the spirit of wisdom, love and courage.
2. He served his people, not with the spirit of fanaticism, but with the spirit of holiness and humility, with love to all people. He supported them in the land of captivity where he found grace in the eyes of the kings. He also opened the doors of hope before the captive people, and before all the Gentiles.
3. He looked to the future through the work of the Holy Spirit inside him. God granted him a lot of visions.
4. He is the father of the history of the Gentiles. He recorded many precise prophecies about the kingdoms which follow one another, through God's plan. The book of Daniel is the only book in the Old Testament which prophesied in details about kings and kingdoms, which he had declared by name like Persia and Greece.
5. He is the prophet of dreams and visions, who enjoyed a divine gift, a heavenly wisdom and a surpassing understanding.
6. He is the prophet who determined the times for the events of salvation, the end of the world, and was occupied with the times of the Gentiles. The Lord Jesus called him "Daniel the prophet" (Matthew 24:15). Because of his frequent prophecies, which reached sixty, the book of Daniel was the book in the Old Testament that is mostly read and studied in the Christian Church.
7. He was a man of wisdom. Ezekiel, Noah, and Job referred to him as the most righteous man of God (Ezekiel 14: 14,20), also as one of the wisest men, for the divine inspiration mentioned that God said to the king of Tyre, "Behold, you are wiser than Daniel! There is no secret that can be hidden from you!" (Ezek.28:3) He was granted the gift of explaining dreams by the Spirit

of God, as the pagan king told him, "...I know that the Spirit of the Holy God is in you, and no secret troubles you..." (Dan.4:9)

8. Josephus, the Jewish historian, mentioned that Daniel was very skillful in architecture, for he is the one who designed the building of the famous tower of Shushan in Persia, where the kings of Persia lived.

Probably, he was born in Jerusalem, and was captive in Babylon like Ezekiel (Dan. 1:1-2). However, Daniel was captive in the first captivity, during the days of Jehoakim, the year 606 B.C., while Ezekiel was captive in the second captivity. He was captive to Babylon, while he was a youth, and he was from the tribe of Judah. (Dan.1:7) Although he was not from the royal house from the descendants of David (Dan. 1:3), he learned the Caldean language with the three youths. Some say that he lived about 84 years from 618 to 534 B.C.

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

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

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

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

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



# Part One

## The Historical Side: chapters 1 - 6

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

### Chapter 1 Strangers in the Palace

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

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

#### 1. The Youth in the Captivity

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

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

This captivity was in the third year of the reign of King Jehoiakim (Dan. 1:1), while in the book of Jeremiah chapter 25:1, it was mentioned that this captivity had happened in the fourth year of his reign, for the Babylonians and the Assyrians calculate it from the year following the king's reign, while in Judah, it is calculated from the same year when the king had been enthroned, that is why there is a discrepancy of one year between the two dates.

Nebuchadnezzar is a Babylonian name which means “broadcast or press”, who is the god of knowledge for the Babylonians. The father of Nebuchadnezzar is Nebu-blaser who founded the new Babylonian city in the year 625 B.C. and who conquered the Assyrian Empire. He sent

his son to attack pharaoh of Egypt in the year 605 B.C. in the battle of Karkamish. (2 Kings 24:7 & Jer. 46:2) Then he came to Jerusalem and besieged it and made captive some of its inhabitants, of whom Daniel were and his companions. When he heard of his father's death, he went back to Babylon to be enthroned. Notice that it was never mentioned that Nebuchadnezzar was a king of Babylon during the captivity of Jerusalem. Berossus mentioned that when Nebu-blaser became old and was unable to lead his people, he gave the leadership of the armies to his son Nebuchadnezzar, thus he was a partner with his father in reigning over his people for at least two years.

The chronicles of Nebuchadnezzar is mentioned in the books of the first and second chronicles, in the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Jeremiah, Daniel. His traces in Babylon corresponded with what was mentioned in the Holy Bible.

“And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the articles of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the articles into the treasure house of his god.” (v.2)

The Babylonian captivity was accomplished on three stages:

1. The first deportation: in the year 606 B.C. or 605 B.C., after the battle of Karkamish in which Nebuchadnezzar had conquered Pharaoh of Egypt, then he went to Jerusalem, where Daniel and his companions were made captive. Nebuchadnezzar took some of the vessels from the house of God and put them in the temple of baal in Babylon, and left Jehoiakim on the throne as his successor and submitted to his authority.

2. The second deportation: in the year 598 B.C. or 597 B.C. after eight years of the captivity of Daniel. During that time, Ezekiel was made captive. The kings of Judah, Jehoiakim and Jehoiakin, revolted against Nebuchadnezzar, then the king came and took the rest of the vessels and treasures of the temple, and captived King Jehoiakim with other 10,000 noble men and from the army. He did not leave in Judah except the poor people. (Ezek.1:1-3& 2 Chron.36:10 & 2 Kings 24:8-20)

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

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

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

St. Jerome said: {The truth about the defeat of Jehoiakim reveals that this victory was because of God's will and because of the power of the enemies.}

God had surrendered the kingdom of Judah, his house and his holy vessels to be delivered by pagan hands to a pagan temple in Shinar. This was not a break in God's promise to

Abraham and his descendants, as written in the psalm, “This is my resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it.” (Ps.132:14) Then he put a condition, “If your sons keep My covenant, and My testimony which I shall teach them.” (Ps. 132:12)

To stimulate us to repent, to obey Him, and to draw us to His love, we being His temple, the living stones, and the holy vessels, God is willing to surrender His temple and His holy vessels to pagan hands.

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

St. Jerome explains, symbolically, the transfer of the vessels of temple of God by Nebuchadnezzar. He said: {It was not possible that the king of Babylon transfer all the vessels of the house of God and put them in the house of the idol, which he had built. He only transferred part of the vessels from the house of God. These vessels refer to the teachings of the truth. If you study all the works of the philosophers, you definitely will find part of the vessels of God, for example, you will find in Plato that God is the Creator of the world. Also, Zeynon, the head of the Epicureans, mentioned that there are people in Hades and the souls are immortal. Due to the fact that the philosophers mix truth with fake, and defile the good nature with many evils, therefore, they have captured some of the vessels of the house of God and not all of them. }

St. Clement of Alexandria and his disciple St. Origen have adapted this thought.

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

Some of the liberal critics think that the name “Ashpenaz” was not mentioned in the old Babylonian records, and that Ashpenaz was not a historical personality. However, later, one of the scientists of the Assyrians discovered this name engraved on one of the bricks in the demolishes of Babylon and it is kept now in the British museum.

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

These youths were characterized by the following:

1. The nobleness of their genealogy.
2. The beauty and strength of their body.
3. The craftiness of their wisdom.
4. Their knowledge

5. Their ability to educate others.
6. Their ability to stand in the palace, that is to use their wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, to practice in their daily work.

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

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

## **2. Their choice to serve the king:**

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

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

Why did the king appoint that they eat from the delicacies of the king?

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

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

Daniel means “The Lord is my judge.”

Hananiah means “kind and gentle.”

Mishael means “who is like God or who resembles God.”

Azariah means “Jehovah helps him”

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

The chief of the eunuchs wanted that those youths sever all their relationships with their past, their religion, their education; that is why he gave them new names which attract them to the major Chaldeans gods, that is, Baal, the god of the sun, the god of beauty and earth, and the god of fire.

1. He called Daniel “Belteshazzar”, which means “Baal’s prince”. The Baal was the main god whom the Babylonians worship.
2. He called Hananiah “Shadrach” which means “Inspired by the god of the sun.”
3. He called Mishael “Meshach”, which means “Through Shak”, for the Babylonians worshipped Venus, under this name and he is the god of beauty and earth.
4. He called Azariah “Abed-Nego” which means “the god of fire”.

It is not strange that the king wanted to change their names as he changed their language and education, like what Pharaoh did with Joseph. (Gen.41) However, he was not able to change their hearts nor their thoughts away from God or His people and His holy places. However, when the Lord Jesus has changed the name Simon to Peter (Mk. 3), and the two sons of Zebedee to the sons of Buenerges, He renewed their inner depths to correspond with their heavenly mission which He had prepared for them.

Daniel carried three names:

1. In the Hebrew language, he was called Daniel, for the Hebrews saw in Him God who judges the evil of the pagans.
2. In the Chaldean language, he was called Belteshazzar, for the Chaldeans or the Babylonians saw in him hidden power, so they considered him the private prince for their great god “Baal”
3. In the heavenly language, he was called, “man greatly beloved”. (10:11,19 & 9:23)

### **3. Their rejection to eat the delicacies of the king**

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

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

St. Jerome said: {The one who was captived because of the sins of his ancestors was rewarded because of his virtues, for he had put in his heart not to defile himself with the delicacies of the king, and preferred a simple meal than a luxurious one; therefore the Lord granted him grace and well being in the eyes of the chief of the eunuchs. In difficult circumstances, the saints are loved by the unbelievers, because of God’s mercies and not because of the goodness of the evil people. }

“And the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, “I fear my lord the king, who has appointed your food and drink. For why should he see your faces looking worse than the young men who

are your age? Then you would endanger my head before the king.” So Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, “Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then let our countenances be examined before you, and the countenances of the young men who eat the portion of the king’s delicacies; and as you see fit, so deal with your servants.” So he consented with them in this matter, and tested them ten days.” (v.10-14)

Daniel lived in a strange country ( the land of the captivity), and he could have an excuse so he does not fast. Daniel was in a corrupt environment which encourages sin, for he was in the king’s palace, and he had to eat from the king’s delicacies and wine.

He fasted even in his old age (ch. 10), as if his heart did not get old.

Note that in Daniel’s fasting:

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

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

### **Daniel considered the king’s delicacies defilement. Why?**

+ Because his brothers were deprived from this luxurious life, so how could he live in luxury in the palace, while his brothers were in need?

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

+ Those youths were afraid that the king’s delicacies might make them forget their weaknesses and their true positions as captives. They do not request the king’s delicacies, but rather their freedom and satisfaction. Their hearts would not rest in a strange palace, but they long to go back to their own country. No doubt, Daniel and his companions were groaning for all what had happened to God’s people, the temple, and the holy city, so they remained in inner bitterness until God pities them and restores the captivity.

+ Daniel was afraid that some of the participants from the table were addicted to wine. So he completely rejected it, as was written, “Those who linger long at the wine, those who go in search of mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly.” (Prov.23:30,31) Probably Daniel considered himself a Nazirite to the Lord who does not drink wine nor similar drink. (Num.6:2,3) The priest were forbidden to use it before their ministry in the temple,(Lev.10:1-9), as well as the kings, too. (Prov. 31:4,5)

Those youth were in bitter agony because of the captivity, so how can they drink wine, which was a symbol of joy? They did not use it so God may restore them from their captivity.

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

St. Jerome said: {Whoever did not want to eat nor drink from the king's delicacies lest he gets defiled (knowing that the wisdom and teachings of the Babylonians were wrong) , surely cannot utter any evil word.}

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

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

God Himself wants that we go in dialogue with Him, as Abraham, Moses, David and others did.

C. Daniel and his friends fasted with seriousness and weariness, for ten days; thus the Lord rewarded them ten times. He gave them a better countenance, and they became in much better health than all the others. This was a gift from God, for it is written, "Man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord." (Deut. 8:3)

St. Hippolytus of Rome said: {They knew that the earthly meat does not grant people beauty and strength but rather God's grace which is granted by His Word.}

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

D. This book presents us a living picture about the fasting of Daniel, who used to eat only beans, (v.12), and not eating any meat. (Dan.10:3) He abstained from every luxury; he did not drink any wine nor anointed himself. (Dan. 10:3) David the Psalmist practiced fasting the same way, for he said, "My knees are weak through fasting, and my flesh is feeble from lack of fatness." (Ps. 109:24) Repentance accompany fasting. (Dan. 10:2)

St. Jerome said: {His faith was so great to the extent that he promised them that he will be in better health, when eating the fasting food, and he determined the time too. This was not being too hasty in acting, but rather great faith; he despised the delicacies of the king.}

#### **4. The results of the test**

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

We do not know the number of youth who served the king, however only the four names, Daniel and his four friends, were mentioned. Since they were serious in their faithfulness to God, in spite of the difficult circumstances, then they were the only ones who deserve to have their names mentioned in the Holy Bible and engrave them in the book of life.

#### **5. They were talented with wisdom and understanding**

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

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

St. Jerome said: {Notice that it was written that God gave the young men knowledge in all literature and in all branches of wisdom. }

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

#### **6. They surpassed the wise men**

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

The king could not have tested those youth unless he himself was highly educated and full of knowledge and wisdom. The king was pleased with them, but he did not bring them to the palace for just passing time and for idle talks, but for helping him with the spirit of wisdom and seriousness.

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

“Thus Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus.” (v.21)

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



**From the inspiration of Daniel (1)**  
**In the Babylonian Palace**

May the enemy carry me to the Babylonian Palace, but he cannot cast my soul from heaven!  
May he offer me all the delicacies and luxuries, but he cannot snatch me from the heavenly table! But I enjoy the food of the angels!

Grant me to fast from the love of the world, then bless my body, soul, and mind. Help me by Your heavenly wisdom and reveal to me Your surpassing mysteries!

As you were with Daniel in his sojourn in the palace, accompany me with Your grace wherever I go! Grant me success in every task I do!

## Chapter 2

### The Vision of the Statue

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

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

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

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#### **1. The history of the dream**

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

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

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

B. Some see that the second year means after the desolation of Jerusalem and the temple and the destruction of the Jewish community in the year 588 B.C. or 587 B.C.

C. The most acceptable opinion was that what was mentioned in the first chapter was during the days of Nebuchadnezzar when he was helping his father Nebu-blaser in the reign. Here he means the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign when he became alone. Nebuchadnezzar

became a king with his father, as was the custom at that time. He, then, besieged Jerusalem as a partner with the king and a leader of the army, then he forsook the besiege and went to the battle of Karkamish because Pharaoh rebelled against him. His father was still living, then he went and besieged Jerusalem in the year 606 or 605 B.C., where the first deportation happened. Then his father died and he became king, this corresponds with what was mentioned in history, meaning that Daniel and his friends were in training for the wisdom of the Chaldeans during the last days of Nebuchadnezzar's reign as a partner with his father, then during the second year of his reign alone, Daniel stood before him, and after the training period.

St. Jerome said: {What he means by the second year is that he reigned not only over the Jews and Chaldeans, but on all the other Gentiles like the Assyrians and Egypt. Josephus said that Nebuchadnezzar dreamt a strange dream about the future after his victory over Egypt. }

It is mentioned that he dreamt dreams, in the plural form, although he had only one dream, but he used the plural form because the dream had many subjects, or probably he dreamt many dreams on different intervals with the same interpretation, but the last dream was worrisome, that is why he sent to the wise men to ask them about the interpretation.

Why did Nebuchadnezzar not mention the dream to the wise men? St. Jerome answered and said: "The dream was in the king's heart like a shadow or echo or traces, so that if others repeat the dream before him, he can remember what he had seen, so they cannot trick him with lies.} What multiplied his worry was that he forgot the dream, so he needed someone to remind him of it. God who gave him the message by the dream made him forget, though it is usual that people ignore the dreams they forget.

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

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

## **2. The forgotten dream**

These dreams are examples of God's work in secret for the benefit of His believers.

Tertullian the scholar differentiated between three kinds of dreams:

1. Dreams from the devil: which may seem true and beneficial, yet they are deceiving.
2. Dreams from God: as what had happened with Nebuchadnezzar the pagan, and that was to show God's great mercy for all the human race.
3. Dreams which are natural in one's daily life, mostly as reaction to one's behavior. At night, after the day's work, one remembers the events of the day, whether sad or joyful events, and he

remembers them in form of dreams. Thus, there is a proverb which says that the hungry dreams of bread and the thirsty dreams of water.

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

Chaldeans means the Babylonians in general, but later it meant only the wise men.

Some liberal critics think that the word “Chaldeans” mean the people of Chaldea, and not just a segment of them. But A. W. Criswell said that the ancient discoveries proved that what was written in Daniel was correct, that this word “Chaldeans” meant a special segment which served the Baal.

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

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

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

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

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

The king admitted his ignorance to interpret the dream and his weakness before such a message.

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

“But the king answered and said to the Chaldeans, “My decision is firm; if you do not make known the dream to me, and its interpretation, you shall be cut in pieces and your houses shall be made an ash heap.” (v.5)

Although they talked with confidence that they can answer his request, yet they were surprised that he was asking something beyond their means and above their understanding.

Those magicians and astrologers were like half gods, in the eyes of the rulers and the people. But now, they were humiliated because they did not know the interpretation. This was a fruit of their pride and haughtiness.

This severe threat revealed the violence of the king and his brutality, as well as spreading the news on a large scale; thus God was glorified through His work in Daniel.

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

Knowing that they were covetous and loves vain glory, the king promised them to honor them with gifts and rewards.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Some thought that they meant the angels who are the only ones who can tell that strange dream, which came as a divine revelation, for a divine purpose. Some thought that he meant the gods whom the Chaldeans worshipped.

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

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

### **3. The order to kill all the wise men**

“So the decree went out, and they began killing the wise men, and they sought Daniel and his companions, to kill them.” (v.13)

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

### **4. Daniel’s Behavior**

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

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

When Daniel was ordered to be killed, he met with Arioch, the king’s captain. He wanted someone to intercede to clarify to the king that the decree to kill Daniel and his friends was unjust because they were not called with the wise men to reveal nor interpret the dream. He rebuked him with gentleness by saying, “Why is the decree from the king so urgent?”

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

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

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

“Daniel went to his house”, this means that the king had agreed and gave Daniel some time, probably for one day, for the king wanted the answer fast, to be relieved from his worry. Daniel asked for this day to enjoy a divine revelation to reveal to him the dream and its interpretation.

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

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

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

The three youths helped Daniel with their prayers, not for a reward from the king, nor to remove his shame, but to glorify God in his prophet in the land of captivity.

The eyes of those righteous youths were directed toward the divine mercies, for they help us during our tribulations.

## **5. Revealing the secret**

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

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

- Since Daniel and his friends prayed with faith to God, God gave them the desire of their hearts. As St. James said, “But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord.” (James 1:6,7) God is near to those who cry to Him in truth and sincerity with faith.
- “Daniel answered and said, “Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His.” (v.20)
- After God revealed the secret of the dream to Daniel, he did not think to meet with the king, but he presented a new praise to the Lord, giving Him credit for the wisdom and the power. He glorified God the Almighty who is in control of everything and nothing is hidden from Him.
- Any contemporary man expects daily changes every day, so he reads the newspapers to be up to date with the news, waiting for anything to happen.. However, when God’s people wake up any day, they realize God’s plan in the salvation of the world. God is in control of all events, whether worldly or local, whether church matters or personal. One praises God for all His surpassing care. A believer sees all movements in heaven, in the nature, in all humanity, and in his private life, all praise the Almighty wise One. When he says, “He gives wisdom to the wise”, means that God granted man natural wisdom, which is a divine gift. If one is faithful in his natural wisdom, giving the credit to God, then God will

grant him more heavenly wisdom. If we are faithful in the little that we have, then God will bless us more, for whoever has, more will be given.

- “He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells within Him.” (v.22)
- He is talking here about the gift of prophecy, where God lets His prophets interpret His secrets. This is a grace given to some faithful, for the edification of the community and for the glory of God.
- God, living in the light, makes us enter into His light and destroys the kingdom of Satan, that is darkness. What a difference between the magicians, the children of darkness and Daniel, the son of the light!
- St. Augustine distinguishes between the enjoyment of the revelation with the spirit and between understanding with the mind. As we worship God in the spirit and mind (1 Cor. 14:15), so Daniel the prophet realized the divine revelation with his spirit and discovered its understanding by his mind.
- St. Augustine said, {The greatest prophets are those who are granted the two gifts, the gift of revelation in the spirit with symbolic comparisons with material matters, and the gift of understanding these matters with the power of the mind. Thus, was Daniel who told the king his dream and also interpreted it. (Dan. 2:27-4:16-24) God revealed to him the dream itself, with the spirit, and God revealed to him its understanding with the mind. The word “spirit” is used here with the same meaning as St. Paul used it when he distinguished between the spirit and the mind.”}
- “I thank You and praise You, O God of my fathers; You have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of You, for You have made known to us the king’s demand.” (v.23)
- Daniel is glorifying the God of His fathers, the God of the living church which extends along all ages. God who made wonders in the past with his fathers, works now from generation to generation and unto the end of all ages. St. Clement of Alexandria said that God is the One who grants wisdom, knowledge, and true philosophy.
- St. Clement of Alexandria said, {The Holy Bible calls every science or art and considers these skills from God. This is very evident in what was written, “Then the Lord spoke to Moses saying, “See I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship.” (Ex. 31:1,2)
- Those who take their wisdom from God have multiplied understanding.
- God gives His own wisdom, understanding and support to the righteous people.
- Before the Lord’s coming, philosophy was essential for the righteousness of the Greeks, and now it leads to righteousness as a kind of training to proofs of faith. }
- “Therefore, Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon. He went and said thus to him, “Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon, take me before the king, and I will tell the king the interpretation.” (v.24)
- Why did Daniel ask that Arioch not to destroy the wise men of Babylon, although they were magicians, followers of Satan?



- A. He did not ask because they were righteous people, but because the verdict was unjust, for no one can interpret the dreams except God.
- B. They were not Jews who knew the Law which forbids magic.
- C. By not killing them, this will give them and their families a chance to realize God's true work in the lives of His prophets.
- God answered Daniel's prayers very fast, and the first thing that Daniel did, even before going to the king, was to thank God. In the captivity, Daniel felt God's abundant care, for He the Almighty decides the times. After many centuries, the Lord Jesus came and the Jews did not arrest Him for they feared the multitudes. But God's plan was fulfilled, for at the Passover, He was crucified, to ascertain that He is the true Passover, in whom all the symbols were fulfilled.
- St. Hyppolitus of Rome commented on the revealing of the secret by saying, {The dream was kept a secret for those who had the earthly mind, but those who seek the heavenly matters, God reveals to them the heavenly mysteries.}
- St. Hyppolitus of Rome said that the name Arioch, literally means the chief of cooks.
  
- **6. Meeting with the king**
- "Then Arioch quickly brought Daniel before the king, and said thus to him, "I have found a man of the captives of Judah, who will make known to the king the interpretation." (v.25)
- Arioch presented Daniel to the king as one who did good and deserved the reward, for he said, "I have found a man..." Daniel did not give himself the credit, but gave all the glory to God.
- Daniel had previously asked if the king would give him some time to think of the dream and its interpretation, why, then did Arioch tell the king about Daniel, as if the king does not know Daniel at all? Probably, because the king had given Daniel only one day, but from talking with Arioch, the king had despaired that Daniel or any of the wise men would know the interpretation of the dream, considering that the day, about which he had told Daniel, was to justify himself in killing all the wise men, including Daniel.
- "The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen, and its interpretation?" (v. 26)
- It is obvious that the king was in despair and wanted badly anyone to reveal the dream and interpret it. The king talked with Daniel, telling him how impossible for anyone to tell him his dream. This showed more the surpassing work of God with Daniel, which glorified God.
- "Daniel answered in the presence of the king and said, "The secret which the king has demanded, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king. But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream and the visions of your head upon your bed, were these:" (v.26-28)
  - When Daniel started talking with the king, he clarified that his dream was prophetic, ascertaining that this was not a normal dream nor human; and no man can interpret it; therefore, God who showed the king this dream will reveal it, with His Spirit.
  - God had revealed to him what will happen at the end of the days, where kings fall, until the King of kings come and establish His spiritual kingdom in the hearts.

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

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

- “But as for me, this secret has not been revealed to me because I have more wisdom than anyone living, but for our sakes who make known the interpretation to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your heart.” (v30)

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

- Probably someone would ask, “Does God talk to us now in dreams?” God can do that, but He gives us what is greater, for St. Paul wrote, “He has in these last days spoken to us by His Son...” (Heb. 1:2)

- **7. The metal image**

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

- Probably, someone would ask: Why did God show this dream, pertaining to the four kingdoms which end by the coming of the Lord Jesus, to Nebuchadnezzar and not to Daniel?

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

- B. Since the dream pertains to the coming of the Lord Jesus, the Savior of the world, God wanted the Gentiles to know about the coming of the Lord.

- “The image’s head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.” (v.32,33)

- After Daniel told the dream, the king did not ask, “Is this the dream?” But with great confidence, he believed that what God had said was true, and the king listened to it with great astonishment and silence.

- It is noted in this dream that:

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

Roman Empire was established on the fall of the Macedonian. In spite of the different kingdoms, yet they all share in their rejection to the will of God, so they all resist the truth.

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

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

- 4. This dream was shown to a pagan king. When the captived Jews who long to go back to their country realize that, they do not get depressed when the kingdom of Cyrus dominate the kingdom of Babylon, then the Greeks, then the Romans. In all that, Israel did not appear as it should in the days of King David or King Solomon, for God wanted to present the kingdom of the Son of David, the stone which struck the image and became a great mountain. Its spiritual kingdom extends to the level of the whole world!

- He wanted to direct their attention from waiting for a temporal kingdom to an eternal spiritual kingdom.

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

- 6. In this vision, Nebuchadnezzar was described as “the head from gold”, for he made Babylon a great empire, full of glory, dominion and majesty. Therefore, the divine inspiration made him not as the founder of this kingdom, but rather that he and Babylon are one. He was its symbol and representative, as he said, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty.” (Dan. 4:30) The divine inspiration described him as, “It is you O king who have grown and become strong; for your greatness has grown and reaches to the heavens, and your dominion to the end of the earth.” (Dan. 4:22) Nebuchadnezzar was a great king and leader, he was a genius and an architect; his dominion was unlimited.

- The divine inspiration symbolized the king and his kingdom with gold, which was a symbol of greatness, besides its wealth from gold. Herodit who visited Babylon, after Nebuchadnezzar by 90 years (450 B.C.) saw plenty of gold in its temples, altars, vessels, and equipment, besides many products made of pure gold.

- 7. The kingdoms of Medes and Persians were symbolized with silver, who, in the Bible, was a symbol of riches and continuous demand of money, for “He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; nor he who loves abundance, with increase.” (Ecc. 5:10) Judas sold the Lord Jesus with silver. (Lk. 22:5) The word “silver” is the same word as money. This empire loved money, and because of the tax system, the kings of Medes and Persians collected lots of silver. Daniel had prophesied in his third vision (11:2) that one of the richest Persian kings, who was Ahasuerus, had collected all the silver of his father Darius and the kings of Persians.

- “You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; and whether the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field

and the birds of the heaven He has given them into your hand, and made you ruler over them all, you are this head of gold.” (v.37,38)

- “The word “king of kings” is a title used to most of the rulers of the East, it was a general title between the Persians, the Ethiopians, the Babylonians. In the book of Ezekiel, Nebuchadnezzar was also called “king of kings” (Ezek. 25:7) His authority extended all over the civilized world, especially between the historical countries like Egypt, Palestine, Asia Minor. Thus, Babylon became a worldly kingdom, and the first model as a representative for all the worldly powers.

- Here, Daniel did not praise the king, but called him the golden head of the image which will be completely destroyed, and that another kingdom will follow him. When he says, “You are the head”, he does not mean him personally but he means the kingdom of Babylon, of which Nebuchadnezzar was its famous king. He was known for his brutality and violence, as king Belshazzar was known for his no respect for God.

- “But after you shall rise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth.” (v.39)

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

- Then he called the kingdom of the Macedonians which dominated the world “bronze”, not because it was mightier than the kingdom of Persia, but because it was more evil, like if you compare bronze with silver.

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

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

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

century B. C. , not just before the Roman Empire was established but even before the Greek Empire.

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

- A. {The Roman armies were known as iron armies, and Daniel the prophet used the word “iron” 14 times in describing this empire. Therefore, the church believed that this empire was the Roman Empire , and this was the opinion of the early fathers, who wrote about the book of Daniel, like St. Ireneaus in the second century, St. Hyppolitus in the third century, St. Jerome in the fourth century, and St. John Chrysostom in the fourth century too, from the year 347 -403 B.C. Joseph Mede, one of the interpreters, wrote that the Jewish church, before the coming of the Lord Jesus, believed that the fourth kingdom was the Roman Empire, and this belief was delivered to the disciples of the apostles and all the Christian Church for 300 years.}

- B. What proves the authenticity of this explanation, the prophecy of the book of Daniel, and the greatness of the Holy Bible that it is the Word of God is that the kingdom of the Messiah started in this empire, for the prophecy in the vision said, “And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, and the kingdom shall not be left to other people...” (v.44) Truly, in that empire, the Lord Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, because of Caesar, for it is written in the book of Luke, “And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.” (Lk. 2:1) The beginning of the ministry of John the Baptist was recorded with dates of the emperors, for it is written, “Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being high priest, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.” (Lk. 3:1,2) The Lord Jesus had paid the taxes for himself and for the disciples (Matt. 17:24-27), and He used to use its currency and He was crucified according to its laws.

- C. The Roman Empire stayed longer than any other empire, for the Babylonian Empire lasted 70 years, the Persian-Medes Empire lasted 200 years, the Greek Empire lasted 130 years, but the Roman Empire lasted 500 years, united, and it remained with its two divisions, the Eastern and the Western, until the year 1453 A.D., when the Turks dominated Constantinople. The Western part remained with the rest of the European countries until today. The civilization of these countries and some of their people were transferred to North and South America and Australia.

- D. In the second century, St. Ereneaus, in explaining the prophecy, said, {The kingdom is divided, and in his referral to the ten fingers, he meant the ten kings who will rule the ten parts of the kingdom, some will be strong and effective, while others will be very lazy and useless. St. Jerome said that the prophecy was partly fulfilled in his era, at the destruction of the empire by the inner enmity and the local wars. It was later fulfilled when the empire was divided to Eastern and Western parts. Lately, it was divided to many small states. S. Hyppolitus thought that the ten fingers, made from iron and clay, meant the different democracies which were divided between the ten fingers of the image in which the iron and the clay were mixed together.

- E. Some think that the mingling of the iron and the clay refers to the mixing of two civilizations, like the barbarian groups penetrating the modern Empire.

- **8. The strange stone**

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

- The most important thing in the dream was that strange stone which was able to crush the kingdoms to establish a spiritual kingdom which fills the earth, a kingdom which lasts forever. Here, he talks about a new kingdom which the stone without hands will establish, for the Lord Jesus was incarnate from a virgin.

- Without hands refer to the kingdom being heavenly without beginning.

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

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

- St. Hippolytus said, {The stone which came from heaven, struck the image and demolished all the kingdoms and gave the kingdom to God’s saints.}

- {The stone which struck the image and filled the earth is the Christ who came from heaven for the judgment of the world.}

- St. Eusebius said, {Daniel, saying that a stone without hands will judge the world, was referring for the Lord’s coming, that He Christ came not according to a human plan but according to a divine plan. “Therefore, thus says the Lord God, “Behold I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily.” (Is. 28:16) The Lord’s coming in the human nature was according to God’s will not man’s.}

- Father Irenaeus said, {This mountain refers to the Jewish Kingdom, and from this mountain was cut a stone without hands, referring to Christ who was born not of any human act.}

- St. Origen said, {This was the temple of the flesh who was cut from the mountain of human nature, without any human act.}

- St. Gregory of Nicea said, {There was a big stone put on the well (Gen. 29), where many shepherds used to remove it to offer drink for themselves and for their cattle. But only Jacob removed the stone and offered drink to the cattle of his bride. What was this stone except the Lord Himself? Daniel also said, “stone cut without hands”, who is Christ born not

of human act. It is strange to cut a stone from a rock without any axe or any tools for cutting; likewise it was strange that the Lord Jesus was born from a virgin.}

- “This is the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all, you are this head of gold. But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron. Inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters all things; and like iron that crushes that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others. Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. And as you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay. And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure.” (v. 36-45)

- **10. The glorified Daniel**

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

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

- “The king answered Daniel, and said, “Truly, your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret.” (v.47)

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

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

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

- **11. Daniel’s Companions**

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

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

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

- St. Hyloppitus of Rome said, {When they asked the heavenly matters from God, they accepted also the temporal matters from the king.}

**From the inspiration of Daniel: (2)**  
**May you make me enter into my house!**

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

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

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



## Chapter 3

### The Three Youths in the Fiery Furnace

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

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

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

- **1. Building a golden image**

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

- Some see that Nebuchadnezzar wanted to remove the effect of the dream on his people and kingdom, for he felt that many had glorified the God of Israel. Therefore, he built this image to occupy the minds of the people. Was this image for Nebuchadnezzar himself, or for the god of his kingdom, or for a new god? Daniel did not mention that, but the majority thinks that he wanted to make himself a god. So if he humbled himself before Daniel, it was only for a moment, but soon he went back to his pride and vain glory.

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

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

- “And King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and

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

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

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

- All the nations worshiped the image, whether he is god or the king or another god, to obey the king's command, who threatened by torturing in a fiery furnace.

- **2. Complaint against the three youths**

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

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

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

- It is obvious that the movements of the three youths were under strict supervision, especially after the issuing of the order to worship the image. Probably some of the king's

advisers have notified the king that this stranger does not participate with the rest of the people in the Babylonian religious rites. Some have envied those, whom the king elevated from the slavery to occupy high positions in the country, and accused them of being rebellious and not worshiping the gods.

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

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

- **3. Debate with Nebuchadnezzar: v.13-18**

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

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

- St. Tertillian said, concerning obeying kings and rulers (Rom. 13:1 & 1 Pet. 2:13) except for matters pertaining to faith: {The three youths were obedient to Nebuchadnezzar except when he told them to worship the image; they completely refused.}

- The three youths could have some excuse to justify worshiping the image:
  - 1. They were young in age and captives.
  - 2. They were under the authority of a brutal king.
  - 3. The king had absolute authority over them, being captives of war. They were required to worship only once, without forbidding them from worshiping God.
  - 4. They were offered all kinds of music to stir them.
  - 5. The king himself who gave them to live in the luxury of the palace, threatened them.

- 6. They were in a strange country, and they could have easily done what the people are doing, as the proverb says, “When in Rome, do as the Romans do.”
  - 7. Their predecessors worshiped the idols even in the temple in Jerusalem and all Judea, as was mentioned in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, without any outside pressure, while these strangers insisted that they do not worship the idols even in a strange country.
  - 8. By refusing to worship the idols, they lose every chance to do something to help their people; however, they were confident that God can rescue them.
  - The furnace was made from red bricks, with an opening from top, as a side door, through which the king had seen the three youths and the Son of God.
  - King Nebuchadnezzar defied their King, however, they defied death, because of their faithfulness to God. They believed that God can save them even if He does not save them from the temporal fire. They were not afraid of the king’s threatening, for they believed that:
    - A. God can save them, and that He is the Guardian of their lives, and that He does not allow them to die.
    - B. They believed that if God allows them to die, they would accept that courageously, offering their lives as a sacrifice of love to God.
  - The three youths are considered martyrs because they witnessed to the divine truth, offering their lives as a price for their testimony, whether they are killed or whether God delivers them. St. Augustine said, {Martyrdom is not achieved through only death, but according to the condition of the believer. Martyrdom is based on two principles: first, believing in God who guards and guides our lives to where He wants, and the other is a door opened in heaven where we see the glory prepared for us, that we are passing through a transient period.}
  - St. Jerome said, {Look at their faith! They say that we believe that God can save us, and if our sins hinder us, we believe that He can deliver us from the eternal death. We do not believe in this life only but in the life to come. We do not believe just to escape from the flames, but so that we may not escape crossing this fire to fall in another serious fire. Therefore, do what you can. Prepare your furnace, for it is for our purification.}
  - Maybe some may ask: Why no one complained that Daniel did not worship the image?
  - The answer is that perhaps Daniel was in a mission outside the region. And second, those who complained against Daniel were afraid that the king may accuse them, for they knew how the king appreciated and highly regarded Daniel, or maybe, they were planning to accuse Daniel after the three youths. Third, probably the king felt that everyone should bow down to Daniel because he is greater than the image or like it.
- **4. Throwing the three youths in the fiery furnace**
  - “Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. Therefore, he spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, and cast them into the burning fiery furnace. Then these men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Therefore, because the king’s command was urgent, and the furnace exceedingly

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

- They were thrown in the furnace from the upper opening. By looking into the eternal fire, they did not fear the temporal fire, nor death. (Lk. 12:4,5)
- 5. What did the fire of persecution do to them?
- A. The Word of God appeared, the form of the fourth is like the Son of God. He who was inside them protected them and embraced them.
- B. The flames unbound the ties, however it could not touch their hair nor their clothes.
- C. The king confessed their God, that He is the Savior and honored them in the region of Babylon.
- St. John Casian wrote that the king of Babylon refers to the devil, who stirs inside us the fire of the lust.
- St. John Casian wrote, {We subdue the lusts of the flesh by depriving the flesh from the food which stirs lust and pride. Thus, by repentance and the tears of our hearts, we can put off the flame of the fire of lust which the Babylonian king has inflamed. But through the Holy Spirit in our hearts, we can subdue the carnal lusts.}
- **5. Deliverance of the three youths**
- “Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, “Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said to the king, “True, O king.” “Look!” He answered, “I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and spoke, saying, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out and come here.” Then, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire. And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king’s counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them. Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, “Blessed is the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God! Therefore, I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this.” Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon.” (v. 24-30)
- There was a side door for the furnace. The king stood by that side door to see them thrown inside the furnace. What did he see?
- First, the fire had purified them in the eyes of God, and the eyes of the king, so the One like the Son of God appeared to glorify them.
- Second: The fire had loosened the iron chains, but did not affect their clothes.

- Third: While some of the soldiers died from the heat, the three youths were walking.
- Fourth: The fire changed into dew, and probably the king wanted to enjoy what they were enjoying, but he couldn't, so he called them to get out to him.
- The three youths did go out from the furnace, but they were walking inside it, until the king ordered that they should come out. They were obedient to the king, in the Lord.
- The Chaldeans knew the story of the throwing the three youths in the fiery furnace. They became a living witness in the province of Babylon about God the Savior of His righteous people. But what did the king do about his eternity?
- St. Origen said, {Hananiah, Mishael, and Abed-Negp deserved to be protected from the flames by the dew, and to have the mouths of the lions shut, through the prayers of Daniel.
- Hananiah and his friends went down to a spiritual pond granted to all the saints, and which Isaac had uttered these words when he told Jacob, "May God give you of the dew of heaven..." (Gen.27:28). This was much better than the material dew which put off the flames of Nebuchadnezzar.
- Nebuchadnezzar now utters the same words which we now utter, for we are crossing to the life to come (Heb. 11:13), yet we experience the heavenly dew which puts off all the flames of lust, and we follow the example of the three youths.}
- St. Tertullian said: {In the Old Testament, prayers were used to deliver from fire (Dan. 3), from animals (Dan. 6), and from famine (1Kings 18, James 5:17,18) Although this happened before the Lord Jesus had honored prayers, how about now?}
- St. Hippolytus of Rome said: {The three youths became an example for all the believers, for they did not fear when they heard the words of the king, nor when they saw the flames of the fire, but they considered all the world as rubbish, keeping only the fear of God before their eyes. Daniel stood away in silence, nevertheless he smiled and encouraged them to be steadfast in their faith. Moreover, he was delighted for their testimony and understanding, and they received the crowns of victory over the devil. The king called the three youths by their names, but he couldn't find a name for the fourth One, for He was not yet incarnate to be Christ born from the Virgin. They were honored not only by God, but by the king too. They taught the Gentiles to worship God.}
- St. Kyrillos said: {When they were locked inside the furnace, the flames escaped and the Lord was with them, assuring that no power can stand against His confessors and witnesses. No harm can touch those who depend on God, but they are always in a haven from all dangers. They added that God is the Almighty who can do every thing. They did not say that just for a temporal request, but to enjoy the glory of the eternal freedom. They say "If that is the case..." telling the king that they are willing to die for the sake of God whom they worship. This is the courageous power of faith. Believing that God can raise from the dead does not mean fear from death, but through it, faith is strengthened. The three youths were the same age, steadfast in their faith, persisting in the virtue, and stronger than the flames and the punishments imposed on them. They declared that they obey only God, and know and worship Him only.}
- St. Basil the Great said: {The three youths have manifested themselves above all the lusts of the flesh and despised the wrath of the king. They were very courageous and did not fear

the fire, but proved that the golden image is a worthless god. How did the three youths have victory over the power of fire? By their persistence.}

- St. Augustine said: {The three youths were famous in Babylon because of the fire.}
- Before those who accused the three youths find anything to justify themselves, the king had issued a decree to abolish anyone who stand against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. However, he did not forsake the pagan worship, and did not ask to be with the God of the three youths and to enjoy His presence.
- **6. The praise of the three youths**
- The three youths started praising God and glorifying Him in the fiery furnace. The church sings this praise daily. We'll talk about it later when we talk about the Apocrypha.
- St. Basil the Great said: {God is in our midst, who made the fiery furnace, in Babylon, cold.}
- St. Augustine said: {The three youths cried to the Lord inside the furnace; and when they praised God, the fire became cold. The flames could not touch them nor harm them, and God delivered them from it. It is obvious that God never forsook the three youths who praised in the furnace, and the flames could not touch them.}

**Form the inspiration of Daniel (3)  
So that I may walk with You in the furnace**

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

## Chapter 4

### The Decree of Nebuchadnezzar or the Haughty Tree

- This chapter is unique in the Holy Bible, where Daniel, the prophet, presents a royal decree revealing to the pagan king a divine talk with him in a dream. God talked with him twice in a dream (ch.2) where He showed him the haughtiness of Babylon and its fall, and during the fiery furnace (ch.3) where God revealed to him that He defies his oppression. Now He talks with him in a second dream to put him down, and to break his haughtiness. In the book of Job, “For God may speak in one way or in another, yet man does not perceive it. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men, while slumbering on their beds, then He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction.” (Job 33:14-16)
- In this royal decree, the old king confesses his pride and is not ashamed to witness to God who broke his pride, by chastening him until he lowered him to the level of animals. He admits that he was under God’s chastisement, and though it may appear severe, yet he deserves it. All what happened to him is a natural fruit of his evil life, for now he is reaping from what he has sown and drinking from the cup which he had filled with his own hands.
- Daniel presented the decree in its original language.
- 1. The decree of Nebuchadnezzar; v. 1-3
- 2. Calling the wise men to interpret his dream: v. 4-8
- 3. The haughty tree v. 9-18
- 4. Daniel interprets the dream v. 19-27
- 5. Fulfilling the interpretation v.28-36
- 6. Nebucahdnezzar glorifies God v. 37
  
- **1. The decree of Nebucahdnezzar**
- “Nebucahdnezzar the king, to all peoples, nations and languages that dwell in all the earth; peace be multiplied to you.” (v.1)
- St. Jerome said: {The message of Nebuchadnezzar was recorded in the prophets, so no one can claim that the book was not written by Daniel. He meant that pagan man, Pophiry, who attacked the book.
- Nebuchadnezzar presented a royal message from his heart, after going through a period of divine chastening because of his pride. He was not ashamed to direct this message to all nations, and peoples living in all the earth, where he declares:
  - 1. It was the custom for kings to consider themselves rulers over all the earth, in spite of the Babylonian Empire did not extend to the countries of Ghal and others. Thus, Rome, during the Roman Empire, was called the empire seat for the whole world, although the empire did not extend to the whole world, then.
  - B. This was a testimony of the king’s personal relationship with God, for God had done with him many wonders. Even if God had chastised him, yet he deserves all that. He glorified God for His care and confessed his sins and that he deserved God’s chastisement.



- “I thought it good to declare the signs and wonders that the Most High God had worked for me. How great are His signs and how mighty His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation.” (v.2,3)
- C. He admits God’s surpassing power, “How great are His signs and how mighty His wonders”(v.3) St. Jerome said: {The king was restored to his throne, through God’s mercies, thus he praised the God of heaven and glorified Him for all His works are true and His ways are righteous. He is the Almighty who can subdue all those who walk in pride. }
- D. He witnesses to God’s everlasting kingdom, and that His dominion never ends; however, the human kingdoms will definitely perish. “His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation.” (v.4)
- The beginning of his decree was written in a divine language, and some see that this reveals how Daniel was influential over the king and his language.
- God talked with the king who was a ruler over all the earth at that time. But still the king was very proud, although he witnessed to God with his mouth, but his heart was haughty. His witness to the Holy God was temporary, for he still worshiped the pagan gods and believed in his wrong beliefs.
- **2. Calling the wise men to interpret the dream**
- “I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my house, and flourishing in my palace.” (v.4)
- Before Nebuchadnezzar tells about God’s judgments because of his pride, he tells that he was at rest and flourishing in his palace, for he had conquered Egypt , Syria, Phoenicia, Judea, Arabia, at the year 34 or 35 after his reign. (Ezek.29:17) These consecutive victories made him proud, for he felt that there are no defeats and that no one can attack him and that there is assured peace.
- Some translate the word “selueh” or rest as abundance. When one has everything in abundance, he becomes like a horse, whom no one can control once he indulges in eating. That is why God sometimes controls our stomachs, not to deprive us, but to teach us to walk in righteousness.
- “I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts on my bed and the visions of my head troubled me. Therefore, I issued a decree to bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. Then the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers came in and I told them the dream; but they did not make known to me its interpretation.” (v.5-7)
- Here, the king distinguishes this dream, that it is different than other dreams, and that it is an unusual dream which carries a divine message; that is why he called the wise men to interpret it.
- Daniel was in the palace, but the king had completely ignored him, for he called the wise men, the astrologers, and the Chaldeans. When they failed in interpreting his dream, the king sought Daniel. He wanted the experiences of the magicians, although he knew the power of the divine interpretation. Often, we do the same thing. The prophetic word is in our hands, and the divine knowledge not far from us, yet we ignore all that and we seek the temporal blessings. Let us seek the work of God, who is full of wisdom, power, love, and is dwelling inside us. Let us abide in his promises instead of seeking outside help!

- The magicians could not interpret the dream, although they had previously said, “Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will give its interpretation.” (ch.2:4,7) The prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled, “You are wearied in the multitude of your counsels; let now the astrologers, the stargazers, and the monthly prognosticators stand up and save you from these things that shall come upon you.” (Is. 47:13)
  - “But at last Daniel came before me (his name is Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god; in him is the Spirit of the Holy God), and I told the dream before him, saying:” (v.8)
  - When all the human devices failed, then the king called God’s man, Daniel, and told him the dream. He, as a pagan king, believes that Daniel has the Spirit of the Holy God. (v.8)
  - The king did not call Daniel, although he knew that he is able to interpret the dream, because he knew that the dream meant chastisement for him. That is why he did not seek Daniel’s interpretation except at the very end.
- **3. The haughty tree**
- “Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the Spirit of the Holy God is in you, and no secret troubles you, explain to me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and its interpretation.” (v.9)
  - The king called him “Belteshazzar”, thinking that he is honoring him because he was referring to a pagan god. However, the name hurt Daniel’s feelings, for he preferred the name by which his parents had called him because it connects him with God. He also called Daniel “chief of the magicians”, which hurt his feelings more because he did not want to be associated with the magicians who had deceived the world with their witchcraft. The king knew two things pertaining to Daniel:
    - A. First, that he had “the Spirit of the Holy God” (v.9). Whatever he utters, is not from him but from the Holy Spirit. When all the human devices failed, the king called Daniel because he has the Spirit of the Holy God.
    - B. Second, that no secret troubles you (v.9) which removes the king’s worry.
  - “These were the visions of my head while on my bed: I was looking, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and its height was great. The tree grew and became strong; its height reached to the heavens; and it could be seen to the ends of all the earth. Its leaves were lovely, its fruit abundant, and in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it. The birds of the heavens dwelt in its branches, and all flesh was fed from it. I saw in the visions of my head while on my bed, and there was a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven, he cried aloud and said thus: “Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts get out from under it, and the birds from its branches. Nevertheless leave the stump and roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, in the tender grass of the field. Let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let him graze with the beasts on the grass of the earth. Let his heart be changed from that of a man, let him be given the heart of an animal, and let seven times pass over him.” (10-16)
  - Nebuchadnezzar liked the trees of Lebanon, brought its wood for construction, therefore, God compared him to a huge tree.
  - Often the prophets refer to great men as trees, as was mentioned in the book of Ezekiel chapter. 17:5-7, 31:3 & Ps.1:3, 38:35) The historian Herodotus says that Ahasuerus saw a

dream where he was crowned with an olive tree which its branches filled the whole earth, but soon the crown on his head was withered, so he realized that his reign will end.

- God wants that all those who have authority should be like trees in which others find their rest and satisfaction, however, they abused their authority and changed ministry to exploitation and pride. Thus, the trees had to be uprooted and the tree of the cross had to be planted to announce love, peace, inner joy to every one.
- In this chapter, God warns King Nebuchadnezzar declaring to him in a dream that he is under severe chastisement because of his pride. In this warning, we still see the compassion of God in His dealings with man, for even the haughty pagan king, God was revealing to him the chastisement, so he may return from his wickedness and repent. He gave him a whole year to examine himself, but instead of repenting, he became proud. Even when God was warning him, He compared him to a useful tree which provides a shade for the animals of the wilderness, and food for man and animal, and shelter for the birds.
- St. Jerome said: {People brag, not because of their great virtues but because of their pride, therefore, they perish. }
- The king related to Daniel the huge tree which was characterized with the following:
  - A. A tree in the midst of the earth and its height was great. (v.10) In the midst of the earth, that is in the center, where the Babylonian Empire extended over all nations. St. Origen and St. Jerome see that Jerusalem, being the city of God where the temple was, is the center of the earth. Some think that Babylon is the center of the earth because it has the royal palace of the anti-christ and his kingdom. Since Nebuchadnezzar represents a planted tree in Babylon, the mother of proud and adulterous, then the true believer represents a planted tree in Jerusalem in the house of God.
  - B. “The tree grew and became strong; its height reached to the heavens, and it could be seen to the ends of all the earth.” (v.11)
  - C. Its leaves were lovely (v.12) referring to the many constructions and decorations of the capital, which Nebuchadnezzar had built.
  - D. Its fruit abundant and in it was fruit for all, (v.12) referring to the huge riches of Nebuchadnezzar.
  - E. It shelters others for “The beasts of the field found shade under it, the birds of the heavens dwell in its branches.” (v.12)
- This is what God offers man, to make him king ruling himself, making him grow until he is in the bosom of the father, who is glorified in all the earth, satisfying everyone, open with love for everyone!
- When Nebuchadnezzar fell in pride, he deserved chastening, so God sent him an angel, called a watcher, a holy one coming down from heaven.
- The angel was called a watcher, for he is spirit without body, does not sleep, and does not need rest, always alert day and night. He fulfills the will of God for the edification of His people, as David the psalmist said, “Bless the Lord, you His angels who excel in strength, who do His word, heeding the voice of His word.” (Ps. 103:20)
- The angel was also called the holy one for he does not carry any human weakness, but we are weak not just for our sins but for our corruption which penetrated to us from our fore fathers, Adam and Eve.

- No matter how much man is sanctified, yet because he is still in the flesh, he is not called the holy one because he is surrounded by temptations and he has to struggle. We have to differentiate between angels and human beings, between the struggling believers and those who have departed.
- In this chastisement, we notice the following:
  - A. Whatever happened to the pagan king was not through a human plan, but through God's permission, for he sent His watchful angel to implement this plan. He talked to him with the Chaldean language, for he believed in heavenly creatures which condemn men's deeds, and has authority over their destiny.
  - B. There is mercy at the same time there is chastisement. God ordered that the roots remain in the earth so that the tree may grow once more in humility and repentance. Do not completely uproot the tree, for chastisement is for a limited time. (v.16) "For there is hope for a tree, if it is cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its tender shoots will not cease. Though its root may grow old in the earth, and its stump may die in the ground, yet at the scent of water it will bud and bring forth branches like a plant." (Job 14:7-9) If God had allowed him to eat the plant with the animals of the wilderness, yet He did not deprive him from the dew of heaven.
  - C. The order was for the animals, which were under the shade of the tree and the birds in its branches, to escape. This referred to all the statesmen forsaking the king; this was the fruit of sin to feel isolated; to feel that everyone forsaking us during the time of trouble.
  - D. It is very clear from the dream that the tree symbolized a certain person, for he says, "Let his heart be changed from that of a man, let him be given the heart of an animal." (v.16) He did not say "it" referring to the tree but "he" referring to a person.
  - What does he mean by the heart? He means the understanding, the will and the feelings and the inner soul as a whole. Of course trees do not have hearts, but this dream was a symbolic dream. The order was to remove from the king his empire and his human nature, for he does not deserve to live as a man.
  - E. He did not appoint a king instead of him, but appointed his son until he came back to his mind.
  - F. The purpose of the chastisement was to benefit others. (v.17)
- In this statement (v.16), God is confirming to the king that he cannot escape from the chastisement.
- "This decision is by the decree of the watchers, and the sentence by the word of the holy ones. In order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men. This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now, you, Belteshazzar, declare its interpretation; since all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation, but you are able, for the Spirit of the Holy God is in you." (v.17,18)
- The word "pethegma" probably means a decree or edict, as was mentioned in the book of Esther 1:20. What was declared was a heavenly decree, but why is he referring the decree to the holy watchful angels, is it a divine order or angelic?
- No doubt that the order was divine, from God Himself, but referring it to the angels, was because they had a positive role.

- The angels completely obeys God’s commands and implement His orders, pray for the salvation of people, asking God to interfere to chasten those who blaspheme against Him. The decree issued from God was in harmony with the desire of the angels and their continued supplications, as if it were issued from them.
- **4. Daniel interprets the dream**
- “Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for a time, and his thoughts troubled him. So the king spoke and said, ‘Belteshezzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation trouble you.’ Belteshezzar answered and said, ‘My Lord, may the dream concern those who hate you, and its interpretation concern your enemies!’” (v.19)
- Daniel was astonished and very sorrowful at the disaster which will befall the king of Babylon. The king was a tyrant and the Jewish people were captives with other nations. Daniel, being in the palace, was obliged to pray for him, for God said through Jeremiah, “And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it; for in its peace you will have peace.” (Jer. 29:7) However, the seventy years were not accomplished. thus the believers did not have the right to ask the king to go back, but they submitted to him and served him faithfully without any hatred. Knowing that, Daniel was sad about what will befall the king.
- “The tree that you saw, which grew and became strong, whose height reached to the heavens and which could be seen by all the earth, whose leaves were lovely and its fruit abundant, in which was food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and on whose branches the birds of the heaven had their habitation, it is you O king, who have grown and become strong; for your greatness has grown and reaches to the heavens and your dominion to the end of the earth.” (v.20-22)
- Here, Daniel’s amazing wisdom appears, for though his love to the king and his humility before him and his desire to rescue him from the disaster, yet he talked with him frankly and uttered the divine truth. Daniel is giving a practical lesson in service, for the true servant is compassionate toward sinners and desires their salvation. If he rebukes sinners, he does not forget that he himself is weak and at the same time, he does not agree with sinners, at the expense of the truth, and does not cover up God’s wrath on sin. Daniel was compassionate with the king, but very courageously, he said, “It is you O king,” He did not hesitate not presented any excuses, nor was in any doubt, but with great certainty, he declared to him that he was the tree.
- “And inasmuch as the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, ‘Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave its stump and roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze in the tender grass of the field; let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let him graze with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him; this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king.” (v.23,24)
- St. Jerome said: {Who will bind the king with a band of iron and bronze? It is obvious that only the crazy and the insane were the ones tied in chains so that they would not harm themselves.}

- Daniel was assuring that the dream and all the bitterness in it applied to the king. But he still called the king “O king”, he respected him and revered him.
- “They shall drive you from men, your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make you eat grass like oxen. They shall wet you with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.” (v.25)
- Often kings are tyrant, they give orders and never submit to anyone, and they may even forget that they have a human nature. Here, Daniel presents the interpretation, not to tell the king his weak nature but to tell him about God’s chastening him. He will be lowered to the level of animals.
- “ And inasmuch as they gave the command to leave the stump and roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be assured to you, after you come to know that Heaven rules.” (v.26)
- Here Daniel is preparing King Nebuchadnezzar to repent. He opens before him the door of hope, for God’s abundant mercies await the penitent. God chastises people, not to torture them but to discipline and elevate them and grant them the gift of knowledge. For he tells him, “After you come to know..” Chastisement is a school to enjoy the surpassing heavenly knowledge.
- “Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you; break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity.” (v.27)
- Daniel kept silent for a while and he felt perplexed. The king felt the seriousness of the dream and encouraged Daniel to talk, assuring him that he will accept the news. Daniel was afraid and his thoughts scared him for two reasons:
  - A. The fall of a great king to the lowest level, the level of animals, to have a heart of an animal.
  - B. That he is the one who is interpreting the dream, although he wished the king good.
- The king encouraged Daniel to talk because he was curious and wanted to know the truth.
- St. Jerome said: {Daniel manifested the truth without insulting the king, to avoid accusing the king with false pride.}
- Father Kaisairus said: {Daniel concluded his talk by opening the door of hope, before the king, by repentance and deeds of mercy. Daniel wished that Nebuchadnezzar would repent so he would not fall under such severe chastisement. Therefore, he advised him to show mercy to the poor, thus turning from violence and selfishness to love and giving, he may find grace in the eyes of God.}
- St. Jerome said: { God postponed the punishment for twelve months to give Nebuchadnezzar a chance to do merciful deeds, but instead, in great haughtiness, he used to walk in his palace saying, “This is the great Babylon which I have built.”}
- We also read in the book of Jeremiah, that God is directing the Jewish nation to pray for the Babylonians, for the peace of the captives is associated with the peace of those who made them captive.}

- **5. The fulfillment of the interpretation**
- “All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of the twelve months he was walking around the royal palace of Babylon. The king spoke, saying, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?” While the word was still in the king’s mouth, a voice fell from heaven: “King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.” (v.28-32)
- The Hebrew word “mehelek” refers to the king walking on the roof of the palace, as was the custom in the East. The king was able to see all Babylon from the roof, especially because the palace was built on a high hill. In pride, he thought he was a god, that is why he was lowered to the level of animals. King Nebuchadnezzar gave himself the credit for everything, not to God who granted him the power and wisdom. Also, he ignored those who preceded him in building the city. Listen to what King Solomon, who built the temple, said, “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who built it; unless the Lord guard the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.” (Ps. 127:1)
- “That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles’ feathers and his nails like birds’ claws. And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom from generation to generation.” (v. 33,34)
- In his pride, Nebuchadnezzar gave himself the credit for building Babylon with its great fences, its gardens, its temple for baal and the royal palace. Herodotus refers Babylon to Semiramis and Nitocris, while Berosus and Abydenus said that the Babylonians or Nebuchadnezzar had added to the old city, so Nebuchadnezzar built a huge palace and fence. It is noted from Nitocris that Nebuchadnezzar’s wife had beautified the city.
- The critics have attacked this statement saying that, historically, Nebuchadnezzar had not built Babylon, but in the new discoveries, thousands of bricks, with the engraving “Nebuchadnezzar, son of Nebu-Blaser”, were found in Babylon. The word “construction” here does not mean just building but also expanding and more additions. We should not forget that most kings do not like to remember the glories of their predecessors, but they give themselves the credit for everything.
- St. Jerome said: {If he had not lifted his eyes to heaven, his understanding would not have returned to him. Saying that “my understanding returned to me” proves that he had lost his understanding.
- Saying “from generation to generation “ does not mean the future generations, but as St. Jerome said that when his understanding returned to him, he realized that the mystery of kingdom of God passes from the Law to the Gospel.

- “All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, ‘what have You done?’” (35)
- Often, the tyrants think that God has no control over the affairs of men, and they can do whatever they like and no one can attack them. But now, the king admits that God is in control; He leads, guides, and controls everything on the earth, as well as in heaven.
- “At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and splendor returned to me. My counselors and nobles resorted to me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me.” (v.36)
- Nebuchadnezzar did not repent in spite of the fact that God had forsaken him for twelve months after the dream. On the contrary, the king became very haughty, and the dream was fulfilled. The dream was fulfilled one year later, because God wanted to give the king an opportunity to examine himself and repent and care for the needy and the captives. However, he became more haughty. The king became like an animal of the wilderness eating the herbs; he lost his mind and became crazy.
- St. Tertullian said: {After the king of Babylon was neglected for seven years because of his rebellion to the Lord, and after enduring the physical pain, he did not only restore his kingdom but fulfilled the pleasure of God.}
- God, who moved Nebuchadnezzar to chasten His people, now declares to him that everything happens with His permission. He permitted that his statesmen arrested him because of his insanity; now He directs them to restore him to the kingdom, without realizing God’s hidden hand.
- **6. Nebuchadnezzar glorified God**
- “Now, I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to abase.” (v.37)
- After completing the period of chastening, his mind came back to him, so he lifted his eyes up to heaven as a penitent asking for God’s mercies. He had a contrite soul and glorified God. He realized that all kingdoms are nothing in front of God and that no one can rule forever. Probably, when Nebuchadnezzar lifted his eyes to heaven to glorify God, God stopped chastening him.
- Some believed that there were no historical proofs about Nebuchadnezzar being insane. However, Perossos and Josephus, the Jewish historian, referred to the craziness of Nebuchadnezzar.



**From the inspiration of Daniel: (4)**  
**Train my soul, for she had gone astray!**

- You have granted me abundant blessings; I was filled and went astray. Who would train me, O You who cares for my salvation?
- Deprive me of some of your gifts, but do not deprive me of Your Person for You are my portion and my eternal inheritance! May You grant me humility, for it builds my inner depths.
- I have hurt your love and your abundant blessings, for I had no control over myself! How hard it is for me to remain humble while You are overflowing me with abundant gifts!
- Let me continuously remember my weakness, so I remain humble. Hold my hand, so I may walk with You in the road of Your love! Grant me the spirit of Daniel the prophet and servant, so I may desire the salvation of sinners and be compassionate toward them, without compromising the divine truth. I do not fear any king, no matter how tyrant he is, and I do not hide Your word, no matter how strict it is!
- Your threatening had scared Nebuchadnezzar. I find the sweetness of Your love in the midst of Your threatening to me. Teach me to consecrate me all my life to Your obedience. Your threatening and promises are for my edification. My sins have made me fall under the divine chastening, and made me eat the pigs' food. But now I come back to You so You may carry me in the fellowship of the saints and lift me to the heavenly life and grant me a surpassing heavenly knowledge!

## Chapter 5

### Belshazzar and the Writings on the wall

- The seventy years of the captivity, of which Jeremiah had prophesied (Jer. 25:11) came to an end. The kingdom of Babylon had changed to a luxurious and corrupt life. Belshazzar, with his weak personality, came and with him the kingdom deteriorated.
  - Nebuchadnezzar was proud and sinful man, and God gave him many opportunities to examine himself. His grandson, Belshazzar did not learn from the lessons of his fathers, but defied God Himself and deliberately insulted God. Therefore, God chastised him. Nebuchadnezzar did not do what Belshazzar had committed. St. Jerome said: {He was not balanced when he committed these things, but was drunk forgetting the punishment which had befallen Nebuchadnezzar. }
  - Daniel the prophet did not pity King Belshazzar, as he did with his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar, for he was known with injustice and corruption. This corresponds with what Zinofonm, the pagan historian, said that he was an evil man and very violent.
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- 1. The banquet of Belshazzar: 1.1-4
  - 2. Writing on the wall: v. 5-9
  - 3. Bringing Daniel to the king v.10-16
  - 4. Daniel's interpretation v.17-29
  - 5. The results v. 30-31
- 
- **1. The banquet of Belshazzar:**
  - “Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and drank wine in the presence of of the thousand.” (v.1)
  - Some translated “shezzar” as fire, however, the word “Bel-shar-usur” “Bel-Sharra-Utsur” means protecting the king.
  - The great feasts were a characteristic of these old times, and “the thousand” meant that it was a huge feast, and it represents a number. In the eastern feasts, the custom was that the king or the head of the feast sits on a high pulpit so that all may see him, that is why he said, “drank wine in the presence of the thousand.”
  - “While he tasted the wine, Belshazzar gave the command to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple which had been in Jerusalem, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken from the temple of the house of God which had been in Jerusalem; and the king and his lords, his wives and his concubines drank from them.” (v.2,3)
  - The word “father” can mean any of his grandfathers or ancestors. The Baylonian city was in danger of Persia, for Cyrus was surrounding the city. Belshazzar was busy arranging a banquet for thousnads of great people with their wives, concubines. He thought that it was impossible for Cyrus to attack the great walls of the city so he besieged it with his army.

According to Herodotus, The width of the walls of Babylon were 87 feet and its height was 350 feet. It had 250 towers which go up high as 100 feet. That is why Belshazzar thought he could never attack Cyrus.

- The amount of effort and money that was spent in preparing this banquet could not be valued. He defied God, and instead of crying to God and fasting during the siege, he used the holy vessels for drinking and licentiousness. Cyrus knew about how huge the banquet was, and that the king was indulged in drinking wine and did not have the time to manage his city, so he thought it was a good opportunity for him to attack the city.
- While Belshazzar was in the opening ceremony, the army of Cyrus was approaching the doors of Babylon. The pagan historian Xenophon relates that the two leaders of Belshazzar, Godatas and Gobryas, have betrayed him; one was eunuch and killed the son of the other during the life of his father, while they were hunting and his arrow hit the other by mistake, so he wanted to revenge. Cyrus had changed the canals of the Euphrate River and suddenly attacked the city.
- They brought the vessels, not for mere enjoyment of the drinking, but rather for insulting God and defiling the vessels which were sanctified for the service of His temple. Moreover, they glorified the pagans during drinking.
- St. John Casian wrote in the introduction of his book "The Institutes": {During this banquet, the believers were warned not to be occupied with the golden or silver holy vessels, which the wicked kings could steal, but rather to take heed for the spiritual vessels, that is, the souls of the holy believers whom no one can rob.}
- St. John Casian said: {When you put in your heart to build a true temple of God, not with hard rocks but with the fellowship of the saints, not with temporary building but with an eternal building which does not shake, when you want to sanctify the most precious vessels, not made from metals nor gold nor silver, which the king of Babylon could take for his own pleasure, you want to shape holy souls with righteousness, purity and who carry Christ inside as a King. The Lord longs to establish in your inner soul a temple for Him.}
- The critics attacked this book because of this chapter. The two pagan historians, Berosus and Abydenus, had previously declared that Nabonidus was the last Babylonian king, and that he had a distinguished position, even after the Persians had put Babylon in captivity. But, in this chapter, it was mentioned that Belshazzar was the last Babylonian king and that he was killed.
- Archeology had assured that what was mentioned by the pagan historians and by Daniel were true, for in the Assyrian carvings which Sir Herbert Rawlinson had discovered in the year 1854 A.D., it was mentioned that Belshazzar was the son of King Nabonidus, and that he shared with him the reign. This corresponds with what was mentioned in the book of Daniel that he was the third in the kingdom.
- In the carvings at Ur, there was carving for Nabonidus which contained a prayer for himself and then for his first born son, Bel-Shar-Usur. This kind of prayer was never offered except to the kings who reigned, and also there were records which recorded that Belshazzar had offered sheep and oxen in the temples of Sippar, as sacrifices for the king.
- Many floods happened in a region called Hillah, in old Babylon, and that is why there were many huge ceramic vessels which represented receipts and contracts for a special

organization related to banks. These revealed that Belshazzar had a house, secretaries and guards.

- Belshazzar was the same one mentioned in the Babylonian records, who acted as vice president to the king. He became king in the place of his father, according to the Babylonian records in the year 553 B.C., and remained in that position until the year 539 B.C.. In spite of Nabonidus being absent all the time in Timah, at the North of the peninsula, yet he did not leave the kingdom until Cyrus invaded Babylon.
- Why did Belshazzar leave the kingdom in Babylon? This goes back to the personality of his father, Nabonidus, who had abundant cultural and religious cares, as well as he was an archeologist. He used to search for the imprints of the old kings and the stones of the public buildings, as well as the records of the past. His religious cares were very strong. His daughter was devoted to the god of the moon, and his mother was a priest to the temple of “Sun”. This made him neglect matters of the kingdom. He spent most of the days of his reign, not in Babylon but in Timmah. He let his son, Belchezzar, to rule Babylon, the same way as Nebuchadnezzar was with his father Nebu-blaser. These facts were offered by Raymond P. Dougherty, the professor of the science of Assyrians. {New Haven, Yale 1929}
- “They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone.” (v. 4)
- Since they defiled the holy vessels, they praised the pagan gods, thinking that they became victorious over the True God. As mentioned in the book of Habakkuk, “Therefore, they sacrifice to their net, and burn incense to their dragnet, because by them their share is sumptuous and their food plenteous.” (Hab. 1:16) Thus, they ate and drank and were filled and forgot about God, who abundantly grants us gifts.
- The king deliberately brought the holy vessels before drinking, and being drunk, he exaggerated in mocking God. The king, with his wives and concubines, sinned and thus the banquet became a seat for scornful.
- St. Jerome said: {How stupid they were! They drank in golden vessels and praised wooden gods and stones!}
- St. Jerome wrote that the golden gods refer to those who attack the truth using mental proofs, the silver gods refer to those who use the logic for the same reason, the copper and iron gods refer to those who use vain babbling, the wooden gods and the stones refer to those who use trifle matters.
- **2. Writing on the wall**
- “In the same hour the fingers of a man’s hand appeared and wrote opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote.” (v. 5)
- St. Jerome commented at the words, “In the same hour”, by saying: {The hand which appeared in the same hour, was to declare that what had happened was due to his blasphemy and not for any other reason.}
- It is obvious that the feast was at night because the lampstand was found there, and they remained feasting until midnight when Cyrus invaded Babylon.

- The hand appeared to the king only and not to the other dignitaries; that is why he was confused and terrified. The dignitaries became terrified like him, without seeing anything.
- St Jerome wrote that the writing was on the wall of the royal palace, so that the king may realize that what was written concerned him personally.
- “Then the king’s countenance changed and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his lips were loosened and his knees knocked against each other.” (v.6)
- Few minutes ago, the king was self-conceited and thought that he was a mighty lord, mocking the true God and defiling His temples and praising the idols. Now he stood as an accused and humiliated, and he realized that God is the true Judge. The physical power of the king was shaken and his thoughts were confused and he lost his balance and dignity among the guests at the feast.
- “The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spoke, saying to the wise men of Babylon, ‘whoever reads this writing, and tells me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck; and he shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.’” (7)
- The king was terrified and called the magicians, the astrologers, the soothsayers to find an answer for his confusion, but he felt that there was no solution and that he cannot escape the Almighty’s hands. He forgot that he was the king who had a great feast for the dignitaries, so he hastily called these men to help him. He lost his temper and cried loudly, which was not fitting for a king with such great authority.
- Why did he not call Daniel?
- 1. Probably, because Daniel was getting old, thus he had retired.
- 2. Due to the great honor that Nebuchadnezzar had given Daniel, this had caused hatred in the hearts of the magicians toward Daniel because they felt that such a stranger was better than all of them. Therefore, after Nebuchadnezzar’s death, they did all what they could to exclude him from the affairs of the palace, so he will be completely forgotten. This found favor in Daniel’s heart because he did not want to be counted as one of the wise men. But in the mean time, they had marred the image of the Jewish people and their worship in the eyes of the king. This was apparent when the king held the feast and wanted to defile the holy vessels and glorify his idols. Hence, they were able to remove all the influence that Daniel had in the palace.
- 3. In spite of all what had happened, the king did not examine himself. He had defiled the Lord’s holies and glorified his idols, and did not seek the man of God to help him, but instead he asked the magicians and astrologers to help him. God had terrified him; and instead of seeking the divine voice, he sought the voice of his idols. He realized that he could not escape from God’s judgement, thus Belshazzar was blind, for he blinded his eyes from seeing the divine light.
- By declaring the gifts that he would offer to anyone who would explain the vision, he showed that he did not enjoy God’s fear, but became like a dead person. In his hidden pride, he declared that he would enrich anyone who could explain the vision.

- “Now, all the king’s wise men came, but they could not read the writing, or make known to the king its interpretation. Then King Belshazzar was greatly troubled, his countenance was changed, and his lords were astonished.” (v.8,9)
  - This writing was like a sealed book, as was written in the book of Isaiah 29: 11, so they could not open it nor read it. They became blind in understanding the vision; a veil was on their hearts so they could not read it.
  - God granted the king to see the hidden hand writing on the wall, but He did not grant him the interpretation of what was written. Likewise, the wise men became like blind, which terrified the king. This incident which happened among thousands of dignitaries made the news of the vision spread very quickly. This made Cyrus feel confident that God’s hand supports him. All the details of this event made Cyrus honor Daniel, his people and his God, which facilitated the return of God’s people to Jerusalem.
  - God condemned the evil deed of the king, thus the writing was not in a dream but rather in a tangible fact. The king realized that punishment awaits him, therefore, he was terrified, before knowing its interpretation. Thus, what the king did, was not done in ignorance.
  - St. Augustine wrote: {Belshazzar saw the fingers writing on a wall. After the vision was over, it still remained in his thoughts; he could visualize it but could not understand it. When the king failed in discovering the interpretation, Daniel came right away, and with the spirit of prophecy, he revealed to the king the prophetic meaning of the vision. }
- **3. Bringing Daniel before the king**
  - “The queen, because of the words of the king and his lords, came to the banquet hall. And the queen spoke, saying, ‘O king live forever! Do not let your thoughts trouble you, nor let your countenance change. There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the Spirit of the Holy God. And in the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him; and King Nebuchadnezzar your father, your father the king, made him chief of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers.’” (v. 10,11)
  - It was obvious that the queen had lived the same events of Nebuchadnezzar, the grandfather of Belshazzar. Most probably she was the wife of Nebuchadnezzar, or the grandmother of Belshazzar and not his wife, for the latter was with him in the banquet, but the grandmother, in great wisdom, did not participate in the banquet, because it was against the Eastern traditions. But in Babylon, the queen had a high status in the royal palace.
  - She reminded the king of Daniel, who was most probably had retired. Belshazzar had not known about Daniel, while others looked at Daniel as an angel from heaven. The king was preoccupied in his desires which made him ignore God’s man or resist God Himself.
  - The queen had rebuked him in a gentle spirit, as if telling him, “Why do you abide in the darkness while God had given you a man who had the Spirit of God?”
  - “Inasmuch as an excellent spirit, knowledge, understanding, interpreting, dreams, solving riddles, and explaining enigmas were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar, now let Daniel be called, and he will give the interpretation.” (v. 12)
  - The old queen was able to discern between Daniel and the magicians. The magicians used to brag about their interpretation of dreams, but their interpretation was vain; however

Daniel was characterized by three divine gifts: He had an excellent spirit, he had knowledge and understanding; and he could interpret dreams.

- She also showed Nebuchadnezzar's appreciation to him, for he gave him a name "Belshazzar". similar to his name, King Belshazzar. so he did not despise him because he was a captive.
  
- "Then Daniel was brought in before the king. And the king spoke and said to Daniel, 'Are you that Daniel who is one of the captives from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah? I have heard of you, that the Spirit of God is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you. Now the wise men and the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing and make known to me its interpretation, but they could not give the interpretation of the thing. And I have heard of you, that you can give interpretations and explain enigmas. Now if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around your neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.'" (v. 13-16)
- In spite of all what had happened to the king and what he had heard from his grandmother, yet he did not humble himself, regretting what he had done, but he talked with great haughtiness to Daniel and treated him as a captive man. He used this method to oblige him to obey.
- The king admitted that he had sought the magicians and they were incapable of helping him, and he hopes that Daniel can help him.
- The king promised Daniel a golden chain and royal clothes, and he did not know that he himself will lose all his possessions and even his life after a short while. He was terrified in front of the divine justice. Probably, he felt that he will lose everything, but he hid all his fear and he promised others things he himself cannot enjoy.
  
- **4. Daniel's explanation**
- "Then Daniel answered and said before the king, 'Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another; yet I will read the writing to the king and make to him the interpretation.'" (v.17)
- Daniel showed that he did not care about the temporal gifts before interpreting the writing, lest the king thinks that the rejection was not from the depth of the heart, but because Daniel thought that his kingdom will end. As St. Jerome said: {Daniel followed the commandment, rejecting any reward, for it is written 'Freely you have received, freely you give'. His heart was not attached to any richness, honor nor authority. On the other hand, he realized that Belshazzar could not offer any gift because soon he will perish.
- The interpretation differed here from the way he interpreted it with Nebuchadnezzar. He did not care about the reward for the following reasons:
  - 1. The sin of the king was not due to ignorance, for he previously knew what had happened with his grandfather.
  - 2. Belshazzar attacked the Almighty God.
  - 3. Belshazzar glorified and praised the pagans to insult the living God.

- The writing was “Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin”, which means that God had ended your kingdom. You were weighed and were found lacking. Your kingdom will be divided and given to two empires, the Persians and the Medes.
- St. Jerome said: {Elijah’s prophecy about the destruction of the Babylonian kingdom was fulfilled. He said, ‘My heart wavered, fearfulness frightened me; the night for which I longed He turned into fear for me. Prepare the table, set a watchman in the tower, eat and drink, arise you princess, anoint the shield!’ (Is. 21:4,5)}
- “O king the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father a kingdom and majesty, glory and honor. And because of the majesty that He gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whomever he wished, he executed; whomever he wished, he kept alive; whomever he wished, he set up; whomever he wished, he put down. But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne and they took his glory from him.” (v. 18-20)
- Daniel made it clear that what the king’s grandfather had enjoyed was a gift from God, for every authority is from God (Rom. 8:1). God wanted to reveal His power through the kingdoms, but he abused the gift. Instead of glorifying God and serving humanity, he became haughty and proud.
- Nebuchadnezzar had authority, he could kill whoever he wanted and forgive whoever he wanted; He could exalt whoever he wanted and humiliate whoever He wanted. He did not realize that people’s lives are in God’s hand, and moreover, the king’s life, his honor and authority are in God’s hand.
- St. Jerome said: {Since the king can do whatever he wanted, how can this Bible verse be applied: “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water; He turns it whenever He wishes.” (Prov.21:1) We can say that he means that every saint is a king because sin does not rule over his mortal body, and his heart remains in the hand of God. (Rom.6) Whoever is in the hands of God, no one can ever snatch.}
- “Then he was driven from the sons of men, his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. They fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till he knew that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses.” (v.21)
- What happened with Nebuchadnezzar was very serious, and could be a lesson for the generations to come. However, soon his grandson, Belshezzar, forgot the lesson and did not gain from the experience of his grandfather. His haughtiness isolated him and made him live in the kingdom of the animals, as if he had no mind. This was what his grandson did with his own free will when he prepared the banquet and defiled the holy vessels.
- “But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this.” (v. 22)
- Belshazzar was called the son of King Nebuchadnezzar who was chastened by God because of his pride, as if telling him, “I gave you an example from your father’s house, you have no excuse!”



- St. Jerome said: {This talk applied to the Antichrist. As Belshazzar did not benefit from the chastening of his father Nebuchadnezzar who fell in pride, likewise the Anti-christ do not benefit from what had happened to his father Satan because of his pride. As the kingdom was transferred from Belshazzar after his death, likewise the antichrist dies and the saints reign instead of him.
- “And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. They have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines, have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver, which do not see or hear or know; and the God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified. Then the fingers of the hand were sent from Him, and this writing was written. And this is the inscription that was written: Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin. This is the interpretation of each word, Mene: God has numbered your kingdom and finished it; Tekel: you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting; Peres: Your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians.’ Then Belchazzar gave the command and clothed Daniel with purple and put a chain of gold around his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.” (v. 23-29)
- The king presented his gifts to Daniel but this did not last for long. Probably Daniel accepted them lest the king thinks that Daniel was rebelling against him or that he was haughty. Daniel was clothed with a purple robe and he put a chain of gold around his neck, symbol of the royal authority. Thus Cyrus was given the opportunity to know about Daniel and ask about the reason for honoring him, and know about the vision.
- St. Jerome commented that when the king presented gifts to Daniel, he thought that this gloomy prophecy will be fulfilled in the far future, and that by honoring God’s man, he will find mercy and grace in the eyes of God.
- **5. The Results**
- “That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain. And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.” (v.30,31)
- While they were indulged in drinking, Cyrus entered Babylon in a way the guards did not expect. River Euphrates overflowed under the great walls of Babylon. The Persians dugged a huge tunnel outside Babylon, and the Babylonians did not know about that. They connected the tunnel with the river so the water flowed in the tunnel, and the army crossed the city through the dry river under the walls. The soldiers attacked the city and Belshazzar was killed the same night or the next night. The kingdom was transferred from the hands of the Babylonians to the Persians, thus we move from the golden head of the statue to the silver chest and the shoulders, as mentioned in the second chapter of the book.
- The pagan historians talked about Cyrus invading Babylon.
- **Darius the Mede:**
- Darius, in Persian, means “owning good. This was a title for the Persian kings like Pharaoh for Egypt, and Caesar for Rome.

- Some think that Darius the Mede was the same one as Cyaxares II, the son of Astyages, the uncle of Cyrus who gave him the throne of Babylon, as his companion in the reign.

- **From the inspiration of Daniel (5)**

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- So that I may enjoy the banquet of Your love, so I do not desire the banquets of the world.
- 
- Belshazzar dared to defile the holy vessels, and in ignorance I defile my body, your precious vessel!
- Let me enjoy the banquet of Your love, my Savior, so that I do not desire the banquets of the world!
- Your hand was stretched to declare Your judgment on **Belshazzar. Let your fiery Spirit write the words of Your love in my heart, so I may not desire any wise person in the world, but I may seek Daniel your prophet and hear Your divine voice inside me!**
- **Daniel despised all the gifts of the king and did not desire richness nor authority, then you gave him grace in the eyes of Cyrus to support your people in their captivity. When do I despise the temporal matters?**
- **When do I obtain You, the treasure of my soul and her inner glory?!**
- **Behold I am in Your hands, use me as You wish!**

## Chapter 6

### Daniel in the Lion's Den

- This chapter presents the story of throwing Daniel in the lion's den; it corresponds with the story of casting the three youths in the fiery furnace.
- The two stories confirm God's great power to deliver His believers, who keep His commandments, from great tribulations. The third chapter presents the determination of the believers for the negative aspect, that is not to worship idols, while this chapter presents the positive aspect, that is, worshipping God in all circumstances. The two stories were known during the Maccabees. (1 Mac. 2:59)
- Daniel became very old, however he was not old in his spirit; and the long time of captivity did not change his heart nor his faithfulness to God. He remained as a youth, and he grew in the faith, in spite of him being deprived from the spiritual atmosphere surrounding him. Daniel represented the church, especially during the end of the ages when people reject worshipping the anti-christ and the beast. Daniel was a captive, and God demonstrated his love through his faithful prophet Daniel, even during the chastening.
  - 1. Daniel's position during the reign of Darius. v. 1-3
  - 2. The enemies plotting against Daniel. v. 4-9
  - 3. Daniel's faith v. 10-15
  - 4. Daniel's tribulation and salvation v. 16-24
  - 5. The declaration of Darius v. 25-28
- **1. Daniel's position during the reign of Darius**
- No doubt that King Darius had heard of Daniel the prophet, and probably he had seen him when Belshazzar was killed, and he was clothed with purple and golden chain around his neck. The king knew that he was the one who interpreted the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar and the writings on the wall. Darius had honored him and trusted him, and he became the tool which God had used to release his people from captivity. However, the devil did not stay quiet, for the more God was glorified in Daniel, the more the devil was stirred to destroy Daniel. The king promoted him to be the second man in the kingdom, nevertheless, the enemy prepared for him a den of hungry lions to get rid of him and devour him.
- "It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom one hundred and twenty satraps, to be over the whole kingdom; and over these, three governors and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king gave thought to setting him over the whole realm." (v.1-3)
- We have previously talked about Darius in the fifth chapter. Some think that the period of the captivity of Babylon was vague. Probably, Darius was an unknown man, who was entrusted with the kingdom by Cyrus.

## **2. The enemies plotting against Daniel**

- “So the governors and satraps sought to find some charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no charge nor fault, because he was faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him. Then these men said, “We shall not find any charge against Daniel unless we find it against him concerning the law of his God.” (v. 4,5)
- St. Jerome said: {Blessed is the man, against whom the enemies cannot find any charges, except concerning the law of his God.}
- “So these governors and satraps thronged before the king and said thus to him, “King Darius, live forever! All the governors of the kingdom, the administrators and satraps, the counselors and advisors, have consulted together to establish a royal statute and to make a firm decree, that whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. Now O king, establish the decree and sign the writing, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter.” Therefore, King Darius signed the written decree.” (v. 6-9)
- It is obvious that Darius was not king over only the Medes Empire, but on both empires, the Medes and the Persians, as it was mentioned in the previous chapter, for he was a partner in the reign with Cyrus.
- The enemies plotted against Daniel; they envied his greatness, his righteousness and his loyalty with the king. They could not find any charge against him so they plotted to get rid of him.
- They convinced the king that that decree would reveal whether the captives were loyal to the king in such a new land or not.

## **3. Daniel’s Faith**

- “Now, when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.” (v. 10)
- The enemies knew when Daniel prayed, and they were easily to watch him from the open windows. The Jews used to pray three times daily: in the morning, when offering the morning sacrifice, at 3:00 p.m. when offering the evening sacrifice, and in the evening at sunset.
- Daniel used to worship in his upper room, referring to the elevation of the soul to meet God above the earthly matters.
- St. Jerome said: {The Lord Jesus celebrated the passover in the upper room (Matt. 14). In the book of Acts, it was mentioned that the Holy Spirit came upon the believers, (120 men) in the upper room (Acts ch.2). Hence, Daniel, not regarding the king’s commands but confident in God, did not pray in an obscure place but went in the upper room and opened the windows toward Jerusalem, so that he may feel the peace of God.
- Moreover, he used to pray according to the commandment of God and according to what King Solomon had said that they should worship toward the temple.
- We have to worship God three times a day. According to the tradition of the church, the three times are as follows: the third hour or 9:00 a.m. when the Holy Spirit came upon the

disciples (Acts 2:15), the sixth hour or 12:00 noon when St. Peter went up the upper room to pray (Acts 10) , And at the ninth hour or 3:00 p.m. when St. Peter and St. John were on their way to the temple (Acts 3).}

- “Then these men assembled and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God. And they went before the king, and spoke concerning the king’s decree: “Have you not signed a decree that every man who petitions any god or man within thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?” The king answered and said, “The thing is true according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter.” So they answered and said before the king, “That Daniel, who is one of the captives from Judah, does not show due regard to you, O king, or for the decree that you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day.” And the king, when he heard these words, was greatly displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him; and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him. Then these men approached the king and said to the king, “Know, O king, that it is the law of the Medes and Persians that no decree or statute which the king establishes may be changed.” (v. 11-15)
- St. Jerome said that as the king understood the intention of Daniel’s enemies that they wanted to harm him, the enemies also understood the intention of the king who abstained from food until sunset to pressure them so they would not ask for Daniel’s death, for the king could not change the decree that he had issued, but they could overlook his prayers and drop the charge against him. But they did not consider what the king had done and insisted on applying the decree on Daniel.
- Daniel could have stopped praying for the thirty days, until the period of the decree was over, and he could have prayed secretly in his house with the windows closed, or he could have pretended that he worshiped the idols. However, Daniel found this a good opportunity to declare his faith, therefore, he opened the windows and challenged evil, not to show off but as a testimony to his faith. Daniel used to appoint special daily times for worship, and also the psalmist David (Ps. 55:16,17).
- The enemies talked against him, in hatred, “This Daniel...” But the king defended him, however, the enemies were wise in their plot, for the king had already signed a decree, in which he could not go back.
- **4. Daniel’s Tribulation and Deliverance**
- “So the king gave the command, and they brought Daniel and cast him into the den of lions. But the king spoke, saying to Daniel, “Your God whom you serve continually, He will deliver you.” (v. 16)
- The king realized that the God of Daniel is the God of the impossible, when all human efforts are incapable of any doing, then God’s power is revealed.
- St. Jerome said: {The king left the plot of casting Daniel in the lion’s den to the multitudes, and did not dare to stop their plot but depended on God’s power to implement what he could not do. He did not doubt God’s power, for he did not say, “If God can save you.” But he dared to say, in great assurance, “Your God whom you serve continually, He will deliver you.” Definitely, he had heard about the three youths, whom God had delivered from

the fiery furnace, and he had heard of the mysteries which were declared to Daniel, thus he regarded him highly, in spite of him being captive.}

- “Then a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signets of his lords, that the purpose concerning Daniel might not be changed.” (v.17)
- St. Jerome said: {The stone was sealed with the king’s seal, so that no one could open it. Daniel was entrusted in God’s hand and he was not scared from the lions. The king was worried about Daniel from the people; he sealed the den with the king’s seal so that no doubt could enter their hearts about God’s deliverance.}
- “Now the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; and no musicians were brought before him. Also his sleep went from him.” (v. 18)
- St. Jerome said: {How good was the king’s intention! He did not touch any food at night nor at day, and he could not go to sleep. Since Daniel was in danger, the king was worried about him.
- Since the king who did not know God, fasted and could not sleep for someone whom he wanted to deliver, how much should we fast and pray asking God’s mercy for our many sins!}
- “Then the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions. And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel. The king spoke, saying to Daniel, ‘Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?’” (v.19,20)
- St. Jerome said: {The king revealed his inner emotions by his tears; he forgot his royal dignity and his triumph over the captives and his dominion over his servant Daniel. He called the true God to distinguish him from the other gods which were like idols for the dead. He did not doubt the power of God whom he trusted, but he uttered these words, with no doubt at all, so that when Daniel is not harmed, he could justify his wrath on the governors.}
- “Then Daniel said to the king, ‘O king, live forever!’” (v. 21)
- St. Jerome said: {Daniel honored the king who earlier honored him and asked that he lives forever.}
- “My God sent His angel and shut the lions’ mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also O king, I have done no wrong before you.” (v. 22)
- St. Origen said: {He who prays saying, ‘Oh, do not deliver the life of Your turtledove to the wild beast.’ (Ps. 74:19) is heard. He does not suffer from the serpent, because with Christ, he can trample over the serpents and scorpions (Ps. 91:13). He is granted the glorious power by God to tread on serpents and scorpions and every power of the enemy. (Lk. 10:19) He is not harmed by any of these. Such a person has to thank God, more than Daniel, because He saved him from much wilder animals.}

- {The mouths of invisible lions were shut, so that his soul is not harmed by the visible lions.}  
St. Origen
- St. Augustine said: {These beasts could be unharmed, unless they are considered as punishment or as a test of faith or to prove the virtues of the believer.}
- St. Jerome said: {Let every saint utter these words, then he is released from the mouths of the invisible lions and from the pit, for he trusts in God.}
- “Then the king was exceedingly glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in his God. And the king gave the command, and they brought those men who had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions overpowered them, and broke all their bones in pieces before they ever came to the bottom of the den.” (v. 23,24)
- Daniel’s story gives a living picture of the role of man in the life of the community. Daniel lived a holy life and he succeeded with his three friends. He served his people in the captivity, served the kings, and the gentiles, and presented them prophecies about the coming of Christ. His service to the Lord in the captivity had no limits because he cleaved to the Lord.
- On the other hand, the corruption which befell his envious enemies made them lose their peace, and they became destructive. It drove them, their wives, their children to become prey to the hungry lions. We should be constructive and not deviate like Jonah, who escaped from the Lord and a great storm happened because of him. The punishment of the whole family was known in the earlier communities. This contradicted what was mentioned in the book of Deuteronomy 24:16, in the book of Jeremiah 31:29, and in the book of Ezekiel chapter 18.
- The king failed in rescuing Daniel for he had already signed the decree and sealed it, but God Himself has saved him.
- The king was depressed in his castle and he could not sleep. The evil people were plotting against Daniel and were happy for their success of getting rid of Daniel. Probably they were plotting to appoint another person in place of Daniel. But Daniel was living as if in Paradise befriending the animals, as he experienced the deposit of heaven. When the angel descended and shut the mouths of the lions, this was the happiest night that Daniel had ever lived.
- If the king had not cast the evil people in the den, one could have said that the lions were not hungry and that was the reason that they did not do any harm to Daniel. Daniel, staying with the hungry lions a whole night in complete peace, whereas the hungry lions could not wait but devoured the evil people right away as soon as they were cast down and they crushed all their bones, this indicated God’s mighty hand who saved Daniel and removed any doubt.
- Daniel rested, not because he was saved from physical death, but because he enjoyed a new revelation of God and realized His deep love and care and concern for him. The king did not rest when he threw Daniel in the den, for he realized that he was unjust and that he had lost a loyal friend, but he hoped in God, the God of Daniel to save him.

- Daniel praised God in the lion’s den saying with David the psalmist: “You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, the young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot. Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore, I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation.” (Ps. 91:13-16) The following verses apply to Daniel’s enemies: “It will be as though a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him; or as though he went into the house, leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. Is not the day of the Lord darkness, and not light? Is it not very dark, with no brightness in it?” (Amos 5:19,20)
- After God saved Daniel, the king decided to punish the evil people and their families who plotted against the righteous Daniel.
- **5. The declaration of Darius**
- “Then King Darius wrote: ‘To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: peace be multiplied to you. I made a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for He is the living God, and steadfast forever; His kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall endure to the end. He delivers and rescues, and He works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.’” (v. 25-27)
- The declaration of Darius was stronger than the declaration of Nebuchadnezzar (3:29), for it was positive and not negative. Darius was touched by the miracle that had happened, and realized that the true God is the God of Daniel, and that He is the eternal, the immortal, who controls heaven and earth to deliver His believers. But this did not mean that Darius became righteous because he still had the pagan worship in his palace. He glorified God temporarily for a period only, but he remained in paganism.
- The king called God the God of Daniel, as was previously mentioned that God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob. Because the king did not experience the life with God, hence he could not say that God is his God. We are in dire need to enjoy our God, who desires to relate Himself to us, as well as we relate to Him, and say with Jeremiah the prophet, “The Lord is my portion, says my soul..” (Lamen.3:24). We also hear His voice saying, “He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.” (Rev. 21:7)
- The king talks that God is the Savior who saved and saves Daniel, however, he did not enjoy His divine mercies nor taste His fatherhood in his private life.
- He praised God as Maker of wonders and miracles in heaven and earth. He knew all what God did with his fathers and what was done with Daniel, but he did not enjoy these miracles in his inner depth and did not submit his body and soul to God, as earth and heaven which God can move with His mighty hand and declare His wonders!
- Some asked how can the den fit 120 satraps with their wives and children? Those who were thrown were only the few satraps who accused Daniel.
- According to Persian customs, the relatives of the accused person were punished too, that is why the wives and children were thrown too.



- “So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.” (v.28)
- This chapter concludes by saying that Daniel prospered in the reign of Cyrus and Darius. During the kingdoms of the Persians and the Medes, Darius shared with Cyrus in ruling the kingdom. This sentence does not mean that they were two consecutive rulers, and the recent discoveries confirmed that.
- Daniel succeeded during the Chaldeans or the Babylonian kingdom where he was exiled to Babylon and was chosen to serve before the king. (ch.1). God gave him grace in the eyes of Nebuchadnezzar, where he interpreted his dreams, but he was excluded by the envy of the magicians, astrologers and the wise men. During the last days of the life of Belshazzar, the last king of Babylon, he was called to interpret the writing on the wall. When Darius and Cyrus invaded Babylon, they gave Daniel special honor; Darius honored him until he died, and Cyrus the Persian, the nephew of Darius, considered him one of the greatest to him. Thus, God changed the sorrows of Daniel in the captivity to consolation. Daniel succeeded in his daily life and in his work. He served his generation mightily, as well as the following generations from the Gentiles and the Jews, through his prophecies which were mentioned in the second part of this book.
- No doubt that Daniel was sad because he was captive, like many nations which Nebuchadnezzar had dominated. But what made Daniel more sad was that he was deprived of the promised land and from enjoying the holy land and the temple of the Lord. But God had used him for a greater work among the nations and for a better mission which remained for generations. Thus God gave him success according to the divine thought and not according to his human thought. He was deprived of the temple in Jerusalem, but he stood before the new temple of God to open the doors of hope before the Gentiles to enjoy the divine holies. Thus, he was able to sing, “I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.” (Ps. 84:10) Ezekiel the prophet considered him one of the first three great men: Noah, Daniel, and Job. (Ezek. 14:14)

**From Daniel’s Inspiration  
He changed love into heaven!**

- Wonderful is Your care, O the Almighty!
- You allow me to be thrown in the den with Daniel, however, you change the den into paradise!
- You grant me to see Your angels, who minister unto us for salvation and love to work for the sake of Your kingdom inside us!
- May You throw me in the den, but may You shut the mouths of the hungry lions so they would not devour me.
- In my perplexity, I see that all are against me, but I see, even among the unbelievers, Darius the faithful king! I am ashamed of his sincerity and his confidence in You! For the sake of Daniel, Darius did not eat until sunset and remained fasting until dawn. He was deprived of his human rights for the sake of his servant Daniel! He could not sleep! At dawn, he hurried to the den!

- With a sorrowful voice, he called Daniel to know who was surrounding him. The God of Daniel is able to save unto the end!
- Darius condemns me! Do I fast and weep for the salvation of my brothers, and for the salvation of the whole world?
- Do I trust that the God of Daniel is able to save? Do I not give my eyes sleep as long as there are souls in the den of invisible lions? Do I wake up early seeking every soul who is drifting away? What do I answer?

## Part II

### Visions and Prophecies

#### Chapter 7 - 12

#### Chapter 7

##### **The four beasts and the small horn**

##### **Nebuchadnezzar's dream and Daniel's vision**

Instead of Daniel's interpretation to the kings' dreams, Daniel was granted a vision interpreted by the angel himself. This vision does not need any historical interpretation because it was interpreted to Daniel.

In general, this vision carries the same meaning of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar mentioned in the second chapter, but with different meanings and some additions. He saw the transfer of the kingdom from the Assyrians to Babylon (612 B.C.), and from Babylon to Persia (year 530 B.C.), and from Persia to Alexander the Great (year 331 B.C.), and from Macedonia to the Roman Empire which started in the year 63 B.C.

Nebuchadnezzar, who represented the natural man, saw the great kingdoms of the world represented in the statue of a great man. The statue was metal with a bronze head. However, Daniel, the spiritual man, saw it represented in four wild hungry beasts talking about the moral issues of the kingdoms of the world. What Nebuchadnezzar saw represented the human vision to the four kingdoms, for they concentrated on wealth, authority, greatness. However, what Daniel saw represented God's outlook to those kingdoms, where he sees them all as wild beasts who want to devour the previous ones. Nebuchadnezzar saw it from the political point of view, whereas Daniel saw it from the spiritual point of view, which is the victory of the kingdom of goodness and the destruction of evil.

Nebuchadnezzar saw Christ as a small stone growing little by little, but Daniel saw him as the glorious son of man (v.13,14) who came to establish His spiritual kingdom in the lives of the people.

Nebuchadnezzar did not see the antichrist, but Daniel saw him as the evil king who will appear at the end of days.

The dream of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel's vision were both recorded to benefit the Jewish nation under captivity, the Babylonians and the future generations. However, this vision, every empire is different from the other, but all share in the violence (four beasts) and the irrationality.

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|---|--------|
| 1. The history of the vision            | v. 1   |
| 2. The big sea                          | v. 2   |
| 3. The first beast: Babylon             | v. 3,4 |
| 4. The second beast: Medes and Persians | v. 5   |
| 5. The third beast: The Greek Empire    | v. 6   |
| 6. The fourth beast: The Roman Empire   | v. 7   |
| 7. The small horn                       | v. 8   |

8. The Ancient of Days	v. 9-12
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12. Daniel's worry	v. 28

### 1. The history of the vision

“In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head while on his bed. Then he wrote down the dream, telling the main facts.” (v. 1)

Daniel was granted this vision during the first year of the reign of King Belshazzar, the last of the Babylonian kings (year 556 - 539 B.C.). From the historical point of view, this chapter comes before chapters five and six, that is the timing of this vision was in the year 555 B.C.

#### 2. The Great Sea

“Daniel spoke saying, “I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea.” (v.2)

By night, that is, before the Sun of Righteousness shone in this world, in the darkness of the evil world, he saw the Great Sea, which we call now the Mediterranean Sea.

1. The boundary of the four great kingdoms was the Mediterranean Sea, and the capital of the last kingdom was Rome, on its coast, thus it is fit that the four animals appear in it.

2. Symbolically, in the Bible, the sea refers to nations, peoples, and gentiles and tongues. (Rev.17:15, Lk. 21:25, Is. 57:20)

3. The great sea with its waves refers to the worrisome state or instability, this was a feature in which the four kingdoms had in common.

Some think that the great sea is not the Mediterranean Sea as mentioned in Isaiah 9:1, but it is the dwelling of Satan, who sends his servants to attack God's kingdom. The sea also refers to unrest and anxiety; that is why in the new heaven and the new earth, there was no sea. (Rev. 21:1)

Some Jews see that the dragon, symbol of Satan, lives in the sea (Is.27:1), and that the watchful church which works with the mighty hand of God, dries the sea and attacks the dragon. “Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord! Awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Are you not the arm that cut Rahab apart, and wounded the serpent? Are you not the One who dried up the sea, the waters and the great deep; that made the depths of the sea a road for the redeemed to cross river?” (Is. 51:9,10) That is why she sings saying, “You divided the sea by Your strength; You broke the heads of the sea serpents in the waters. You broke the heads of Leviathan in pieces, and gave him as food to the people inhabiting the wilderness. (Is. 74: 13,14)

#### The four winds of heaven

These refer to the hidden stewardship of God; the wind refers to the Holy Spirit who works in secret (John 3:8), for in the Hebrew and Greek languages, “wind” and “spirit” are the same word. The vision that the prophet saw came from heaven, with God's permission, where God's Spirit works for the kingdom of heaven, even if the events seem to be bitter or against God's work.

St. Jerome said: {The four winds of heaven were angelic powers, and this came in accordance with what was mentioned in the book of Deuteronomy. “When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel.” (Deur. 32:8) The sea covered by bitter waves, refers to this world, as the Lord explained about the net cast in the sea (Matt. 13). Also, He was described as the king of all creatures in the sea, as mentioned in Psalm 73. Also in Amos, it was said, “And thought they hide themselves on top of Carmel, from there I will search and take them; though they hide from My sight at the bottom of the sea, from there I will command the serpent, and it shall bite them.” (Amos 9:3) The four winds of heaven on the great sea are called the “winds of heaven”, for every angel does what his obligations are within limits. }

Probably what he means by the four winds of heaven that what will happen regarding the four empires are hanging in the winds, which means that these kingdoms have no stability, and no one can change the events which God had declared.

### **3. The First Beast: Babylon**

“And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other. The first one was like a lion, and had eagle’s wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man’s heart was given to it.” (v. 3,4)

In verse 17, the four beasts refer to four kings, whereas in verse 23, the four beasts refer to the four kingdoms. It is obvious that every kingdom was known by one king. Nebuchadnezzar represented the kingdom of Babylon, while Cyrus represented the kingdom of Persia, and Alexander the Great represented the Greek Kingdom (Macedonina), and the Roman kingdom was referred to by the beast in Revelation chapter 13.

The Babylonian kingdom was represented by a lion with eagles’s wings, that is, he is distinguished by power and the speed of motion, for the Babylonian kingdom dominated the whole world in a very short period. In the book of Ezekiel, Babylon was referred to by a flying eagle, who quickly devours its prey.

St. Jerome said: {The fact that Babylon had the wings of an eagle refers to the pride of the mighty kingdom and its ruler, as was mentioned in the book of Isaiah, “I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.” (Is. 14:14) That is why it was written that “If you are elevated like the eagle, I will lower you.” (v. 4) As the lion is like the king of the beasts, so the eagle is like the king of the birds. }

Daniel saw that the wings of the Babylonian kingdom were cut off, that is the kingdom started to decline; it became unable to fly.

When one is known by his bravery, it is said that he has a heart like a lion or “lion hearted” like King Richard. Here, we find a lion with a man’s heart. Outwardly, he appears to be as a brave lion among the beasts, but inwardly, he is full of fear as an unweaponed man among wild beasts. This was what happened with Babylon during the days of Belshazzar.

St. Jerome translates the Aramaic word “aryeh” as a lioness. He said: {The kingdom of Babylon was not called lion but lioness, because of its fierceness and brutality, and moreover

because of its indulgence in lusts and luxury.) He also said: {The authors of natural history confirm that the lionesses are more fierce than the lions, especially when they nurse their cubs and they are very lustful in intercourse.}

St. Hippolytus of Rome said: {When talking about a lioness coming from the sea, he means the kingdom of Babylon, and it is the same as the head of the golden statue. The wings of the eagle refer to King Nebuchadnezzar who was very boastful of his glory against God. Then, his wings were plucked off, that is, his glory was destroyed, for he was expelled from his kingdom. The words “It was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man’s heart was given to it,” mean that he returned to himself and realized that he was a mere person, giving God the glory.}

St. Jerome said: {If we understand this about Nebuchadnezzar, it is very obvious that after losing his kingdom, his power was removed from him., then he returned to his original state and learned not only to be a man instead of a lioness, but to regain his heart whom he had lost. This can be applied to the kingdom of the Chaldeans, that is, after the killing of Belshazzar, and the Medes and the Persians dominated the empire, the Babylonians realized that they were nothing.}

#### The Babylonian Kingdom

1. Nebuchadnezzar the first established it after he rebelled against the Assyrians in the North and it became independent and he established the new Babylonian kingdom. In the year 612 B.C., he destroyed Nineveh and burned it.

B. Nebuchadnezzar (606 - 562 B. C.) invaded many places and established the city of Babylon and the temples of Merdouch and invaded Jerusalem three times (606, 599, 587 B.C.). In the last time, he destroyed the temple and it became desolate, and offering sacrifices ceased during the captivity.

C. Nabonidus (562- 560 B.C.) forgave Yehoyakin, the king of Judah.

D. Nabonidus (560 - 556 B.C.) is the brother-in-law of the previous king.

E. Nabonidus, the father of Belshazzar, (556 -539 B. C.), in his days, the Babylonian kingdom was abolished and he surrendered the kingdom to his son. When Cyrus invaded Babylon, he killed Belshazzar but his father remained outside Babylon and abandoned the political work until his death.

#### **4. The second beast: Medes and Persia**

“And suddenly another beast, a second like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And they said thus to it: Arise, devour much flesh!” (v. 5)

The most important feature of a bear is his power and violence and timidity. It was known that the kingdoms of Medes and Persia did not conquer by military skill nor by swift motion, but through invading the countries by large numbers of army. In the battle of Ahasuerus against the Greeks, he fought against 2.5 million from the allies. His army had about 5 million; upon entering a city, they would demolish it because of their multitude. They would cause famine because they would capture all the food supplies for the needs of the army.

It was raised up on one side, for the kingdom was made up of two nations: the Medes and the Persians. But after a short while, the Persians dominated over the Medes. St. Jerome said that the raising up of the bear on one side meant that although the Persian Kingdom was very fierce with other nations, yet it was gentle with the Jews. It treated other nations different from the Jews, that is, it was raised on one side.

The three ribs between its teeth are the main Babylonian cities, Babylon, Ecbatana and Borsippa. These cities were invaded by the army of Cyrus. Probably, they referred to the kingdoms of Lydia, Babylon and Egypt. St. Hippolytus of Rome said that these referred to three nations: Medes, Persians, and Babylon, where they all met under the Persian Empire.

The kings of Persia were:

A. Cyrus II (559 - 530 B.C.) : Isaiah the prophet called him Cyrus the anointed of the Lord because he forgave the Jews and issued a decree to return from the captivity of Babylon, during the era of Zorbabel when he gave him permission to rebuild the temple and restored all the vessels of the temple, which Nebuchadnezzar had stolen. Cyrus started his reign in the northern part in the year 559 B.C., and he was able to add Babylon, which was in the southern part in the year 539 B.C., after he conquered Belshazzar, the last king of Babylon who invaded many places in the Arab island.

B. Cambyses (530 - 522 B.C.)

C. Pseudo-Smerdis (522 B.C.)

D. Darius I (522 -486 B.C.), the book of Esther.

E. Artaxerxes (465 - 424 B.C.) , the book of Nehemiah.

F. Xerxes II (424 - 423 B.C.)

G. Darius II (423 - 404 B.C.)

H. Artaxerxes II (404 - 359 B.C.)

I. Artaxerxes III (359 - 338 B.C.)

J. Arses (338 - 336 B.C.)

K. Darius III (337 - 336 B.C.)

### **5. The Third Beast: The Greek Empire**

“After this I looked, and there was another like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird.. The beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it.” (v.6)

Although the leopard is smaller than the lion, but he had four wings and four heads.

Since the Greek Empire was less than the Babylonian Empire like the leopard being smaller than the lion, however, Alexander the Great was more swift than the Babylonian emperors, that is why the leopard had four wings as if flying in four directions of the world.

The four wings refer to the multiplied speed and victory, for in ten years, Alexander the Great, the founder of the Greek Empire in the year 333 B.C., conquered all the Persian powers and dominated all the world, including Egypt and Palestine. The four heads refer to the four divisions of the kingdom, after the death of Alexander the Great, when he was 34 years old. His four leaders were Selucas, king of Syria, Batlimus, king of Egypt, Israel and Palestine, the third leader over Macedonia, and the fourth over Thrace.

St. Jerome said: {The victory of Alexander the Great was so fast, for he conquered all the way from the Illyricum to the Adriatic Sea, to the Indian Ocean and the Ganges River. He did not only enter these battles, but he mightily conquered and in four years, he ruled all Asia and part of Europe.}

In spite of his genius and military ability, however, all the authority he had was given from God. St. Jerome said: {He was given authority; this statement reveals that the empire was not due to his bravery but to the will of God.}

## **6. The Fourth Beast: The Roman Empire**

This chapter mentioned the Roman Empire, which was symbolized by a beast which Daniel could not compare. Nothing could be more violent and brutal than this empire.

St. Jerome said: {In the previous animals, we saw different symbols for terror, but all these were concentrated in one animal.}

{Probably, that was to show how terrified the animal was, to demonstrate how fierce the Romans were; they were like a wild animal who crushed the rest, like the Romans torturing the Gentiles and submitting them under slavery and taxes.}

The Roman Empire was established in the year 63 B.C., and extended until it occupied both kingdoms of Babylon and Persia and Egypt in the year 47 B.C.

“After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.” (v. 7)

This beast was much stronger than all the others, dreadful, terrible, and exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth and brass toes.. (The Septuagint) This corresponds to the feet of the statue which Nebuchadnezzar had seen, some were iron and some were pottery. (Dan. 12:33) St. Hippolytus of Rome said that the toes were made of iron and pottery, correspond to the ten horns of the beast, which symbolize the ten kings of this kingdom.

This beast was dreadful and terrible and very strong, which could not be compared with the previous kings. Alexander the Great conquered most of the countries of the world, yet his desire was to be famous and not to dominate. When his dreams were fulfilled, he granted freedom to all the countries under his domain. However, the Romans dominated the world and became harsh rulers; they subdued Asia Minor, Syria, Cilicia, Greece, Macedonia, Spain, Ghal, and some parts of Germany. All the countries of the Mediterranean, including Egypt, submitted to the Romans; for they submitted to the taxes, and all the Roman laws. They left some rulers in Asia Minor, but they were spies for the Romans. Julius Caesar was the first to enter Great Britain after subduing El-Ghal, that is why Daniel called it the dreadful and very strong beast.

It had huge iron teeth which symbolized its fierce attacks and its strong greed. The best crops of the world and its resources were transferred to Rome, and it still was not satisfied. The Roman Empire never cared about the needs of the colonies but on the contrary, it crushed them. The emperors used to send ambassadors, with the excuse of keeping the security of the countries, but their main goal was to spy and transfer all the valuable things.



Some critics think that this beast refer to the Selukians, and its ten heads refer to: Selukus I, Antichus Soter, Antiochus II, Selukus II, Selukus III, Antiochus III, Selukus IV, Heliodorus, Patlimus VI, Demetrius, and the strong horn is Antiochus Abifanios who crushed the last three kings. However, the correct opinion is that the fourth beast refers to the Roman Empire. He is a strange beast because the Roman Empire did not impose its culture over its colonies, but all what concerned it was its military power and collecting taxes. It was characterized by its administration and left each country with its own culture.

Some critics say that the ten horns refer to the ten periods of persecution of the Romans. Others see that they represent kingdoms which will exist during the second stage of history.

Some Jews think that these mean that ten kings will rule Rome, but it is obvious that the number 10 in the Holy Bible means abundance. The Roman emperors appointed governors over the colonies, one over Syria, another over Macedonia, another over Spain, etc.. and they had rights like the kings. They could do what ever they like but they had to submit to the emperor, who was like a god, and they had to obey his laws.

### **7. The Small Horn**

“I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words.” (v. 8)

Porphiry thinks that the small horn which appeared after the ten horns was Antiochus Abiphanus, and that the three horns which were plucked of the ten were Patlimus VI (Philometer) and Batlimus VII (Euergetes) and Artaraxias the king of Armenia.

St. Jerome refuted that by saying that some Christian critics said that the small horn was Satan or the devil or the son of perdition who dared to sit in the temple of God making himself like God. (2Thess. 2) He also said that if the small horn was Antiochus whom Judas the Maccabite had conquered, this would be impossible for how can he say that Judas will be coming on the clouds as the son of man and that he comes before the Ancient of Days? How can he grant authority and royal power and that all nations and tribes worship him and that his dominion is everlasting? If he refers to the Macabites, then let those who defend him explain how can the kingdom of the Macabites have the touch of blood?

John Calvin mentioned that some had thought that the small horn was the Pope of Rome or the appearance of the Turks. But this opinion was refuted. He mentioned that the small horn was Julius Caesar or any other Ceasar like Augustus or Nebarius or Kaligiola or Claudius or Nero or others. The senate shares in the authority of the Caesars, to limit their authority, that is why they were compared with the small horn.

Since the visions and the prophecies revealed the coming of the Lord Jesus to establish His spiritual kingdom in the hearts and abolishing the violence from the hearts, then the devil will attack the Lord. This attack becomes very apparent especially when the Anti-Christ will come. Daniel prophesied about this when he mentioned the small horn; also the Lord Jesus talked about this in his speech about the end of the world (Matt. 24), also St. Paul (2 Thess.3:8), and also St. John the Beloved. (Rev. 13).

The small horn symbolizes the anti-Christ. This was mentioned in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. (Matt. 24, 2 Thess.2:2-8, Dan. 7) to emphasize that although the Word of God is surrounded by many tribulations, yet the end result is the victory of the divine plan for the kingdom of God. If Satan and all his powers attack the kingdom, still the saints will reign with God, not on earth but in heaven.

The characteristics of the small horn were:

A. A little one, mysterious and violent (v. 8): He suddenly appears and conquers kingdoms and establish a kingdom which resist God. (v. 25) and he terrified all. (v. 28)

B. He is like another king who has the power of Satan and makes himself god.(v.8, Rev. 13:2, 2 Thess.2:9)

C. He conquers three kings (v. 8,24)

D. He is very smart and knows how to plan for he has many eyes.

E. He blasphemes and resists God.

F. He looks exciting. (v.20)

G. His kingdom is temporary for a time and times and a half time; he thinks that he can conquer the kingdom of God and can change times (v.25 , as if he does not know about the divine plan which conquers all evil.

H. The secret of the victory is the advent of the Lord Jesus:.

His first coming was when he destroyed the devil by His cross.

His second coming is to reign with the saints in heaven after conquering the antichrist.

The coming of the Lord in the heart is for conquering the evil kingdom inside.

## **8. The Ancient of Times**

“I watched till thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire; a fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.” (v. 9,10)

After talking about the four empires which ended by the coming of the Lord Christ to establish His kingdom in the hearts, he talked about condemning those wicked empires. He saw the eternal God sitting on the throne and He had dethroned all the empires with their authorities, for He had prolonged their lives for a season and a time. (v.12)

He states that God is a Judge, whom he calls the “Ancient of Days” to assure that all the past events are not overlooked. He is the eternal Judge, but because He is patient, He waits for the appropriate time. Since He created us, He offers us many opportunities to enjoy His mercies. Since our fall, He waits for our return, but time will come when He will sit on the seat of judgment to judge according to His justice and righteousness.

Some see that the term “thrones were put in place”, in Hebrew means that thrones of kings were removed so that the King of kings would sit to judge. Others see that that this term means that God would sit on His throne surrounded by the heavenly host and they would rejoice by the victory of the believers and the destruction of Satan and his followers.

Probably the thrones here refer to what the Lord Jesus promised His disciples that they would judge the twelve tribes of Israel. God the Almighty would judge all human beings, whether the victorious righteous or the wicked who had no excuse.

The attributes of God the Judge here corresponds to what was mentioned in the Revelation (Rev. 1, 4:2, etc.). The Lord Jesus said that He is the Judge of the Gentiles. (Matt. 25: 31-46)

St. Clement of Alexandria said: {When man approaches his end, he becomes more righteous; God is the eternal, ancient of times and the oldest of all things.}

St. Jerome said: {God's judgment subdues pride, that is why the Roman Empire will be destroyed, for it is the horn which utters haughty words.}

St. Origen said: {When Daniel described God's judgment, he referred to the books which were opened. (Dan. 7, 10) No doubt that these books contained sins of people. We are the ones who write these books which will judge us on the last Day.}

No one can see God, but He declares Himself to us according to our ability and in a manner that will edify us. Here the revelation presents the conflict between the kingdom of the Lord Christ with His saints and the kingdom of the anti-christ. God appeared in a white robe, white like snow and his hair like pure wool. White refers to purity and the heavenly life. Our weapon in the battle is our enjoyment with the pure heavenly life, lifting our hearts to heaven and being occupied with the eternities and keeping ourselves pure.

Talking about the fiery inflamed throne and the chariots mean that our depths are changed to a spiritual throne inflamed with the fire of the divine love, with no laziness nor negligence but with inflamed spirits like the Cherubim.

In front of Him flows a river which quenches our thirst, not with water but with holy fire, thus changing our depths to a paradise carrying the fruits of the inflamed spirit. If the anti-christ is scary and dreadful, yet the children of God, in whom the heavenly river flows, become so powerful before whom the devil cannot stand!.

Then, he declares that innumerable heavenly host, thousands and ten thousands, desire to serve Him. The heavenly host with the believers stand before Him. The believers have the following traits: heavenly thoughts and purity, the fire of love and the inflamed zeal, the fire of the daring heart which never fails. They stand in countless numbers.

St. Origen mentioned the Book of Life in a singular form. Also St. John the Beloved said the same thing in the Revelation (Rev. 5: 1-5, 3:7). Moses said the same thing: "Yet now, if You will forgive their sin, but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your Book which You have written." (Ex. 32:32) However, the plural form was used to refer to the books which record those who are kept for eternal judgment.

St. Jerome said: {The closed books will show an accountability of all our performances, every word or thought or even any idle word (Matt. 12:36). Some think that there are real books in heaven in which our sins are recorded; however these books are our consciences which will be revealed at that Day, and each one will give an account of himself.}

St. Jerome said: {The consciences of people and their deeds, whether good or evil, are revealed before everyone at that Day. One of these books is the Book of Life which contains the names of the living, while the other is the evil book which contains the names of the accuser

of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night (Rev. 12:10). This is the earthly book about which the prophet Jeremiah said, “shall be written in the earth” (Jer. 17:13)

### **9. One like the Son of Man**

“I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and a glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed.” (v. 13,14)

He comes to reign forever, where the saints enjoy fellowship of glory with Him. Tertullian the scholar, in his debate with the Jews, clarified that Daniel had prophesied that there are two comings for the Lord Jesus; He comes as a small rock which knocks the statue of temporal kingdoms, He comes incarnate emptying Himself, however in His Second Coming, He, in His heavenly royal glory, will come on the clouds.

St. Eusebius said: {He is the Son of God, He is the Word of the Father, He is the Son of Man. He was born from St. Mary, and He became the Son of Man.

St. Hippolytus of Rome said: {All authority given by the Father to the Son was revealed to those in heaven, and to those on earth, and to those under the earth and He is the Judge of everyone.} (Phil.2:10)

{He is the Lord to those in heaven for He is the Word born before all ages; and He is the Lord to those on earth for by His death, He conquered death and preached the Gospel to the souls of the saints (1 Pet. 3:19)}

### **10. The explanation of the revelation**

Daniel was worried when he saw this vision, so he approached one of those standing, most probably an angel, asking him to give him an explanation of what he had seen. However, Daniel was peaceful when he realized that all these kingdoms, with their brutality and dominion, will one day end with the kingdom of the saints in heaven, which is preceded by the great tribulation of the anti-christ.

“I, Daniel, was grieved in my spirit within my body, and the visions of my hand troubled me. I came near to one of those who stood by, and I asked him the truth of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things: Those great beasts which are four, are four kings which arise out of the earth. But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.” (v. 15 – 18)

The prophet Daniel saw all the heavenly host standing before the throne serving Him joyfully, for it is written that thousand ministered to Him and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him (v.10). This motivates us to serve Him like the heavenly host.

St. Clement of Rome said: {As we gather together in harmony, let us cry with one voice to become partakers of His great glorious promises. He is our pride, let us submit to His will and realize that all the angels are assembled to minister to Him.}

St. Gregory of Nyssa said: This picture motivates us to desire to be like the angels through the redeeming act of Christ. He said, {We live with Christ because we are crucified with Him,

glorified with Him and we reign with Him. The result of our presence with Him is our transfer from the level of the human nature and human dignity to that of the angels, thus Daniel said that thousands stood before Him. }

St. Clement of Alexandria said: {It is appropriate for those who are pure to put simple white clothes. Very clearly, Daniel said, “I watched till thrones were put in place and the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow.” (v.9) In the revelation, the Lord appeared in such clothes. Also the saints appeared in such clothes.“...I saw the souls of those who had been slain for the Word of God... and a white robe was given to each of them...” (Rev. 6:9,11) The white color is the natural color for the truth.

### **11. The kingdom of anti-christ and the kingdom of the saints:**

“Then I wished to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its nails of bronze, which devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled the residue with its feet; and about the ten horns that were on its head, and about the other horn which came up, before which three fell, namely that horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance was greater than his fellows. I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them.” (v. 19 – 21)

Daniel was eager to know the secret of this strange beast He repeated his description because he realized how serious his violent act.

The other king beside the ten kings is the small horn who knows the anti christ. He reigns for a time and times and half a time. (v.25)

St. Jerome thinks that a time means a year, that is, the anti-christ will reign for three and a half years. (v. 16-23)

St. Jerome said: {The anti-christ will stir a war against the saints and will glorify himself, attempting to change God’s laws and the holy rituals. }

The four kingdoms are earthly kingdoms, “all are from the dust, and all return to dust.” (Ecc. 3:20) But the saints will be granted not an earthly kingdom but a heavenly one. }

“Thus, he said, ‘the fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all other kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, trample it and break it in pieces. The ten horns are ten kings who shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them; He shall be different from the first ones, and shall subdue three kings. He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time. But the court shall be seated, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and destroy it forever. Then the kingdom and dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.’” (v. 23-27)

### **12. Daniel’s worry**

“This is the end of the account. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly troubled me, and my countenance changed; but I kept the matter in my heart.” (v. 28)

Daniel was incapable of completely interpreting the vision, therefore he kept it in his heart.

### **From the Inspiration of Daniel (7)**

#### **A Glorious and Eternal Kingdom**

The world is like a raging sea, out of which comes wild beasts to devour and dominate! But your kingdom is definitely coming to reign over your saints forever, not on transient earth but on new eternal heaven!

This is the last hour! You are certainly coming to rule! The anti-christ is entering a decisive battle, it is a battle of life or death!

May the evil be mortified and the darkness be abolished, and may the kingdom of light shine inside us!

May the anti-christ come. He is very violent and destroyer to the souls! But You are much stronger and greater! May Your church be protected until the end of the ages!

# Chapter 8

## The Ram and the Goat

In the last year of the reign of Belshazzar, when the Babylonian kingdom was about to end, God showed him a new vision about the destruction of old kingdoms, so he may not be astonished when he sees the destruction of Babylon. Many thought that Belshazzar will mock Cyrus and Darius, and their attack to Babylon does not deserve the concern of Belshazzar. But God revealed, more than once, to Daniel the destruction of Babylon then Persia. Daniel enjoyed seeing a new vision which confirmed what came in the first vision and which explained it in more detail, by revealing the extremely evil role which Antiochus Euphianes played in the Old Testament, and the antichrist in the end of days. This had weakened Daniel and made him perplexed. St. Hippolytus of Rome said that this vision was for the edification of the believers.

- |                                  |         |
|----------------------------------|---------|
| 1. Introduction of the vision    | v. 1-2  |
| 2. The vision of the ram         | v. 3-4  |
| 3. The vision of the goat        | v. 5-8  |
| 4. The small horn                | v. 9-14 |
| 5. The explanation of the vision | v.15-27 |

### Introduction of the vision

This vision was fulfilled just before the fall of Babylon, for Daniel saw himself in Shushan, the capital of Elam, west of Persia and east of Babylon and south of Medes.

“In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared to me, to me, Daniel, after the one that appeared to me the first time.” (v.1)

Daniel was granted to see what will happen, to be far sighted and see things which no one beside him can see, and which some may even think of as impossible. This gift is granted to the faithful soul which is thrown in God’s bosom, so He lifts her as if with the wings of a dove, to see what is beyond the times.

This vision was seen two years after the first one, after the fall of Babylon (Dan. 5), thus it ignored the vision of the Babylonian Empire and revealed the kingdoms of Medes and Persians (the ram) which the Macedonian kingdom (the goat) attacked.

“I saw in the vision, and it so happened while I was looking, that I was in Shushan, the citadel, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in the vision that I was by the River Ulai.” (v.2)

The city of Shushan or Susa is described as a fortress and was the capital of Persia. It became like Babylon as the capital of the Persian Empire, which is located 250 miles east of Babylon. One was used in winter and the other in the summer and it became the capital of Cyrus. Daniel was in the palace in Babylon, but because he saw himself in the vision by the River Ulai, some thought that Daniel was in the city of Shushan. But this is unacceptable,

because it is impossible for Daniel the captive to leave Babylon and go to Shushan in Persia. However, that is how he saw himself in the vision. Perhaps God had permitted so that he may know that as he served God's people during the Babylonian reign, he will serve him also during the Persian reign. Most probably the palace in Shushan was not built yet, for the Persian Empire had not flourished yet.

### **The vision of the ram**

In the previous vision, Daniel saw 4 animals, but here he saw 2 animals, the first a ram with 2 horns.

Babylon was about to collapse in front of the Persians and Medes; Daniel saw a ram standing by the river. The ram had two horns, one was higher than the other. St. Hyppolitus of Rome said: {He means by this ram which attacks west, north, and south, King Darius, the king of the Persians who conquered all the Gentiles, for it is written that no animal stood before him.}

“Then I lifted my eyes and saw, and there, standing beside the river, was a ram which had two horns, and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last. I saw the ram pushing westward, northward, and southward, so that no beast could withstand him; nor was there any that could deliver from his hand, but he did according to his will and became great.” (v. 3,4)

Since Daniel felt that he was called to see divine visions, he lifted his eyes to see. The vision indicated the appearance of the kingdoms of the Persians and the Medes and the Greeks. In its essence, the vision touches the eternity of the believers and their enjoyment of what is above. We cannot ignore the history and the time, however, God lifts up our eyes to see His hidden plan which works beyond history.

In great accuracy, the kingdom of Persia was likened by the ram with two horns, one higher than the other, because Persia became better than Medes. Cyrus the Persian married his cousin, Cyaxares. Darius had a weak personality compared to Cyrus the Persian who surpassed his father-in-law. However, he left him as a partner in the rule, thus the prophecy was literally fulfilled.

The two horns here correspond to the two sides of the bear in the previous revelation where it was raised up on one side (7:5), and correspond to the shoulders of the great metal statue (Colossus) in Nebuchadnezzar's dream that was mentioned in the second chapter. The pushing of the ram symbolizes the fast victories of the Persians.

Persia was likened to the ram and the other kings who were likened to the animals, were not able to withstand him.

Marcellinus said that the king of Persia used to put on his head a head of a ram instead of a crown.

### **The vision of a goat**

“And as I was considering, suddenly a male goat came from the west, across the surface of the whole earth, without touching the ground; and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. Then he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing beside the river, and ran at him with furious power.” (5,6)



The ram appeared with power and authority pushing every animal he meets, then an enemy appeared, which was the goat with a notable horn between his eyes. The prophet saw him coming from the west, where Greece is located west of Persia. The goat was very swift so that his legs did not touch the ground (5.). He and his army were like a bird flying in the air, not like one coming on ground or in the navy. The kingdom of Persia was compared to the ram while the Greek Empire was compared to the goat; for the goat is swifter than the ram, and thus was Alexander the Great, faster in his movements.

The ram was conquered and his two horns were broken and he fell on the ground, and there was no power in the ram to withstand the goat. (v.7)

“And I saw him confronting the ram; he was moved with rage against him; attacked the ram, and broke his two horns. There was no power in the ram to withstand him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled him; and there was no one that could deliver the ram from his hand.” (v.7)

This was a true vision for it was fulfilled after 200 years. Here God revealed to his prophet the victory of Alexander the Great who dominated the whole East. He went through many battles especially against Persia which had dominated many countries and which was compared to the ram who pushed in all directions.

The goat reached the ram, which no one had expected to happen, for the great cities were fortified, especially there was a big distance between Persia and Greece. However, Alexander the Great conquered Persia very fast; he conquered Darius in two battles. He was killed in the second battle.

Some historians said that Alexander the Great was called to be the son of the god Jupiter Amon who was symbolized by a goat. Many historical pictures were discovered which showed a goat with one horn, as a symbol of the old Greek armies.

“Therefore, the male goat grew very great; but when he became strong, the large horn was broken, and in place of it four notable ones came up toward the four winds of heaven.” (v. 8)

St. Hyppolitus of Rome said: {What he meant by the male goat was Alexander the Macedonian coming from Greece. Alexander went to war against Darius and conquered him and all his army and became the ruler over all the kingdom. After the goat was glorified, his horn was broken and four horns appeared instead. This was to symbolize Alexander the Great who became ruler over all Persia, but after he died, his kingdom was divided among four rulers. }

The goat became very great, but something strange happened. The large horn was broken and in place of it, four notable ones came up toward the four winds of heaven. (v.8) When Alexander the Great died, his kingdom was divided into four: Macedonia, Turkey, Syria, and Egypt. The historians differ about the cause of his death. Some say that he died because of illness, others say that he died because someone poisoned him. Before his death, he was asked whom does he want to succeed him. In his pride, he couldn't find anyone that deserves that position. He had two sons, one from Roxana, the daughter of Darius, and he had a brother called Aridaeus, but he thought that both of them do not deserve to succeed him, as if he was indispensable. When he became unable to talk, he took off his royal ring and gave it to Perdicas. After his death, there were many attacks and fifteen of the generals were killed.

Cassander, the son of Antipatir, became king over Macedonia, after the killing of Olympus the mother of Alexander, his sister, his son, his wife Roxana and many relatives. The leaders lost trust in one another, and each one was afraid of the other, and the spirit of treason prevailed against them. Then fifteen years after his death, the kingdom was divided into four divisions:

1. Macedonia; where Cassander, the son of Antipatir, ruled. Some parts of Thrace with some cities of Greece joined it.
2. Syria, Babylon and all the kingdoms of the East: where Seleucus Nicanor ruled.
3. Asia Minor: where Antigonus ruled. Phrygia and Paphlagonia and all the Asian regions joined it, then 5 or 6 of the generals were killed.
4. Egypt: Ptolemy the son of Lagos ruled.
5. There were the four notable horns which prevailed in the East, West, North, and South.

#### **4. The Small Horn**

“And out of them came a little horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Glorious Land. And it grew up to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the ground, and trampled them. He even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the daily sacrifices were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down. Because of transgression, an army was given over to the horn to oppose the daily sacrifices; and he cast truth down to the ground. He did all this and prospered. Then, I heard a holy one speaking; and another holy one said to that certain one who was speaking, ‘How long will the vision be, concerning the daily sacrifices and the transgression of desolation, the giving of both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled under foot?’ And he said to me, ‘For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed.’” (v. 9-14)

Who is this small horn except the antichrist of the Old Testament, Antiochus Apiphanus, who is a symbol of the antichrist in the end of the days. He was called the small horn, not because he was compared to the rest of the kings in his era, but because no one expected him to reign after his father, but he ruled because of his craftiness. Epiphanus ruled over Syria (the kingdom of the North for the Greek Empire), in the year 175 B.C.. He talked about this in more details in chapter 11: 21-35. He was called the most defiled person in the Old Testament who persecuted the Jews. After the death of his brother, he met the people and pretended to be very gentle, so he deceived them, so they appointed him king. He killed a pig and sprinkled his blood on the altar and on the holy vessels and prohibited offering the daily sacrifices, lest they be killed.

St. Hyppolitus of Rome said: {As Antiochus Apiphanus conquered Egypt, he went to Jerusalem and entered the temple and took all the vessels, the golden lampstand, the sanctuary, and the table, and he made a big slaughter on earth, as it was written, The sanctuary was trampled by foot for 1300 days. The holy temple became a desolate for three and a half years, thus fulfilling the 1300 days. When Judas the Maccabite appeared after the death of his father Mattias, he conquered Antiochus, saved the city, sanctified the holy places and restored the Law.

He went toward the south, that is, toward Egypt. He wanted to occupy Egypt, but the Senate sent him Pompilius so he may leave Egypt. Due to his craftiness, he asked the prophet to

give him some time until he leaves Egypt, however, he told him, “You have to give me an answer, and do not deceive me by saying that you are asking for a counsel.” He had to leave Egypt, however, he entered into war against Ptolemy Philopator, the king of Egypt.

He headed toward the east, for his kingdom extended until Ptolemais, and in Persia, he fought those who rebelled against him.

Then toward the glorious land, that is the promised land “Canaan”. As it was written in the book of Jeremiah, “...And give you a pleasant land, a beautiful heritage of the hosts of nations?” (Jer. 3:19) I gave them this land which I had sworn to give it to their fathers, a land that overflows milk and honey. (Jer. 31:22) Also, it was called the glorious land because the glorious temple of the Lord was in Judah. Antiochus fought the Jews and defiled their temple.

Antiochus or Antichrist bragged over all the hosts, and he cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the ground (v.10), thus God revealed to his prophet Daniel that his church is heaven and that the believers are the host of Christ and His stars.

As Antiochus attacked the church of the Old Testament and killed many, likewise the antichrist will exert all his efforts to attack the stars of the New Testament. The Lord Jesus said about His second coming, “Whether the Son of Man will find the faith on earth?” And that the anti-christ will deceive even the chosen ones.

The matter does not stop even at the stars of the heaven and its host but the anti-christ tries to brag over the chief priest, whom Antiochus had persecuted. St. Jerome said that he meant by the chief host God Himself. Antiochus had defiled all the temple and prohibited offering the permanent offering “endelekhismos”, thus annulling the temple of God. St. Jerome said that Antiochus had done that, not because of his bravery but because of the sins of the people. This symbolizes what the anti-christ will do, making himself a god.

Moreover, he did not only oppose the worship of God but he defiled the divine teachings, for he said that he cast truth down to the ground (v.12). Thus, the vision correlated between the worship and the correct teachings, for the devil can cast truth down to the ground but he cannot cast it from heaven. Hence, anyone living in heaven carries the truth in him beside the spiritual worship.

Since Daniel’s heart was raised up to heaven, he saw an angel asking another angel. Some think that he was asking the Word of God: “How long will the vision be, concerning the daily sacrifices and the transgression of desolation?” (v.13) The angels do not know all the mysteries (Eph. 3:10), but due to their love to the human race and their longing to the perfect glory, they ask about things which pertain to the church. They feared lest the tribulation may prolong and the believers may lose their faith and their crowns.

### **The scholars differed about the small horn.**

Some think that he is the small horn mentioned in chapter 7.

Others say that they are different, for the small horn mentioned in chapter 7 refers to the anti-christ, while the small horn mentioned in this chapter refers to Antiochus Apiphanus, who was the anti-christ of the Old Testament.

Another opinion mediates between the two previous opinions by saying that the small horn in chapter 8 refers to Antiochus who in turn refers to the anti-christ. In chapter 7, he refers to the anti-christ in a direct way, but in chapter 8, in an indirect way.

Regarding the period of cleansing the sanctuary which is 2300 days, St. Jerome says that this represents 6 years and 3 months, which is the period since Antiochus attacked the worship until Judas the Maccabite conquered him. St. Hippolytus of Rome thinks that 2300 mornings and evenings mean 1150 days (2300 divided by 2) where the morning and evening daily sacrifices were prohibited during the persecution; this is equal to three and a half years, where Judas the Maccabite cleansed the temple, after Antiochus had defiled it.

Many interpreters think that 2300 mornings and evenings confirm that they were true days, which correspond to 6 years, 4 months, and 20 days. A year in the Holy Bible is equal to 360 days, a month is equal to 30 days. This is the period which started from August 5, 71 B.C., that is, since the desolation, where there were conspiracies with Jason the chief priest, and the king promised to pay him 260 silver coins. He permitted him to build a store to teach the Jewish youth the pagan customs and call them the Antiochians. Thus the priests despised the temple of God and the sacrifices, and were occupied with the Greek sports. As it was written in the book of Maccabees, "In those days lawless men came forth from Israel and misled many saying, 'Let us and make a covenant with the Gentiles round about us, for since we separated from them, many evils have come upon us. This proposal pleased them, and some of the people eagerly went to the king. He authorized them to observe the ordinances of the Gentiles. So they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem, according to Gentile custom, and removed the marks of circumcision and abandoned the holy covenant. They joined with the Gentiles and sold themselves to do evil.'" (1Macc. 1:11-15) According to Daniel's prophecy since this incident to the restoration of the temple and purification of the sanctuary on December 25, 165, this period is 2300 days, that is, this constitutes the period where all the catastrophes had befallen the temple during the days of Antiochus Apiphanus, since the desolation until the end of the period of annulling the permanent offering, when Judas the Macabite saved the Jews from Antiochus.

The grievous events which had encountered Jerusalem during that time were as follows:

Appointing of Jason a chief priest and his participation with Antiochus in pagan defilement.

Antiochus attack over Jerusalem and his entering the temple and plundering all the vessels and offering a pig on the altar. (1Mac. 1:20-28).

After two years when the news of his false death was announced, the Jews rejoiced. Apolenis, one of his commanders, was sent, so he burned the city and destroyed its walls and built a citadel on a mountain overlooking the temple. (1 Mac. 2:29, 2 Mac. 5:11-14)

Officially prohibiting offering sacrifices in the temple (1 Mac. 44:51) was during the month of June in the year 197 B.C.

Regarding what had happened to the Jews under Antiochus Apiphanus, we differentiate between two major periods:

A. The period of 2300 days started by the reign of Jason the high priest and ended by the victory of Judas the Macabite.

B. The period of 1290 days, that is approximately three and a half years, started by the abolish of the permanent sacrifice and the erection of the statue of Jupiter in the temple and defiling the vessels after Antiochus had overtaken Jerusalem by his commander Apolonees.

## 6. The interpretation of the vision

“Now, it happened, when I, Daniel, had seen the vision and was seeking the meaning, that suddenly there stood before me one having the appearance of a man. And I heard a man’s voice between the banks of the Ulai, who called, and said, ‘Gabriel, make this man understand the vision.’” (v. 15,16)

Daniel desired the interpretation of the vision in a clearer way, for he knew a little, but for his benefit and the benefit of the church, he desired a clearer interpretation. He saw one having the appearance of a man. Most probably this was the Word of God before the incarnation who had the authority to command Gabriel the arch angel to interpret the vision (16). When God, who knows the inner heart, sees the yearning of one toward the truth, He reveals it to him and asks His heavenly ministers to reveal to him some of the hidden mysteries.

“So he came near where I stood, and when he came I was afraid and fell on my face; but he said to me, ‘Understand, son of man, that the vision refers to the time of the end. Now, as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me, and stood me upright. And he said, ‘Look, I am making known to you what shall happen in the latter time of the indignation; for at the appointed time the end shall be.’” (v. 17-19)

St. Jerome said about the angel calling Daniel “son of man”: {Since Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah were always in the company of angels, God wanted to remind them of their weaknesses lest they fall in pride and think that they partake of the angelic nature or dignity, that is why they were called “sons of men” }

As soon as the arch angel approached Daniel, he fell in fear. Probably Daniel felt the seriousness of the vision and God’s concern to reveal its mysteries to him. He recorded this for us so that we may not belittle the vision or its interpretation. We have to prepare our minds and our lives to know this vision, through the spirit of diligence and seriousness. The angel clarified that this vision was for the time of the end (v.17), that is it pertains to the future. Probably, he meant that it will be fulfilled during the days of Antiochus, especially before the second coming of Christ He emphasized that the vision will be definitely fulfilled, but in due time.

The arch angel woke him up from his deep sleep and calmed him that the small horn will be destroyed. It was said that Antiochus died and the worms ate his body, like Herod Agrippa the First (Acts 12). Likewise, the anti-christ will be destroyed and his kingdom.

“The ram which you saw, having the two horns, they are the kings of Media and Persia. And the male goat is the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that is between its eyes is the first king. As for the broken horn and the four that stood up in its place, four kingdoms shall rise out of that nation, but not with its power. And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressions have reached its fullness, a king shall arise, having fierce features, who understands sinister schemes. His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; he shall destroy fearfully, and shall prosper and thrive; he shall destroy the mighty, and also the holy people. Through his cunning, he shall cause deceit to prosper under his hand; and he shall

magnify himself in his heart. He shall destroy many in their prosperity. He shall even rise against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without human hand.” (v. 20-25)

He called Antiochus king with fierce features, that is, he was very severe and strict. He also said that he understands sinister schemes, which means that he was extremely cunning.

Daniel prophesied that Antiochus will destroy many in their prosperity (v.25). This was fulfilled when he sent his commander with 22,000 men to Jerusalem, as if it was a mission of peace. The soldiers used to go in and out until the Jews were used to them and they treated the people very gently. On a Sabbath while the Jews were worshiping in the temple, a command was issued to slaughter them all. Thousands were killed on that day, thus he destroyed many in their prosperity.

Daniel also prophesied that he will rise against the Prince of princes and shall be broken without human hand (25).. This was fulfilled when Antiochus Apiphanus attacked God Himself, the King of kings. He remained like that for 6 years (2300 days). The Maccabites attacked him and through them, the temple was cleansed and victory was proclaimed. Under the leadership of the Maccabites, the statue of Jupiter Olimpias was removed from the temple. The anger of Antiochus was aroused and he decided to eradicate all the Jewish race, but he had severe pain in his bowels and instantly died. Hence, he died by the divine providence and without human hand.

“ ‘And the visions of the evenings and mornings which was told is true; therefore, seal up the vision, for it refers to many days in the future.’ And I, Daniel, fainted and was sick for days; afterward I arose and went about the king’s business. I was astonished by the vision, but no one understood it.” (v. 26, 27)

The visions of the evenings and mornings which was told is true (v.26) means that the vision had two sides: one gloomy which refers to the great tribulation and the other joyful which refers to the triumph of God’s people.

Daniel could not bear the vision so he became sick, unable to leave his bed. He was scared about what will befall the church whether during the times of Antiochus or the times of the anti-christ. As St. Jerome said, {He went to perform the works of the king, thus rendering to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” (Lk. 20:25) }

Anyway, Daniel could not comprehend all the mysteries of the vision and therefore, he was astonished by the vision.

### **From the Inspiration of Daniel (8)**

Gabriel the arch angel accompanied your prophet Daniel and showed him some interpretation of your mysteries. Here he cries after his body became so weak and was astonished by the vision and did not understand it..

May You reveal to me the mysteries of Your love, so I may see all history under Your control and see my life the subject of Your concern! Let Your angels accompany me, but remind me of my weaknesses lest I become self-conceited. May I remember that I am a weak human being, but with You I become strong and comprehensive!

May the mighty kingdoms succeed one another, and the antichrist appear. But You alone are the fortress of the church and her power!. You will never allow the anti- christ to reign except for a limited time! His kingdom will end and Your saints will reign forever in heaven!

# Chapter Nine

## The Seventy Weeks

Since Daniel had great love for his people, and even to all humanity, God granted him wisdom, understanding and the gift of prophecy. He interpreted the dreams for the kings, as well as the visions pertaining to the future of the whole world. Now in his old age, as he noticed that God had promised for the return of God's people from captivity after seventy weeks, as was mentioned in the book of Jeremiah, he started asking God, with humility, to forgive his people. God granted him to see the vision of the seventy weeks, where God revealed to him not only the return of the people to Jerusalem, but also the return of all the human race to the divine bosom, by determining the time for the divine incarnation and the offering the unique Sacrifice of Christ.

This prophecy was to correct the Jewish misinterpretations, for the Jews thought that after the captivity, they would establish a Jewish nation. However, the Word Incarnate was coming to establish a kingdom by His own Sacrifice to grant the believers inner glory and not a temporary kingdom.

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|--------------------------------------|----------|
| 1. Daniel who studies the prophecies | v. 1-2   |
| 2. Daniel a man of prayer            | v. 3-19  |
| 3. The answered prayer               | v. 20-23 |
| 4. The vision of the seventy weeks   | v. 24-27 |

### 1. Daniel who studies the prophecies

“In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of Chaldeans.” (v. 1)

The events of this chapter was fulfilled after the fall of Babylon, in the first year of the reign of King Darius, the son of Ahasuerus, as the Historian Zenofon said, that is approximately around the year 537 B.C., one year before Cyrus allowed the Jews to go back to Jerusalem. The name Ahasuerus was common at that time among the kings of Persia and Media.

“Was made king” means that Darius did not become king because of his own integrity, but he was granted this kingdom from another, from Cyrus his nephew and his son-in-law.

“In the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the Lord, given through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.” (v.2)

Daniel appears not only as a prophet, but also as one who studies prophecies (Jer. 25:9-11; 29:10. 31:38; 2 Chron.36:21). He studies the word of God and the prophecies and mingles his study with his prayers. He prays three times a day, and his study was not to fulfill a mental sensation or as curiosity, but rather to enjoy the promises of God. Daniel grew old and retired. He spent about 69 years in the captivity from year 606 B.C. to 537 B.C. (until the moments of this vision). However, his heart did not grow old nor did he quit God's work as a man of God, but as time progressed, he was filled with power and hope in God's true promises.



That is why Daniel resorted to the Holy Bible to find in it the treasure of these promises. He mingled his study of the Holy Bible with the ascetic life, prayer with contrition before God. “I, Daniel, understood by the books” (v.2) : Some liberal critics think that the word “books” was in the Hebrew language and that he meant a perfect law for the books of the Old Testament, however, they think that this law was not completed until the second century before Christ. The critics say that these were built on the thoughts of the three past centuries, however, the scientific studies and the research have annulled these thoughts.

First the prophets did not write their books to hide them, but on the contrary, the people used to memorize what was written in the books of the prophets even before it was written, because they were revelations to the people before they were written by the Holy Spirit.

Second: These books were assembled in the temple and with the people especially the prophets and scholars of religion. All what was written before Daniel, he had a copy of it. The original copy was put in the temple, and other copies were put in the synagogues which were built for Jewish worship as a temporary substitute for the temple.

### **1. Daniel a man of prayer**

When Daniel opened the Holy Bible and he discovered treasures of the heavenly promises, he realized that enjoying these treasures require prayers mingled with fasting and humility and contrition. This book revealed Daniel’s personality as a man of prayer. In his prayer, we notice the following:

Prayer as a living encounter with God.

When Daniel realized that he was not ready spiritually for God’s promises, he prayed to God confessing his sins and confessing God’s righteousness. (v. 3-14) Thus, Daniel admits that he is waiting for God’s divine work, not because he deserves it nor due to his human righteousness.

“Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplication, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.” (v.3)

To Daniel, prayer was not a matter of routine or a duty he has to perform but rather an enjoyment of seeing God’s face, for he said, “I set my face toward the Lord God.” He goes into dialogue with God, with the spirit of love of humility, thus he fulfilled what Solomon the Wise had said on the day of the inauguration of the temple, “When they sin against You (for there is no one who does not sin) and You become angry with them and deliver them to the enemy, and they take them captive to the land of the enemy, far or near; yet when they come to themselves in the land where they were carried captive, and repent, and a make supplication to You in the land of those who took them captive, saying, ‘We have sinned and done wrong, we have committed wickedness; and when they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their enemies who led them away captive, and pray to You toward their land which You gave to their father, the city which You have chosen and the temple which I built for Your name; then hear in heaven Your dwelling place their prayer...’” (I kings 8:46-48)

B. Daniel did not weaken in his faith regarding God’s promises.

St. Jerome said: {Daniel asked God, with sack cloth and ashes, to fulfill His promises, not because he lacked the faith about what will happen in the future, but rather to avoid the danger of feeling of heedlessness which creates rebellion against God. }

C. The feeling of personal relationship with God: Daniel said, “The Lord my God” (v. 4, 20) He was confessing his sins and the sins of the people, nevertheless he did not approach God with fear but with trust and confidence in God his personal Friend who grants His true promises.

“And I prayed to the Lord my God, and made confession, and said, “O Lord great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments.”

St. Jerome said: {And I prayed, “O Lord great and awesome God” meaning that You are awesome to those who neglect Your commandments. }

Daniel’s feeling of sharing the sins of his people: He does not blame them alone but he blames himself too. He presents the subject of his prayer and confession by mingling the greatness of the awesome God and His mercy and in the same time confessing his sins and the sins of his people. He started his prayer by glorifying God and His surpassing care for His people.

Daniel knew that God fulfills His promises to those who keep His commandments. The Bible connects between God’s covenant and His divine promises, for the covenant is based on His mercies. A believer feels that God is faithful in His promises, but he has to prepare himself to enjoy God’s promises and mercies, by declaring his faith and trust in God and in the same time confessing his sins. “God is faithful by whom You were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” (1 Cor. 1:9) “...God is faithful who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able...” (1 Cor. 10:13) “But the Lord is faithful who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.” (2 Thess. 3:3)

“We have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments.” (v.5)

While Daniel keeps confessing his sins, he declares that what had happened to them was due to their sins. The captivity was a just chastening because of their rebellion. They cannot complain at the brutality of the enemy who made them captive and at all the financial losses and shame. St. Jerome said: {Daniel looked at the sins of the people as though he did them himself, because he considered himself one of them. The same applied with St. Paul in his epistle to the Romans.

When we approach God by confessing our sin, we have to feel that we are guilty and we are pleading to win His mercy and love.

In his confession, Daniel used more than one expression, “We have sinned”: this is associated with the word “Satan”, for the nature of Satan is to sin. When we sin, we reject God’s fatherhood and we admit that we are children of Satan. As the Lord Jesus said to the Jews, “You are of the father your devil, and the desires of your father you want to do.” (John 8:44)

“And committed iniquity”, that is we committed lawlessness.

“We have done wickedly”, that is our behavior became inappropriate.

“And rebelled”, rebellion is worse than sin, for it is considered defiance to God’s commandment and His judgments. Rebellion is rejection to the divine light, as David the Psalmist said, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” (Ps. 119:105)

“Neither have we heeded Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings and our princes, to our fathers and all the people of the land.” (v.6)

Daniel did not justify sin, but on the contrary he justified God’s chastening to His people. God had warned them through His prophets, but all have participated in committing sin, whether the leaders or the people.

“O Lord, righteousness belongs to You, but to us shame of face, as it is this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those near and those far off in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of the unfaithfulness which they have committed against You.” (v. 7)

Since they fell under God’s wrath, yet God is righteous in His wrath, but they deserve the shame of face, that is confessing their sins before Him. As St. Paul said, “Let God be true and every man a liar, as it is written, “That You may be justified in Your words and may overcome when You are judged”” (Rom. 3:4) We cannot glorify God while we are committing sin and falling under His chastisement, until we admit our sins and confess them and realize His wisdom in chastising us. By saying “Those near and those far”, he means Judah and Israel, where Israel was made captive and scattered more than Judah. They were expelled from their land because of their treason, so it is appropriate for them to confess their sins in shame of face.

“O Lord, to us belongs shame of face, to our kings, our princes, and our fathers because we have sinned against You. To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him.” (v. 8,9) .

Daniel continues confessing his sins and the sins of his people before God. The kings and leaders deserve the shame of face, as was mentioned in the book of Isaiah, “From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; they have not been closed or bound up or soothed with ointment.” (Is. 1:6)

“We have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in His ways, which He set before us by His servants the prophets. Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your law, and has departed so as not to obey Your voice; therefore the curse and the oath written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against Him.” (v. 10,11)

Israel has committed two major transgressions:

Disobedience to God’s Law, which was very clearly declared among them. God has manifested His righteousness, His will, His commandments very clearly through His Law, which made the people deserving a double punishment when they disobeyed.

They did not listen to the voice of the prophets who had warned them.

Daniel did not try to justify the people’s error, but He emphasized God’s faithfulness in His promises. Once more, he emphasized that it was communal transgression, that is why God’s wrath was poured on all the people. He mentioned the word poured or “tittach” which is used in melting metals and pouring it on the bodies of criminals. Thus, was the feelings of the captives because they were deprived from their temple and their country. Their souls were bitter when God chastised them. However, God has warned them since He chose Moses their first leader, therefore, they had no excuse! Daniel considered every transgression directed toward God Himself. (v.11)

St. Jerome commented on this expression by saying: {‘The curse ...have been poured on us’ meaning do not pour on us all Your wrath for we cannot endure it, but pour only a drop of Your wrath so that we may return to You when we fall into Your snare. }

“And He has confirmed His words , which He spoke against us and against our judges who judged us, by bringing upon us a great disaster, for under the whole heaven such never has been done as what has been done to Jerusalem. (v.12)

All the chastisement that befell God’s people was foretold by Moses the prophet. God had previously warned not only the people but also the judges, for no one is above the divine Law. No one can brag before God, and no one can escape the divine chastisement, no matter how high his position is, whether his religious or carnal position. The leaders were given authority from God, but within the limits of His Law and will. The authority granted to them cannot cover their sins and does not protect them from the chastisement.

The captivity years were 70 years, however the people did not move to repent nor to accept the divine truth.

God has chosen Jerusalem as His holy city, but when it sinned and rebelled and did not repent, God has tremendously chastised the people. (v.12)

“As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us; yet we have not made our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand Your truth.” (v.13)

Daniel admits that God has chastised them, yet they have not benefited from that chastisement for the following reasons:

They have not pleaded God. Truly they have prayed whether individually or as a group, but these were superficial prayers with hypocrisy, for their hearts were not lifted up to heaven nor were they were in true dialogue with God. Their prayers did not come out of a living faith nor a true repentance.

They did not repent.

They did not understand God’s truth, for they abided by human wisdom and ignored God’s wisdom. The whips of the chastisement did not drive them to wisdom, but rather they remained in their foolishness, by saying, “That we might turn from our iniquities and understand Your truth.” (v.13) He links between the holy life and the true faith or the divine truth, as well as he links between the evil behavior and the deviation from the truth. St. Jerome said, {God’s Truth is equal to repenting from evil. }

Daniel connects between prayer or supplication to God and repenting from sin and enjoying the divine wisdom and truth.

“Therefore the Lord has kept the disaster in mind, and brought it upon us; for the Lord our God is righteous in the works which He does, though we have not obeyed His voice.” (v.14)

“Has kept” this verb means the alertness of the mind and it is used for the guards who are awake night and day to guard the cities. All the disasters that had happened were not done haphazardly, but God who guards the soul and who cares for her salvation allows the disaster to

happen or what we may think is evil. He was very patient for many generations and in due time allowed the captivity for the chastisement of His people, though He may appear to be severe.

St. Jerome said: {Whenever we are rebuked for our sins, God keeps an eye over us and chastises us. But when God forsakes us, then we are not worthy for His chastisement, as is He is asleep, as it was mentioned in the Psalms, “God arises as though He was asleep...” (Ps. 78)

Daniel confirmed in this book that all the tribulations we meet in life are not done haphazardly, but according to the providence of God the Almighty, lest we deprive God of His surpassing care for His creation and misunderstand His might and justice.

During our tribulation, he emphasizes that God is “our Lord” who cares for us. We have to hear His voice and understand His plan and doctrines, not only through the commandments but also through His chastisement and suffering! He takes us into the school of chastisement and reveals to us the philosophy of suffering!

“And now, O Lord our God, who brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and made Yourself a name, as it is this day, we have sinned, we have done wickedly!” (v. 15)

Daniel the prophet confessed his sins and the sins of his people, as well as admitted that they were justly chastened, which declared his confidence that God is the Savior of his people. He remembered the experience of God’s salvation from the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and now He can take them out from Babylon to glorify His holy name. Daniel believed that God who did in the past is still doing in the present.

“O Lord, according to all Your righteousness, I pray, let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; because for our sins and for the iniquity of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people have become a reproach to all who are around us.” (v.16)

We deserve death because of our abundant evils and sins, yet Your righteousness and mercies are innumerable, therefore, we ask **all** Your righteousness.

As we boldly approach the throne of His mercy, may You turn away Your wrath from Your city which You like, and from Your holy mountain which You have chosen where we offer acceptable sacrifices, so we may be sanctified.

“Now, therefore our God, hear the prayer of Your servant, and His supplication and for the Lord’s sake cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary, which is desolate.” (v. 17)

Daniel is telling God to prove His reconciliation by shining His face on them. He did not ask from God to allow him to rebuild the temple which was destroyed, but to shine His face on the sanctuary, for God’s house is not built by stones but by His dwelling with them and His satisfaction with His people.

He concludes his prayer by asking God to speedily interfere, not because he deserves it but because of His grace. He did not ask God’s mercy for his sake, nor for the sake of Israel, but for the sake of God Himself to glorify His name. Daniel could not present anything

to God to justify enjoying His mercies, but saw God the Lover who bountifully gives to everyone.

All His mercy (v.16): for God's mercy is great (v.18) and abundant which forgives all our iniquities.

For the sake of the city of God, His holy mountain (v.16): It became a reproach because of our sins, but it is the city of God and His holy mountain. Here, the feelings of Daniel are apparent which show how bitter he was because he was deprived of the city of God and the holy sanctuary.

For the Lord's sake: (v.17): that is for the sake of God Himself.

For His name: who was called on the people and on the city.

“O my God, incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and see our desolation, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies. O Lord hear! O Lord forgive! O Lord listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name.” (v.18,19)

He does not ask God to hear him and see the desolation, but rather to incline His ear and to open His eyes and see. When we sin, we feel as though God is ignoring us, and that He shuts His ears so He does not hear us and closes His eyes so He may not see us. But we tell Him, “We need You to cleave to us before You hear and see. We want You to incline Your ear as a kind Father who listens to his small child. Open Your eyes with love so our souls may rest in You. We want You only! May You come close to us for we are in dire need of You.”

During the period of the captivity, the people felt as though God has forsaken them, and that He does not hear them. Here, Daniel asks God to speedily forgive them for they are asking His mercies.

Daniel pleaded with God to forgive His people. He did not justify himself but felt the responsibility as a member in the community and that he has a positive role to abide with. The book did not mention any personal sins which Daniel had committed, but still he wanted to repent with all the people, for he said, “I confess my sin and the sin of my people.” (v.20)

Daniel was a man of prayer and he enjoyed the following blessings:

The Son of Man appeared to him several times: (7:13, 8:15, 10:5-9), thus Daniel enjoyed the Desire of all the nations.

Daniel was the only one who saw heavenly visions, for he said, “And I Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision; but a great terror fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. Therefore, I was left alone when I saw this great vision...” (10:7,8)

Daniel enjoyed the company of arch-angel Gabriel, whom the Son of Man asked to interpret to Daniel the mysteries of His first and second coming and His act of salvation. (8:16; 9:21; 11:1). He also strengthened him. (10:9)

Daniel was called “greatly beloved” (9:23; 10:11,19), that is, he is the one whom God desires and is pleased with.

### 3. The answer of the prayer

“Now, while I was speaking, praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God.” (v.20)

St. Augustine used to depend on this verse in answering the followers of Pilagios and Coelestius who ignored the divine grace and relied mostly on the human strife. St. Augustine emphasized that there is no righteous person who does not need God’s mercies. Since Daniel, whom the Holy Bible did not mention any sin which he had committed and Ezekiel witnessed that he was one of the three righteous persons in the world, Job, Noah and Daniel” (Ezek.14:14, who supplicated God with a contrite heart to forgive his sins, how about us? The Lord Jesus Christ has taught His disciples to ask for forgiveness of their sins more than once in the Lord’s Prayer, therefore whoever thinks that he does not need forgiveness of his sins, has isolated himself from the school of the Lord Himself.

St. Jerome said: {Daniel did not only think of the people’s sins, but also of his sins, being one of the people. Though he did not commit any personal sins, yet he wanted to win God’s forgiveness by his humility.

“Yes, while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, reached me about the time of the evening offering. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, ‘O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand. At the beginning of your supplication, the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision.’” (v. 21,22)

Daniel revealed the surpassing love of God who heard his prayer and accepted his confession for his sins and the sins of the people, and his supplication for the holy mountain, that is for the city of Jerusalem and all its holy places.

First: Daniel said, “while I was speaking” (v.21), which means that Daniel did not pray only by his heart but also by his lips. He offered his prayers by his spirit as well as his body, that is all his being shared in expressing what was inside him. And the answer came to him while he was praying.

Second: Daniel has not yet finished his prayer, for it is written “While I was speaking in prayer” (v.21), this means that God has answered his prayer before he even finished it. It is strange that Gabriel told him, “At the beginning of your supplication the command went out.” (v.23) This means that God answered Daniel’s prayer before he has even started it.

Third: God sent him Gabriel very swiftly! God’s great concern for Daniel was amazing! For this was the first time that God sent an angel in the form of a man “the man Gabriel”. Here, God reveals how precious man is in His eyes, to the extent that He sent His angels to serve man, and the angel carries even the picture of a man! St. Jerome said: “ {It was mentioned that the angel flew, but he appeared in a picture of a man. }

Fourth: Arch-angel Gabriel appeared to Daniel at the time of the evening offering, that is at three o'clock in the afternoon. Daniel had been a captive for at least seventy years and therefore he had not seen the evening offering, which the priest used to offer in the temple of the Lord. However, the long years did not make him forget the offering and did not deprive him from enjoying the temple of God, whose stones were destroyed! In the palace in Babylon, he used to participate every morning and evening in the worship which was abandoned in Jerusalem. Hence, man can worship God, even if he is in a prison, and can share with the heavenly church their magnificent worship.

St. Jerome said: {It was mentioned that “at the time of the evening” to show that his prayer has extended from the time of the morning offering until the evening, that is why God was merciful to him.}

The appearance of arch-angel Gabriel at the time of the evening has a symbolic meaning. The fullness of time has come when the time of sin has ended by the coming of the Savior who touches us by His incarnation and takes us to the new heavenly knowledge.

Fifth: Arch-angel Gabriel revealed to Daniel his position before God, for he told him, “You are greatly beloved” (v.23) In Hebrew, literally it means the one whom God likes, that is the subject of God’s pleasure. God the Lover of mankind, loves those who have a deep fellowship with Him, and He reveals to them His divine mysteries.

Sixth: God gave him a divine commandment, moreover a divine gift, which is the gift of understanding. “Consider the matter and understand the vision” (v.23) Daniel has studied the prophecies of Jeremiah and understood the history of the return from the captivity, but he wanted a better understanding, where his heart returns from Canaan to heaven itself through the work of the Messiah.

## **1. The vision of the seventy weeks**

### **Introduction**

This vision has a significant importance to the Jews as well as to the Christians. Both have agreed that the day here refers to a year, and a week to seven years as was mentioned in the book of Leviticus. “And you shall count seven sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years; and the time of the seven sabbaths of years shall be to you forty-nine years.” (Lev. 25:8)

The purpose of this vision: St. Jerome said: {The Jews who preceded that age have admitted, in humility, that no one can understand this expression except by the coming of the Messiah. However, many see that God’s punishment will befall the Jews even after their return from the captivity. In their opinion, the beginning of the seventy weeks is the destruction of the temple and ends by the desolation of the temple during the time of Titus. However, in spite of the difference of opinions, all agree that the focus of the vision is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.



### **First: The purpose of the vision**

“Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation of iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.” (v.24)

This period (70 weeks) was determined to accomplish a certain goal with six results, three of them are negative and three are positive. These were all fulfilled by the coming of the Lord Jesus:

To finish the transgression: that is to erase sins from the eyes of God, by preaching the Gospel of salvation and enjoying the gift of the Holy Spirit, which God granted to His church through the worthiness of the precious blood. The captivity was considered a chastisement for the sins of Israel and Judah, but it was not a just punishment for captivity cannot forgive sins, therefore, the sacrifice of the cross was a must, where the Lord Jesus offers Himself on the cross as a propitiation for the sins of the whole world. (1John 2:1)

To make an end of sins: When the Lord Jesus offered Himself, who is without blemish, a Sacrifice for sin, one time for the whole world, He put an end to sin.

To make reconciliation of iniquity: This means that the sacrifice for reconciliation or atonement has to be offered.

These were the negative results where the curse of sin was abolished. Sin created enmity between us and God, and thus we needed reconciliation. Now the three positive results were:

To bring in everlasting righteousness which brings continual peace, which the Messiah grants as a free gift. He offers Himself justification, so we are justified by Him.

St. Athanasius the Apostolic comments on Daniel’s prophecy by saying: {This was the reason for all the prophecies, that is that the true Righteous One comes who becomes a ransom for the sins of all.} St. Paul said, “...Who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.” (1 Cor.1:30) Montgomery, who conveyed the opinion of the critics who interpreted this vision, mentioned that Haddershan said that “the everlasting righteousness is the Messiah the King.”

To seal up vision and prophecy: where the prophecies of the Old Testament and symbols were fulfilled, the prophecies about the coming of the Messiah, His redemption, and His eternal glory. Daniel has enjoyed seeing the visions, but a time will come when there is no need for visions and prophecies, where the Word of God Himself will dwell among us and talks with us personally.

Pope Athanasius said: {When the Lord Jesus will come, then there is no need for prophecies and visions. When the Lord Christ came, all the prophecies and visions ceased.

This is a strong proof of the coming of the Word, that there is no more a prophet and no more visions. When the truth comes, then there is no need for the shade. Thus, when the Holiest of all comes, it is obvious that the vision, the prophecies and the kingdom of Jerusalem end.

The kings were anointed from among the people until the Holiest of all came. Jacob prophesied about the kingdom of Judah saying, “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people.” (Gen. 49:10) The Savior cried saying, “For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.” (Matt. 11:13, Lk. 16:16). If there were among the Jews any king or prophet or vision, then they would have denied that the Lord Christ has come. }

“To anoint the Most Holy” for He has sanctified Himself for us, offering Himself a unique Sacrifice who intercedes on our behalf. As the Lord Jesus said in His final prayer, “And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.” (John 17:19). His only goal is to enter every soul into the eternal glory to enjoy the heavenly inheritance. In another translation, it is mentioned that the holy of holies was anointed, that is, the place full of holiness, or the most holy place in the temple.

St. Jerome noticed that God told Daniel, “Your people, your holy city”, and He did not say “My people and my holy city”, because God has divorced His people and rejected His city because of their transgressions. In the same way, God talked with Moses when the people insisted to live in sin. Here, God reveals to Daniel who loves His Jewish people and his city Jerusalem that the Lord Christ will come and achieve salvation. He will come to His own but His own will not believe in Him, so they will be rejected and become a city under chastening!

### **Second: The three stages of the seventy weeks**

“Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall even in troublesome times. And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of war desolations are determined. Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured on the desolate.” (v.25-27)

God has determined a specific time for the coming of the Word of God, the Word Incarnate. In great wisdom, He has determined the hour in which the Messiah would be born and the moment in which He will offer His life Sacrifice for the sins of the world. In God’s eyes, the coming of the Lord and His redemption are the center of the history and the backbone of the divine care and the crown of grace. Nothing is done haphazardly, but everything is done in great accuracy and according to God’s providence. The Holy Bible has ascertained the coming of the Savior in the fullness of time and at the end of ages.

This prophecy came as a shining star among the miseries of the captives who suffered from the darkness of bitter agony. Many understood the prophecy, so that when He came, the Jews were expecting the Messiah. Many saintly men and women diligently studied the prophecies and were waiting for the coming of the Savior. Simeon the elder was waiting for the consolation of Israel. Anna and others were waiting for the salvation in Israel. Also, the Samaritans were waiting for the coming of the Lord, as the Samaritan woman said, "I know that Messiah is coming, who is called Christ; when He comes, He will tell us all things." (John 4:25) Even the Gentiles were expecting His coming for the wise men who saw the star, were expecting a King, a Savior.

Tertullian the scholar presented in his article, "An answer to the Jews" a whole chapter 8 about how this prophecy was fulfilled about the birth of the Lord Christ and His suffering and the desolation of Jerusalem.

St. Athanasius the Apostolic said: {Daniel has determined the exact date of the coming of the Savior by saying "Seventy weeks are determined ..."} Probably the critics could find excuses for other prophecies, but what can they say about this prophecy? It refers to Christ and declares that the anointed one is not only a man but the Most Holy, and that Jerusalem would stay until His coming, then the prophecy and vision will cease in Israel.

Bishop Dioscorus commented on this chapter by saying that due to how precise this chapter was in determining the time of the crucifixion of the Lord Christ, the Jews have replaced the word "to anoint the Most Holy" to "consecrating the holiest of all". This was mentioned in their copy called "Masoretic", which dates back to the eleventh century, and the prophecy seems to relate to a place and not a person. Moreover, they added the book of Daniel to the "Ketopem" which contains the historical books, the psalms, the wisdom books, so that the book of Daniel is not counted as one of the prophetic books.

Father Bishoy Kamel commented on this prophecy by saying: {These calculations gave the Jews a chance to determine approximately the date of the coming of the Lord Jesus. That is why St. Luke the evangelist wrote, "...waiting for the consolation of Israel, and ...to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem." (Lk. 2:25,38) St. Luke wrote "...because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately." (Lk. 19:11) Thus, the Jews have no excuse in determining the date of the coming of the Lord Jesus.}

### **Third: What is the meaning of week?**

In Hebrew, the word "week" means "shabua" derived from "seba", not meaning seven days, but a unit out of seven. The plural of the word is "shabu'im" , and it is not the feminine plural but it means periods of seven. The Jewish and Christian interpreters have agreed in their explanation that "seventy weeks" means seventy units of seven, most probably it starts from the year 457 or 455 B.C until the year 26 and 70 A.D.

#### **Fourth: The special decrees of the return to Jerusalem and the restoration of building the temple**

Three decrees were issued for the return to Jerusalem and rebuilding of the temple:

**First decree:** was issued by Cyrus on the year 538 B.C. or 537 B.C. after conquering Babylon (Is. 44:8, Ezra 1:1,2) 2 Chron.36:22,23). The first return was under the leadership of Zerubbabel, the restoration of the altar and reorganization of the worship had started, but the enemies had attacked them. During the era of Darius the First, the king ordered the continuation of building the temple, but did not issue a decree to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. Daniel said that there was a difference between the two decrees, of renewing the temple and renewing Jerusalem. King Cyrus did not mind helping the Jews to build the temple, however, he felt that helping them to build the city of Jerusalem, was a great risk for him. Building the temple was considered the end of the period of captivity, which was 70 years. It was mentioned in the book of Ezra that “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people? May his God be with him! Now let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (He is God), which is in Jerusalem.” (Ezra 1:2,3) Here, he did not mention anything regarding the renewing of the city of Jerusalem and its construction.

**Second Decree:** King Artaxerxes I (464 B.C. to 424 B.C.) issued that decree in the year 457 B.C. and Ezra the priest carried it (Ezra 8) after about 80 years after their first return. The decree allowed the Jews to go back to Jerusalem (Ezra 7:13) to organize the Law and to apply the Law of Moses (Ezra 7:7), and to arrange the financial matters pertaining to the temple (Ezra 7:15,20). Ezra’s concern was to build the people spiritually and ethically (7:9). He was granted the right to rebuild the temple and the walls of Jerusalem. He said, “For we were slaves. Yet our God did not forsake us in our bondage; but He extended mercy to us in the sight of the king of Persia, to revive us, to repair the house of our God, to rebuild its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem.” (Ezra 9:9) Unfortunately, history did not tell us any of the renewals in the construction, but it was obvious that Ezra did the spiritual renewal but could not build the walls nor renew the city. “The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down and its gates are burned with fire.” (Neh. 1:3) Nehemiah did not expect that the condition of Jerusalem was that bad; probably he expected that Ezra and his companions had renewed the city and built its walls.

**Third Decree:** Artaxerxes I issued the third decree in the twentieth year of his reign during the month of Nisan (March/ April 445 B.C.). Nehemiah the cupbearer of the king carried it (Neh. 1:11). Nehemiah built the walls of Jerusalem and the city, for he said, “If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers’ tombs, that I may rebuild it.” (Neh. 2:5)

### **Fifth: The accounts of the three stages**

With faith, Daniel had asked God to fulfill His promise, which is the return of His people after the seventy years of the captivity. However, God gave him a much grater promise, which is fulfilled not after 70 years but after  $70 \times 7 = 490$  years to let him, and all the human race, enjoy a new Sabbath and a complete rest in God's righteousness. The fathers and the prophets desired the return of the human race to God through God's salvation, through the incarnation of the Word and offering Himself a propitiation for the sins of the world. He determined the time for the coming of the Savior, His crucifixion, as well as the events of His second coming.

Father Yolios Afrikanos said: {It is obvious that this expression talks about the coming of the Lord who will reveal Himself after seventy weeks. During the time of the Savior, sins were erased through the propitiation. Eternal righteousness was preached which differs from the righteousness of the Law. Visions and prophecies had ceased until the coming of John and the Most Holy was anointed. Before the coming of the Savior, they were hoping all these matters. The angel teaches us that the beginning of the numbers, that is the seventy weeks, which is 490 years, starts by the decree of building Jerusalem, as an answer to the request of the captives. This happened in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, the king of Persia. Nehemiah had asked him and the answer was that he had to build Jerusalem, that was in the year 115 of the Persian Empire and the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes. Up to this date, at the year 16 from the reign of King Tiberias Caesar (when the Lord Jesus was crucified), then the result is 475 years, which is equivalent to 490 years by the Jewish calculation, where they calculate the year according to the rotation of the moon. To them, the year is 354 days, while the solar year is 365 days and a quarter. The solar year has eleven and a quarter days more than the lunar, according to the rotation of the moon.}

#### **The period was divided into :**

**First:** Seven weeks: that is,  $7 \times 7 = 49$  years, which is the period between issuing of the decree to rebuild the temple and the wall by the decree of Artaxerxes I on Nissan 14 in the year 445 B.C., and appointing Nehemiah a governor for Jerusalem. This period ended in the year 397 or 396 B.C., when Nehemiah died during the days of Malachi the prophet. The seven weeks (that is 49 years) is the period of rebuilding Jerusalem. No doubt that Nehemiah had spent this period in building Jerusalem. Nehemiah was appointed a governor for Judea, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem was during his second appointment as a governor. During the first time, he remained 12 years as a governor over Judea, because Artaxerxes had issued a decree to rebuild Jerusalem and appointed him governor over Jerusalem. During the thirty-second year, Nehemiah returned to him and asked permission from the king to return to Jerusalem. (Neh. 13:6,7) The king gave him permission. When Nehemiah started rebuilding Jerusalem, he was 30 years old, and he spent 49 years in its construction, thus he was 79 years after its completion, as the historian Josephus said.

Some say that the temple was built in 49 years as follows: Cyrus gave permission to build the temple. The foundations were laid in three years, when Cyrus went to war in Scythia.

But the Jews had to stop building during the time of his successor Cambyses who was against them. Then they had permission to continue, this took 46 years. Thus, the period (3 + 46 years = 49 years) was the period of rebuilding Jerusalem, and also rebuilding the Jewish people, whether religiously or secularly, through Ezra and Nehemiah.

**Second:** 62 weeks ( $62 \times 7 = 434$  years) is the period of four centuries, which represent the darkest periods of the people, spiritually, for there were no prophets until the coming of John the Baptist. Thus they were sitting in the darkness until the Sun of righteousness shone above them by His cross.

St. Hippolytus of Rome said: {After the return of the people under the leadership of Joshua and Ezra and Zeubbabel, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem, there are 434 years until the coming of the Lord Christ, “the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.” Who is the One to forgive our sins? St. Paul said, “For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one...” (Eph. 2:14) “Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us...” (Col. 2:14). There are 434 years from the time of the return of the people from Babylon (the rebuilding of Jerusalem) and the time of the birth of the Lord Christ. }

During this time, two important events happened:

First: The appearance of Antiochus Epiaphanus (167 – 164 B.C.) who is the antichrist of the Old Testament. He stopped the offering of the permanent sacrifice for three and a half years. He ordained Greek priests who worshiped Greek gods and defiled the temple by the blood of the pig, and murdered thousands of Jews. However, the Maccabees attacked him until the temple was liberated and the sacrifice was returned.

Second: During the Roman Empire, when Herod the Great reigned and he wanted to win the approval of the Jews, so he started building the new temple around the year 20 B.C., and it took about 46 years to build. He expanded the area on which the temple was built.

In verse 27, it was mentioned that the abolishing of the animal sacrifice during the week, that is in the middle of the last week of the 69<sup>th</sup> week. That means that the crucifixion will be accomplished in the week number 68.5, that is,  $(68.5 \times 7)$  which is 479 years after the issuing of the decree of rebuilding the temple by Nehemiah (year 445 B.C.). Thus, crucifixion was 33 and a half years after the birth of Christ and this was fulfilled, for the Lord was crucified at that age. The end of the last week was after the crucifixion by 35 years, that is around year 70 A.D. when the temple was completely destroyed by the hands of Titus the Roman.

Some see that the crucifixion of the Lord came after 483 years ( $7 + 62 = 69 \times 7 = 483$ ) of issuing of the decree of Artaxerxes, for the crucifixion was fulfilled in April 30 A.D. Since the decree was issued on 445 B.C., then the difference is  $445 \text{ B.C.} + 30 = 475$  year and not 483, that is the difference is 8 years. The reason for the 8 years is that the year in the Holy Bible is 360 days and not 365 days and a quarter. The five and a quarter days make the difference of

the 8 years. Thus the coming of the Messiah is after 69 weeks ( $x 7 = 483$  years) exactly according to what was mentioned in the Holy Bible.

Gleason L. Archer sees that the sixty-nine years are symbolic (483 years). This is calculated from the second decree or the first one according to King Artaxerxes in the year 457 B.C., which Ezra carried for the construction. But the construction was not fulfilled except by Nehemiah. So if we subtract 483 from 457, the difference is 26. Since there is no year that is equal to zero, then the number 1 is added to 26, then the time is 27 A.D. Since the Lord Christ was crucified on the year 30 A.D., then He would have started His ministry and baptism on the year 27 A.D., thus the prophecy was accurately been fulfilled.

Others see that the twentieth year of the reign of Artaxerxes is the year 454 B.C. according to the scholars Hengstenberg and Asher. If we subtract this period from the year 483 A.D. (69 weeks  $x 7$ ), the period which Daniel had spoken about in verse 25, the result is year 29 A.D. which is the year of the beginning of the ministry of the Lord Jesus. The most important point in the history of kings and rulers is the beginning of their rule and not their birth, that is why Daniel heeded that point.

Many see that this second period ends by the baptism of the Lord Jesus and the beginning of His ministry, where the third period comes when the Lord Jesus offers Himself a Sacrifice in the middle of the week, that is after three and a half years after He started the ministry, thus abolishing all the animal sacrifices.

**Third:** The seventieth week or the last week: “Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.” (v.27)

One opinion or reflection about this verse is that this week refers to the Holy Week, with its seven days, starting on the triumphal entry of the Lord to the temple on Sunday (tenth of the month of Nissan) as a Lamb, then He stayed in Bethany as if until the fourteenth day (Thursday) when He celebrated the last Passover with His disciples. Then the Last Supper when He offered the sacrifice of the New Testament with His Body and Blood who were changed from the bread and wine, as the offering of Melchizedek, as David’s prophecy in the Psalm. Thus the first five days refer to approximately five thousand years when the animal sacrifices were offered, which were a symbol to Him. Then the last two days of the week refer to two thousand years, thus what St. Peter had written about the Second coming is fulfilled that “Do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” (2 Pet. 3:8-10)

Some see that the sixty-ninth week has ended by the Lord Jesus offering Himself a unique Sacrifice of love. Now, Daniel’s vision will bring us back to the end of the world, which is the period of the seven last years when the antichrist will come to rule for three and a half years, when the great tribulation about which the Lord Jesus has said, “Therefore, when you see the ‘abomination of desolation’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place

(whoever reads let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house...For then there will be great tribulation such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened." (Matt. 24:15-22) Then he talked about His Second Coming.

Daniel mentioned this in another place, "... And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time..." (Dan.12:1) Also in the book of Jeremiah, it was mentioned, "Alas, for that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it." (Jer. 30:7) Also in the book of Zephaniah, it was written, "Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy..." (Zeph. 1:18) In the book of Revelation, "...These are the ones who came out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Rev. 7:14) Description of this great tribulation was also mentioned in the following references: Rev. 6:15; 11:1-14; 12:6-17).

St. Hippolytus of Rome said: {He stretched His hands, that is His sufferings. By mentioning a time and two times and a half refer to the three and a half years of the antichrist, which is 1290 days which Daniel had prophesied about to end the sufferings when the antichrist comes.}

### **From the Inspiration of Daniel (9)**

#### **You grant me more than I ask for and You give me more than what I need!**

In humility, Daniel felt that he does not deserve Your promises, therefore He prayed while in sackcloth and ashes. He confessed his sins and the sins of his people. He desired that You fulfill Your promise of returning after seventy years!

You have justly chastened Your people by the Babylonian captivity. During the chastisement, You were awake and knew that everything that befell Your people was by Your permission. You like to chastise them then glorify them!

He entreated You, for the sins of the people have hid Your presence. He supplicated You to incline Your ear and listen, to open Your eyes and see the shame that befell Your people. Please forgive their sins for the sake of Your name, for the sake of Your temple and Your city!

Since the destruction of the temple, the offering of sacrifices have ceased. However, when the time came to offer a sacrifice, Daniel used to offer himself as a sacrifice of love crying



to You, O the full of mercy. You sent him arch angel Gabriel to grant him understanding. He told him that he is greatly beloved by You, and he interpreted the vision to him.

With the old promise of freedom from captivity after seventy years, You gave him a new promise on the Sabbath of these seventy years. You showed him how the world should be free from the captivity of sin, and how the believers should not commit sin but enjoy righteousness and the fulfillment of the prophecies by the coming of the Most Holy.

You determined for him the time of the Incarnation and its purpose. You declared to him the mystery of the cross and the unique Sacrifice. You revealed to him the end of times and the enjoyment of the eternal glories! Truly, You grant me more than what I ask for and give me more than what I need!

# Chapter 10

## Seeing the Glory of God

Chapters ten through twelve covers the last of Daniel's visions.

Chapter Ten: Introduction of the vision which describes the appearance of the angel or probably the Word of God Himself.

Chapter Eleven: The vision itself: which presents special prophecies regarding the relationship between the Ptolemies of Egypt and the Selukians of Syria, and ends by the death of Antiochus.

Chapter Twelve: The conclusion of the vision: which talks about the great tribulation and the end of times.

Daniel presents this chapter as an introduction to the following two chapters, where he shows the concern of the heavenly creatures for the human world. (1 Chron.1:7, 2:1; Zech.3:1; Rev.12:7). He also presents the conflict between the angels and the evil powers for the salvation of the human race or their destruction. As the angels do not cease to work for the sake of those who will inherit the salvation (Heb. 1:14), likewise the devils do not cease to attack the truth and to perish the souls.

In the previous chapter, he presented to us a special vision of the seventy weeks which determined the time of the coming of the Lord Jesus to liberate the believers, as well as directing our attention to His second coming. Now in this vision, Daniel is confirming the main events from the time of the return of Babylon until the coming of the Lord Jesus in a precise way and in details.

- |                                   |         |
|-----------------------------------|---------|
| 1. The date of the vision:        | v.1     |
| 2. His enjoyment with the vision: | v.2-9   |
| 3. The angelic ministry:          | v.10-14 |
| 4. The divine ministry:           | v.15-27 |

### 1. The date of the vision

“In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar. The message was true, but the appointed time was long; and he understood the message, and had understanding of the vision. (v.1)

In the third year of the reign of Cyrus the king of Persia, comparing this to what was mentioned in Daniel 1:21, “Thus Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus”, it becomes clear that Daniel had retired at the age of 80, after King Cyrus had ruled for one year.

The reason for Daniel not returning to Jerusalem with Zerubabel, but his staying in Babylon was by God’s order to fulfill a special mission to serve his people in the captivity.

He saw this vision two years after he forsook his work before his departure. He was sure that God will fulfill what he had seen (Rev.22:6), for he said that the message was true. There was no doubt, although some of the events were unexpected. Anyway, Daniel knew that the appointed time was long. Some see that it was a long time because the fourth vision (ch. 10-12) extends until the resurrection of the dead and the life to come.

Daniel fully understood this vision, although he did not understand the previous vision.

Why did he mention here the name Belteshazzar, the name given to him in Babylon?

A. To confirm that in spite of him being retired, no one knew him by his original name, but he cleaved to the name that was imposed on him.

B. Since he still carries the Chaldean name, yet his heart is still attached to his God who reveals to him His mysteries and grants him understanding and wisdom.

## **2. His enjoyment with the vision:**

“In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.” (v.2,3)

Daniel fasted for three whole weeks; he did not eat any pleasant food nor did he anoint himself with perfume, for Cyrus was busy with the war against the Scythians. So he left Asia Minor and appointed his son Campyses to attack the restoration of the building of the temple and the holy city Jerusalem. Truly, some had gone back to the promised land, but they were in shame and reproach, unable to rebuild the spiritual life in their country. He also may have heard that those returning Jerusalem are not keen about rebuilding the temple.

He distinguished between the week in the previous vision as a symbol of seven years and between the week here, literally as seven days.

In the first chapter of this book, we saw Daniel refusing to eat the delicacies of the king and eating only beans. Did he go back to eat meat and drink wine? It was not mentioned. Earlier, he rejected the delicacies of the king, but now he refused any pleasant food even in his house, to offer an acceptable fasting for his people.

Some criticize the church fasting that it does not have any purpose, and that there is no need for it except for necessity, as what happened with Daniel the prophet. To refute that, we say that

Daniel was a man of prayer and fasting; he prayed and fasted during the tribulation as well as other times for he prayed three times daily. Likewise with the church fasting, we need it besides the private fasting when tribulation arises. But we have to confirm that there should be a clear spiritual purpose for the fasting and for all our worship.

Daniel refused to eat meat, wine and every pleasant food; likewise in all our fasting, we should not only stop eating meat but we should not eat any food with lust, even if it is vegetarian or some dry bread.

Daniel's fasting was combined with prayer and confession of sins, for fasting is to prepare one's self to talk with the Lord and it is not a goal in itself. The Lord Jesus Himself said, "This kind can come forth by nothing except by prayer and fasting." (Matt. 17:21)

St. Basil the Great said: {Since Daniel controlled his lust, he was able to control the Chaldean kingdom, so he destroyed their idols, tamed their lions, proclaimed the Incarnation and interpreted the hidden mysteries.} (5: 9,14)

St. Basil the Great said: {What about Daniel? How did he meditate on the wonders? This did not happen except after fasting 20 days.}

"Now on the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, that is the Tigris," (v.4)

Some see that in the vision, he saw himself by the shore of the River Tigris, although he was not actually there and he never lived in that region. Others see that after three weeks of fasting, Daniel was walking by the River Tigris reflecting on God's dealings with him as Isaac used to walk in the field.

Ezekiel the prophet saw a great vision by the River Chebar (Ezek.1), and at the Jordan River, the heavens were opened during the baptism of the Lord Jesus. Thus, when we sit by the baptismal water and accept the work of the Holy Spirit inside us and realize our adoption to the Lord, then we are granted a new vision in our inner life and the Son of God reveals Himself to us. We see Him on His throne granting us the deposit of His heavenly glory until we meet Him face to face then we enjoy the fellowship of His glory and His eternal inheritance.

Instead of feasting, Daniel was grieving and fasting, did not eat any meat nor drink any wine nor anointed himself with any perfume as the custom of the Persians. This vision appeared to him while he was grieving for the sins of his people.

Cyrus had allowed the Jews to go back to Jerusalem, but few accepted that, for many wanted to stay in Babylon for their business and their material gain instead of starting new projects in the promised land. This made Daniel very sad, who stayed in the captivity not for any material gain but for serving those who did not return. What saddened him more was the negligence of those who returned to Jerusalem in building the temple of the Lord, and caring only for building their

houses. This also saddened Haggai the prophet and he told the people, “Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?” (Hagg.1:4)

This vision was on the twenty-fourth day of the first month, that is, on the feast of the unleavened bread (Ex.12:18), which comes for a whole week directly after the Passover.

“I lifted my eyes and looked and behold, a certain man clothed in linen, whose waist was girded with gold of Uphaz! His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like torches of fire, his arms and feet like burnished bronze in color, and the sound of his words like the voice of a multitude.” (v.5,6)

Some see that the word “Uphaz” means pure, while others see that it refers to a special region as was mentioned in the book of Jeremiah “gold from Uphaz” (Jer.10:9). Some translated it as “Ophir”.

Some see that the linen clothes refer to the priesthood of the Lord Jesus, and that the golden girdle refers to the ministry of the Lord Jesus. In the East, they used to wear girdles on the waist because their clothes were long reaching their feet which stumbled their movements. Therefore, the girdle lifts up the clothes and helps one to move faster.

His body was like beryl. St. Jerome said that this is one of the twelve precious stones which is laid on the chest of the high priest. The precious stones refer to the twelve tribes and the high priest intercedes for them and carries them, by love, on his chest to enjoy the divine presence. Now if we are one tribe, the tribe of Judah (spiritually) and if we are members of His body, then we have the right to enter the heavenly holies with the Heavenly Head.

His voice was like the voice of a great multitude which Daniel heard and understood, while the others with him did not understand and escaped. This was what happened with Saul of Tarsus on the way to Damascus when he saw and heard the Lord Jesus, while the others with him did not see nor understood anything. (Acts 9:7; 22:7)

Daniel saw the exact description of what St. John saw in the Revelation (Rev. 1:13-15) Some think that Daniel saw an angel, while others think that he saw the Word of God before the incarnation. Since Daniel was weeping for the sins of his people, He who carried the sins of the world appeared to him.

St. Hippolytus of Rome said: {He said, “I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen.” (v.5) In the previous vision, it is written, “Look, Angel Gabriel was sent” However, here is different for he sees the Lord not a perfect man but in a form of a man. His wearing clothes of different colors symbolically refer to the different gifts which we are called to. The priesthood clothes were made of different colors, for many Gentiles wait for the coming of the Lord Christ, so we may become one body with different talents.

His waist was girded with gold of Uphaz (v.5). The word “Uphaz” was translated from Hebrew to Greek which means pure gold. He was girded with a pure girdle. The Word carried us and

tied us as a girdle around His body through His pure love, however, we are as members in His body and rise by the Word Himself.

His body was like beryl. The word “beryl” means that “it is hard to recognize it”. Thus the prophet Daniel had previously declared that the body will be revealed in the world but many will have hard time to recognize it.

His face was like the appearance of lightning, and his eyes like torches of fire. It is appropriate for the power of the fiery word and judgment to declare the fire of his judgment so He shines with justice on the wicked and destroy them.

His arms and feet were like burnished bronze in color. This was to declare that the first and the second calling were for the Gentiles, “ the last will be first and the first last.” The sound of his words was like the voice of a multitude. (Rev.19:6) We utter words which were prophesied. }

“And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision; but a great terror fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. Therefore, I was left alone when I saw this great vision, and no strength remained in me; for my vigor was turned into frailty in me, and I retained no strength. Yet I heard the sound of his words; and while I heard the sound of his words I was in a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground.” (v.7-9)

Daniel, who was the best person at that time, did not brag and was not self-righteous. He considered all his righteousness as filthy rags(Is. 64:6). The glory of the Lord overcame him, so he fell to the ground, as though he fainted, but he realized God’s voice.

Fear fell upon all who were with Daniel and they escaped to hide. Perhaps they saw something strange, but they did not understand the vision, so they were scared. God allowed that lest anyone may think that what Daniel had seen was some imagination and fantasy. He was chosen to become a teacher to reveal God’s mysteries and to accept the divine knowledge, but he needed someone to testify that he was called to a divine task.

He repeated more than once that what he had uttered was a reality, that he had truly seen it; and he called it a great vision so we may take heed and look into it.

Daniel trembled and lost his physical power until he became like a dead person. God does not want his children to be that weak, however He allows it for our edification. Sometimes when we are very healthy, we do not heed to the divine voice and do not enjoy any inner heavenly vision. However, God allows some physical weakness to lift our inner energy to a specific heavenly message. The vision had scared Daniel, but the heavenly voice had filled him with peace and serenity and the touches of His hand gave him power.

### **3. Angelic Ministry**

“Then suddenly a hand touched me, which made me tremble on my knees and on the palms of my hands.” (v.10)

It is obvious that Daniel saw the vision while he was lying on the ground, and he was leaning on his knees and hands and needed a heavenly help to assist him.

The hand which wrote on the wall and scared King Belshazzar is the same hand which touched Daniel and raised him and gave him the enjoyment of understanding. Some see that the heavenly hand refers to the divine incarnation, where the Lord Jesus offered the divine act granting us understanding and wisdom for the redemption and the glory.

St. Jerome said: {The angel appeared in the form of a man and put his hand on the prophet where he was lying on the ground. He carried his human form so he may not fear!}

The appearance of the angels in the form of men reveals how the heaven value us as human beings. Though they do not have bodies like ours, yet they are not ashamed to appear in a human form, thus they declare the desire of the heavenly creatures to befriend us.

“And he said to me, “O Daniel, man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you.” While he was speaking this word to me, I stood trembling.” (v. 11)

The hand touched him and a heavenly voice urged him to rise, casting away any fear from him and granting him understanding. However, when Daniel rose, he was trembling. Because of God’s great love for us, he allows us to have some weaknesses so we may not be proud. Daniel was the only one who was granted the gift of seeing visions and he received divine help for Arch angel Gabriel touched him with his hand and talked with him and granted him understanding, yet he still was trembling, so he may realize that he is mere dust and ashes, like what Abraham felt.

A heavenly hand touched him and raised him, probably it was the hand of Arch angel Gabriel who was interpreting the vision to Daniel and who called Daniel the beloved to encourage him and support him.

St. Jerome commented: {The word “beloved” is an appropriate expression, for every saint carries beauty in himself and he is beloved from the Lord.}

The old prophet was scared and trembling; the angel encouraged him that his prayers were answered.

“Then he said to me, “Do not fear Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words.” (v. 12)

Arch angel Gabriel asked Daniel not to fear; this was beyond Daniel’s ability, thus he needed divine help to grant him peace and to prepare his thoughts to realize his divine mysteries. When he told him, “Do not fear”, he was not giving him a mere heavenly commandment, but a heavenly gift granted by God Himself to his beloved. Why did God give all these gifts to Daniel and not others? Is God biased? Does He have partiality? Never! But because Daniel had put his

heart into understanding by prayer, fasting, repentance with contrition; that is why he was given all these free gifts. He was not negligent nor lived lavishly and in luxury, but with seriousness, pleading God to grant him understanding and knowledge. As St. John the Beloved said that God will answer if we ask anything according to His will. (1 John 5:14)

Daniel humbled himself before the Lord, repenting with a contrite heart. Because his personal relationship with God was strong, he deserved that God sent his angel to him, for “The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him.” (Ps. 145:19)

“But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia.” (v.13)

The angel justified the reason for his delay twenty-one days or three weeks, which are the three weeks that Daniel was fasting and entreating God. Daniel did not know that until the three weeks had passed, the angel was working to help the prophet without him knowing. Often we think that God does not hear our prayers or that he is slow in answering, but He is concerned about us and He hides his work from us until we discover it in the appropriate time, and then we are able to understand God’s plan for us.

“Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision refers to many days yet to come.” (v.14)

The angel is confirming to Daniel that he came to declare to him that his prayers were answered and that he was doing all he could for the advantage of his people attacking the evils of the king of Persia. He came to declare that God’s care is extended for many years. He has to wait, with the spirit of prophecy, to see the coming events, not only until his departure, but until the coming of the Lord Jesus the Savior of the world.

Father Isaac wrote: {He who doubts that God will answer his prayers, will not be answered. We have to ask without any doubt or worry, as Daniel taught us, for God heard him since the first day he prayed. But he reaped the fruit of his prayers after 21 days. Therefore, let us not be lukewarm when our prayers are not immediately answered. Let us be persistent as Daniel did for 21 days, for God answered his prayer since the first day.}

Arch angel Gabriel clarified why God was late in answering his prayers, because for three weeks he was attacking the prince of the Persian Kingdom, until Arch angel Michael, the intercessor of God’s people, came and helped him. Whom does he mean by the prince of the kingdom of Persia? Does he mean the king or an evil angel attacking God’s work?

He does not mean a man but he means an evil angel who moves the kings of Persia against God’s people. Therefore arch angel Gabriel supported arch angel Michael to destroy the evil deeds against the believers. Saying the prince of the kingdom of Persia, he does not mean a man but rather a devil who pushes the king of Persia to do evil.



St. Jerome said: {In my opinion, he is the angel appointed for Persia, as was mentioned in the book of Deuteronomy: “When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, when he separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel.” (Deut. 32:8) St. Paul said, “However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” (1 Cor. 2:6-8) Thus, the prince of Persia was attacking God’s people so they would not be liberated from their captivity. In spite of God answering Daniel’s prayer since the first day he prayed, yet He did not declare to him His compassionate decision because the prince of Persia attacked him for 21 days, enumerating the sins of the Jewish people as a just excuse that they should remain in captivity. ]

Was arch angel Gabriel unable to resist the devil who instilled the spirit of hatred and violence in Cambyses against the believers? Or was he unable to resist the evil king himself? Why did God send him arch angel Michael? I do not think that the angel’s talk here lessened the status of arch angel Gabriel or his ability, however, it reveals the spirit of the communal work, even among the heavenly creatures. It also declared God’s concern for his people, for He does not send them only one angel but more than one, for the sake of His people. Jonathan said, “For nothing restrains the Lord from saving by many or by few.” (1 Sam. 14:6) Asa said, “Lord, it is nothing for You to help, whether with many or with those who have no power.” (2 Chron. 14:11)

Arch angel Gabriel emphasized that his role has not ended yet, but God left him with the king of Persia who hated the people. God, in His justice, did not end the king’s life and did not force him to love the believers, but gave him free will to do whatever he wants. However, for the sake of the believers, God sends His angels to attack the evil king.

In the Jewish and the Christian tradition, arch angel Michael is considered a guardian to God’s people. (12:1)

#### **4. Divine Ministry**

“When he had spoken such words to me, I turned my face toward the ground and became speechless. And suddenly, one having the likeness of the sons of men touched my lips, then I opened my mouth and spoke, saying to him who stood before me, ‘My Lord, because of the visions, my sorrows have overwhelmed me, and I have retained no strength. For how can this servant of my Lord talk with you, my Lord? As for me, no strength remains in me now, nor is any breath left in me.’” (15-17)

St. Jerome said: {Before we are worthy to see God, we have to look at our inner nature.}

“The royal daughter is all glorious within the palace; her clothing is woven with gold.” (Ps. 45:13)

When Daniel was overcome by his weakness, he fell to the ground once more. But God gently cared for him. David was unable to utter a word until God opened his lips. He let the angel touch his lips.

Because Daniel was unable to go in a dialogue with God, the angel supported him, not only by encouraging words, but also by touching him. God desires that we meet the heavenly creatures and have fellowship of love with them, for both of us praise Him forever.

The angel appeared in the form of a man, so that Daniel may hear him. In great love and humility, angels appear to us in the form of human beings. On the contrary, the devil tries to deceive us by transforming himself into an angel of light. (2 Cor. 11:14)

Some think that the One who appeared is the Son of God who always touches us by His divine love and gives us power to be in dialogue with Him.

“Then again, the one having the likeness of a man touched me and strengthened me. And he said, ‘O man greatly beloved, fear not! Peace be to you; be strong, yes, be strong!’ So when he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, ‘Let my Lord speak for You have strengthened me.’” (v. 18, 19)

St. Jerome said: {Had the angel not comforted Daniel and freed him from fear, he would not have been able to hear the mysteries of God. Therefore, he said, “Speak Lord, for you have strengthened me, for You have made me understand Your words.}

Daniel needed a continuous heavenly work, so the angel touched him, encouraged him, emphasizing that he is greatly beloved by God; and the heavenly creatures, granting him peace, encouraged him by the divine commandment to be strong.

We are in need of continuous spiritual growth through our continuous encounter with God, enjoying the fellowship with the heavenly creatures and the saints. We are strengthened by the communal act and listening to God’s promises.

“Then he said, ‘Do you know why I have come to You? And now I must return to fight with the prince of Persia; and when I have gone forth, indeed the prince of Greece will come.’” (v. 20)

St. Jerome said: {Truly I have come to tell you about matters which answer your prayers. But I come once more to fight the king of Persia, for he does not want to free your people from captivity.}

“But I will tell you what is noted in the Scripture of Truth. No one upholds me against these, except Michael your prince.” (v. 21)

The Lord sent the angel, probably Gabriel, to talk to Daniel about a second chief. Here, he talks about the Greeks. He also declared that the devil sends his evil angels to stir the Gentiles to do evil.

The angel confirmed that God had a divine heavenly plan for him and He gradually reveals it to him. God entrusted Michael, the arch-angel, to protect His people from Satan and his evil powers.

God sent him to the Persian King Cambyses, but his mission has not yet been completed. The attack is continuing during the Greek era, as well as the Persian. That is why he works among the kings who attack the truth, in order to protect the simple believers. God's care for His church never stops in any age nor generation, and his mission of sending angels is continuous to attack the evil powers.

### **From the Inspiration of Daniel (10)**

#### **May You proclaim Your glory in the midst of my sufferings!**

Lord grant me with Daniel the spirit of prayer and fasting with humility.

Let me find in You my peace and the joy of my heart; let me not ask for a delicious food. Let me confess my sins and the sins of my people with tears, for I raise the voice of my tears to the throne of Your grace!

Often I think that you have forgotten me and that You do not hear my prayers and groaning. Open my eyes so I may see You working for my sake. You hide Your works from me, temporary, so I may have a dialogue with You!

I fell down and I am scared. O Holy One, let Your hand touch me. Let me hear Your voice full of hope, "Be of good courage." Your words have dominion over my inner depths!

I see the world attacking the truth and persecuting Your church. I see Gabriel the arch angel working with Michael the arch angel! You gave free will to the evil people, but due to Your great love, You sent the heavenly host to protect us. You are amazing in Your justice as well as Your love. Declare Your glory amidst Your sufferings!

# Chapter 11

## The Last Vision of Persia, Greece and the end of times

This chapter contains amazing prophetic details about the events of the world for a period of three centuries, which corresponded exactly to the historical events. As C. Larkine said: {This chapter is one of the most amazing chapters, more than any other chapter in the Holy Bible, which presented precise detailed prophecies. It corresponded exactly to the history of kings of Egypt and Syria for more than 350 years. Verses 5 through 31 presented us prophecies about the wars which erupted between the kings of the North (Syria) and the kings of the South (Egypt).}

1. Prophecies about Persia: v. 1-2
2. Prophecies about Greece: v. 3-4
3. Prophecies about the conflict between Egypt and Syria: v. 5-35
4. The end of times, the anti christ: v. 36-45

### **Prophecies about Persia:**

“Also, in the first year of Darius the Mede, I, even I, stood up to confirm and strengthen him.”  
(v. 1)

Some may think that this statement is about the strengthening of arch angel Michael to arch angel Gabriel. However, this is not acceptable, for this statement is directed toward arch angel Gabriel who stood beside Darius the king and strengthened him to support Cyrus the king of Persia against Babylon. In other words, if some of the Persian kings have attacked God’s people and were victorious, this was with God’s permission and with power granted to them through the angels of God. Here the angel does not brag about his power nor his own abilities but as a steward of God and in the name of God working through His angels.

“And now I will tell you the truth: Behold three more kings will arise in Persia, and the fourth shall be far richer than them all; by his strength, through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece.” (v. 2)

All the prophecies in this chapter pertain to the kingdoms of Persia and Greece, then the conflict between Egypt and Syria. All these were to declare God’s care for His church and urges the believers to trust in the Lord and His divine care, even during the critical times. Truly, there are worldly struggles between the great countries like Babylon, Persia, Medes, and Greece, and between the two parts of the Greek Empire which are the country of the Ptolemies and the country of the Selucians. Behind all these events, God’s hidden hand and His providence change all for the edification of the church, and to show that God gives priority and special concern to His people, even if it is unnoticeable.

In spite of the fact that this prophecy was given in the third year of Cyrus (ch.10:1), arch angel Gabriel referred to Darius and strengthened him. This mostly happened during the time when Daniel was thrown in the den.

Some think that the three kings who ruled Persia after Cyrus were :

1. Cambyses: the son of Cyrus (527 – 522 B.C.). While in Egypt, his younger brother (Magus also called Smerdis) was kidnapped.
2. Smerdis (522 – 521 B.C.) He married Pantaptes , the daughter of Cambyses and stayed in the reign for seven months.
3. Darius Hystaspes or Darius I (521 B.C. – 486 B.C.) became king and married Pantaptes , the wife of the previous king. He had a son called Ahsauerus who became one of the richest and most famous kings.

Others see that the angel meant, when he mentioned the three kings, Cyrus, his son Cambyses and Darius, and completely ignoring Smerdis.

The arch angel talked about a fourth king who superseded the former three kings, who was Ahsauerus the son of Darius (480 –465 B.C.) who married Esther. St. Yustinus talked about his wealth. He crossed with an army of about 2, 641,000 soldiers and conquered Greece. The Greeks have put in their hearts to revenge for themselves, and they did that. He stayed four years to gather his army, but he was unable to organize it because of the exceedingly great number of the army. He was conquered in Salamis, due to his pride, and escaped in a small boat and could not find any ship to rescue him, although his giant fleet covered the sea. His people considered him stupid in his army affairs, and they despised him because he killed his brother and committed many crimes, especially with his sister.

The angel considered the remainder of the Persian kings as defeated, for the kingdom of Persia deteriorated and the kings became with no prestige at all, until Alexander the Macedonian ruled the world.

St. Jerome said: {We have to note here that after Cyrus and the kings of Persia were defeated, the book did not mention any of the other nine kings, but mentioned Alexander right away, because the spirit of prophecy does not care about the historical details, but presents briefly only the important events.}

## **2. Prophecies concerning the Greeks**

“Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. And when he has risen, his kingdom shall be broken up and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not among his posterity nor according to his dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be uprooted, even for others besides these.” (v.3,4)

In the appropriate time, Alexander the Great (356 – 323 B.C.) will appear and will conquer Persia and other countries. Alexander the Great had great animosity toward the Jews. On his way to Judea, he saw a vision which was fulfilled when he saw the chief priest, with his priesthood clothes presenting to him the prophecies of Daniel, to confirm to him that he has conquered Persia and will establish a great kingdom. Thus, his enmity changed to friendship and he improved his dealings with the Jews.

After many conquests and victories, he died all of a sudden while he was drunk. No one knows if he had died from a sudden disease or from poison or if he had committed suicide, or if Cassander had poisoned him. The angel told him, “And when he has risen, his kingdom shall be broken up...”. This means that after he became the only king over all the East, by his sudden death, his kingdom was demolished. We had previously talked about the conflicts which happened after his death until his kingdom was divided between four of his generals, after the Ipsus battle.

He said, “For his kingdom shall be uprooted, even for others besides these.” (v.4) This prophecy was precisely fulfilled, for none of his children nor his relatives inherited the throne. Strange generals took over the throne, although he had two sons, Hercules and Alexander II, but one was murdered before the father’s death and the other after his death.

St. Jerome said: {Beside the four kingdoms, that is, Macedonia, Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt, the Macedonian kingdom was split between other rulers less important and between small kings. Perdiccas, Lysimachus, Craterus and others who ruled Capadokia, Armenia, Bythinia, Heraclia, Pophorus and other regions have withdrawn from the Capadokian power and appointed kings for themselves.}

The angel has declared all that to Daniel the prophet, even before the birth of Alexander the Great by many years.

## **3. Special Prophecies about the struggle between Egypt and Syria**

These prophecies talked about the wars between the Selukians and the Ptolemies. These two families were in constant war, because of the geographical location of Palestine between Egypt

and Syria. In most cases Palestine was the battle ground, and the kings of Egypt were called the kings of the South and the kings of Syria were called the kings of the North.

This covers a long period about two centuries, and when he says about the king of the North or the king of the South, he does not mean one king for both countries.

### **A. The First War**

“Then the king of the South shall become strong, as well as one of his princes; and he shall gain power over him, and have dominion. His dominion shall be a great dominion.” (v. 5)

The first king of the South, Ptolemy I Lagus (323 – 285 B.C.) was very strong, smart and rich, much stronger than Antiochus the son of Seleucus, the king of the North, that is Syria. However, later Antiochus became stronger and richer, for Babylonia and Mede were added to his kingdom. The angel knew that Antiochus became much stronger than Ptolemy.

St. Jerome said: {The person mentioned here is Ptolemy Philadelphios, the second king of Egypt, and the son of Ptolemy mentioned earlier. It was mentioned that during his era the Holy Bible was translated into Greek by the seventy scholars. (The Septuagint)}

He also sent many treasures to Jerusalem and vessels to the temple to Lazarus the chief priest.

His librarian was called Demetrius of Phalrum, a man of fame among the Greeks as a great philosopher.

It was mentioned that Philadelphios was stronger than his father Ptolemy. He had 200, 000 soldiers, 20,000 horses, 2000 chariots, 400 elephants, which he had imported from Ethiopia.

His treasure of gold and silver was great, and his annual income, from Egypt, was 14,800 silver pieces. The amount of wheat ranged between half a million to a million kilos.}

“And at the end of some years they shall join forces, for the daughter of the king of the south shall go to the king of the North to make an agreement; but she shall not retain the power of her authority, and neither he nor his authority shall stand; but she shall be given up, with those who brought her, and with him who begot her, and with him who strengthened her in those times.” (v.6)

He prophecies about the end of days when an agreement was accomplished between the kings of Egypt and Syria in the year 250 B.C., when the king of Syria married the daughter of the king of Egypt. Antiochus Theos (285 – 246 B.C), the third king of Syria, divorced his wife Laodice to get married to Berenice or Betonice, the daughter of Ptolemy II (283 – 246 B.C.) who was called Philadelphios. He gave his daughter a dowry, thousands of silver and golden pieces. He was called Phernophorus or dowry giver. The purpose of Ptolemy letting his daughter marry the king of Syria was for him to dominate over Syria and all the kingdom of Antiochus, however, the plan failed because Laodice, whom Antiochus had divorced, was kept as a concubine and

not as a queen. She stirred her friends against the king and killed Berenice. Antiochus had his first wife Laodice and she enthroned her oldest son, Seleucus Callinicus, and her youngest son, Hierax, became a governor over Asia Minor. The oldest son deceived Berenice and killed her and her son. Thus deceit and cheating entered the lives of the two kings and they both failed.

The prophecy was literally fulfilled, for the plan of the king of Egypt completely failed, for the king did not offer his daughter a wife for the king of Syria, and the daughter, her husband and her son were all murdered.

## **B. The Second War**

“But from a branch of her roots one shall arise in his place, who shall come with an army, enter the fortress of the king of the North, and deal with them and prevail. And he shall also carry their gods captive to Egypt, with their princes and their precious articles of silver and gold; and he shall continue more years than the king of the North. Then the king of the North shall come to the kingdom of the king of the South, but shall return to his own land.” (v. 7-9)

He refers to a branch from the family of Berenice will come and conquer the king of the North. This truly had happened when Ptolemy III Euergetes, the brother of Berenice, the third king of Egypt who succeeded his father Philadelphios, prepared a great army to revenge for his sister. He truly won the governor of Syria, Kalinikos, with his mother Laodice, and made many victories. Not only he conquered Syria, but also Cilicia and other regions at the Euphrates. He almost dominated over all Asia. News came that a rebellion in Egypt made Euergetus go back to Egypt carrying the captives, with two and a half thousand silver and golden statues, which Cambyses had brought from Egypt a long time ago. He also carried 40,000 talents of silver, and Kalinikos did not think of going into battle again with Euergetus, for he knew that he cannot conquer him or restore what he had carried from the prey. Euergetus remained a king for 46 years. When Kalinikos felt the defeat before Euergetus, he asked for help from his brother Herakus, the governor of Asia Minor, who did not care about his brother’s cries for he felt that he deserves the throne. He battled with his brother and his brother fell dead on his horse, while Euergetus remained king in Egypt for 4 years, after the death of the king of Syria. In any case, Euergetus did not return to Syria.

## **C. The Third War**

“However his sons shall stir up strife, and assemble a multitude of great forces; and one shall certainly come and overwhelm and pass through; then he shall return to his fortress and stir up strife. And the king of the South shall be moved with rage, and go out and fight with him, with the king of the North, who shall muster a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into the hand of his enemy.” (v. 10,11)

He prophecies about the sons of Kalinikos, the king of Syria, who are Selucus II Ceraunus and Antiochus the Great, who assembled an army to revenge from the Egyptians after the death of Euergetus. But Ceraunus was killed in Phrygia in the third year of his reign, for Nicanor and



Apaturius deceived him while he was getting ready for battle against Egypt, leaving his brother to rule the country. Antiochus the Great became a great king who led a great army against Egypt. At that time, Ptolemy Philopator was the fourth king over king. He was named Philopator as a shame, for the name means “lover of his father”, while his father, his mother, his brother were killed so the people hated him. This what made Antiochus the Great to battle with him in Rafah in the year 217 B.C. The king of Egypt gathered a big army, the same size of the army of Syria. Ceraunus, with his army, was able to restore the Syrian land. The king of Egypt, who was known to be coward and careless, was getting ready with his army, and he won the army of Antiochus in a great massacre.

Philopator did not win Antiochus the Great by his bravery and power, but God allowed that to abase the pride of the latter.

Since he was negligent in pursuing his victories, especially since he did not trust any who surrounded him, yet he made peace with Antiochus in an inappropriate manner.

“When he has taken away the multitude, his heart will be lifted up; and he will cast down tens of thousands, but he will not prevail.” (v. 12)

The historians say that Philopator could have invaded Syria very easily, but he indulged in his sexual desires, lust and committed many crimes. After returning from the war, he killed his wife, Euridice, and committed many crimes. He also yielded the rule to an evil lady called Agathoclea, who played music. He fell in love with her brother, Agathocles, and he made him a general commander over Egypt.

After he led many victories and the whole East used to fear him, he indulged in drinking with carelessness, and his only concern was only making banquets, thus his heart was full of disgrace.

“For the king of the North will return and muster a multitude greater than the former; and shall certainly come at the end of some years with a great army and much equipment. And in those times many shall rise up against the king of the South; also certain violent men of your people shall exalt themselves in fulfillment of the vision, but they shall fail.” (v. 13,14)

Here the angel reveals to the prophet that many wars will arise. After the death of Ptolemy Philopator, Egypt became without a king, for his son Ptolemy Epiphanes the Fifth (203 – 181 B.C.) was only four years old. Agathocles deviated and all the regions under Egypt’s rule rebelled and had many internal problems. Antiochus attacked Egypt, for it became very weak, so the Egyptians asked for help from Rome. The Romans wanted to expand their authority over the whole world, so they asked Antiochus to stop the war. After several attempts, he failed in his war, then he won the battle against the Egyptian Commander Scopas, on the boundaries of Judea. The angel clarified that Antiochus the Great was not the only enemy to Egypt, but that there were many enemies.

Antiochus made a truce with Philip III the Macedonian, and asked for Jewish help. The righteous Jews refused to help him, but some of the Jews supported him.

What does he mean by saying, “Certain violent men of your people shall exalt themselves in fulfillment of the vision but they shall fall.” (v.14) St. Jerome says that this was a prophecy about the high priest, Onias, who defiled the altar of the Lord in Jerusalem. He escaped to Egypt and took with him a great number of the Jews. Ptolemy received him in great honor and offered him the region of Heliopolis, where he built an altar to the Lord, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah that there will be an altar to the Lord in the midst of Egypt. (Is. 19:19) The book of Maccabees and Josephus the historian also mentioned that. St. Jerome said that the temple remained until the era of Fesbesian for 250 years. The city itself was called “Onias” and it was destroyed during the war between the Jews and the Romans. No traces remained for the temple nor the city during the days of St. Jerome.

“So the king of the North shall come and build a siege mound and take a fortified city; and the forces of the South shall not withstand him. Even his choice troops shall have no strength to resist. But he who comes against him shall do according to his own will, and no one shall stand against him. He shall stand in the Glorious Land with destruction in his power. He shall also set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, and upright ones with him; thus shall he do. And he shall give him the daughter of women to destroy it; but she shall not stand with him, or be far from him.” (v. 15-17)

St. Jerome said: {In order for Antiochus to restore Judea and some countries in Syria, he had to go in battle with Scopas, the leader of Ptolemy, near Jordan close to a city called Peneas. Scopas fled but he was attacked in Sidon with ten thousand of his soldiers, and the Egyptians had no power to fight back. Thus, he sat in the “Glorious Land”, which is Palestine which became under his domain. It was mentioned in the Septuagint, the “land of desire” which meant the land of which God was pleased. God had revealed to Daniel what will happen, so when Palestine falls into the hands of Antiochus, the righteous will not be heart broken, but will realize that God had previously revealed that all this will happen. Thus, the prophecy becomes a source of consolation during tribulations and persecutions. In order for him to have Egypt under his control, Antiochus gave his beautiful daughter Cleopatra to marry Ptolemy, thinking that Egypt will submit to his authority. But Cleopatra did not support him but supported her husband. So he directed his attention to Asia Minor instead of Egypt, so he went with his navy fleet and invaded many of the islands.

“ After this, he shall turn his face to the coastlands, and shall take many. But a ruler shall bring the reproach against them to an end; and with the reproach removed, he shall turn back on him.” (v. 18)

By coastlands, he means Asia Minor and the coast of the Mediterranean, Greece, Cyprus and all the islands in the sea. It was the custom of the Jews that they call all the regions by the sea coastlands.

Antiochus, with his small army, was able to advance to Asia Minor. With him, he had Hannibal, whose fame had spread to the Romans and they were terrified from him. Therefore, it was not hard to expel the Romans from every region he had to go to. Hannibal became a close friend to Antiochus, however, Antiochus doubted his loyalty. Antiochus went to Greece. Chalcis married a beautiful girl and had a big wedding ceremony, as if he were in his own country in complete peace. Due to his great fame, he invaded many countries and liberated these countries from the Romans. As the angel told Daniel, “he shall turn his face to the coastlands and shall take many.” (v.18)

When Antiochus rejected Hannibal’s counsel, he began to deteriorate and became a reproach. He used to mock the Romans. He invaded some of the regions in Greece, which were allies with the Romans. The Roman general Lucius or Acilius Scipio Nasica, with his brother Publius Scipio Aficanus, were able to attract him beyond the Taurus Mountain and conquered him in Maghnesia, so he was able to revenge for all the mocking which he had uttered against the Romans. Therefore, the angel said, “But a ruler shall bring the reproach against them to an end; and with the reproach removed, he shall turn back on him.” (v. 18) Hence, Antiochus was defeated before the Greeks who allied with the Romans. Here, many blame General Scipio because he had left all the Roman prestige under the leadership of Philip the Macedonian.

“Then he shall turn his face toward the fortress of his own land; but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found.” (v. 19)

Antiochus weakened before the Roman general Scipio, so he went back to his country to be strengthened, after he lost many. He tried to plunder the temple of Jupiter Dodoneus in Elymas close to Shushan. To pay the Roman duty, he and his soldiers were killed by the people rebelling against him. Therefore the angel said, “But he shall stumble and fall and not be found.” (v. 19)

Antiochus died in the year 187 B.C.. Seleucus Philopator ruled after him (187 – 176 B.C.). Some call him Ceraunus. The second son was called Demetrius, and the third was called Antiochus Epiphanus. Now he will talk about his successor Selecus:

“There shall arise in his place one who imposes taxes on the glorious kingdom; but within a few days he shall be destroyed, but not in anger or in battle.” (v.20)

His successor was Selecus Philopator, and he exaggerated in imposing taxes on people (v.20), to pay customs to Rome. So he sent his prime minister Heliodorus to Jerusalem to plunder the temple. Afterwards, Heliodorus robbed his master and Antiochus Epiphanus ruled.

“And in his place shall arise a vile person, to whom they will not give the honor of royalty; but he shall come in peaceably, and seize the kingdom by intrigue.” (v. 21)

All historians agree that Antiochus Epiphanus was crafty and very stubborn. When the news of the death of his father reached Rome, they released him for they were content with his brother Demetrius. He used to bluff the Romans, and at his arrival to his country, they greeted him with great welcome. His brother Seleucus did not stay for long, and he left his son to succeed him. Antiochus, with his deceitfulness, was able to rule with no right at all. Therefore, the angel said, "To whom they will not give the honor of royalty..." He continues, "And seize the kingdom by intrigue" How did this happen? He pretended that he was a man of peace with his nephew, who was the legitimate heir to the kingdom and its guardian. Thus, he was able to withdraw the kingdom from him.

"With the force of a flood they shall be swept away from before him and be broken, and also the prince of the covenant." (v. 22)

Antiochus found that his people were attacking him. The people discovered his deceitfulness and his excluding his nephew. He also encountered many difficulties from the surrounding countries like Egypt, whose king was Ptolemy Philometor. His advisers were in good terms with the son of Seleucus, whom his uncle had excluded. They and other surrounding countries sent a secret help to attack Antiochus. But all these attacks were defeated, as the angel said. All this was not due to the power of Antiochus, but with God's permission, for God allowed him to rule to chasten the Jews at that time.

Who was the prince of the covenant who was defeated before Antiochus? He meant Ptolemy for he was a relative to the legitimate heir, the son of Seleucus.

Ptolemy Philometor was the son of Ptolemy Philopator and Cleopatra, the sister of Seleucus. Though he was a small child who could not move by himself, yet he was the prince of the covenant, being the king of Egypt.

"And after the league is made with him he shall act deceitfully, for he shall come up and become strong with a small number of people." (v. 23)

At the beginning, Antiochus was despised in Syria, and there were attempts supported by Egypt to let "Ibn Seleucus" the legitimate ruler. But Antiochus sent to the king of Egypt (his nephew) asking for his friendship, especially that Cleopatra, the sister of Antiochus was still living. Ptolemy was secure with his uncle Antiochus and became his friend. As soon as Antiochus was confident, he made a riot and invaded some Egyptian countries. He occupied them by force from his nephew who did not expect such a revolution.

"He shall enter peaceably, even into the richest places of the province; and he shall do what his fathers have not done, nor his forefathers; he shall disperse among them the plunder, spoil, and riches; and he shall devise his plans against the strongholds, but only for a time." (v. 24)

Through his deceitfulness, not with a great army, he was able to occupy some countries from his nephew and carry the spoil and riches to his country, for the Egyptians lived in luxury. Antiochus thought again how to attack Egypt as a second step.

Antiochus surpassed his fathers and forefathers in deceiving people, especially that breaking oaths in the East was considered a disgrace.

“He shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the South with a great army. And the king of the South shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army; but he shall not stand, for they shall devise plans against him.” (v. 25)

After his conquest, Antiochus prepared a great army to attack Egypt and its cities. He needed a long time to establish an army after he had occupied many countries by his deceitfulness. In the mean time, his nephew realized the interests of his uncle, so he made himself ready with a big army.

Verses 21 – 25 concentrated on Antiochus Epiphanes, mentioned earlier in chapter 8, and who was the antichrist of the Old Testament.

The men at the castle called him Epiphanes, or the exalted, for he was very interested in architecture and building beautiful buildings. Some people used to change one letter in his name and call him “Epimanes” which means the crazy, for he was violent, deceitful, and insane in his behavior.

“Yes, those who eat of the portion of his delicacies shall destroy him; his army shall be swept away, and many shall fall down slain.” (v. 26)

God allowed that Ptolemy be defeated before Antiochus, for he was indulging in eating delicacies without any concern at all for his country.

“Both these kings’ hearts shall be bent on evil, and they shall speak lies at the same table; but it shall not prosper, for the end will still be at the appointed time.” (v. 27)

The two kings, the uncle and his nephew, were evil and deceitful. Therefore, when Ptolemy was defeated, the two asked for reconciliation and to become friends, so that each can plot to destroy the other. Antiochus conquered his nephew, but he was unable to continue the journey, for he was afraid to be defeated before the rest of the fortified cities. The two sat on one table, but their hearts were full of hatred and detest. That is what politics does for many, so one will lose his confidence even in the closest ones to him.

The angel said that the end will be at the appointed time (v.27), meaning that all what happened was within certain limits so that God’s plan will be fulfilled, for the end has not yet come because God had appointed a time for everything.

“While returning to his land with great riches, his heart shall be moved against the holy covenant; so he shall do damage and return to his own land.” (v.28)

Antiochus returned to his land Syria and did not rule over Egypt, but he carried many riches, then he went to stir a war against Jerusalem and the holy temple and all the Jews. He had to leave Jerusalem and many treasures, as was mentioned in 2 Kings 5: 2, where God made many wonders. He added what he had plundered from the temple to what he had robbed from Egypt and went back to Syria with the desire to attack the holy covenant, that is, to attack God Himself.

“At the appointed time, he shall return and go toward the South; but it shall not be like the former or the latter. For ships from Cyprus shall come against him; therefore he shall be grieved, and return in rage against the holy covenant, and do damage. So he shall return and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant.” (29,30)

Since the truce between Antiochus and his nephew was completed and they sat together on one table, Antiochus prepared a big army and broke the covenant and invaded Egypt as well as besieged Alexandria. At that time, a Roman mission came with the leadership of Publuis or Popilus, from Macedonia or Greece or Italy. Antiochus greeted him very kindly as usual, but Publuis was not deceived but asked that he immediately departs, as an order from the Roman Senate. He asked to give him some time to counsel with his friends, but Publuis drew a circle with his rod and asked to call his counselors and negotiate with them before leaving that circle, or else he will declare war against him. Antiochus was not able to hesitate but surrendered himself in the hands of the Senator and went back from Egypt. These are the historical facts which the angel had declared to Daniel the prophet.

Antiochus did not fulfill his greediness in Egypt, but returned in shame, for just one word from the Roman Senator. Therefore, he returned and directed all his energies against Jerusalem and the holy temple. This time, he returned with much more violence to look for the Jews who forsook the holy covenant to use them against the Jewish nation and the holy matters. This was fulfilled as was mentioned in Second Maccabees chapters three to five.

“And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation.” (v. 31)

The forces which supported Antiochus were the ones who denied God and forsook the covenant, thus they supported the evil king against the divine truth. (2 Mac. 4)

The Jews mistakenly heard that Antiochus was killed, so they rejoiced. On his return to Jerusalem, when he heard that, he treated them very brutally.

The Jews resorted to Rome asking for support. Rome sent an army, while Antiochus went to attack the Jewish powers, under the leadership of the Maccabees. Antiochus submitted

to Rome and promised to keep the peace. But as soon as the Roman powers returned, he betrayed the covenant. Some of Jews also helped him in that betrayal.

Due to his known craftiness, he did not forbid the worship of the Living God, but he mingled God's worship with the pagan worship inside the temple. He defiled the temple by putting the statue of Jupiter Olympius in it. Then he stopped the Jewish worship, and made himself a god and offered a pig on the altar. The faithful people revolted against him, under the leadership of Maccabees. Thousands of the Maccabees were killed. That was considered "the abomination of desolation of the temple", a symbol of abomination of desolation which will happen at the end of days and which the Lord Jesus referred to. (Matt. 24:25)

"Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits." (v. 32)

The angel clarifies how the priest and the people were divided into two parts, one part was deceived by the flattery of Antiochus, and the other part abided in God's knowledge, so God granted them more power and understanding. As St. Jerome said that he does not doubt that this will happen also during the antichrist, where many will attack him and escape from him. The Jews explained the abomination of desolation of the temple through Fesbesian and Titus. They say that many knew the Lord and were killed for keeping the covenant.

St. Jerome said: {We read in the Maccabees that they pretended to be guardians over the covenant of God, but they entered in a covenant with the Gentiles. In my opinion, this is what will happen during the antichrist when the love of many cools off. The Lord Jesus said, "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" (Matt. 18:8)

"And those of the people who understand shall instruct many; yet for many days they shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering. Now when they fall, they shall be aided with a little help; but many shall join with them by intrigue." (v. 33,34)

The wise people (mostly priests) rejected the intrigues of Antiochus and taught many to consider all kinds of sufferings, whether by burning or plundering their possessions, or by captivity or by killing by the sword, as glory and honor for them.

This was the calling of the faithful people, in their relationship with God, not to be pressured after the flattery of any person, no matter how high his position was. This was the calling of the priests and the leaders to accept the sword and fire and not to lose their loyalty to God and their abiding by the divine commandment. Though they seem to have failed and had no support except from few, like the Maccabees, yet they should not care about the temporal glories and the love of praise.

"And some of those of understanding shall fall, to refine them, purge them, and make them white, until the time of the end; because it is still for the appointed time." (v. 35)

Here he confirms that some will fall. Perhaps he means that they will fall by the sword or burning by fire, but this does not mean that God will not support them. God permits that for their salvation, for their purification that they may become white, during the tribulation. They are considered martyrs who go through the fire, so they may be purged like pure gold.

Thus God was preparing the souls of the Maccabees, not only since they were born, but even before they were created. So when they see the attack very vigorously, they go back to Daniel's prophecies and they become strengthened and of good courage.

St. Hippolytus of Rome said: {Antiochus became king over Syria. He ruled in the year 107 of the Greek kingdom. In the mean time, he stirred a war against Ptolemy, the king of Egypt, and conquered him. On his return from Egypt, he went to Jerusalem in the year 103, carrying with him all the treasures of the house of God and went to Antioch. After two years, the king sent a tax collector to Judea to force the Jews to forsake the covenant of their fathers and to submit to the king's decree. He tried to oblige them by saying, "Obey the commands of the king, so you may live." But they replied, "No, we do not obey the king's decree, but we are willing to die in purity." So he executed thousands of them. (1 Macc. 2:32) Thus, what Daniel said was fulfilled, "They shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering." (v. 33) Daniel added, ""They shall be aided with a little help" (v. 34), for Mattias and Judas the Maccabee went to help them and deliver them from the hands of the Greeks. }

All of a sudden, the vision was transferred to the end of days and to the coming of the antichrist, in full details of his evil deeds.

#### **4. The end of days , the antichrist**

"Then the king shall do according to his own will; he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished; for what has been determined shall be done. He shall regard neither the God of his fathers nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall magnify himself above them all." (v. 36,37)

The Jews differed in their explanation of the previous statement. Some thought that the angel meant Antiochus Epiphanus, while others thought that he meant some of the Romans like Fesbesian and his son Titus, or even the whole Roman Empire. However, the church fathers agreed that he meant here the antichrist and not Antiochus, because what was mentioned after that does not apply to him. However, some thought that he meant the exalted Roman Empire, which some of its emperors made themselves gods and asked the people to worship their statues.



This man walking by his own will above all is like Lucifer (Is. 14:13,14) who glorified himself. He blasphemes against God and does not regard the God of his fathers. This made some say that the antichrist will be a Jew blaspheming against the faith.

Saying that the antichrist is a ruler who reestablishes the Roman Empire and attacking the Jews, made some think that he is a Christian denying the faith.

The Hebrew word for “The God of his fathers” is “Elohim”.

“The desire of women”, St. Jerome said that there are two interpretations for this phrase. Either he means asking the desire of women or denying this desire, as the antichrist will do, who will pretend to be chaste in order to deceive many. Some think that it means the desire of the Jewish women to conceive and give birth to the Messiah. Probably, it means that he does not care about women and their desires; Hitler was such a person.

St. Jerome said that this statement refers to the antichrist and not to Antiochus, for the latter attempted to oblige the Jews and the Samaritans to feast for his gods, and he made statues for the gods of the Greeks. However, the antichrist does not care about the god of his fathers but he makes himself a god.

“But in their place he shall honor a god of fortresses; and a god which his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver; with precious stones and pleasant things. Thus he shall act against the strongest fortresses with a foreign god, which he shall acknowledge, and advance its glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and divide the land for gain.” (v. 38,39)

Here he talks about the antichrist, the god whom his fathers did not know, and he means himself. He refers to himself the divine honors and seeks all the riches and the authority for himself. Thus, he is the strange god who presents gifts to all who submit to him and are deceived by him.

Some say that this applies to the Roman Empire which rejected the worship of the True Living God. Its god was the power, the fortresses and the love of authority by collecting taxes and financial gains from its colonies. The emperors made golden or silver statues for themselves or for their gods. They considered themselves better and stronger than the gods. They looked up toward Rome as the god whom everyone should honor.

The Greeks never dared to attack the gods; however the Romans often pretended that they honor the strange gods of other nations. Moreover, they mocked the gods and called for their denial, considering their country above all consideration.

“At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter the countries, overwhelm them, and pass through. He shall also enter the Glorious Land, and many countries shall be overthrown; but these shall escape from his hand: Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon. He shall stretch out his hand against the countries,

and the land of Egypt; also the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall follow at his heels. But news from the east and the north shall trouble him; therefore he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many. And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and no one will help him.” (v. 40-45)

Here there are three personalities:

1. The antichrist
2. The king of the South (Egypt)
3. The king of the North (Syria)

St. Jerome said: {Antiochus had partially fulfilled that. “The Libyans and the Ethiopians shall follow at his heels.” Antiochus did not conquer Libya, which most authors interpret as North Africa, nor Ethiopia. }

The center of the antichrist will be in Jerusalem and his dominion will extend across the seas, especially the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea. He will be stationed over the glorious holy mountain, which is Mount Zion. In spite of all the power and authority he has, yet no one can support him. He will collapse before Elijah and Enoch who support the church at that time and who prepare the believers for the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus.

St. Jerome said: {Our school of thought insists that the antichrist will perish in the same place where the Lord Jesus ascended up to heaven, the Mount of Olive. }

### **From the Inspiration of Daniel (11)**

#### **May history pass and the End of Times come!**

All the history is under Your control, and nothing is hidden from You. Giants arise and many perish; covenants are established and some keep them while others break them. Kingdom arises against kingdom, and all is past history.

May all the events of history pass away, and may the End of Times come. The antichrist will poison all, but our Conqueror the Christ is certainly coming! May You, the Victorious, come and may Your believers be glorified!

# Chapter 12

## The Great Tribulation and the Resurrection

St. Hyppolitus of Rome wrote that Daniel talked about the great tribulation or the abomination of desolation which was partially fulfilled on a local level during the time of Antiochus Epiphanus, and it will be fulfilled in all the world during the days of the antichrist at the end of times. Many of the fathers, especially St. Jerome, see that the words here are very clear and that they refer to the antichrist at the end of times.

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|--------------------------|---------|
| 1. The great tribulation | v. 1    |
| 2. The resurrection      | v. 2,3  |
| 3. Conclusion            | v. 4-13 |

### 1. The great tribulation

“At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book.” (v .1)

Starting with “At that time”, is very obvious that he is continuing the previous chapter. At the peak of the authority of the antichrist, arch angel Michael will arise to work for the benefit of the church, as was mentioned in the book of Revelation chapter 12. This was during the great tribulation which the Lord Jesus talked about in the book of Matthew 24: 15 –22.

During the trouble, God delivers the people of Daniel, that is the church of the faithful, whose names are written in the Book of Life. The church constantly faces tribulations but God never forgets His church. The more the tribulation, the more concern that God shows toward her. The church is in the hands of her Savior the Lord Jesus who works for her edification, and uses His angels and arch angels to protect her.

### 2. The Resurrection

“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.” (v. 2,3)

The book of Daniel is considered the first book in the Old Testament which clearly mentions the resurrection, when the Day of the Lord comes and the wise who obeyed God shine like eternal stars. This seemed to be above Daniel's comprehension, for he said, "Although I heard, I did not understand." (v.8)

Some try to distinguish between two kinds of resurrection, one for the thousand years and the other for the eternal life. However, it is clear here that he means one resurrection and one eternal judgment, either eternal glory or eternal punishment.

St. Jerome said: {The teachers who know the Law and apply it and those who preach other nations to worship God will shine like stars in eternity.}

Father Cysyrus said: {With all our effort, let us flee from all the obstacles of the world and devote our time for prayer and reading the Bible for the salvation of our souls. Thus, this saying will be fulfilled in us: "Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament." (v. 3)}

St. Jerome said: {After the antichrist is demolished and perishes by one breath of the Savior, the people in the Book of God will be judged according to their deeds, some will go to eternal life and others will go to eternal reproach. He compares the teachers to heaven itself, and compares those who teach others like the brightness of the stars. It is not enough that one becomes wise but he has to teach this wisdom to others. The one who can teach and remains silent and does not edify others is not rewarded.}

St. Jerome said: {The Lord helps the humble, and the humble are transformed into stars, for the righteous shine like stars, as Daniel said.}

### **3. Conclusion**

"But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase." (v.4)

Daniel ordered that the book be sealed until the time of the end, but knowledge shall increase, although one is puzzled until what is written in the book is fulfilled. Probably what he meant by the seal is the unclarity of the prophecies until the salvation is fulfilled in the fullness of time and all the secrets of the Second Coming are revealed as mentioned in the book of Revelation. (Rev. 22:10) Many of the scholars see that the book of Revelation is the key to the book of Daniel.

St. Ireneaus said that the divine inspiration asked Daniel to seal the prophecy, for no one can comprehend it until the Lord Jesus comes who is the goal of all the prophecies. Then the faithful will realize its mystery. He said: {The hidden treasure in the holy books is Christ, where all the symbols and the proverbs refer to Him. We could never comprehend His human

nature before the coming of the Lord, therefore, the angel told Daniel, “Shut up the words and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall increase.” (v.4) Before the fulfillment of any prophecy, it becomes like a mystery, but when the due time comes and it is fulfilled, then it becomes very clear and certain.}

St. Hippolytus of Rome said: {All what was said by the prophets were all sealed and were unknown to people. This what Isaiah said, “The whole vision has become to you like the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one who is literate, saying, ‘Read this, please,’ and he says, ‘I cannot, for it is sealed.’” (Is. 29:11) All what the prophets had uttered in the past were all sealed and hidden from the Pharisees who thought that they knew the letter of the Law. However, everything was revealed to the believers. The old matters were all sealed, but now by the grace of God, every thing is revealed to the saints, for He Himself is the Seal and the church is the key which opens and no one shuts and no one opens, as was mentioned in the book of Revelation. (Rev. 3:7) Therefore, the angel told Daniel, “ Shut up the words and seal the book until the time of the end.” To Christ, He unseals the sealed things, and through His grace, we know the will of God and believe that He sent the Lord Jesus for the salvation of human beings.}

St. Jerome said: {The one who declared the truth to Daniel declared that these matters were secret. He asked him to shut up the words and seal the book, thus upon reading it, many will not understand it and will differ in interpreting it because it is very mysterious. It is written, “Many shall run to and for”, meaning that many will read it. Also in the book of Revelation, there was a sealed scroll and no one was worthy to open the scroll and loosen its seals. St. John said, “So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. But one of the elders said to me, ‘Do not weep. Behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.’” (Rev. 5: 4,5) The scroll can be opened by the one who learns the mysteries of the book and is willing to understand its hidden truths. He can interpret the proverbs and can transform the letter which kills to the Spirit which quickens.}

“Then I, Daniel, looked; and there stood two others, one on this riverbank and the other on that riverbank. And one said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, ‘How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?’ Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that it shall be for a time, times and half a time; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished. Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, “My Lord, what shall be the end of these things?” And he said, “Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.” (v. 5 – 10)

To conclude the book, Daniel saw two angels and One wearing linen, who is the Word of God before the incarnation. (Dan. 10:5) One of the two angels asked him about how long the tribulation will be. The answer was for one time, two times and a half time, that is, for three and

a half years. This is half the week of which Daniel had talked previously, the period of severe persecution which ended by the defeat of the violent king. St. Jerome said that the time, the two times and a half time were not meant the three and a half years which Antiochus had defiled the temple, as Porphiry claimed, for this means that the conqueror enjoys eternal kingdom and that all the kings submit to him and obey him, and this has never happened. It is very clear that he is talking here about the antichrist who will rule for 1290 days or three and a half years.

Daniel was asked to conclude the book for it contains mysteries which no one knows. Daniel himself said, "Although I heard, I did not understand..." (v. 8) But in the mean time, he assures that whoever is pure and holy will understand and will become wise, but the evil will not understand. Knowledge and wisdom are relative; no doubt that Daniel had understood many of the mysteries of the end of the world, but though in a mirror or through a shade, until the knowledge is revealed to the believers.

St. Jerome said: {When the end will come, the evil will not understand, while the wise with God's doctrines will be able to understand. Wisdom will never be revealed to a deviated person or to one submitting to the desires of the flesh. }

"And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days."

He defined the period by days not by years, that is 1290 days, which is three and a half years, where the church will suffer from the great tribulation. Forty-five days are added to make the number 1335 days. Probably this is the period between the killing of the antichrist and the coming of the Lord Jesus. It is a period of rest so that those who deviated after the antichrist may repent. In the same time, it is a period for purifying the believers where they joyfully await the coming the Lord after the antichrist is gone. That is why Daniel praises those who wait for the 1335 days.

St. Jerome said: {It is obvious that the three and a half years is the period of the antichrist, for he will persecute the saints for three and a half years or 1290 days, then he will fall on the holy mountain. Thus from the time when the "Endelekismos" , that is the permanent sacrifice, is forbidden, which is the time when the antichrist rules the world and forbids the worship of God until his death, then the 1290 days or the three and a half years will be fulfilled. }

St. Jerome said: {He who waits 45 days after the 1290 days, is praised, for the Lord Himself will come in His glory. The reason for those 45 days after the murder of the antichrist is beyond our comprehension, this is a matter in God's knowledge. Probably judging the saints is postponed to test their faith. }

"But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days." (v. 13)

At last, Daniel was asked to rest until the coming of the Lord who says, “Behold, I am coming quickly.” (Rev. 22:12)

St. Jerome said: {It is obvious that all this prophecy pertains to the resurrection of the dead, when the prophet will also rise.}

In the sixteenth century, John Calvin said that some interpreters added the two numbers together (1290 + 1335). The result was approximately 2600 years. Since this prophecy was in the year 600 B.C., then the coming of the Lord and the end of the world will be 2000 years after His first coming. However, Calvin refuted this interpretation.

Some commented on the saying of the Lord Jesus in the parable of the “Good Samaritan”: “On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay You.’” (Lk. 10:35) They use a symbolic interpretation, that the Lord Jesus had entrusted the injured souls in this world into the hands of the struggling church for a period of 2000 years, for one day is like a thousand years to the Lord. The two denarii represent two thousand years after the ministry of the Lord Jesus, that is, the Lord Jesus will come again to the inn at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Bishop Dioscorus presented a research about the book of Daniel. He revealed that the end of the world is at hand. Also, many scholars in the West supported this opinion. Some scientists see that the hole in the ozone is getting bigger, which caused some glaciers to move in the region of Antarctica for a distance of three kilometers. This movement will cause magnetic imbalance of the globe which will cause strong earthquakes and volcanoes which cause the destruction of the whole world, few years after the year 2000.

Both in the East and the West, some supported these opinions while others opposed them. However no doubt, that when the antichrist comes, the believers will discover that what was mentioned in the Book of Daniel was very clear to the righteous people. Since the establishment of the early church of the New Testament, it has realized that the time of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus is very clear and frank.

I want to emphasize here that since the Lord’s ascension, the church is joyfully awaiting the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus. He is definitely coming, and coming quickly. Therefore, we do not have to be negligent nor slothful. The Lord Jesus has revealed to us the signs of His Second Coming, so we may be ready with patience and with facing difficulties, especially the great tribulation and the abomination of the desolation. We should also be ready with joy and hope that we have a share in the fatherly bosom. Some look at the Second Coming of the Lord with great pessimism, which make them negligent in carrying their responsibilities. This is a sign of weak faith and that the hearts are not kindled with the heavenly thoughts of the life to come.

He is certainly coming! Time will quickly pass and we will rejoice by our resurrection from the dead and our meeting with Him on the clouds!

**From the Inspiration of Daniel (12)**

**Yes, May the Times End!**

For our sake, You created time so we may glorify You. And for our sake, time will end so we may be glorified eternally with You.

Yes, May the times end and may You come to us, our Beloved, or may Your Holy Spirit carry us to You. We want to meet You very quickly!

May You open the eyes of our hearts so we may see You coming to our inner depths, and may we see ourselves crossing to You to enjoy Your presence!



# ANNEX

## CHAPTER NINE<sup>a</sup>

### OPINIONS REGARDING THE 70 WEEKS

**St. Jerome** provided us with various opinions of the Fathers of the Church and the Jewish scholars regarding the vision of the 70 weeks, even if it is different in the way of calculating it but it mainly concentrates all around the Person of Jesus Christ and His redeeming work.

He commenced with the opinion of **Fr. Julius Africanos**, we have previously presented. He introduced to us afterwards a group of different opinions for **Eusebius of Caesarea** which are mentioned in his eighth bookwork “Evangelic Preparation” “*Praeparatio Evangelica*,” which we will mention briefly here:

#### 1. THE FIRST VIEW

This opinion is based on the assumption that Jesus Christ, the High Priest, is the center of the vision, that is why the calculations arises through the successive high priests of the Israelites since their return from Babylon till the arrival of the Savior who is anointed for our sake.

[I do not think that the division of the seventy weeks aroused hypothetically... let us think of the other (anointed ones) who took care of the Jewish people, and who succeeded this prophecy and the return from Babylon, i.e. the high priests “*arkiereis*” that the Bible calls them anointed ones. Then stood up Jeshua the son of Jozadak (Ezra 3:2; 4:3 who was also called Joshua Zech 3:1,3) who was followed by several successors who occupied this position until the coming of our Lord and Savior... which means here that the total of the seven weeks till the 62 weeks become (69 - 7) 483 years after the time of Cyrus, or it will be said that we used our guessing to calculate those who occupied this

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<sup>a</sup> Translated by Nagwa Salib, Ottawa, Canada.

position as anointed priests looking after the people since Joshua the son of Jozadak till the coming of the Lord, i.e. who were anointed as priests (we'll mention this in details)...]

**Joshua the son of Jozadak** the high priest, who together with Zorobabel Ben Shealtiel put the foundation of the temple and the construction, was accomplished in 49 years, as it was delayed due to the Samaritans and other Gentiles surrounding them. These 7 weeks (49) have separated from the 62 weeks as in the prophecy. The Jews have finally approved this opinion as they said to the Lord, as mentioned in the Gospel story, "Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and will you rear it up in three days?" (John 2:20)... Josephus adds three more years the main works related to the building preparations etc. Thus the total comes to 49 years calculated from the seventh year of Darius. During this time **Joshua the son of Jozadak and Zorobabel** were looking after the people (which reached its maximum), and Zechariah and Haggai were telling their prophecies.

- ❖ Then Ezra and Nehemiah came from Babylon and built the walls of the city during the priesthood of **Joiakim the son of Jeshua** (Neh 12:10) named Jozadak (Jehozadak), who was succeeded by **Elishahib**, then **Jonathan and Joiada**, afterwards **Jaddua** (Neh 12:10) who during his era Alexander, the king of the Macedonia built Alexandria, as mentioned by Josephus in his book *Antiquities*, He came to Jerusalem and offered sacrifices in the temple. Alexander died during the 113 Olympics in the year 236 of the Persian Empire, which started in its turn the first year of the 55 Olympics. This date came matching the time when Cyrus the king of Persia conquered the Babylonians and Chaldeans.
- ❖ After the death of Jaddua the Priest who was responsible for the temple during reign of Alexander, **Onias** took over the high priesthood. During this time Seleucus appointed himself as king on Syria and Asia after conquering Babylon in the 12th year following the death of Alexander. Until this time the total of the years passed since Cyrus the king are 248 years, complying

with the date of the Book of Maccabees.

- ❖ Succeeding Onias the high priest came **Eleazar** (Avaran) heading the priesthood for the Jews. During this time the seventy elders have translated the Holy Bible to the Greek language (Septuagint) in the city of Alexandria.
- ❖ After this came **Onias the Second** then **Simon** who lead the people, Joshua the son of Sirach wrote, the Greek title *Panartos* (the honorable and perfect man) whom lots of people have related to Solomon by mistake. Antiochus during this time tried to obligate the Jews by submitting offerings the gods of the Gentiles. **Judas Maccabaeus** succeeded Onias, who cleaned the temple by destroying the idols of the Gentiles. His brother **Jonathan**, then his brother **Simon** (Thassi) to rule the people, succeeded him. By his death 277 years have passed by the reign of the Syrian Empire. The Maccabees has recorded the incidents happened during this time, leading to the end of the First Maccabees and the death of Simon the high priest in the year 425.
- ❖ **Johannes Hyrcanus** took over the high priesthood afterwards for 29 years, after his death **Aristobulus the First** ruled the people for one year, and he was the first one to have the honor of the high priesthood together with the power of ruling the kingdom after the return from the Babylon captivity.
- ❖ His successor was **Alexander Jannaeus** who combined being the high priest and king. He ruled the people for 27 years. At this point the total number of years from the first year of Cyrus and the return of the people to Judea from the captivity is 483 years. This total sums the 7 weeks with the 62 weeks making 69 weeks in total. During this duration the high priests ruled the Jews and the people considered them as the anointed ones.

After the death of their last one, Alexander Jannaeus, the Jews were divided into different parties, and internal revolt was among them as they were without a leader. This lead Alexandra, the wife of Alexander who was named Salina (Salome) to over rule, and

keep the post of high priest for her son **Hyrcanus the Second** but the kingdom was passed to her youngest son Aristobulus the Second who ruled the kingdom for 10 years. The two brothers started fighting and declared national wars and the Jews were divided into parties. Then Graeus Pompey the General of the Roman army came into the picture. He invaded Jerusalem and reached the Holy of Holies in the Temple and sent his brother Aristobulus the Second chained to Rome to humiliate him while he is in his victorious procession. He gave his brother **Hyrcanus the Second** the high priesthood. The Jewish nation became for the first time ruled by the Roman Empire. Herod the son of Intibater followed him in taking over the reign over the Jews with a decree from the Roman Senate after the assassination of Hyrcanus, thus becoming the first foreigner to rule the Jews. Following the death of his parents he gave the high priesthood to his children although they weren't from the tribe of Levi, neglecting the Law of Moses. He gave them this position in accordance to their promise to provide him with bribes and special benefits, as he despised God's Law<sup>a</sup>.

## 2. THE SECOND VIEW

**St. Jerome** presents us with another explanation for the **Eusebius of Caesarea**, he states that the number of years since the sixth year of Darius' rule who followed Cyrus and his son Cambyses this timing coincides the timing in which the temple building was completed, till the time of Herod and Augustus Caesar, this duration resembles the 7 weeks in addition of 62 weeks and its total 483 years. In this time Hyrcanus was assassinated becoming the last priest to the Maccabees through Herod ending the priesthood according to the Law. In this time a Roman leader destroyed the city and the temple. Maybe by Herod himself who declared himself a ruler illegally. According the angel's saying: **“And He emphasis his promise with many in one week, and in the middle of the week...”** we recognize the following:

Jesus Christ was born during the rule of Herod in Judea and

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<sup>a</sup>PL 25:684 - 686B.

Augustus Caesar in Rome, He preached with the Gospel and constructed the worship of the true God for many, meaning undutifully the apostles and the believers in general and following the sufferings of the Lord the offerings in the middle of the week were stopped because whatever was offered afterwards did not have any value in front of God... As all cried: “His blood be on us and our children” (Matth 2;25), and also “we do not have a king except Caesar”.

**Eusebius** has mentioned this in his book *Chronicle*, but for calculating the years since the accomplishing of the temple till the tenth year of the reign of the Emperor Augustus Caesar, i.e. when Hyrcanus was sleighed and Herod took over the Jewish nation, in its total 7 + 62 weeks (7 69) or 483 years presented as follows:

The building of the temple was accomplished during the 67 Olympics, which is the sixth year of Darius. In the third year of the Olympics 186, i.e. the tenth for Augustus, Herod ruled the Jews. Thus calculating this duration as 483 years according to the Olympics as it is completed every 4 years.  
[There are 120 Olympics within 186, 67.  $(120 \div 4 = 480 + 3$  (the third year after the Olympics) = 483)].

### **3. THE THIRD VIEW**

**St. Jerome** states that Eusebius has another opinion which he does not totally reject, which is evaluating the last week of the years as equal to 70 years considering that each day is equal 10 years of age.

In the midst of the week, approximately 35 AC, Jesus’ Sacrifice happened, and 35 years later (year 70) Rome arose against the Jews and destroyed the temple by Titus the Roman.

### **ST. HIPPOLYTUS OF ROME VIEW**

We have previously discussed this in the Chapter’s explanation. He sees that the last week represents the end of the world, when the Antichrist will appear and Elijah the prophet will appear to declare God’s knowledge. Finally, Jesus Christ will come

and kill the hypocrite with a blow of His mouth and will destroy his kingdom.

## **APPOLINARIOUS VIEW**

He saw that with The Lord Jesus' birth and his salvation work the seven weeks have completed (49 years), if we add to it the 62 weeks (434 years), i.e. in the year 482 the reconstruction of the temple and Jerusalem... when Elijah will appear reviving the hearts of the parents of their children, thus the Antichrist will come according to the apostle that he will sit in the Lord's Temple (2 Thess. 2) and arises a war against the saints, then he will be killed with the blow of our Lord and Savior. This will happen in the mid of the week fixing the oath of the Lord with His saints, after a decree is presented by the Antichrist forbidding the offerings as abomination will occur, that is a statue of an idol will be placed in the temple. And the final destruction will occur and the Jews who will believe the Antichrist after rejecting Jesus Christ will be condemned.

Appolinarius gets witness of Julius Aficanios's book the *Tempora* whom we have previously presented his view in the Chapter's explanation.

He emphasizes that the last week follows the end of the world, but Appolinarius says that it is impossible to separate the duration among each other, but it is stuck following each other.

## **ORIGEN'S POINT OF VIEW**

Although he follows the symbolic interpretation, but we find him in this vision not appealing to symbolism but attached to the historic facts. He presented us with the following brief notice in the tenth binder of the *Stromata* division.

[We must find thoroughly the duration between the first year for Darius the son of Ahasuerus and the second coming of Jesus Christ, and discover how many years it includes, and the facts which was said have happened during this time; then we find out if these timings coincides with the second coming or not].

## TERTULLIAN VIEW

**St. Jerome** presented to us the opinion of **Tertullian**<sup>a</sup> mentioned in his book “Against the Jews” *Contra Judaeos*, briefly.

How can we say that Jesus Christ came during the 62 weeks? We start calculating this since the first year of Darius, as it coincides with Daniel’s vision. That is why it is said He informed me, and talked with me, and said, “O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. At the beginning of your supplications the commandment came forth” (22,23).

Darius ruled for 19 years, and Artaxerxes 40 years, but Ochus named Cyrus ruled for 24 years and Argus one year then Darius called Melas for 21 years. Alexander the Macedonian ruled for 12 years, Soter in Alexandria for 35 years, the successor of Philadelphius for 38 years. Euergetes ruled for 25 years, the Philopatir for 17 years, followed by Epiphanes for 24 years, and Euergetes the Second for 29 years and Soter 38 years, Ptolemy for 37 years and Cleopatra for 20 years and 5 months. Also, Cleopatra shared with Augustus the empire for 13 years. Augustus then ruled after Cleopatra for another 43 years, thus the total years of Augustus ruling 56 years. Augustus then lived after the birth of Jesus Christ for 15 years.

The sum of the years till the birth of Jesus Christ (the 41 year of Augustus’ reign) 13 years shared by Cleopatra, 28 years alone (the birth of the Lord in the year 29 of his reign), making 437 years and 5 months, i.e. 62.5 weeks passed, which is equal to 437 years and 6 months upon the birth of Jesus Christ. The eternal ratification then appeared, and anointed the Holy of the Holies who is Jesus Christ, and the vision and prophesies where ended and Jesus omitted sin for all who believes in Him. But what does it mean that the visions and prophesies were justified? **Tertullian** says that the prophesies have ended, justifying that all the prophesies were completed, completing all the prophesies, which have been previously.

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<sup>a</sup>PL 25:691 - 694.

Surely all prophesies and visions for the coming of Jesus and His sufferings are not valid anymore due to the fact that it is already achieved.

**Tertullian** adds here: Let us search for the meaning of the 7 1/2 weeks that was in turn divided to parts of previous weeks, how it was achieved among these parts? After the death of Augustus who lived after the birth of Jesus, 15 years passed, and was followed by Tiberius Caesar who ruled for 22 years and 7 months and 28 days. In the 15th year of his reign, Jesus suffered when he was 33 years old. Then Caligula Caesar ruled for 3 years and 8 months and 13 days. Nero ruled for 9 years and 9 months and 13 days. Galba followed for 7 months and 28 days and Otho for 3 months and 5 days; Vitellius has ruled for 8 months and 28 days. Vespesian conquered the Jews in the first year of his reign, thus the total years became 52 years and 6 months, for he ruled for 11 years and this during the time Jerusalem was invaded, thus the Jews have completed the 70 weeks as in Daniel's prophecy.

## **THE JEWS VIEW**

**St. Jerome**<sup>a</sup> says that the Jews counted the 490 years starting from the 1st year of Darius who sleighed Belteshazzar and converted the Chaldean Empire to Medes and Persia, ending till the era of Jesus Christ. They found a prophecy about His death in it and about the attack of the Roman army under the lead of Vespesian and Titus his son. And the prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem by the hand of the Romans, the Jews have considered the first 3 1/2 years from the week signifies its destruction on Vespesian hands and Titus and the other 3 1/2 years points to Hadrian's war.

James Montgomery<sup>b</sup> who adopted the ideas of the critics of the 20th century has mentioned that several of the Jewish scholars in the Middle Ages followed the traditional vision considering the final point in the prophecy, the destruction of Jerusalem through Titus or Hadrian, like Rashi, and the son of Ezra etc.

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<sup>a</sup>PL 25, 694 - 695.

<sup>b</sup>A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel, p. 392.



It is said on behalf of Shottgen examples for the Jews' views of this prophecy, as Nachmanides said that the Holy of the Holies is not except the Messiah, devoted through David's sons.

And the rabbi Moses Hadershan says, "the eternal righteousness is Messiah the King".

To add more interpretations for this prophecy of the Jewish scholars, please refer to the book of Father Abde-Messih Abou-El-Kheir page 136-139.

**ANNEX TO THE INTERPRETATION OF  
THE BOOK OF DANIEL:  
THE ANTICHRIST IN THE  
WRITINGS OF THE FATHERS**

**THE INTEREST IN THE APPEARANCE OF THE  
ANTICHRIST AND THE END OF THE DAYS**

Though the Book of Daniel and the Revelation of St. John the Apostle have approached the subject of the Antichrist, I prefer to present a separate annex to the interpretation of the Book of Daniel about the Antichrist in the writings of the Fathers of the Church. The question of *the Antichrist and the end of the days*” is now, more than ever before, occupying the entire world. A few years ago, one of the most famous preachers in the United States of America noted that the number of questions he received in one year about the end of the days has exceeded the total number of questions received in the past twenty years about the same subject. This only reveals the people’s feelings about the coming of the end of the days even in the western countries.

The interrogation marks have increased in the past years for the following reasons:

- The creation of the State of Israel, “When the fig tree has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near.” (Matt. 24:32, Mark 13:28).
- Many people wonder whether Israel will accept the faith in Jesus Christ at the end of the days as says St. Paul (Rom 11). The movement of preaching the Christian faith among the Jews has grown, the Jewish Christian Center is established in the United States and many people are keen to spread the Good News among the Jews even inside Israel.
- One of the well-known rabbis, who has accepted the faith in Jesus Christ, is proclaiming that the Jews should be waiting for the Antichrist and not the Messiah and that they are already preparing the way for him without knowing.
- The appearance of some new Jewish hymns singing that the Messiah is already born and some Jews are expecting His advent soon.
- The dangerous strife between the Jews and the surrounding countries over the re-establishment of the temple which had completely disappeared since year 70 until today, more than 19 centuries ago.

- **Away from the political climate**, many Christians are wondering:
- Will God allow the construction of the temple knowing that our Lord Jesus Christ confirmed that it will be destroyed forever (Matt. 23:38, Luke 13:35) and that previous attempts to rebuild it have failed?
- Will God allow the construction of the temple where the Antichrist will lay the foundation of his spiritual center and spreads his poison against the church around the world thus realizing the apostolic say about the appearance of the man of sin in the temple of God?
- Will there be an offertory of animal sacrifices after breaking the tradition all those years with the unique Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ? If ever this happens, what will be the stand of heaven about it?

The Israel's declarations about the construction of the temple, other than creating problems of political nature, the issue that preoccupies the politicians, is raising questions in the spirit of some Christians around the world about the end of the days.

- Beside the above noted factors, the declarations made by the scientists about the enlargement of the hole in the ozone and its impact on the complete destruction of the earth through earthquakes and volcanoes has moved many people to wonder about the issue.

## **TIME OF THE SECOND ADVENT OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST**

Many questions have been raised in the past few years about the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ, especially that many people have tried over the years to calculate the periods and times. They use the book of Daniel and the Revelation as reference in order to identify the time of His advent and the end of the days.

### **THE FIRST OPINION: NO ONE KNOWS THE TIMING**

a. Daniel was told to *'shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end'* (Dan. 12:4), this means as well that Daniel knew the end but was obliged to hide it.

Our Lord Jesus Christ said openly that not one single human knows

about that day or hour, not even the angels of heaven and that human beings don't have to know the times and the periods that God has kept to Himself (Matt. 24:36, 42).

**St. Hilary of Poitiers**, says [He has forbidden them from knowing it, not only that, furthermore the desire to find the way of knowing it is forbidden, because they don't have to know those times<sup>a</sup>.]

b. The feeling that the time for the Second Advent is at hand is needed all along the generations so that everyone would be ready for it. As it is said:

“Our salvation now is closer than when we accepted the faith, **the night is far spent, the day is at hand**” (Rom. 13:12).

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see **the Day approaching**” (Heb. 10:25).

“**For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry**” (Heb. 10:37).

“**But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers**” (1 Pet 4:7).

“**Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!**” (James 5:9)

“**Behold, I am coming quickly!**” (Rev. 3:11, 22:7, 12, 20)

## **THE SECOND OPINION: THE SIGNS ARE POSITIVES AND THE COMING IS AT HAND**

In the past, many people have specified the time of the end of days, especially those who believed literally in the thousand year reign, because they thought that since God created the world in six days therefore the world must take an end six thousands years later. “With the Lord one day is as a thousand years” (2 Pet 3:8). Then, on the seventh day starts the resting day for God (the thousand-year reign) and on the eighth day He will come to condemn. Therefore, with the beginning of the world's seventh thousand year, the Lord Jesus Christ will come again to reign on the earth for a thousand year<sup>b</sup> as stated by **St. Irenaeus<sup>c</sup>, Comodian<sup>d</sup>, Victorianus<sup>e</sup> and Lactantius<sup>f</sup>**.

If we set aside the signs that could be applied to all generations, then this generation has its own signs that confirm that the Second Advent is at hand. As stated before when we spoke about the return of the Jews and the

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<sup>c</sup> *Adv. Haer* 5:33-35.

<sup>d</sup> *Instr.* 2:35:8ff.

<sup>e</sup> *PL* 5:303.

<sup>f</sup> *Inst* 7:24.

establishment of the State of Israel, the struggle about the construction of the temple for the Jews and the feeling among some Jews that the Messiah was in fact born.

Besides, as soon as the Jews declare that they accept someone as the waited for Messiah, the believers will immediately know that this person is the Antichrist. That there won't be more than 1290 days – the length of his bitter reign and his death – then a waiting period of 45 days to allow those who lost their way to repent and the believers to be justified.

We will now give a presentation about what has been reported over the years about the Antichrist.

## THE ANTICHRIST IN THE EARLY CHURCH

Since the inception of the Church's work in worshipping God and preaching the people immediately after the Pentecost she was asking her children to watch two facts about the end of the days:

1. The Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ, when He will lift His Church up with Him to the bosom of His Father to share His glory. The Church is now enjoying His presence and His stay in the heart of the believers to fill them with the token of His inner glory and to inflame their hearts longing to see Him face to face coming on the clouds.

2. The coming of the Antichrist, who will resist the truth, and will engage in a one last decisive war for the benefit of the devil at the end of the days. He will be spreading all forms of corruption and cheating against our Lord Christ. If it is possible, he will try to mislead even the élite. Antichrists in every era will be preparing the way to that perverter.

## THE ANTICHRIST IN THE APOSTOLIC ERA

St. Jhn the beloved says about **the Antichrists of his era**: *“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.”* (1 John 4:1-3). St. John then warns us against the antichrists who are false prophets and who do not speak of truth. By the same token, St. Paul draws our attention to the fact that **at the end of the days the arrival of the Antichrist will be in conjunction with many falling away situations**. St. Paul says: “Let no one deceive you by any means. For that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as god in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” (2 Thess 2:3-4)

## THE ANTICHRIST IN THE ERA OF THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS

The author of the **Didache** (second century, some of its texts go back to the first century) tells us about the Antichrist that he will deceive the world, and will pretend that he is the Son of God<sup>a</sup>. He will rule the earth, will make miracles and will persecute the believers. However a total victory for Christ will be seen with the appearance of the sign of the Cross in the open skies, the trumpets will be heard and the dead will rise. At this particular moment Christ comes on the clouds and will be accompanied by all his saints.

The author of the **Didache** makes the link between the advent of Christ and the widespread of hate with injustice.

**St. Policarb of Smyrna** defends the holy incarnation and the death of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross and counts anyone who denies them as if he is the Antichrist and the eldest son of the devil<sup>b</sup>.

### ST. JUSTIN, THE MARTYR (100 – 165)

**St. Justin** speaks about the man of sin that he is the man of apostasy who talks against the Almighty and who dares to do evil against Christians<sup>c</sup>.

### ST. IRENAEUS

[Although he is a thief and an apostate who wants to be adored as a god, and despite being a dispossessed slave, he wants to make himself king. Because he carries the powers of the devil, he comes not as a saintly king worshipping God, but as a resisting man with every evil apostasy centered in him and deceiving people as being God...<sup>d</sup> ]

**St. Irenaeus and St. Cyril the Great** see that the Antichrist will renovate the temple of the Jews in Jerusalem to be the center for his activities. But **St. John Chrysostom, St. Augustine, St. Jerome and Fr. Theodoret** see that he will sit in the middle of the altar of the Christian Church. **St. John Chrysostom** says, [He will sit in the temple of God not only in Jerusalem but in every church<sup>e</sup>.]

In all events, our Master Jesus Christ came to the world to sanctify every heart to become a holy temple for the Holy Trinity, and through this sanctification holiness returns to the temple of God. The Antichrist will come to destroy the hearts and to corrupt the exalted temple, violating it for his own

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<sup>a</sup> *Ep. to Philippians, 7:1.*

<sup>b</sup> *Dial. cum Trypho, 110.*

<sup>c</sup> *Adv. Haer. 5:25:1.*

<sup>d</sup> *In 2 Thess. hom.3.*

account as well as corrupting and persecuting the churches of God<sup>a</sup>.

## TERTULLIAN (160 – 240 C.)

It was believed in the first centuries that **this man would appear after the desolation of the Roman State**. People were looking at the empire as a power resisting His appearance. **Tertullian** says, [What other obstacles he has other than the Roman State, the apostasy will appear as an opponent and Antichrist<sup>b</sup>.] He says further, [We, Christians, abide by the prayers for the emperors and for the complete stability of the empire because we know that the square power that threatens the world is hindered by the existence of the Roman Empire. This power that we do not want, let us pray God that He may postpone its appearance, showing our good will for the permanence of Roman State<sup>c</sup>.]

He sees that the arrival of the Antichrist is coming close so he says: [He is at the door, longing for the bloodshed of the Christians not for money<sup>d</sup>.]

## ORIGEN

**Origen** speaks about **the malicious miracles following the Antichrist** that they are powerless and deceiving miracles since they cannot change our bad nature to a holy nature and cannot offer development in a better life but he emphasizes that those who practice them are not living in purity<sup>e</sup>.

**Origen** thinks that the man of sin as he carries the ill doing of the devil with all its violence and deceit, he represents the lies that cannot exist with the declaration of the advent of Christ, i.e. the appearance of the truth<sup>f</sup>. Hence the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, at the end of the days will eliminate completely the darkness of the enemy of goodness and will send him to the eternal suffering. The declaration of truth will then destroy the lie.

**Origen** followed the curriculum of symbolic interpretation, therefore his interpretation of Chapter 24 of the Gospd according to Matthew 24:3-4 *Comm. in Matthaëum* is symbolic. He sees the Antichrist as **the misinterpretation of the Christian faith and the Christian virtue**. As for the events of the end of the days, they are:

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<sup>b</sup> *De. Resurr. 24.*

<sup>c</sup> *Exhort. ad Martyr.*

<sup>d</sup> *De Fuga 12; cf De An. 50; De Resurr. 25.*

<sup>e</sup> *J. Wendland: Miracles and Chrstianiamity. 1911, p 53f.*

<sup>f</sup> *See Gomm. on John 2:4.*

- The famine that will precede the advent of Christ is the Christian's hunger for the meaning beneath the surface of the Bible, in other words the spiritual or symbolic meaning hidden behind the letter.
- The epidemics are the speeches given by heretics to hurt the souls.
- The persecutions are the false teachings that the impostors use to distort the Christian truth.
- The abomination of the desolation in the holy place is the wrong interpretation of the Holy Bible.
- The clouds, on which will appear the Lord Jesus Christ, are the prophets and the apostles' books, which reveal Him to the souls.
- The sky that we are enjoying is the holy books that present us with the truth.
- The last victory is the declaration of the Bible in the world.

The use of the symbolic interpretation by Origen doesn't mean denying the arrival of the Antichrist as a real person at the end of the days.

## ST. HIPPOLYTUS OF ROME (3rd century)

In his article about Christ and Antichrist '*De Christo et Antichristo*' **St. Hippolytus** relied upon extracts from the two testaments, the old and the new. He said that the history would take an end with the appearance of a violent tyrant who will imitate Christ to overcome all the nations for his own account<sup>b</sup>. He will build the temple in Jerusalem and the empire of Rome will be his political base (the new Babylon)<sup>f</sup>.

The Antichrist will call the people to follow him, will tempt them with false promises and will attract many for some time<sup>d</sup>. However, as soon as the matter reaches its apogee, God will come preceded by two prophets, John the Baptist and Elijah<sup>c</sup>. They will come in glory and will gather the believers in Paradise<sup>e</sup>. A fire will be set and those who will refuse the faith will fall under fair judgement. At that moment the innocents will rise to heaven and the sinners to an eternal fire<sup>g</sup>.

**St. Hippolytus** supposes that the Antichrist will be a Jew and specifies that he will be from Dan's tribe<sup>h</sup>. **St. Irenaeus** agrees with St. Hippolytus on this subject<sup>i</sup>.

<sup>a</sup> Brain E. Daley: *The Hope of the Early Church, A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology*, Cambridge, 1990, p. 38ff.

<sup>b</sup> *De Christo et Antichristo*, 6:49.

<sup>c</sup> *Ibid* 30-36.

<sup>d</sup> *Ibid* 49-63.

<sup>e</sup> *Ibid* 64f; 44f.

<sup>f</sup> *Ibid* 64.

<sup>g</sup> *Ibid* 65.

<sup>h</sup> *Ad Anti Christo*, 14.

<sup>i</sup> *Adv. Haer* 5:30:2.



In his “*Commentary on Daniel*,” considered as one of the oldest fatherly interpretation of the book in our lands, **St. Hippolytus** makes the link between the kingdom of the Antichrist and the end of the world. According to him the end of the days will arrive 6000 years after the creation of the universe since God rests on the seventh day.

## COMMODIAN

There are two Latin poems, going back to the second half of the third or the fourth century, related to **Commodian**, first Latin Christian poet. Those poems are *Carmen de Duobus populis* and Instructions. They deal with the subject of the end of the days as follows:

Nero will rise from hell to become the Antichrist who will engage into war against the Church. Elijah, the prophet, will return to earth and will stand before him<sup>a</sup>. The Antichrist will be a repeat of Nero’s life and will make miracles in Judea<sup>b</sup>. The poem *Carmen* makes reference to the arrival of another Antichrist in the East while the other poem only points out to one Antichrist, Nero, who will come to Jerusalem after his victory in the West and deceives the Jews who will accept him as the Messiah<sup>c</sup>.

## ST. ATHANASIUS THE APOSTLE (C. 295 – 373)

Since the Church had suffered tremendously because of Arius, Pope Athanasius looked at him as though he was the Antichrist. He did not look at him with the spirit of fear and anxiety but through the spirit of victory and overcoming the wicked. In his tenth Paschal letter he says, [How to stir up patience if the untrue and deceiving accusations of the Antichrist don’t come first<sup>d</sup>.] He called Arius the predecessor of the Antichrist<sup>e</sup>, who paves the way for the Antichrist to come. He also defended the Church’s decision to isolate and forbid Arius from entering the Church since when he denied the divinity of Christ he got closer to the Antichrist<sup>f</sup>.

## ST. CYRIL OF JERUSALEM (deceased year 364)

In his fifteenth article regarding the glorious advent of Christ, **St. Cyril of Jerusalem** says about the Antichrist that:

1. The brother’s hatred to one another is the way that is being prepared for the Antichrist. In that statement, **St. Cyril** reaffirms the words of our Lord Jesus Christ when He said that at the end of the days the love of many will cool down and is also in conformity with what has been related in the

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<sup>a</sup> *Carmen* 825-36; *Instructions* 1:41:50.

<sup>b</sup> *Carmen* 837-41; 891-926.

<sup>c</sup> *Instructions* 1:41:13-20.

<sup>d</sup> *Epist. Pasch.* 10:7.

<sup>e</sup> *Depositio Arii* 1.

<sup>f</sup> *Ibid* 5.

Didache<sup>a</sup>.

2. Apostasy happened with the appearance of heresies.
3. The heretic sent his spies for a partial aberration until he comes to overtake the prey.
4. An emperor of Rome crowns himself, deceiving the simple Jews who are waiting for the kingdom of Medes and deceiving the Gentiles with false miracles.
5. Three years and half is the length of his rule, which will be over with the appearance in the sky of the Lord Jesus Christ in his glory.

[*“Therefore when you see the abomination of the desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place whoever reads let him understand”* (Matt. 24:15). Then if anyone says to you, Look, here is the Christ or there, do not believe it. (Matt. 24:23)

**The brother’s hatred to one another paves the way for the arrival of the Antichrist** because the devil divides people so that they accept the one who is about to come. But God prevented the servants of the Master Christ from going here or there towards the enemy <sup>b</sup>.]

[St. Paul the Apostle wrote about that subject giving us a clear indication when he said, “...for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first” (2 Thess 2:3).

And the apostasy had happened says St. Paul since people fell away from the righteousness believes to the point that some people dared to say that Christ came of nowhere. Before, the heretic people were seen, but now the Church is full of unseen ones because the people lost the way to the truth and shut their ears (2 Tim. 4:4). If there is an article full of pride, everyone is happily listening but if there is a word of edification everybody will turn away from it.

The majority departed from the right words and rather chose the word of evil instead of the word of virtue. This is the falling away and the enemy is looking forward to it since he sent his spies to partially pave the way until the time comes for him to overtake the prey.

Man, take care of yourself and may your soul be safe.

The Church put the responsibility on you before the living God. She is informing you all about the Antichrist before he comes. We don’t know whether he will come during your time or after you depart from this world, however it would be appropriate for you since you are made aware of the matter that you would be careful<sup>c</sup>.]

[However, since it was appropriate for Him (Christ) to become man in the past and it was expected that he would be born from a virgin, then the devil was created as a deceiver who makes stories about lying gods who give birth and

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<sup>a</sup>

<sup>b</sup> St. Cyril of Jerusalem: Lect. Cath. 15:9.

<sup>c</sup> St. Cyril of Jerusalem: Lect. Cath. 15:9.

are born from women so that when the lies are established no one would believe the truth. Same again, as Christ comes back, the antagonist will take advantage of the simple people who are waiting for the Messiah, especially those who are circumcised. A sorcerer as he is who is brilliant in the art of magic and prediction, a deceiver and crafty **takes for himself the power of the emperor of Rome** and makes himself a false Messiah. **Using the name of Christ, he will deceive the Jews who are waiting the advent of Christ and seduces the Gentiles with his magical aberration<sup>a</sup>.**]

[This Antichrist, as described above, will come after the end of the times of the Roman Empire, when the end of the world comes closer. Rome will have ten kings who will be against each other and will be ruling in different areas at the same time. After that comes the eleventh, i.e. the Antichrist, who with his magical aberrations violates the Roman power out of the hands of the ten kings who were ruling before. He shall subdue three kings (Dan. 7:24) and submit the other seven under his authority. At the beginning he will appear as gentle, reasonable and affectionate, then with false signs and magical untrue miracles will deceive the Jews as if he was the Messiah waited for. After that he will show all sorts of atrocious crimes and wickedness. He will surpass all the wicked and atheists who came before him using the spirit of a terrible killer against all humanity, especially the Christians, without mercy and full of duplicity.

Only three years and six months later, these crimes will vanish with the advent of the Only-begotten Son of God and our true Savior Jesus Christ coming from heaven. He will massacre the mouth of the Antichrist and will throw him in the fires of hell<sup>b</sup>.]

[We did not create this teaching, we have learnt about it through the Church's holy books, particularly Daniel's prophecy that we have just read and was interpreted by the archangel Gabriel saying, "the fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all other kingdoms" (Dan. 7:23). The interpreters of the Church customarily know that it is the kingdom of Rome. As was the first infamous kingdom, the kingdom of the Assyrians, the second is the kingdom of Medes and Persia together, then the third is the Macedonian kingdom and the fourth is the kingdom of Rome. Archangel Gabriel carries on with his interpretation saying: "The ten horns are ten kings who shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them; he shall be different

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<sup>a</sup> *St. Cyril of Jerusalem: Lect. Cath. 15:11.*

<sup>b</sup> *St. Cyril of Jerusalem: Lect. Cath. 15:12.*

from the first ones” meaning that he will surpass the evil of all his predecessors (he will not only surpass the ten preceding kings but all his predecessors) “and shall subdue three kings.” (Dan. 7:24). It is clear that he three kings are of the ten preceding kings. “He shall speak pompous words against the Most High” (Dan. 7:25). He will be a blasphemer and wicked, will not inherit the kingdom from his father but will violate it with magic<sup>a</sup>.]

[(Who is he and what kind of business is his?)

St. Paul explains it all. He says “the coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders” (2 Thess. 2:9), showing that Satan uses him as a tool, working in him and through him. Since he knows that it won’t be too long before his judgment day comes he makes war not through his agents as usual but he openly declares the war from that instance forward. Working through lying wonders because the father of lies makes the works of lies to the extent that people would think that they are seeing the dead rise when he did not, the lame walks and the blind sees although they are not really healed<sup>b</sup>.]

[St. Paul also says about him “who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God” (2 Thess. 2:4). Which temple is that? People might think that we are giving preference to ourselves. When the lawless one comes to the Jews, pretending that he is the Messiah and wanting to be worshiped by them, he will show interest in the temple to deceive them completely, pretending that he is a descendant of David and that he will rebuild the temple of Solomon. This temple, when the Antichrist comes will not find in it one stone overlapping another as is ruled by our Savior.

He will come with lying wonders, exalting himself over all the idols, showing first his love for kindness but later will show his real nature that knows no mercy especially towards the saints of God as is stated in the book of Daniel “I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them” (Dan 7:21). And in another chapter it was stated “and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time” (Dan 12:1). This beast is scary; a huge dragon which has not been defeated by a man and ready to attack. We can say a lot about it as related in the holy books but this is now sufficient if we do not want to go beyond the framework of our subject<sup>c</sup>.]

## LACTANTIUS (the fourth century)

He speaks about the Antichrist saying that **a powerful enemy will come from the far north<sup>d</sup> at a time when the normal human being is being**

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<sup>a</sup> St. Cyril of Jerusalem: *Lect. Cath. 15:13.*

<sup>b</sup> St. Cyril of Jerusalem: *Lect. Cath. 15:14.*

<sup>c</sup> St. Cyril of Jerusalem: *Lect. Cath. 15:15.*

<sup>d</sup> *Institutiones, 16.*

**destroyed<sup>d</sup>**. At last will appear a Syrian king, the son of perdition, to devastate and desolate the human beings<sup>b</sup>. That king is the true Antichrist<sup>e</sup>, who will demand to be worshiped, makes wonders and kills the prophet sent by God to gather His people<sup>d</sup>. After three and half years of persecuting the believers, God will send the great king Jesus Christ from heaven to set free the believers and destroy the Antichrist with all his powers<sup>e</sup>. All the believers will rise to judge those who did not know God, those who have been condemned already and fell under judgment<sup>f</sup>, but who were waiting for the second death and the final resurrection. At that time the wicked will be thrown into the eternal fire, which is a holy fire that lives in itself, does not need ignition and does not destroy the ones it consumes<sup>g</sup>.

It is also understood from his words that all the mankind will get into this fire, but only the saints won't burn because they have in them what is from God that opposes the power of the heat and treats it lightly<sup>h</sup>.

**Lactantius** confirms that the judgment of the believers **will not happen immediately** after death but at the time of the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ<sup>i</sup>. He also believes that **the saints with the Lord Christ will rule** the rest of the nations for a period of a thousand years of peace and wonder prosperity<sup>j</sup>.

## **TYCHON, THE AFRICAN (the fourth century)**

**Tychon** (deceased year 380 A.C.), followed the Donists and believed that the Antichrist had appeared during his days in Africa and that this fact will be proclaimed in the whole world<sup>k</sup>.

He'd seen that the Antichrist up until his days was persecuting the true church of Christ in an indirect and crafty way, showing the appearance of the saints and presenting the secret of the hidden evil<sup>l</sup>. But the time has come for the Antichrist to appear publicly as a real person and proclaim his followers since he won't go back to speak secretly against the Most High or under cover of the religion but will be speaking out loudly before all the people<sup>m</sup>.

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<sup>a</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>b</sup>*Ibid* 17.

<sup>c</sup>*Ibid* 19.

<sup>d</sup>*Ibid* 17.

<sup>e</sup>*Ibid* 17-19.

<sup>f</sup>*Ibid* 20.

<sup>g</sup>*Ibid* 21.

<sup>h</sup>*Ibid* .

<sup>i</sup>*Ibid* .

<sup>j</sup>*Ibid* 24.

<sup>k</sup>*Beatus* 2:6:82; *Sanders* 243.

<sup>l</sup>*Beatus* 6:3:38; *Sanders* 478.

<sup>m</sup>*Beatus* 6:3:38; *Sanders* 478f.

At the same time, the Church – the body of Christ – will always grow in an invisible glory, thanks to its unseen battle<sup>a</sup>. At the end of the period of this mysterious development, at which time the number of saints will be full, the devil will fall from the spiritual hell where he is locked now. His people will sin publicly and will impede the preaching of the Church<sup>b</sup>. The saints will be left with no other alternatives but to shed their blood<sup>c</sup> for the sake of their continuous testimony to the Gospel in the whole world despite the great desolation and the opposition<sup>d</sup>.

The end of the days is not just the time for proclamation but also a time for the purification of the church. The angels will be sent afterwards to harvest the grapes of God's vines, the winepress will be built outside the city (Rev. 14:20) and the sinners will be separated from Christ's people<sup>e</sup>. Tychon said those who do not suffer today with repentance would certainly suffer later in hell<sup>f</sup>.

## ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

**St. John Chrysostom** looked at **Nero** as the Antichrist since the latter considered himself a god<sup>g</sup>. **St. John Chrysostom** called Nero [the apostasy, because he is responsible for the perdition of many and made them retrograde from their faith, if possible even the elect were deceived (Matt 24:24). Furthermore, he called him **the man of sin** because he made evil without limit and instigated others to do it, and also called him the **son of perdition** because Nero himself is condemned too<sup>h</sup>.]

The ferocious way with which the man of sin attacks makes some people look at him as the devil himself. Therefore, **St. John Chrysostom** corrected this issue by saying, [Is he the devil? No but he is a man in whom the devil pours all his works<sup>i</sup>.]

The words of St. Paul the apostle “*and now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way*” (2 Thess 2:6-7); those words may raise a few questions:

- What is this clog that is restraining from declaring the man of sin?
- And why the apostle wrote in such a mysterious style?
- And how will He be taken out of the way?

**St. John Chrysostom** answers those questions by stating at his time

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<sup>a</sup>Lib. Reg.1; Burkitt 4:21-23.

<sup>b</sup>Beatus 5:6:6; Sanders 423.

<sup>c</sup>Beatus: Praef: 4:12; Sanders 8.

<sup>d</sup>Beatus 5:10:36ff; Sanders 443.

<sup>e</sup>Beatus 7:2:21; Sanders 522.

<sup>f</sup>Beatus 7:2:15; Sanders 522.

<sup>g</sup>In 2 Thess. hom 4.

<sup>h</sup>33, In 2 Thess hom. 3.

<sup>i</sup>34.2 Thess. hom.3.

there were two predominant opinions:

**The first opinion** says that **the clog is the Holy Spirit** who restrains the man of sin from rising until the time has come. **St. John Chrysostom** has rejected this opinion;

**The second opinion** says that **the clog is the Roman Empire** that stands in the way of his appearance. **St. John Chrysostom** has accepted this opinion considering Daniel's prophecy which he interprets as follows: the state of Babylon rose on the wrecks of Medes, the Persian rose on the wrecks of Babylon, the Macedonian (Greek empire) on the remains of its predecessor and the Roman Empire on the debris of the Greek. All that happened before the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ to reign eternally over his Church in heaven. In the opinion of **St. John Chrysostom**, the apostle meant not to reveal what is the clog in order not to provoke the Roman Empire against the Church since she is prophesizing the end of the Roman Empire, which is being replaced by the Antichrist.

## ST. AMBROSE

Jesus Christ destroys the Antichrist with His Holy Spirit: [Christ doesn't receive grace presented to Him, but He represents the non-dividable unity since it is impossible that the Christ be there without the Spirit, nor the Spirit with Christ because the unity of the divinity is not dividable<sup>a</sup>.]

## ST. AUGUSTINE

**St. Augustine** believes that Christ came to the Jews seeking the glory of the Father but they refused Him and the Antichrist will come seeking his own glory and they will accept him as the Messiah they are waiting for. [In the Gospel of St. John 7:18 God revealed the truth about the one who will seek his own glory and not the glory of the Father. The Lord Jesus Christ told the Jews: "I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive." (John 5:43). He declared to the Jews that they would accept the Antichrist who will proudly be seeking his own glory, him who is neither trustworthy nor established but certainly damned. As for our Lord Jesus Christ He showed us the great example of modesty. Though He is undoubtedly equal to the Father... He still seek the glory of the Father and not of his own<sup>b</sup>.] As for the reason why the Jews are accepting the Antichrist is their materialistic thoughts and their literally interpretation of the prophecies. **St. Augustine** says it seems to me that the carnal Israelites think that the following prophecy will come true in the Antichrist "Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the Gentiles" (Psalm 106:47). They think that the prophecy will be realized under his leadership and before the eyes of their visible enemies, those who will be in his captivity in a visible way and he will present the visible

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<sup>a</sup> Of the Holy Spirit 3:7.

<sup>b</sup> In Joan. hany 29:8.

glory<sup>a</sup>.

Many people thought that the end of the world would come in the year 6000 versus the six days of creation so that God rests on the Sabbath. But **St. Augustine** believed that the Judgment will be on the eighth day, the Saturday for rest<sup>b</sup>.

## ST. JEROME

**St. Jerome** sees that **many will rise as the symbol for the Antichrist**. He said [as Solomon and other saints were the symbol for the Savior, we believe that there will appear a symbol for the Antichrist like Antiochus, the most evil king, who persecuted the Church and defiled the temple<sup>c</sup>.]

In his interpretation of Daniel's book and his detailing of Porphyry's attacks, **St. Jerome** said that the Antichrist is **a Jewish man of low origin who will destroy the Roman Empire and will rule the world<sup>d</sup>**.

## SULPICIOUS SEVERUS (363 – 420)

**Severus** informed us that his master **St. Martin of Tours** is convinced that Nero and the Antichrist will subdue the world in a short time. This belief goes back to the year 396 in preparation for the end of the world and entering into a peremptory war. He also believed that the Antichrist was already born and is a young boy who is getting ready to receive the power at an appropriate age<sup>e</sup>.

## NARSAI THE SYRIAN (399 – 503)

**Narsai** sees the Antichrist as **a man** possessed completely by the devil, makes great wonders, establishes untrue peace and demands to be adored<sup>f</sup>.

Elijah comes back to the world to oppose the Antichrist in the name of all the believers and with the Holy Spirit will defeat him in a one peremptory war, armed by the Word<sup>g</sup>. At the end of the war, Christ Himself will appear and will crown the victory of Elijah by destroying the Antichrist's soul and flesh.

**The Lord will come down to earth in his glorious transfiguration in a procession of praising souls led by an angel wearing a cross on his head<sup>h</sup>**. With a simple sign God will raise the dead and will change the nature of the living to become immortal<sup>i</sup>. **With another sign** He will separate the saints from the evils in a great judgment. He will lead all his creatures to the furnace of the

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<sup>a</sup>On Ps. 107:33.

<sup>b</sup>*Enarr in Ps. 37:9-12; conf. 12:10:10; 12:11:13; Epistle 55:17f.*

<sup>c</sup>On Dan. 11:35

<sup>d</sup>*Comm. on Daniel 2:7:7f; 2:7:11; 4:11:21.*

<sup>e</sup>*Dial. 2:14:4*

<sup>f</sup>Hom. 4:4.

<sup>g</sup>Hom.15;52.

<sup>h</sup>Hom. 34.

<sup>i</sup>Hom. 52.



rule to melt them in order to select the real gold and the impostor will vanish<sup>a</sup>.

## **OECUMENIUS (beginning of the sixth century)**

**Oecumenius** wrote a book interpreting the book of Revelation based on the statements of the previous fathers who refused the idea of the millennium reign (materialistic reign). He considered that the disciples sat on the throne in a very humble way in the days of Jesus Christ<sup>b</sup>. **That some people have really enjoyed the first resurrection when they have accepted to live in the new faith<sup>c</sup> and that the first resurrection (Rev. 20:5) is the attraction of new disciples to live in the Holy Spirit<sup>d</sup>.**

He also spoke about Gog and Magog (Rev. 20:8) being unknown barbarian tribes who join the devil in his persecution to the believers<sup>e</sup>. He also said that the Antichrist will come, as a man possessed by the devil, will become king of Jews and kills Elijah and Enoch the prophets who will appear at the end of the days<sup>f</sup>.

## **ROMANOS THE MELODIST (the sixth century)**

He presents to us a reflection of conceiving the end of the days from a Greek and Syriac point of view of the century. He sang the Second Advent of the Master Christ in hymn number 50 where he described the tyranny of the Antichrist in some details<sup>g</sup>.

He sees the Antichrist as an incarnated devil<sup>h</sup>, who strongly opposes the believers in Christ<sup>i</sup>, makes wonders, and raises the dead<sup>j</sup>. The Antichrist will deploy all his efforts to lead the saints to the traps of his wedding<sup>k</sup>.

The enemy will be thrown in the eternal fire along with his followers and all the wicked<sup>l</sup>.

## **ANDREW THE METROPOLITAN OF CAESAREA**

Metropolitan Andrew (7th Century) thinks that the Antichrist comes from the tribe of Dan<sup>m</sup> of Bashan from Euphrates<sup>n</sup> region. In his opinion, the Antichrist will appear as though divine<sup>o</sup>, will appoint himself a Roman empire<sup>a</sup>

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<sup>a</sup>Hom. 18.

<sup>b</sup>*Hoskier 217:19-24.*

<sup>c</sup>*Hoskier 219:1-15.*

<sup>d</sup>*Hoskier 219: 13-19; 220:19-27.*

<sup>e</sup>*Hoskier 225:14-20.*

<sup>f</sup>*Hoskier 131:3-13ff; 128ff; 155:12ff.*

<sup>g</sup>*Hymn 50:6-14.*

<sup>h</sup>*str. 7.*

<sup>i</sup>*str. 9-10.*

<sup>j</sup>*str. 17.*

<sup>k</sup>*str. 18.*

<sup>l</sup>*str. 19.*

<sup>m</sup>*Schmid 79:3.*

<sup>n</sup>*Ibid 35:7.*

<sup>o</sup>*Ibid 142:5-10.*

and will re-establish the Roman Empire of which Rome won't be the capital, but he will make it a general earthy kingdom regrouping all those who resist the Word of God in all times and places to form the body of that kingdom<sup>b</sup>.

Metropolitan Andrew believes that only God knows the number of years needed to finish making the church<sup>c</sup>.

## **FR. JOHN OF DAMASCUS (650 – 750).**

**Fr. John** presented us with written understanding about the Antichrist. He insisted that the Antichrist would be a normal human being who falls under the authority of death, born of sin, wearing evil powers and accepted by the Jews<sup>d</sup>. He will persecute the church and will deceive many with false signs and miracles<sup>e</sup>.

God will send Enoch and Elijah and they will be killed<sup>f</sup>.

Christ comes back on the clouds in glory as He ascended and destroys the illegitimate man (the Antichrist)<sup>g</sup>.

**Father John of Damascus** absolutely refused the idea of the incarnation of the devil<sup>h</sup>.

Here are some extracts of Archimandrite Shakkour's translation of the writings of Father John on the subject.  
Written understandings about the Antichrist<sup>i</sup>.

## **BIBLICAL CONCEPTS OF THE ANTICHRIST**

[You should know that the Antichrist is definitely coming and to the Antichrist belong all those who do not testify that the Son of God had come and was incarnated, that He is the Perfect God who became the Perfect Man. Nevertheless, in a special and restricted meaning they call the one who will come at the end of the days "the Antichrist." Therefore, the Gospel of the kingdom should first be preached to all the nations (Matt. 24:14) as stated by God. Then the Antichrist will come to restrain the Jews who resist God because He had told them *"I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive."* (John 5:43). St. Paul the Apostle also said *"and for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the*

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<sup>a</sup> *Ibid* 137:1; 18:18-21; 202:5f.

<sup>b</sup> *Ibid* 181:6-9; 202:8-13.

<sup>c</sup> *Ibid* 216:13-18; 221:15-222:6.

<sup>d</sup> *Expositio Fidei* (Kotter, Berlin 1973, 232:23).

<sup>e</sup> *Ibid* 233:39-43.

<sup>f</sup> *Ibid* 233:44-47.

<sup>g</sup> *Ibid* 233:47-234:52.

<sup>h</sup> *Ibid* 233:31ff.

*truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” (2 Thess 2:11-12)]*

### ▪ **The Jews will accept him as their Messiah**

[The Jews then did not accept the Master Jesus Christ as the Son of God and God and will accept the deceiver who pretends to be God. He calls himself God because the angel who was interpreting to Daniel said so “he shall not regard the God of his fathers” (Dan 11:37).

St. Paul the Apostle says *“Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”* (2 Thess 2:3-4). The Apostle says “in the temple of God – not our temple – but the old Jewish temple because he doesn’t come to us but to the Jews. He doesn’t come for the sake of the Christ but against those who are for the Christ, therefore he is called the Antichrist.]

### ▪ **The Antichrist will be a real man**

[Therefore the Gospel should be preached in all the nations *“and then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish”* (2 Thess 2:8-10). Hence, he is not the devil who becomes man like the example of God’s incarnation – God forbid! But he is a man born of sin and receives all the work of the devil. God had previously known the horror of his election; therefore He allowed the devil to settle in him.]

### ▪ **The beginning of the Antichrist era and the expansion of his authority**

[So we said that he will born of sin and will be raised secretly, then suddenly he will revolt and takes over the reign. At the beginning of his reign or better said at the beginning of his oppression he will pretend to be fair. As soon as his authority gets extended, he will persecute the church of God and will show all his evil. Because the coming of the lawless one is associated with signs and lying wonders (2 Thess 2:9) he will deceive all those weak and rotten minds and will turn them away from the living God, even the elect he will try to deceive them if possible (Matt 24:24).]

### ▪ **Elijah and Enoch’s war against the Antichrist**

[God will send Elijah and Enoch who will return the spirit of the fathers to the sons or in other words will return the chiefs of the assembly to our Lord Jesus Christ and to the preaching of the apostles, but the Antichrist will kill them. Then God will come from heaven, as he was seen ascending to heaven by the saint apostles, as a perfect God and a perfect man, in glory and power to

destroy with the breath of his mouth the lawless one and the son of perdition. Therefore, no one should expect the coming of God from the earth but from heaven, as confirmed by Him.]

## Pope Gregory (the Great)

In the biography of **Pope Gregory**, written by John the Deacon of the 9th century, the Pope believed that the **judgment day was expected soon and that the end of the days is at the doorsteps accompanied by many disasters<sup>a</sup>**. The Pope followed the old Latin custom of seeing in the contemporary social diseases the sign that the world is old<sup>b</sup>. He wrote, “Now the blows of the earth had become like the pages of our books<sup>c</sup>.” He also wrote to the emperor Maurice: “there won’t be any delays, heaven and earth will burn and the elements will dissolve and the respected judge will appear with the angels and the archangels, the crowns, the presidents and the powers<sup>d</sup>.”

Pope Gregory use to see in the stubbornness of his brother the bishop of Constantine the haughtily Antichrist working in him<sup>f</sup>.

Even though the Pope believed that the end of the days is coming soon, he did not think that it is happening in his time<sup>f</sup>.

## SOME EXTREMIST IDEAS

In the middle age, many western theologians were interested in the subject of the Antichrist. The resitants to the power of the church in Europe were looking to the seat of the Pope as to the Antichrist. Father Bernard said the clergy of the Messiah has become the clergy of the Antichrist and the beast of the Revelation sat on the chair of St. Peter<sup>g</sup>. However, many of our Protestant theologian brothers refused this idea confirming that the Antichrist is not a specific regime but rather a specific person who appears at the end of the days before the last advent of the Christ. As on the one hand some extremist Protestants had accused the Papal to be the Antichrist himself, on the other hand some extremist Catholics had accused the Protestant movement to be the Antichrist; some Catholic theologians refused that idea<sup>h</sup>.

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<sup>a</sup> *Vita 4:65 PL 75:214 A15-B5.*

<sup>b</sup> *Hom. in Ev. 1:1:1 PL 76: 1077c ff.*

<sup>c</sup> *Epistle 3:29 ( April 593 AD ).*

<sup>d</sup> *Ep.11:37.*

<sup>e</sup> *Ep.11:37.*

<sup>f</sup> *Ep. 11:37.*

<sup>g</sup> *Bishop Hurd: On Prophecy, vol 2., p2 8.*

<sup>h</sup> *Pulpet Commentary, Vol. 21 (2 Thess.) p. 54.*

# ***CUSTOMS AND BEHAVIOURS IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL***

## **1. THE TREASURE HOUSES OF THE TEMPLE**

*“And he brought the articles into the treasure house of his god.”* (Dan. 1:2)

The pagans used to put the precious articles, especially those used in worship and in religious processions, in treasure houses adjacent to the pagan temple. The mighty men and the kings used to seize the precious articles of a city as soon as they conquer it and bring them to the treasure house of their god. Nebuchadnezzar did the same when he carried the holy vessels from the temple of Jerusalem to the treasure house of the god Baal’s temple. The purpose for those treasure houses, as previously explained, is:

- To confirm that everything precious in a kingdom is a property of the god worshipped in that kingdom;
- To bring the articles as plunders from the conquered cities proves that their god granted them victory over their enemies;
- To have the treasure house adjacent to the temple indicates that god is the protector of the safes of the kingdom and the king.

In the temple of Solomon were found separate rooms for receiving the tithes and the first-born and others to stock the precious articles. The Jews were known for their extremely generous giving to the house of God example what happened at the time of Moses when the tent was built and in the days of David when they were preparing for the construction of the temple. Same with Joash (2 Chr 24) and Josiah (2 Kin 22) when they were repairing the temple. The precious vessels were presented as treasures or gifts and because of their great number the treasure house of the temple in Jerusalem was lust after by strangers like the Syrians and the Romans.

## **2. THE KING’S DELICACIES AND HIS DRINK OF WINE (DAN 1:5)**

The kings and the great people of Babylon were repute for conducting

an extremely wealthy life. They used to have banquets full of all kinds of tasty and delicious foods. They were also known for having pleasure and for drinking wine until they are drunk. The kings of Persia followed their example.

### 3. SANCTION OF THE CRIMINALS (DAN 2:5 – CHAPTERS 3 AND 6)

In the book of Daniel there are three kinds of sanction:

**The first kind:** the criminal is cut in pieces (Dan. 2:5). This method of punishment was familiar to most of the ancient peoples. It was occasionally used by the Hebrews as ruled by the prophet Samuel against the king Agag (1 Sam 15:33). Some people think that this kind of punishment indicates that a person is cut into two parts or into pieces. It was customarily in Babylon to destroy the house of the criminal and to consider the soil on which his house is built as cursed forever. The Persians also followed this custom and it was applied in Athens too. Therefore, in the ancient cities there used to be found huge spaces of vacant lands on which no one can build anything because of the decrees that were issued against the landlords to be cut into pieces and to have their houses destroyed.

**The second kind:** the insubordinate against the god is cast in a fiery furnace (please review the interpretation of Chapter 3).

**The third kind** the insubordinate against the king is thrown in the lion's den (please review the interpretation of Chapter 6).

### 4. MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS (DAN. 2:5, 7, 10 AND 15)

Music was occupying the first place in the old age. It was used during the worship and at the time of war to motivate the soldiers, in the procession of a victorious king, at the time of festivities and events as well as in funerals. The old age knew three kinds of musical instruments: the family of strings, the blowing and the drumming instruments. Some of those instruments are well known, however the description of others is somewhat ambiguous.

**Horn:** In the old age, the blowing instruments were made of the horns of animals. Then they developed to be made of metals while maintaining their original shape and name. The difference between the horn and the carnet is the shape of the latter is less curved than the first one. In the book of Daniel, the "horn" was called "carnet" as though they were one.

**Flute** (*Mashrokitha*): is one of the oldest and simplest music instruments. At the beginning it was just a pipe dug through with some holes all along. As it became more popular greater attention was given to its manufacturing. It is sometimes made of copper, wood, ebony or bones. Sometimes, two flutes are played at the same time, one with the right hand and the other with left hand holding together through the mouth.

The flute was used in special processions and at the time of great festivities to create an atmosphere of happiness. It was also used in travel to prevent passengers from feeling bored and in funerals for its calm and mournful tunes.

**Lyre, Harp, Lute** (*Kathros*): Rawlinson thinks that it is about the Babylonian lyre which looks similar to the Assyrian lyre, however with less number of strings. They are similar in a sense that both are carried under one arm and played on with the two hands while each hand is taking a special direction on the strings.

Some people think that the “harp” looks like the “*cittern*,” a Greek instrument used by the Chaldeans – some sort of a guitar still in use in the middle east.

**Rebeck:** *Sabbeqa, Sackbut*: known as *Sambuca* by the Romans. Rawlinson sees that it could be a huge rebeck centered on the ground like the Egyptian rebeck. However, Wright describes the *Sambuca* that it has a triangle shape with four or more strings and is played on with fingers and that it gives a sharp tune.

**Dulcimer** (*Pesanterin, Psaltery*): is a kind of rebeck and it is thought to be a sling “*Nebel*,” however it seems that it has no particular shape. It belongs to the string family of instruments, maybe it looks like a reversed triangle (reversed delta), others see that it looks like a guitar in general.

Josephus says that the dulcimer has twelve strings and sets forth twelve tunes. The Psalmist says “the one with the ten strings” is played with fingers. The strings, no matter how many they are, are stretched on a piece of wood. (2 Sam 6:5).

It is unknown neither when the dulcimer was first used nor when the Hebrews started using it. It was first referred to when Saul came in power and was met by a number of prophets shortly after Samuel the prophet gave him the blessings. The dulcimer was used with other musical instruments (1 Sam 10:5) as it was used in holy leadership (2 Sam 6:5 – 1 Chr 13:8–15:16–25:1 – Amos 6:5) and at the time of festivities (Is 5:12–14:11). It seems that it was used to accompany the voice of a singer.

Rawlinson believes that the old dulcimer looks like the modern one (*Santour*) with less than ten strings stretched on a sunken box or on a musical board. It is played with a small rod held in the right hand of the musician while he presses the strings with the left hand to obtain the desired tune.

**Bagpipe** (*Sumpongah, Dulcimer*): People could not agree on its definition, therefore they called it once lute, or curved trumpet, or high drum, or organ and finally bagpipe. Today it is known by its Italian name *Sampogne*, and

in little Asia by Sampony. However, in some reference books it is called the bagpipe of the old instrument Ugab.

**Ugab** is an old instrument and it is said that Jubal is the one who invented it (Gen 4:21). It was used at the time of festivities and big occasions as stated in the book of Job (Job 21:12-3:31).

Some people say that it seems that the Ugab looks like the Bagpipe given that it is made of two pipes mounted on a leather bag, one on the top and the other one on the bottom. The top pipe, which is held between the lips of the musician, is filled with air when the bottom pipe, which has holes in it, is played with the fingers like the flute. At the same time, the pressure causes the bagpipe to go up and down like a pump.

In many reference books it was stated that the Ugab is similar to the Syrinx (a primitive blowing instrument) made of a chain of pipes in tiers length - the origin of the modern organ. According to Kitto, the translators when they used the word "organ" they meant the "*syrinx*."

The *Syrinx* was used by the Arkadian shepherds and other people of Greece. They believe that Pan, the guardian god, is the one who created it. Further, they imagine that Pan was playing it on the mountain of Maenalus. It was made of sticks of cane and hemlock (a poisonous plant of which a poison drink is extracted). In general, they used to bring seven hollow sticks of those plants, cut them to the desired length and stick them together with wax. The same process is repeated until they make eight or nine sets of them to give tunes identical to their numbers. In rare occasions the pipes were curved instead of being straight to fit the shape of the lips. This instrument is still in use in some eastern parts of the world. The canes are different in length but have the same diameter and their number varies between 5 and 23. Sometimes we see this instrument in the hands of the strolling musicians on the streets of Europe and America.

The monuments long testify that the Babylonians were fond of music, were using many musical instruments and had organized orchestras on a large scale. Annarus reported that to give reception to his guests he used to have banquets accompanied by music played and sung by an orchestra composed of 150 ladies.

## **THE HOURS OF THE DAY**

The word "hour" in the Aramaic language "Sha-ah" maybe means "look." This expression was first used in the Holy Bible in the book of Daniel (Dan 3:7-5:5). It is an ambiguous word announcing a short period of time, unidentified exactly how long, and not bearing the same meaning of the word "hour" as understood today.



It seems that the Babylonians are the first people to have divided the day into twelve equal partitions. Herodith testifies that the Greek followed the Babylonians in that matter and the Jews have adopted the idea.

The Jews used to count the day from the evening of the day until the following evening and a part of the day used to count for a whole day. Master Jesus Christ was laid in the tomb just before Saturday and is risen in the early hours of Sunday. That period of time was counted as three days in the tomb (Friday, Saturday and Sunday). The Jews, after they became under the authority of the Romans, have followed the Roman system in dividing the night into four parts. Each part of the night equals three hours as referred to in the Gospel of St. Mark (Mark 13:35) evening, midnight, crowing of the rooster and morning. As for the day, it has been divided into twelve equal hours and varies depending on the length of the day during the year from sunrise to sunset given that the summer hours are longer than the winter hours. Hence, in the area of Palestine, the longest summer day is 14 hours and 12 minutes when the shortest day is 9 hours and 48 minutes. Therefore, the hour varies between 71 minutes and 49 minutes.

The first hour starts with the sunrise, the sixth hour is at noon and the twelfth hour at sunset when the night starts. As for the ninth hour prayer it falls at 3:00 p.m.

## **THE HOURS IN THE HOLY BIBLE**

6:00 p.m.	Vespers	(Gen 28:11 – Ex 17:12 – Josh 8:29)
6:20 p.m.	The appearance of the star	(The prayer before sleep – Compline)
10:00 p.m.	End of the first part of the night	(Lam 2:19)
12:00 a.m.	Midnight	(Ex 11:4 – Ruth 3:8)
2:00 a.m.	End of the second part of the night	(Judg 7:9)
3:00 a.m.	The rooster crow	(Mark 13:35 - Matt 26:34)
4:30 a.m.	The second rooster crow	(Matt 26:75- Mark 14:30)
5:40 a.m.	Dawn	
6:00 a.m.	Sunrise (End of the third part of the night)	(Ex 14:24 – Num 21:11)
9:00 a.m.	The first prayer	
12:00 p.m.	The sixth hour (noon)	(Gen 43:16)
1:30 p.m.		
3:30 p.m.		
5:40 p.m.		

## **THE POWERFUL ALMIGHTY**

In the monument discoveries of Khorshabad there are indication that those powerful almighty or the “giants” existed. It seems that those men were chosen among the army soldiers according to their size and power. They used to

guard the palace of the king, ready at all time to execute his orders. This is still the case in the kingdoms of Europe and the East.

Some of those almighty power threw the three youths in the fiery furnace (Dan 3:20).

## **CLOTHES**

*“Then these men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their other garments...”* (Dan 3:21)

- Coat “Sarbalin” has different pattern from the one known in the Hebrew language.
- Trousers “Patish” is a tunic.
- Turbans “Carbala” is a tunic.
- Garments “Lebush” dress to cover all the clothes.

## **THE PRAYER IN THE UPPER ROOM**

*“And in his upper room with his windows open toward Jerusalem...”* (Dan 6:10)

The upper room “aliyah” is a room built on the highest level of an eastern house and in most cases on the roof of the building. The poor people merely had any upper room “aliyah” in their houses. Generally speaking, the upper room was adequately furnished to receive the guests as is the case when the Shunammite woman received Elisha the prophet in her upper room (2Kin 4:10). Also king David secluded himself in the upper room to weep his son Absalom (2 Sam 18:33).

In the Gospel of St. Mark (Mark 14:14-15) we understand that a large upper room was prepared and furnished for our Master Christ and His disciples to eat the Passover.

Sometimes the upper room is built separately from the house, on a high level of a courtyard and in front of it there is a fountain to refresh the air and add beauty to the design of the building to please the guests.

## **THE LAW OF THE MEDES AND PERSIANS (Dan 6:15)**

According to the law of the Medes and Persians, the king has no right to change any decree or statute issued, sealed and proclaimed based on an agreement signed between the two parts when they united.