

THE SECRET OF DANIEL'S STRENGTH

by Harry Foster

*(H. F. was a co-worker with T.A-S for many years at Honor Oak.
He became the editor of Toward the Mark after Sparks home going in 1971
and continued this publication until 1989)*

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Chapter I. SOVEREIGN LORD

"THE people that know their God shall be strong, and do exploits" (Daniel 11:32). These were Daniel's words, they were wonderfully confirmed by his life. From him, therefore, we can learn valuable lessons. The narrative chapters in his book give us a great variety of names of God or titles applied to Him. In this series I propose to examine some of these, with a view to discovering how they gave strength to Daniel's faith and how we also may learn to be strong and effective for God.

The first is "Lord" or "Sovereign Lord" (1:2), which in the original is *Adonai*. This simple title for God appears nowhere else in the book except for chapter 2, where it is constantly on Daniel's lips with that other and more intimate LORD, that is *Yahweh*. The various Babylonians could speak of God and use the term "Lord" (2:47 & 5:32) but then a different word is employed. Only the true believer can appreciate the reality of the title "Sovereign Lord".

Daniel's Submission

To Daniel this was more than a title; it was a practical reality of everyday life. Its employment at the beginning of the first chapter informs us that from the start God was in charge of the life of this man and his companions. For them life was only tolerable because in everything that happened to them they saw the hand of their God. Only men with this kind of faith can triumph as Daniel did. God really is Sovereign King. How came it that their beloved city was conquered by proud Nebuchadnezzar? It was because the Sovereign Lord permitted him to do so. How could it ever be that those most sacred vessels of God's house should fall into the hands of the heathen conqueror? Again we are told that it was the Sovereign Lord who delivered them into his hands and allowed him to store them in his own god's treasure house. (And incidentally we are told later on how the Lord watched over those holy things (5:2) and kept them safe until Cyrus sent them back again to Jerusalem (Ezra 1:7-8).) Coming much nearer to the poignancies of human suffering, how was it that Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah were led away into the dark captivity of Babylon, to spend their whole lives there and finally die far from their beloved Jerusalem? The explanation is written down for all to see -- it was the Lord who did it. Faith can never acknowledge secondary causes; it insists that if God is Lord at all He is Lord of everything. His ways may be strange and unaccountable, but His power is absolute.

We are therefore confronted at once with this element of Daniel's faith, which was submissiveness. He accepted all the painful, humiliating and puzzling circumstances of life with good heart because he could see the hand of the Lord

behind and above the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. Part of the unpleasant experiences which He permitted to come to these four princes was the humiliation of being given pagan names. Contrary to all their natural instincts and desires they had to become students of the learning and tongue of the Chaldeans. For the whole of his life Daniel gave devoted service to this foreign state and its rulers (6:4). If we may judge Daniel's inner reactions by the words of his prayer (and how better can one discern a man's heart condition?), then we can certainly say that he had no personal resentment or complaint. "O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee ..." (9:7). The whole prayer breathes a beautiful spirit of submissive faith.

He didn't sulk when Nebuchadnezzar persisted in calling him Belteshazzar (4:8) and although he probably despised all the superstitious learning which he had to acquire and certainly never found any need for in his career, yet he worked so hard that he and his friends were way out at the top when examination time came. Even when Daniel was confronted with an unacceptable demand it is typical of the man that he voiced his refusal in the quiet courtesy which should mark all those who own complete submission to the Sovereign Lord.

Daniel's Determination

Part of the painful experiences which God permitted to come to these four princes of Judah was the humiliation of being given pagan names. This they seemingly accepted with all the other indignities. We notice, however, that verse 7 which lists these names is immediately followed by the challenging conjunction, "But"! It seems that Daniel took the lead in this matter. He was content to meet the pressure of harsh circumstances with a submissive spirit, but he could not and he would not tolerate spiritual defilement. "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not ...". Since they were enduring so much, this might seem to us a matter of relative unimportance; to Daniel death itself was preferable to inner defilement.

It is not easy for us to appreciate just what it was that provoked such a violent reaction on Daniel's part. Some have tried to make it an argument in favour of a vegetarian diet, but there is no suggestion that he was then or afterwards committed to a sole diet of "pulse". Others have used Daniel's resolve to support total abstinence from alcoholic drinks. Now I believe that alcoholism is one of our greatest social evils and maintain that Christians best serve their fellows by refusing all alcoholic drinks, but I find no support for such a procedure in this chapter. On the contrary I notice that later he clearly did eat meat and drink wine in his own home (10:3). No, this is not meant to indicate what the believer should eat or drink, but rather to suggest a spiritual principle. For him the king's meat and wine involved inner defilement, a departure from loyal submission to the holy Lord, and therefore it was unacceptable. Daniel was not a protestor but he was an abstainer. In New Testament language, in his heart he acknowledged Christ as his

holy Lord (1 Peter 3:15) and that, as Peter suggests, is a complete antidote for fear.

In this connection we should notice how Daniel implemented this firm resolve of his -- "He purposed that he would not ... therefore he requested that he might not ...". Here, as we have already said, is a perfect example of the quiet courtesy of faith. So often when we try to be uncompromising in our principles we become aggressive and strident. In some cases our very forcefulness betrays some underlying element of insecurity, some doubt which makes us feel that it is necessary to fight for our cause. Now the Christian's fight is always the fight of faith, which means that he can face every problem in a relaxed way. Daniel had no sense that he needed to protest but rather that all he must do was to request and to propose an alternative. In particular it ill became one of God's princes to bring trouble down on the head of the prince of the eunuchs, which might so easily have happened (verse 10).

Does this sound feeble? Just to request to be excused? Well, we must judge by the outcome. The request was granted; Daniel and his friends never did compromise on this or on any other matter which concerned holy separation unto God. It seems that they did not need to do so. The whole message of the book is that God really is Sovereign Lord, who will take full responsibility for His own. In some ways it was a miracle that the man in charge was willing to listen to Daniel at all; it was an even greater miracle that he was prepared to give them the 10-day trial which they asked for; the greatest miracle, however, was that God used their simple food of "pulse" to make them fairer of countenance and fatter in flesh than all the non-abstainers. There was nothing in the pulse. It was probably a simple alternative food available in that place. But at least one man in that company received a striking demonstration that it pays to put one's faith in the Sovereign Lord.

Daniel had staked everything on this Lordship. However courteous he was in his approach, he had a steely determination in his heart that he would rather die than accept the inward defilement of Satan's kingdom. He would accept captivity, perhaps emasculation, a change of name, an obligatory education and a post in the Civil Service of his day; but in the matter of his inner life he knew only one loyalty, and that was to his Sovereign Lord. In this way he placed himself and his future in the hands of God, and he did so with every confidence that only the briefest probation would justify his decided faith. The whole of the rest of this story, and indeed the whole of Daniel's life, took its character from this fundamental determination to have a heart kept clean for God.

Daniel's Pre-eminence

Daniel and his friends had to learn a foreign language. I have no doubt that they learned it well, so much so that they were able to shine in the highest political positions. They had to adjust to another culture -- by no means an easy achievement. In their studies they had to spend long hours in acquiring useless information, including superstitions and erroneous ideas which could not be reconciled with the Word of God which was precious to them.

Those early days in Babylon must have entailed hard discipline. In a sense Daniel's very loyalty to God must have made some of the features of his education difficult to endure. There are students in our own day who will feel genuine sympathy with him, for this can also be true for them in their modern Babylon. Education is an area of opportunity but it may also be one of severe testing. Over the food question, Daniel was entirely cast upon God to act for him, but in this matter of intellectual equipment he had to apply himself with diligence if he were to demonstrate that in this field too, God is Sovereign Lord of the lives of His people.

In both tests Daniel excelled. His simple diet and bold faith made him and the other three so much better than the rest that the prince of the eunuchs was put to no risk at all on their account. In the schools, their pre-eminence was equally apparent. It seems that the great Nebuchadnezzar was himself their judge, and his delighted verdict was that these young Jews were ten times better than anyone else in his kingdom. It took some time for him to become acquainted with the explanation of this excellence, but eventually even he had to confess that there was a special element in Daniel's wisdom which came from the true God.

Who can doubt that this first success represented God's seal on Daniel's stand of faith? Yet it must also have been the result of diligent application on his part, for the subjects to be studied were strictly Babylonian. Is there a principle for all believers in this pre-eminence? Dare we say that every true subject of heaven's Sovereign Lord should have this kind of "ten times better" testimony in the world? Well, not everybody can be clever or especially gifted, but at least a Christian should never come behind men of the world in hard work and conscientious diligence. Clearly Daniel made no difference between secular and sacred -- he sought to do everything for the glory of the Lord. This is not as common as it should be among believers. Like Daniel, we should all be noted not only for our abstinences but for our devotion to duty and good workmanship.

Daniel never departed from this basic thoroughness and when he was an elderly man it was said of him that "this Daniel was distinguished above the presidents and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him ..." (6:3). The blending of human consecration and divine undertaking gave him spiritual and moral pre-eminence throughout his long life. The initial combination of submissiveness and

determination described in this chapter one found expression right through to the first year of king Cyrus (v.21). The special significance of that year was that then the seventy years of Israel's captivity were ended and the decree was given for their return to the land. So Daniel's life and ministry spanned the whole of those barren years, and all the time he proved his God to be the Sovereign Lord. No wonder, then, that he was strong and did exploits. He knew his God.

Chapter II. A REVEALER OF SECRETS

*“Your God is the God of gods, and the Lord of kings,
and a revealer of secrets” Verse 47*

THE previous chapter closed with Nebuchadnezzar's realisation that Daniel and his three companions were ten times wiser than his own counsellors. If the Hebrews thought that this would bring them favour and promotion they were mistaken, for we now find the troubled king calling for help from all his official advisers, with never a thought for the Jewish princes. But God has His own way of opening up a chance of service for those whom He plans to use, as this chapter clearly shows. If God has called us, we will find that opportunity will knock if we remain spiritually on our toes. And even while we serve, we learn. God was about to continue with Daniel's spiritual education by teaching him that one of His own names is "The Revealer of Secrets".

A Life and Death Crisis

The revelation which came to Daniel was a life-saver: "... they sought Daniel and his companions to be slain" (v.13). The prophecies of Scripture are never intended to be treated as hobbies or mere intellectual exercises; their objective is to deliver us from spiritual death and to give us new life. Daniel knew that for him this whole matter of revelation was an area in which he desperately needed "mercies of the God of heaven" if he and his friends were to stay alive (v.18). At this point the first need was not just prayer but active faith. With nothing more to rely on than confidence in his God, Daniel assured the king that he would remind him of his dream and then give him its interpretation. It was a humanly impossible task. As the Chaldeans asserted, no-one had ever been expected to provide such information. Was this forgetfulness genuine, or was Nebuchadnezzar trying it on? If he really had forgotten the dream -- a very normal happening -- we may perhaps believe that God made him forget it so that no opportunity for human ingenuity or duplicity was possible. In any case Daniel was committed to discover the truth, and his life depended on God giving him success.

This, then, was the time for prayer. All God's deliverances seem to be in response to man's prayer. Happily Daniel had friends who could pray with him and for him. They knew how to pray, too, for their appeal was made on the ground of mercy (v.18). This is always a sure basis for our petitions. Special emphasis is given in the Bible to corporate praying. In this case we have an excellent example of how spiritual fellowship works; they all prayed but the answer came to only one of them. Daniel had what all servants of God greatly need -- loyal prayer partners. Incidentally they saved their own lives, too, by praying for Daniel!

The answer came. Anxious as Daniel must have been to take it to the king, he did not forget to think first of his God and to offer praise and thanksgiving for it. After that he went straight to the public executioner and told him what had happened. Arioch took all the credit to himself for bringing Daniel to the king (v.25), but this did not disturb Daniel, who in any case wanted no glory for himself, and was careful to insist that revelation owed nothing to his efforts but was altogether a divine miracle. Nebuchadnezzar himself was to be shown that God is the sole Revealer of Secrets, and many lives were saved by God's gracious answer to urgent prayer.

This exciting story is a wonderful illustration of how God answers prayer, but it is much more than that. It goes on to tell us what the secrets were which God brought to Nebuchadnezzar through his dream and through Daniel's Spirit-given interpretation. The actual content of the vision was very great, as we shall see, but the spiritual realities behind it are very much greater. They carry us into the New Testament realms of what is there called "a mystery". God has a secret. There is a "mystery which from all ages has been hid in God" (Ephesians 3:9). At first glance it does not seem to be the main import of the dream, but it is disclosed at the overthrow of the great world image. God is prepared now to disclose that heart secret of His. His servant Paul assures us that He has much pleasure in revealing this secret to men of faith and prayer. Before we read on any more it would be good for us humbly to ask His Spirit to give us wisdom and revelation so that we may get the full value of this amazing dream and its God-given interpretation. There may be a sense in which for us, too, this is a crisis of life or death.

The Secret of Present World Kingdoms

Nebuchadnezzar's dream represented a divine disclosure of what the Lord Jesus called: "the times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24), that is, the period during which the nation of Israel is no longer central to God's operations in world affairs. Unlike some of the later visions given directly to Daniel, this one makes no reference to Israel. From verse 4 here to the end of chapter 7, the Hebrew language is replaced by Aramaic. The revelation was given to a non-Jewish ruler, himself one of the principal characters involved. It is not easy to discern that Nebuchadnezzar got any immediate value from it, except that he received a startling demonstration of the difference between human cleverness and divine revelation. This is a lesson which we all do well to learn.

So far as the dream is concerned, the period of Gentile domination will be brought to a violent end by another kingdom, one which is heavenly and eternal. In the larger context of Bible study, though, it gives an amazing preview of the centuries of human history. It gives a clear indication that world empires rise and fall by divine decree, and that from God's point of view there is a continual deterioration

in the quality of world government. It tells us that the whole cumbersome political structure is top-heavy, since the metals are lighter as well as cheaper as the image develops. It makes no secret of the fact that there will be a complete collapse when God's ripe time arrives.

If in the New Testament we look for those uses of the word "mystery" as they apply to this image, we will find two passages: "The mystery of Babylon" (Revelation 17:5) and "the mystery of iniquity" (2 Thessalonians 2:7). In the other frequent uses of this word "mystery", we find that it refers to that other kingdom, "the stone cut out without hands" which displaced man's rule and became a great mountain to fill the whole earth" (vv.34-35). At this time God had nothing more to reveal about this great secret of His; we must wait for the New Testament for that, since it was "hid in God from all ages" (Ephesians 3:9). In this vision, most of the attention is focussed on what the New Testament calls, "the kingdom of this world" (Revelation 11:15). It seems that the more correct rendering is in the singular, not "kingdoms", for the image is an imposing unity, though composed of many parts.

We are distinctly told that it was God who gave "the power and the strength and the glory" of this first world kingdom to Nebuchadnezzar. Similar language is used about the final expression of this world kingdom for the significant phrase, "it was given" is often applied to it (Revelation 13:5, 7, 14, 15). This is the kingdom of MAN. It is essentially the same kingdom through all the centuries. When it comes to the divine disclosure of its true nature in the final manifestation yet to come, not only is the word "mystery" employed, but we find that it has reverted to its original title of "Babylon" (Revelation 17:5).

Here, then, in the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream is given us an outline of world dominion from the time of the destruction of Jerusalem until the Coming of Christ in His kingdom. No doubt it is possible to identify various expressions of that kingdom in this and other prophecies, but for our present purpose it is enough to suggest that the "secret" here revealed is that by divine permission a world order is operating in which fallen man works according to his own will and finds himself moving inexorably forward to catastrophic collapse. From the New Testament we know that throughout the period in which He permits man to have his way, God is working to fashion and prepare His own "secret", and that in due course this will completely and permanently replace the present order. This is the chief importance of the revelation to us who have a place in that kingdom by reason of redemption through Christ's blood (Revelation 1:6). Meanwhile, however, it is evidently salutary for our eyes to be opened by God so that we may have discernment as to the real nature of the civilisation in which we have a part. This "mystery" concerns the hidden and spiritual significance of our world.

In our view of history, various kingdoms have risen and fallen: in God's view, the

same essential order has continued all the time. To us there has seemed to be an evolution towards ever improving conditions of life: to God there has been a steady deterioration, with no hope of recovery. We may think and talk of "Christian" and non-Christian nations: God tells us that all the time He has been visiting the nations "to take out of them a people for his name" (Acts 15:14). Daniel had to live his life and do a faithful job in the alien kingdom in its "head of gold" expression; we have to live our lives and be worthy of our high calling in the same kingdom in its "feet and toes, part of potters' clay and part of iron" expression. I have no suggestions to offer about the identity of those ten toes, and no hope to offer those who are remote from the Mediterranean area that they are not part of the kingdom which is to be destroyed. There is only one kingdom of this world. It has its prince (John 14:30); it is essentially antagonistic to God and full of human pride (1 John 2:15-17); it will find its final expression and disintegrating state represented by brittle earthenware and cruel iron.

Does this seem defeatist? Obviously it did not have that effect on Daniel, who went on praising and witnessing throughout his long life. Is it realistic? Well, in keeping with our getting to know God as the Revealer of Secrets it may be enlightening to note that in dealing with the subject of "the last days", the Scriptures use this very word in speaking of "the mystery of iniquity" (2 Thessalonians 2:7). "The mystery of iniquity, or lawlessness". What is that? What the Thessalonians thought of the statement that this sinister influence was already at work in their day, I do not know; but I do know that in our world today dark and iniquitous influences are working in a multiplicity of ways, so much so that it hardly seems to be any more a mystery. Yet such it is.

Few perceive its true nature. The majority of people, even Christians, seem unable to grasp that the world's malaise is not caused by the blatant wrongs and injustices. These are only symptoms. The real truth is that we live in a doomed society, just as surely as the ancients did before the Flood. Daniel's image makes no secret of this fact, and offers no remedy. May I even suggest that those who long for past conditions in our land and pray for a reversal to the good old days, may all unconsciously be wanting to put back God's clock? This cannot be. "The end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore of sound mind ..." (1 Peter 4:7).

"We look for a Saviour from heaven." When the blow from heaven falls, it will not only crush the ten toes (whoever they may be!), but will disintegrate and scatter to the winds the whole society of human government as we know it (v.35). Can Daniel's interpretation have any other meaning? Was not this the plain teaching given by Paul to the Thessalonians at the beginning of their Christian lives? They were told that this mysterious iniquity will culminate in one single man, the lawless one (2 Thessalonians 2:8). This may be parallel to John's revelation that "the ten horns" -- under God's overruling -- will hand over their sovereignty to one supreme

deceiver (Revelation 17:17).

This vision does not enter into any details like that, but it does assure us -- as indeed do all the other visions, both in Daniel and in the Revelation -- that the last word will be with God. He gives us enough indications about the future to assure us that He knows beforehand just how things will go and how and when He will act. This is the blessing of knowing Him as the Revealer of Secrets. It brings a deeper conviction of faith that God is always in control. A man needs to be absolutely certain of that if he is to be strong and do exploits.

The Secret of God's Eternal Kingdom

It seems that the main reaction of the earthly-minded Nebuchadnezzar to this revelation was that it focused all his attention on his own position as the golden head of the image. This will appear more clearly when we come to the next chapter. It is all too possible for us now to focus our attention on the ten toes, but how unspiritual that can be. We should not let our study of God's Word lead us to concentrate on the fascinating form of the image and so give second place to God's final objective. It is quite possible to forget that what concerns us most is the divine kingdom represented by the stone. I suggest that while it may be interesting to identify the various world empires and to speculate about those ten toes, this can hardly bring much spiritual increase to our lives. Our purpose in turning prayerfully to Him who is the Revealer of Secrets ought to be the production of spiritual growth in ourselves, and others. It may help us to do this if we concentrate our supreme attention on the culminating feature of the dream, God's ultimate, which is His own heavenly and eternal kingdom to which we are called in Christ.

God has a heart secret. He has kept it hidden through the ages, but now He longs to make it known. This is the theme of that New Testament seer, the apostle Paul, who wrote: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given ... to make all men see what is the stewardship of this mystery ..." (Ephesians 3:8-9). Paul it was who made repeated references to this great secret of God's. It will well repay a consideration of some of those references so that we can get a better understanding of this "stone cut out without hands" which Nebuchadnezzar dreamed about. Here are six of them, and they lead us to understand that:

1. *The mystery is the gospel.* "My gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal, but now is manifested ..." (Romans 16:25-26). See also Ephesians 6:19. Why should we limit the term "gospel" to the initial offer of salvation to repentant sinners? It is positively unscriptural to do so. This revelation of God's mystery is not an extra to the gospel; it is not an extension of the gospel; it *is* the gospel, the full gospel of God's plan of salvation in Christ. Paul called it "my

gospel", not because he had the monopoly of it or gave some special emphasis which made it different from what all the other evangelists were preaching, but because by faith he had grasped it and made it personal. Every preacher should be equally able to call it "my gospel", but if he is to do so he will need to get back to the Revealer of Secrets to learn something more of its scope and objective. This is the only gospel which Paul knew, and the one which he had been called to preach and for which he was prepared to suffer. "The mystery of the gospel".

2. *The mystery concerns the fullness of Christ.* "all riches of the full assurance of understanding, that they may know the mystery of God, even Christ" (Colossians 2:2). Our Lord, the Christ, is the central Figure in the revelation of this mystery. He is the Stone, "cut out without hands" (1 Peter 2:4). Those who are in Him are made into living stones (again, without hands), and form one organic whole in Christ. This mystery must not be approached as though it were some spiritual luxury, an optional extra to ordinary Christianity. In no sense at all does it embody a "Jesus plus"! The risen Christ not only gives forgiveness to lost sinners, He gives the Holy Spirit to forgiven sinners that their hearts may be enlightened to know "what is the hope of his calling" (Ephesians 1:18) and God's objective in their salvation, which is the fullness of His Son (Ephesians 1:23). If we are saved, then we are called to reign with Christ.

3. *The mystery involves being indwelt by Christ.* "the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). There is no other prospect of lasting glory than what is produced by this marvel: "Christ in you". In the nature of things it was not possible for Daniel to have more than the most elementary indication of God's eternal kingdom -- a stone cut out of the mountain without hands -- since the mystery was deliberately hidden by God from all ages and generations (Colossians 1:26). We are now privileged to live in that era when God no longer wishes to hide His great secret, but is very pleased to share it with His Bible-loving people. With Paul as God's chief agent, the whole New Testament call believing men not only to find forgiveness and peace but also a destiny. He reveals His Son *in us* (Galatians 1:16) in order to make that destiny possible. God begins His kingdom from the centre and works outwards. In every true believer He begins by the Spirit's forming of Christ in our hearts and then seeks to extend the Spirit's rule throughout our whole being. Life -- Christian life -- is an unsolved problem until we catch a glimpse of God's eternal purpose for and in us. When that "secret" is revealed, then everything begins to make sense.

4. *The mystery includes men of all nations.* "the mystery of Christ; which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit, to wit, that the Gentiles are ... fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel"

(Ephesians 3:5-6). Once again Paul confronts us with the fact that this destiny of the Church was not made known to other people, not even to Israel, but has now been uncovered by New Testament "apostles and prophets" whose Spirit-given ministry is provided for us in their writings. One of the points made very clear is that "all men" may now both perceive this mystery and have a share in its glory. The threefold stress which the apostle makes concerning the inclusion of all nations is: "fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus". Can anything be more clearly stated, and can any grace be more marvellous? When God began to implement this eternal purpose of His in Christ, He began with the believing remnant of Israel -- it came to the Jew first. Soon, however, Christians who were also Israelites were completely outnumbered by Christians who are described as "Gentiles", and so it is to this day. All, whether Jews or Gentiles, are included in this stone cut out without hands". This was always God's intention, and it will never be changed. I am one of those who believe that among the earthly nations there is still a place, and a central place, for Israel. It need not be considered here, though, for as we have already seen it has no place in Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

5. The mystery is based on love-union with Christ. "This mystery is great; but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church" (Ephesians 5:32). It is not surprising that here the apostle calls the mystery "great". It is stupendous. It lifts the matter of reigning for God to its highest level, for it presents the Church as the consort, the beloved companion in eternal union with the King Himself. Here on this earth and in this age, the Church has the unique honour of being known as the body of Christ. In the age which is to come, and through eternal ages, the title used is "the bride". "Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb" (Revelation 21:9). There seems no end to the glories of this great secret. So *this* was what was in the Father's heart when He made Eve! This is the eternal purpose in God's heart long before time began when, "in the mystery of his will", God predestinated us in Christ (Ephesians 1:9-11). Why waste time trying to fathom how and why God foreordains men to be pardoned, when the real wonder is that God planned a destiny (pre-destiny) of eternal love union with His Son for believers? I am rather uncertain as to why the Revealer of Secrets gave this vision and interpretation to Nebuchadnezzar, but I have no doubts as to why He unveils His mystery to me; it is to inspire me to seek holiness of life in preparation for my share in the heavenly destiny of the Church.

6. The mystery will be completed at the Second Coming: "when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the gospel" (Revelation 10:17). John goes on to say that the sounding of the seventh trumpet will be the moment for this world's kingdom to pass to Christ (11:15). According to Daniel 2, this is when the rock of Christ and His Church will take over the government of this world which God had previously committed to the various powers indicated by the

image and it will "become a great mountain and fill the whole earth ... It shall stand for ever".

Chapter III. THE MOST HIGH GOD

"Ye servants of the Most High God, come forth and come hither"

Verse 26

SINCE it was in answer to their prayers that Nebuchadnezzar had received the revelation about the head of gold, it may well be that the three Hebrew princes were tempted to regret the whole matter. It seems most likely that it was this that put into the king's mind the idea of making his great golden image, and that image made great difficulties for the three young men. It sometimes happens like this for those of us who pray. God takes great risks; they are always justified but they are not always easy for His servants to understand the way things work out. The name which we are going to consider in this chapter is The Most High God. It will appear frequently in the subsequent chapters, but this is its first appearance. It is just because He is the Most High that God allows proud men to go to such lengths before He deals with them. He is always confident that the last word will be with Him. This story proves that very point.

No Support from Daniel

Until now the three had always enjoyed the inspiration of Daniel's leadership. This time they had to stand alone. It may be pertinent to ask why Daniel is not mentioned at all in this chapter, but the spiritual lesson is clear, namely that there comes a time when the Lord removes our human support in order that we may learn to rely on Him alone in a new way. There are several possible explanations of Daniel's absence. The previous chapter closes with the information that he had been exalted to the position of being "in the gate of the king". It may therefore be that Nebuchadnezzar himself had no intention of sacrificing his favourite, and so excused him from attendance at the ceremony. Or it may be that the tale-bearing Chaldeans (v.8) would not dare to accuse Daniel to the king, judging it more tactful to keep silence so far as he was concerned but to get at him through his three compatriots. Or it may have been some accident of daily life which kept him out of it all. We must remember that this is not a book about Daniel, but about Daniel's God. There is a certain encouragement for us in knowing that we who are second- or even third-rankers, can know and prove that He is our God too. The God of Daniel (6:26) turns out to be also the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (v.29). By Daniel's influence these had been promoted in the province (2:49). This time it was not through him but by the king's own desire that they found further promotion (v.30). The Most High God had a purpose of blessing for these three servants of His, even while He allowed them to undergo such a severe trial.

Psychological Warfare

This chapter gives clear illustrations of the psychological pressure which Satan

exerts on God's servants in order to force them to be disloyal to their God. This pressure largely operates in the realm of fear. This is Satan's master weapon. To him it is more important to frighten us than to do us actual harm. He might, or might not, have found pleasure in the burning to death of the three Hebrews, or in the destruction of Daniel in the lions' den, but his supreme objective was to use these terrors to frighten those concerned into compromise, and so destroy their testimony. I sometimes feel that he did not so much want Jesus to die on the cross, but that his main purpose was to induce the Lord either to shrink back from it or to come down from it, so saving Himself but leaving a disappointed Father and an eternally lost world. We remember that it was Satan who prompted Peter to urge Christ not to go that way. It was only when all else failed that he used Judas to precipitate the crucifixion but even then his was really the voice which, through the senseless mob, called to Jesus to save Himself by coming down from the cross. What glee in Hell if He had so saved Himself: what dismay when He stayed there until He could rightly claim "It is finished!" Satan may work for our outward destruction, but his real goal is to divert worship from God and claim it for himself. He bitterly hates the fact that God is the Most High.

See, then, some of the psychological pressures exerted in Satanic attempts to destroy men's faith:

1. Mass Persuasion

The essence of this kind of pressure is to stress the folly of being different from others. Not only were the three surrounded by large crowds of image-worshippers, they were to be intimidated by the calibre of the opposition. Twice over we are given the impressive list of celebrities present: "the satraps, the deputies and the governors, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces ..." (vv.2 & 3). What is more, the loud-voiced herald gave the king's command to "peoples, nations and languages" (v.4) and then "*all* the peoples, the nations and the languages" obeyed (v.7). The three lonely young men were being made to look ridiculous.

There are many young men in our own day, and young women too, who suffer this kind of assault on their faith. How often does the world ridicule Christians with their sneers about what "All intelligent people know ..."! 'All' the scientists, the archaeologists, or even the religious leaders, are alleged to judge our faith as being unworthy of sensible people. Well, it has always been like that. The 'overwhelming majority' will always overwhelm the man of faith if he pays any attention to them. "Have any of the rulers believed on him, or the Pharisees?", they asked concerning the Lord Jesus (John 7:48).

It is difficult to exaggerate the tremendous pressure of public opinion which was

brought to bear on these young men. They had to stand alone. They had to do so in the presence of all the important people in the empire as well as the massed crowds of onlookers. How high was that company! How high was that image! How high the flames of that crackling furnace! Only by keeping their eyes on the One who is the *Most High* could they resist the frightening pressure. Such moments come to most of us who seek to stand true for God in this Babylonian world.

2. Emotional Atmosphere

In any public reading of this chapter, the repeated enumeration of all the musical instruments becomes wearisome and absurd. No wonder that after the second list the bright young curate rendered the other ones as, 'the orchestra -- as before'! Surely, though, the four-fold repetition of the detailed list of instruments (vv.7, 10 & 15) is meant to stress the emotional influence which was also brought to bear on the three witnesses for God. Any publicist knows what powerful influences are exerted by suitable music, and it seems that Nebuchadnezzar's staff had nothing to learn from our modern P.R. men. Music can be almost divine -- it can release in us a heart worship of God which we felt but did not know how to express. Music can also be well-nigh devilish -- it can sweep people off their feet in frenzies of irrational emotion.

I am not here making any comment on various types of music. I am not competent to do so, nor does it form any part of my argument. The simple point I wish to make is that what music can do -- at any rate to most people -- is to loose them from rational restraints and govern them by impulsive emotions. These three received the full treatment. They were not only surrounded by overwhelming numbers, they were exposed to "all kinds of music" (v.15) in an atmosphere of idol-worship which was well-nigh irresistible. God neither silenced this hellish orchestra, nor drowned its sound with heavenly harmonies, though either action would have been very simple for Him. He risked all on the sheer faith of His servants.

3. Reasoned Argument

The whole souls of these men were under assault. First there was pressure on their wills, then influence on their emotions, and now a call to use their minds and think again. Nebuchadnezzar's counsellors may have been amazed at the trouble which he took to reason with the recalcitrants. He was a man of hot impulse rather than cool logic, as is amply demonstrated in this book. Why, then, did he take the trouble to remonstrate with the three and give them the chance to reconsider their decision? He was, it appears, very angry indeed, yet he left the offer open and promised that all would be well even at this late hour, if they only complied with the formality of prostrating themselves (v.15). He even offered to get the music going

again for them. What is more, he tried to bring God into the matter, though only to argue that the One] who had given him his kingdom and power (2:37) would not, or could not, support them in their disobedience.

He was not so foolish as to argue against the existence of God. To anyone who has a personal knowledge of God this is a sheer waste of time. No, it was more subtle than that; it was an insinuation that their God was so remote that they could not expect Him to keep them out of the fire. In a sense he was not entirely wrong, for God did not intervene to prevent their being thrown into the furnace. In another sense he was quite mistaken. It was not that God could not, but that He refrained from doing so because He had something better for them. They themselves had no clear conviction that they would be spared the fires, though they were most dogmatic about His ability to do so. What they were quite positive about was that He would never leave them in the hands of Nebuchadnezzar (v.17). They had all God's Word behind them in this conviction.

Spiritual Warfare

So they were quite adamant. They were not open to this kind of reasoning. The psychological pressures were powerless, for faith is the victory that overcomes the world. The image was high; the pressures were higher; the threat of the furnace was higher still; but theirs was the Most High God. That knowledge kept them steady in their hour of testing, so much so that they felt it unnecessary and unprofitable to discuss the matter with the king: "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter" (v.16). It was as though they said: 'It is not our business to reason about the fiery furnace: our business is to keep our worship for God and to leave the consequences with Him. Even if He makes no move to deliver us, we will not bow down to the golden image. We settled that long ago when we entered God's service, so we do not need to reconsider anything now'.

All this is past history, and remote history at that, but it is full of meaningful relevance for us today. The world's golden image is higher than ever now; the masses worship it, the notables honour it, the musical world sings its praises and the voice of reason warns us not to reject it. What can the people of God do? Nothing at all save prostrate themselves with the rest, unless they have a personal knowledge of Christ as the Most High. They will be saved if they feed on the Scriptures. They must remember, as the three Hebrews doubtless did, that it is written: "Above the voice of many waters ... the LORD on high is mighty" (Psalm 93:4).

God's Strange Ways

Just because God is the Most High, His ways are strange to men, even to godly

men. There was no word or act of intervention from Him as His three trusting servants courageously stood together while the rest of the world bowed in worship. When Nebuchadnezzar's face revealed his mounting fury against them (v.19) God showed no sign of His favour. An already frightening fire was heated seven times more than usual, and with an altogether uncalled-for show of violence, shock troops of the Chaldean army were summoned to tie them hand and foot and throw them into the flames. So much the worse for the soldiers! Their actions were so eager and the fire was so fierce that they themselves were immediately incinerated. How helpless the three must have felt. It seemed that God would not deliver them after all. They were tossed into the very heart of that devilish conflagration. What next?

Perhaps their first reactions were to imagine that they were now in heaven. Scholars tell us that there is almost no allusion to life after death in the Old Testament. One of the most definite exceptions to this general fact can be found in this book of Daniel: "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and contempt" (12:2). Moreover we are specifically told in the New Testament that in the old days there were people of faith who "were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection" (Hebrews 11:35). It was in this spirit that the three faced the furnace, but God still had a surprise for them and for all the onlookers.

He really is the Most High God. His ways are different from ours, and they are also much higher and much better. For, instead of going into heaven, heaven came down to them. God's power was not withheld until the resurrection day, it was demonstrated right then and there. Nebuchadnezzar must know how wrong, how very wrong, he had been in his ideas about the Hebrews' God. He was the first to witness the miracle. He had a front seat in order to enjoy the discomfiture of these misguided fools, and now found that he was being made a fool of and that they had been so very wise to commit themselves to the King of Heaven. He sprang off his throne to inform his startled counsellors that he could see that the men of Judah were walking about at liberty in the very heart of the fire, and that a Companion from heaven, the very Son of God Himself, was there in the furnace with them. All that his terrific fires had been able to do had been to remove the ropes which had bound the captives; apart from that they were powerless.

Faith's Testimony

Unbelief or little faith would have expected God to shelter His servants from ever having to go into the fiery trial. There are not lacking Christians today who have this kind of mentality. 'Pain', they say, 'is of the Devil, and is not the will of God for His children'. Well, there is little doubt that it was Satan who lit these fires, but clearly it was the will of God that His three servants should go into them. His word

promises victory, not immunity. Blessed are those who discover that in fiery trials they can discover a new liberty of spirit and a new awareness of the Lord's presence. That is what faith did for these three. They did not seem at all in a hurry to emerge from the furnace. They were enjoying their walk with the Lord. It was only when they were commanded by the king to "come forth and come here", that they moved towards the furnace door.

The story concludes with the information that the Lord had added a new title to the very many that He already possessed; He is called, "The God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego". This was a tremendous honour for them -- much greater than the civic honours given to them in the province of Babylon -- but it also represents some new facet in the divine glory. "God is not ashamed to be called their God" (Hebrews 11:16). Nebuchadnezzar's verdict on the whole affair is truly remarkable. He admitted that the three had changed his word and realised that they had done so not by any human capacity or effort but by yielding their bodies as living sacrifices to God. He had yet more to learn, as we shall see in the next chapter, but in his own pagan and intolerant way, he himself owned that the God of the Jews is in a class of His own -- He is indeed "The Most High God". I feel sure that Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah afterwards agreed that it had been worth the burning fiery furnace to be privileged to establish such a testimony right there in Babylon.

Not that they made anything of their part in it. One of the most astounding features of the whole story is that they came through those terrific fires and yet had no smell of scorching to betray what they had passed through. It is rare to meet such believers. Too often those who have suffered for Christ are persuaded to publicise their experiences and to carry around with them the constant reminder of what they have endured. Although the trial is now over, they are encouraged to feel that it ought not to be forgotten. Not so Shadrach and his friends. We are so glad to know that the hair of their heads had not even been singed, but the most striking thing is that "nor had the smell of fire passed on them" (v.27). Nobody would have guessed that they had ever been in the fire at all, except that perhaps they were even more praiseful than ever.

Praising in the Fire

These men literally praised God in the fires. Were they not proving God's promise "When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned" (Isaiah 43:2)? Were they not upheld by the Lord's words: "Fear not ... I will be with thee"? Although they could not have known this at the time, all the onlookers could see that their God was actually with them as they had never seen it before. The world witnessed their testimony.

The Scriptures themselves do not tell us that they actually praised God as they walked with Him, but there is a passage in the apocryphal book called The Song of the Three Holy Children which assures us that they did, and even purports to give us the triumphant hymn which they sang. On the whole I find the books of the Apocrypha very dusty reading. This professed amplification of Daniel is, however, quite inspiring. Its sixty-eight verses are inserted after verse 23 of our chapter. Rightly enough, the three are here given their proper names of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, and their inspiring call is for universal praise to God: "O ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord; praise him and magnify him for ever". Those who possess a Church of England Prayer Book will find this hymn in the Service for Morning Prayer and will find special interest in the fact that after calling upon the heavens and the winds to bless the Lord, the three are reputed to have sung: "O ye fire and heat, bless ye the Lord; praise him and magnify him for ever". This is victory indeed! Whenever a saint under extreme pressure can glorify God and even praise Him for the fiery trial, it is clear that faith has embraced the fact that God is in fact The Most High. The story of these young men confirms to us the Bible assurance that "the people who know their God are strong and do exploits" (11:32).

Chapter IV. THE KING OF HEAVEN

"Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of Heaven."

Verse 37

THIS is surely the most remarkable chapter of this amazing book of Daniel. It is unique in the whole Bible. It consists of a long explanation given by a heathen king, and its main thrust is his confession of how God humbled him. Two passages (vv.1-18 and 34-37) were clearly written by Nebuchadnezzar himself.

In a sense this continues the theme of chapter 3, namely that ours is The Most High God. Who else would dare to incorporate into His own Holy Word a contribution by a man who was not only a non-Jew but the ruler of the very pagan empire which had overthrown His people? And who else would have taken so much time and trouble to instruct and correct an individual whom we would have rejected as a complete outsider? More than once in this chapter the title reappears: "The Most High God", and rightly so.

It naturally follows that this chapter, being unique, merits very special consideration. It has a predictive element in it, as has the whole book of Daniel apart from the first chapter, but it also carries a deeply spiritual message, namely the peril of pride. As God taught Nebuchadnezzar the need for humility, He doubtless intended it also for His beloved servant, Daniel, and planned through him to impress it on all of us who are called to the kingdom. Alas, we prefer sensational peeps into the future to solid moral lessons and so tend to hasten on from this chapter as if it were of relative unimportance. How foolish, though, to plunge on into a detailed speculation about times and seasons when we should have been giving careful and prayerful attention to the supreme matter of humility which is dealt with so graphically in this chapter.

A Kingdom Issue

As is the case in so many of Daniel's prophecies, the basic point at issue is the contrast between two opposing kingdoms. The divine title which I have chosen for this present study is "The King of Heaven" (v.37), "whose domain is an everlasting domain, and whose kingdom is from generation to generation", as Nebuchadnezzar so convincingly stated. It is sometimes an aid in Bible study to select or underline any words which recur a number of times. By this means we can hope to discover the essential contents of any given book. If this system be adopted in our consideration of Daniel, the obvious repetitions are the words 'king' and 'kingdom'. This, then, is what the book is all about.

The challenge and contrast of the two opposing kingdoms is clearly stated in chapter 2, as we have already seen. This clash and contrast run right through the book. Various figures rise and fall. They are the metal limbs of an image; they are wild beasts; they are rams and goats; they are actual men, whose geographical spheres are sometimes mentioned, and later they are spiritual entities -- princes of the underworld. All of them form one essential kingdom of this world, with "the prince of this world" (John 12:31) governing and energising them. On the other hand there is another and a superior kingdom. It is seen coming down from heaven (2:44) because it is heavenly in nature; it is committed to the Son of Man because He is its rightful Ruler (7:14); its representatives here on earth are assaulted and seemingly defeated for a time (7:21 and 11:33), but in the end they will emerge triumphant to share the kingdom (7:27) and shine as the stars for ever (12:3).

All this is found in the book as a whole. Chapter 4 makes it a very personal matter, revealing the spirit of this world as embodied in one single man. It is no accident that the man concerned was the ruler of Babylon, for from Genesis to Revelation that name and that city express the essential characteristic of the world, which is pride. At the decisive moment in this chapter, this specimen of incarnate pride defies heaven by announcing that the great Babylon, a world wonder, owed everything to him personally. He did this to God's face, and in spite of the clear warning sent from heaven and interpreted clearly to him by Daniel. This was the signal for the King of Heaven to act. He did so and humbled the proud man to the very dust.

The Warning

There is an astonishing frankness about Nebuchadnezzar's account of his experience. It brought no glory to him, but the very reverse, yet he made it as public as possible, without in any way attempting to excuse his own behaviour or hide the nature of the divine discipline which overtook him. There is a passage in the New Testament which reads: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God" (1 Peter 5:6), and this is basically what Nebuchadnezzar did. It seems that only God can humble, for we are all sons of Adam who aspired to be like God. Nevertheless we are told to seek humility and we must be prepared humbly to accept the hand of God when it brings us low in order to impart this divine quality to us and to break down our natural pride. This hand came heavily upon the king of Babylon, and in due course he accepted it and received the consequent blessing.

The warning about pride came to him in a dream which was then interpreted for him by Daniel who, once again, was only called in after everybody else had failed. It is true that when he did come he was welcomed. In accordance with his

pompous conceit the king praised Daniel (v.9), but in practice he had tried all the others first, only calling in the prophet when the vaunted wisdom of this world had exposed its total inability to give spiritual aid to the troubled soul. The man of God often has to accept the sad fact that his help is only sought as a last resort.

This time Nebuchadnezzar could remember his dream well enough but it may have been pride which prevented him from appreciating its implications. He could understand that men are exposed to the scrutiny of heaven but could not credit that he -- the great world ruler -- was unacceptable to those heavenly watchers. They told him that God's requisite for the man to whom He would entrust His rule was that he must be "the lowliest of men " (v.17) This is the better translation of what the A. V. translates as "the basest of men". Humility is what God seeks. Nebuchadnezzar was told that since God is the Most High, then His chosen servant must be the most lowly. The Lord Jesus both taught this and demonstrated it in His Person. To Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon this was quite unacceptable. After all, he had much to be proud of. Had not God Himself described him as "the head of gold" (2:38)? True he had erred over the matter of the fiery furnace, but he had eventually recognised his error and had ascribed supreme greatness to the Most High God (3:26) and even exerted his powers to make others do the same (3:29). He did not believe that God would humble him in everybody's eyes, though he had to confess that he was thoroughly frightened and needing help (v.5). The wise men either did not know or did not want to know what it was all about. So it was left to the faithful Daniel to speak the blunt truth.

No wonder that he hesitated before giving the interpretation. "All the peoples, nations and languages feared before Nebuchadnezzar" (5:19), and now it fell to Daniel to pass on to him a message of divine wrath. It was a task just as daunting as his later facing of the hungry lions. However he so feared the true king -- the King of Heaven -- that he could not allow himself to be scared of this dreadful earthly monarch.

His behaviour does him great credit. He waited silently for a whole hour, deeply troubled by what had been revealed. Having been urged to speak frankly he did so, not only giving a true explanation of the dream but even sharpening the force of the original, "that the living may know ..." to a more direct and personal, "till thou know" (v.25). God's severe treatment was meant not to be destructive but educative, with the one purpose of teaching the king that it is the heavens that rule. Before the Most High God ""all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (v.35). Daniel closed his interpretation with an earnest and eloquent appeal to the king to seek peace with God by repentance and change of life.

We see, then, how a spiritual man passes on God's message to the enquiring sinner. He finds no pleasure and shows no zest in speaking of judgement; indeed he prefers to remain silent and has to be urged to deliver his message. He conveys a spirit of sympathy, and lets it be known that he has deep compassion for the man at fault. Nevertheless he is frank, making no attempt to water down God's warnings, but rather focusing their personal application down to his hearer. In his boldness he is courteous, and in his appeal he is positive, stressing God's desire to give a sure future to the penitent, and speaking confidently of the possibility of his error being healed (v.27).

The king did not respond. In spite of the sensational message from heaven and the passionate appeal from God's interpreter of it, the warning seemed to be quite in vain. Daniel's pleas and prayers seemed quite unsuccessful. He could therefore only do what all gospel witnesses have at times to do -- wait. But he could wait with constant prayer, even though the full seven years had to pass before the answer came.

The Humbling

Even before the seven years began, Daniel was doubtless praying, for there was a whole year when nothing happened and his words received no vindication. God has plenty of time, but his word is sure, as we see by the fact that He introduces the next section with the terse statement: "All these things came to pass upon king Nebuchadnezzar" (v.8). Not only was it true that God's year of grace was finished but also that He found Himself forced to act in response to a new outburst of pride on Nebuchadnezzar's part.

"Is not this the great Babylon that *I* have built for the royal dwelling place, by the might of *my* power and for the glory of *my* majesty?" These were the king's words. Babylon was indeed the wonder of the world. Humanly speaking the king had very much to boast of. We may wonder why his words were so very provocative to God. Do they not verbalise an attitude which is natural to us all in moments of success? Even though Christians may not voice things quite so frankly, do they not at times indulge in a measure of boasting about *their* work, *their* church, *their* enterprise, or *their* spiritual success? God forgive us, most of us have been guilty at some time or other of this kind of mentality! Can it be that when we do so, we lose our heavenly reward, even as Nebuchadnezzar promptly lost his kingdom? What a perilous area of life is Christian publicity! We live in a Laodicean age. Let us beware of boasting of our collections or our conversions. Perhaps it would do us all good to re-read Daniel 4 and take its moral more to heart.

See the urgency of the warning. "While the word was yet in the king's mouth" (v.31), "the same hour" (v.33), it happened. It happened after all. It happened just

as God had said it would. In one brief verse we are told of the seven years of tragic degradation which befell the man who had seemed so great and had felt so secure. The chapter might conceivably have ended at this point. It must have seemed like the end. But the King of Heaven is merciful as well as mighty, so there is a most blessed sequel to it all. When God found the right response in the mad monarch's heart, He was able to restore not only the balance of his mind but the lost glories of his state. When God is given His rightful place, then everything else can be rescued from its chaos.

The Recovery

At this point Nebuchadnezzar takes up the narrative again, making no secret of the fact that he had been out of his mind. He blames no-one but himself and demonstrates his return to sanity by a new acknowledgement of the sovereign majesty of God: "None can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (vv.34-35). The restoration was completed. His people and courtiers rallied to him once more and he resumed his administration of the great Chaldean world empire. The God who had so faithfully warned him, now just as faithfully restored him.

At this point divine election and human decision meet, and who shall reconcile them? Did the phase of insanity cease because God's time of seven years was completed, or was the change brought about by Nebuchadnezzar's lifting his eyes to heaven in submissive faith? What precipitated the conversion from pride to humility? Did Nebuchadnezzar change his mind, or did God change it for him, and if the latter, why did it take seven years for Him to do so? How could a man in such a demented state of mind get right with God? These are the constantly recurring problems of the theologian, but they are not for us. We take the story as we find it and, like Nebuchadnezzar, give all the glory to the Most High God.

Perhaps it will be more profitable for us to set aside the problem of the king's clinical condition and just take him as an example of man's madness in being alienated from God. The Lord Jesus hinted at this when He described the prodigal's decision to return home as a result of "coming to himself" (Luke 15:17). Pride is madness. Pride separates from God. God resists the proud (1 Peter 5:5); "Everyone that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord" (Proverbs 16:5); God only knows the proud afar off (Psalm 138:6). The turning point for any such man, the moment when he really comes to himself, is when he whole-heartedly capitulates, as Nebuchadnezzar did, to God's majesty and mercy. This, surely, is the real message of the chapter to us all.

Who of us does not need to come under God's hand for humbling? The great apostle confesses that he had to do so (2 Corinthians 12:7). The important thing is to be willing to learn our lesson, and to do so with a new appreciation of the

privilege of being humble subjects of the King of Heaven. Humility is enthroned in heaven in the Person of the Lord Jesus. He is the only One who could truly claim to be "meek and lowly in heart". Humility is not just a pleasant virtue: it is a fundamental requirement for those who are called to share Christ's kingdom. God's hand upon us may seem heavy, but its one intention is to conform us to Christ.

He is able to do this. That is the final summing-up of the chapter. "All his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to abase" (v.37). What a tremendous victory for God's grace when a man who has been going through such a devastating experience as Nebuchadnezzar can justify God in all his ways. It is a lesson to all complaining Christians. And what an unusual employment of the much loved phrase: "He is able"! We are familiar with the many verses which assure us that God is able, but here is a most unusual use of the words: "He is able to abase"! Thank God that He is, for we should never do it by ourselves. In this testimony Nebuchadnezzar claims no distinction except shame for the humbled sinner. He attributes no special credit, except compassion, to the preacher of God's Word. No, all the glory is reserved for God Himself, and for His combination of wisdom, power and love which produced the miracle of conquered pride.

One last point, which is typical of the God of all grace, is that after his humbling, Nebuchadnezzar was able to report that "still more greatness" had been added to him (v.36). In other words, the king was enriched as well as God being glorified by those strange years when he had eaten grass like an ox, had hair like eagles' feathers and nails like birds' claws. Human reasoning would have called them wasted years. They were far from that. However great the cost and however long the discipline, nothing is wasted if it brings a man into humble faith relationship with the King of Heaven.

So we are confronted with an inspiring challenge. In our search for greater humility we must submit ourselves anew to that Hand of love which is upon us to teach us more kingdom meekness. Our testing will be different from and probably less than, what came upon Nebuchadnezzar. Can we come through it with new awareness of His greatness as the King of Heaven, and testify in the face of it all that "all his works are right and his ways are just"? If so then this to us will be that knowledge of God which makes us strong and able to do exploits.

Chapter V. THE LIVING GOD

"He is the living God, and steadfast for ever"
Daniel 6:26

THERE is no doubt that Daniel was a key man for God throughout the years of Israel's captivity in Babylon. God's intentions in this matter are indicated by the simple statement at the very beginning that "Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus" (1:21). He lived on beyond that, but the point is that he lived to see the day of the return of the captives. He probably played a key role as adviser to Cyrus in this matter, for God put him up to the top and kept him there. But not all the time. This chapter opens with the startling implication that after Nebuchadnezzar's demise, Daniel entirely disappeared from public life. All the honours given to him in his promotion by Nebuchadnezzar seem to have lost their value; he was so completely forgotten that it took a divine miracle to bring him back on the scene. This chapter will explain how it all happened. That it only happened on the final night of the Chaldean empire is but one more example of the recurring truth that while God is never late, He has a way of leaving things to the very last minute. He runs it very fine.

A Dying Empire

The scene set before us in the Babylonian banquet hall is so bizarre that if any Jews were present they might well have wondered if the Lord was still alive. There was no sign of His reaction to arrant blasphemy. Where now was the King of Heaven? Where was any evidence that God is the Most High? Nebuchadnezzar's dissolute son (or grandson) was mocking Him in ways which his great ancestor would never have countenanced. It is true that Nebuchadnezzar carried away the holy vessels from the temple in Jerusalem, but he seems always to have treated them with respect. After he had learned the lesson of the burning fiery furnace, he uttered bloodthirsty threats against anyone who dared to be irreverent towards the true God.

But times had changed. Nebuchadnezzar was no more. His son, Nabonidus, was at that very time being defeated in the field by the Medo-Persian armies, and Belshazzar, the regent (either a son or a younger brother), was indulging in this gigantic drinking party while the empire disintegrated. So great was the Babylonians' sense of security within their massive city, that they contemptuously ignored the seemingly ineffective besieging troops of the Medes who in fact had been steadily working while they seemed inactive, and had now completed the field works which opened the undefended city to them. On the eve of the empire's overthrow Belshazzar, descendant of the mighty conquering Nebuchadnezzar,

was indulging with his officers in drunken revelry. Times had changed in Babylon.

Times had changed for Daniel, too. He who had risen to such eminence under Nebuchadnezzar, was so effectively removed from office that Belshazzar behaved as though he had never heard of him. It was only when the old queen-mother came on the scene that Daniel's name and ability were disclosed. Obviously he had been removed from all prominence and authority in this crumbling empire. Unbelief might well have wondered if God were asleep or dead.

But no, God was alive all right. Our title for this chapter is "The Living God" (6:26). The phrase was coined by Darius the Mede, Belshazzar's successor, but it is the perfect description of the One who is not only very much alive Himself, but able to bring back life into dead situations. He alone could rescue Daniel from obscurity and put him back again into the governorship from which he had been eliminated. Whenever we think of God's exercise of life, we should bear in mind that it invariably carries with it the idea of resurrection from the dead. There is no other life available to Christians than resurrection life. The fact that He is the Living God means that His methods in all His working -- and most notably in His Son -- are based on resurrection. Daniel needed such a God; for practical purposes he had been reduced to social and political death, with no position, no power, no public reputation; he was in the depths.

His experience had some parallel with that of Nebuchadnezzar as described in chapter 4, though in Daniel's case there was not the slightest suggestion of any fault on his part. Both men were in a hopeless position, humanly speaking. Nebuchadnezzar was brought down to zero by the heavy hand of God upon him. Daniel came down to zero by divine permission, though probably he was the victim of men's envy. After seven years of suffering, Nebuchadnezzar was fully restored. After an unknown period of eclipse, Daniel was also fully restored. But the eclipse had been so total that Belshazzar only met him for the first time on this occasion (v.13), and his return to power can only be likened to a resurrection.

The title, Living God, means just this, that He has power to give life by raising from the dead. This chapter proves the point and justifies itself in forming part of the whole book by its implication of the miracle which happened to Daniel. We may be carried away by the wonder of "the writing on the wall", but God would not use His Word just to interest us with that story of Belshazzar's shock and doom. His interests are positive and purposeful. What He needed to do was to safeguard those precious holy vessels of the temple and, even more, to restore Daniel to his place of authority until His people returned to the land. This chapter discloses how He did all this.

The Writing on the Wall

The effective words here are, "that night" (v.30). Once again we should notice God's perfect timing. Even while the besotted regent was blaspheming God in his cups, a hand -- indeed only part of a hand -- was stretched out to sober him up with a solemn warning. That hand could just as easily have struck him down, and if there were any Jews present, they must have wondered why it did not do so. It is true that the time for Belshazzar's end had come, but God's main purpose was to re-instate Daniel. Instead, therefore, the divine fingers wrote four cryptic words on the wall. Just that, and nothing more. It was enough, though, to terrify this boasting blasphemer. Somehow he knew that the message came from another world, even though he did not know what it said or who could explain it to him. He was so frightened that he made the offer of highest advancement, even to third rulership, to anyone who could tell him what the mystic message was. He who had been so bold in drunken blasphemy was now terrified in sober panic as he saw the fingers write. Incidentally the fact that he was only regent explains why it was that when Daniel was given top-rank promotion, he could still only be described as 'third' in the kingdom.

Once again they went through the now familiar pattern of calling in all Babylon's wise men, and once again God's servant had to wait patiently till the last. Nebuchadnezzar had had to learn humility: Daniel knew it but had to practice it. There was such a hysterical panic in the palace that the king's mother broke into the disorderly scene with the reminder that Nebuchadnezzar's previous 'master of magicians' was still available and was the very man they were looking for. So last of all, the neglected and unrecognised servant of the Lord was brought in and given the opportunity to speak for Him. It is my firm belief that any gifted man of God with a message does not need to force himself forward and rely on the influence of others, but will be given his chance to minister if he keeps humble before God and available to Him. That is what Daniel did, and his experience confirms me in my conviction.

His humility was outstanding. If Nebuchadnezzar had felt some justification for feeling proud of himself (4:30), how much more might Daniel have harboured pride in his heart. Before him the mighty emperor had prostrated himself, and in his honour it had been commanded that they should offer an "oblation and sweet odours" (2:46). He had been the honour of receiving Nebuchadnezzar's commendation: "You are able, for the spirit of the holy gods is in you" (4:18). He had had the high privilege of indicating to the king how he might experience God's delivering mercy, even though he had to wait a long time before his hearer responded to his exhortation. We know, however, that Daniel was free from any conceit: he retained his lowliness as well as his integrity. When later we listen to his prayers, we will appreciate the depth and reality of his beautiful humility.

When the call came quite unexpectedly, then, his spirit was so pure that he was ready to answer it, and his walk with God so close that he did not need a lot of time and exercise to be able to communicate God's message. He was not looking for promotion. His first reaction was to reject the gifts and rewards offered by the king (v.17). But he was in touch with God. What could natural reasoning make of the three words, Numbered, Weighed and Divided? Only divine inspiration made it possible for Daniel to give the interpretation of the sinister message.

But before he gave this, Daniel was bold enough to tell Belshazzar what he and everybody else well knew, and that was the truth about himself. In Babylon pride was on the throne once more. In spite of the sensational experience of his father about which he was fully informed, he had made himself the ring-leader of a dissolute revolt against the very King of Heaven who had so signally proved His power (v.23). This time Daniel made no plea for repentance and gave no offer of forgiveness. The words had been written. The moment of reckoning had arrived. The Hand had pronounced the sentence. The solemn interpretation followed, with its emphasis by repetition of the first word about the kingdom being numbered and brought to an end. We look now to see how it worked out.

Fall of Babylon

It is a matter of secular history that the bloodless capture of Babylon opened the way for the new Medo-Persian empire, already prophesied in chapter 2. It appears that while Belshazzar was junketing with his nobles, trembling at the supernatural writing and then trying to smother his conscience by heaping honours on Daniel, a small band of enemy soldiers penetrated into the city by a subterfuge and changed the government overnight. There was no fighting, except a scuffle in the palace, and it is recorded that only Belshazzar was actually killed. If, in fact, he was the only man to die when the city and empire were conquered, then the divine warning is made all the more solemn by its personal directness. God does not need to waste His time in the constant performance of spectacular miracles; "all things are His servants" (Psalm 119:91).

Daniel's book shows us that heaven is not to be trifled with. Nebuchadnezzar disregarded God's warning to him through Daniel, and he paid dearly for seven years for his obstinacy. This son of his, who had been terrified at the uncanny appearance of the divine fingers and the warning words, seems to have tried to pass it off by promoting Daniel, but he soon found that there is no armour against the judgements of God. Heedless of the verdict pronounced upon him, completely deceived as to its totality and imminence, Belshazzar kept his word about rewarding Daniel because he felt that it somehow glorified him, and then presumably returned to his carousing. God gives no details of his sordid end. It is

of no importance. What is important, though, is that in spite of everything, without knowing it and without any credit for it, Belshazzar's last act had been to safeguard the interests of God by committing authority to Daniel. Our God is indeed the Living God and steadfast for ever!

God's Care of His Own

When we considered chapter 4 we were given a clear understanding why it was written. It warns us all and it inspires us all. In chapter 5, however, there is little in the arresting story of Belshazzar's downfall to give any spiritual help to God's people. We therefore look beyond him, to seek to discover the inner significance of the chapter, and as we do so we are confronted with a wonderful and inspiring disclosure of God's ability to protect and care for the vessels of His service. In this case they were two-fold, the golden vessels of the temple and the human vessel of His testimony in Babylon.

It was essential that those vessels that had been carried away from the temple by Nebuchadnezzar should be safely returned at the end of the seventy years by Cyrus. The latter knew nothing of them, and would not have cared had he known. But God knew. God looked forward to the day when Cyrus's treasurer, Mithredath, would take them from the pagan museum in Babylon and hand them over to a prince of Judah to be replaced in God's house in Jerusalem (Ezra 1:8). Belshazzar desecrated the vessels by using them in his drunken carousal, and they so easily might have been mixed up with all the other heathen goblets, but no doubt one of Daniel's first actions on being promoted to rulership was to collect them and store them against the day when they should be restored "every one to his place" (Ezra 6:5) in that re-built temple about which he later so fervently prayed. The Living God can be trusted to care for what is His, and to exert resurrection power in the process if that be necessary.

And what shall we say of the human vessel? In the wise providence of God, Daniel was destined to prominence and authority in the new empire so that he could steer the counsels of Cyrus towards the release of the captives at the end of the allotted years. From the first God had determined that Daniel should continue through those seventy years (1:21) and the intervening chapters have shown us how He worked to bring His servant to the place of rulership. For some reason all this had been lost. What happened between chapters 4 and 5 we do not know, but by the time chapter 5 opens he was a nonentity. By the end of the chapter, though, we find that the Living God had brought him back, as if by resurrection, and had made sure that his authority was fully restored.

Chapter VI. JEHOVAH

*"I set my face ... and I prayed unto the LORD"
Daniel 9:4*

IT seems clear from the time indications in 6:3 and 9:1 that the prayer described in chapter 9 preceded and provoked the events here described in chapter 6. However since chapter 6 continues to give an account of affairs in the Babylonian capital's public business, it would be vain to expect to find in it any use of the thrice-holy personal name of Israel's covenant God. The earlier chapter (9) describes Daniel's private heart exercise; it makes use of the Hebrew language again and takes us into the heavenly atmosphere of God's audience chamber.

For this reason we are not surprised to be introduced to the supreme and highly personal name of JEHOVAH, which appears no less than seven times in the course of Daniel's intercessory prayer. The correct name is YAHWEH, the great I AM (Exodus 6:2). In the Bible it is usually rendered in full capitals -- LORD -- while transcriptions, influenced by Hebrew vowel pointings, have accustomed us to the more familiar rendering, Jehovah. This is the form which I propose to use now. While Yahweh is more correct, Jehovah is more readily identified by most of us.

Timely Prayer

Chapter 9 opens with the information that Daniel's study of his Bible revealed the fact that the time was very near for Israel's return from captivity. Through the ministry of Jeremiah, Jehovah had pledged His word that there would be an end to Jerusalem's desolations, and had indicated when that would be (9:2). This drove Daniel to earnest prayer. To natural logic it must seem foolish to pray intensely for an event which had been already decreed by God. To the spiritual mind, however, this is a most reasonable thing to do. It is He who has chosen to link His operation with the requests of His servants, and true prayer must be based on His Word. As a true intercessor, Daniel sought to co-operate with God by his prayers, not trying to induce God to make new plans, but rather to fulfil what He has promised, asking "according to His will" (1 John 5:14). The person who prays does not allow himself to be confused by questions as to why an omnipotent God should seek prayer as a basis for His working, but he knows that it is so. It was just because Daniel read and believed Jeremiah's prophecies that he got to grips with the matter in humble but earnest prayer.

It is most important to read chapter 9 before coming to the open window of chapter 6. The whole prayer is most moving. Daniel prayed not as an important personage, not even as a consecrated saint, but as an undeserving sinner. He had begun in

that way when he urged his companions to seek God on the basis of mercy (2:18), and he was now careful not to depart from that ground himself, though many years of faithful service and bold witness had elapsed since those first simple prayers. "To the Lord our God belong mercies", "we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies" (vv.9 & 18); this was how Daniel prayed, urging that for His own name's sake God should do this seemingly impossible work of restoring Israel. "O Lord hear; O Lord forgive; O Lord hearken and do; defer not; for thine own sake, O my God, because thy city and thy people are called by thy name" (v.19). We notice in this prayer that there are not only seven mentions of the great name, Jehovah, but also many appeals to God as Sovereign Lord, a title which is found nowhere else in the book after 1:2. Unless our God is absolute Lord of all, what is the use of our asking Him to do impossible things? Because Daniel did know Him as Sovereign Lord, he prayed. His prayer, as recorded in chapter 9, is one of the outstanding prayers of the Bible. It produced startling results, as this kind of prayer is bound to do. God intervened with a message to His praying servant, and He did so at the most significant hour of the evening oblation (v.21). New Testament readers know that this was the hour of Calvary's shout of victory, and remember that the cross provides a basis for all our prayers.

Daniel was given assurances that Jerusalem would be rebuilt, though with the added information that it would be "even in troublous times" (v.25). Many years later, when Nehemiah read this Scripture, he might well have added his own commentary, "Yes, and you can say that again." He had to live and work through those times and knew only too well how troublous they were. What a thrill for him, though, as the work of restoration went on, to know that what he was engaged in was the fruit of another man's prevailing prayer. Prayer has a kind of chain-reaction. Daniel was supported by Jeremiah's prayers. Ezra and Nehemiah were encouraged by reason of Daniel's prayers. So it goes on. When the final day of fulfilment comes for God's eternal city and His redeemed people, it will be acknowledged that an important part has been played by the prayers of believers (Revelation 8:3). We know, of course, that all human prayers are only made acceptable by the incense of the holy ministry of intercession of our Ascended Lord Jesus. It is in His name that we pray: "Thy kingdom come".

That final day of fulfilment was referred to by God in His answer to Daniel. That answer went far beyond the immediate miracle of the restoration of ruined Jerusalem, pointing on to the end of the age when vision and prophecy will be fully consummated (v.24). It is not without significance that in doing so, God mentioned that there will be wars right up to that end (v.26). No doubt that applies to international affairs -- as we see in our day -- but it refers most especially to the praying people of God. The soldiers of the cross will have no respite from conflict until Jesus returns. Those who pray in the Spirit will inevitably find themselves

engaged in a grim warfare. Daniel certainly did, as we will see if we move back to Chapter 6. So far as Chapter 9 is concerned, it is not my intention here to comment on the fulfilled or still unfulfilled prophecies of the "seventy weeks" referred to, but rather to enquire what was the immediate effect of Daniel's prayer. Following the time pattern, we return to Chapter 6, and there we find what devilish opposition was aroused by this one man's prayers. We have no reason to believe that much time elapsed between the two chapters and are impressed with the close link between the prayer chamber of Chapter 9 and the lion's den of Chapter 6. One contrite sinner prayer and a whole storm of satanic opposition broke over him.

Outbreak of Opposition

Chapter 6 opens with the information that Daniel had made such a favourable impression during the first year of the reign of Darius, that the emperor devised a power structure in the kingdom which was to give Daniel the highest post. As we may well imagine in such a court, the other officials were envious of him, so there arose one of those political plots with which we are familiar today and Daniel's enemies combined to discredit him. The attack was made possible because there had been a deterioration in the kingdom, as illustrated by the metals forming the image of Chapter 2. No longer was there a head of gold. If Nebuchadnezzar had signed such a decree and then regretted it, he would have had no scruples about rescinding it and might possibly have proceeded to liquidate the men who had drafted it. Not so with Darius! He was ruler of the silver kingdom in which the laws of the Medes and Persians were so binding that even the monarch who signed them became their slave. Darius was duped by flattery, as many better men than he have been during history; when it was too late he found, to his great distress, that he was forced to administer his own decree. The whole thing was a trick.

But although human elements of jealousy and ambition were the more obvious factors in this confrontation situation, these were only the outworking of spiritual activities -- as such evils often are. It was Satan who was jealous and ambitious. And Daniel had become a threat to his evil plans. The hidden truth behind the obvious was that Hell was being badly shaken by this one man's prayers. God's will was moving triumphantly forward, and all because three times a day Daniel was on his knees. So the command came from Satan's headquarters that at all costs this prayer must be stopped. No doubt the satraps and presidents thought they were very cunning, but what are evil men but the foolish instruments of diabolical craft and spite against God?

In any case, an attempt was to be made to destroy Daniel by denouncing him to the king. It was easy enough for Satan to foment jealousy among political colleagues, but it was not so easy -- in fact it was impossible -- to discover any

offence or shortcoming in Daniel's public life which could be used to provide some sort of basis for their calumnies. They searched hard, but they could discover no grounds for complaint anywhere: "They could find none occasion nor fault; foreasmuch as he was faithful, neither was any error or fault found in him" (v.4).

This is how it should always be. Daniel served in an alien and a very corrupt court, but he was just as faithful there as if he had been in the forefront of holy temple service in Jerusalem. God's man is never excused from loyal devotion by reason of the unworthiness of his masters: he must do everything as to God Himself. "Whatsoever you do, work heartily, as unto the Lord and not unto men; knowing that from the Lord you shall receive the recompense of the inheritance: you serve the Lord Christ" (Colossians 3:23-24). Although Daniel lived in Old Testament times he lived by New Testament standards. How much stronger would be the testimony of the Church in our day if God's people carried this principle into their daily work. We notice, of course, that this did not prevent Daniel from being attacked, but we must observe that it did mean that God was on his side when he was under attack.

His opponents came to the conclusion that the only way of destroying Daniel was to entrap him by a subterfuge connected with his well-known faith in God. They therefore persuaded Darius to accept the foolish decree which he regretted as soon as he had signed it. It was too late, however, for him to rescind it. He spent the whole day in a vain effort to alter its application to his favoured servant, but he was a prisoner to his own law. It was a bad day for him and there was no remedy. The night was even worse, for his trusted servant had been thrown to the lions. God did not help Darius. He did not *seem* to be able to help Daniel. With hindsight we approve of Daniel's quiet faith, but we must remember that he no more knew about his immediate future than we know about ours when troubles confront us.

Response to Opposition

In a few phrases we are told about Daniel's reaction to the crisis which so troubled the emperor. In full knowledge of the inevitable consequences, he entered his room which was open to public view and there knelt as he was accustomed to do. He had the window opened towards Jerusalem before him, and he continued his normal custom of facing that window as he prayed to God. For him there was no crisis -- it was just another day with God. He could have gone into another room; he could have closed the window; he could have prayed without kneeling. It was his own private house and he was a man of such standing that no-one could have intruded to spy upon him if he had made any attempt to hide his activities. He could have stopped praying for the time being -- it was only for a month! These are the kind of temptations which come to any Christian, but had Daniel yielded to any of them, he would have been spared the lion's den but he would have lost his

power with God and provided Satan with a victory. If we suspend praying for a month, the probability is that we will never take it up again. Those who absent themselves voluntarily from the Prayer Meeting for four weeks will probably find it very hard to resume their place among the Lord's intercessors.

It may well be that Daniel hardly thought of such behaviour. He does not even seem to have offered any special request for self-preservation but rather to have gone quietly on his way with God. When he knew that the writing was signed, he prayed and gave thanks before his God, "as he did aforetime" (v.10). His reaction was simply to give thanks to Jehovah and to pray on, with a holy contempt for his enemies: "In nothing affrighted by the adversaries; which is for them an evident token of perdition, but of your salvation, and that from God; because to you it hath been granted not only to believe on him, but also to suffer in his behalf" (Philippians 1:28-29). Once again we marvel at such New Testament behaviour from an Old Testament saint.

Why was the window opened toward Jerusalem? The temple was no longer there - - it was all in ruins. It was not that he prayed *to* Jerusalem, he prayed to Jehovah his God, but he did pray *about* Jerusalem. This was the clear and definite objective of his praying. His was not a general prayer -- "God bless me and my friends" -- but a focused appeal to his covenant God on behalf of the people and city of His divine purpose. It was a matter of faith that the windows should be opened in that direction. The distance was so great that he could not see anything, and in fact there was nothing to be seen but shameful ruins, but he had the eye of faith. Without it there is not much point in praying.

In the matter of "thanksgiving" (v.10), we seem to detect a new element in Daniel's praying, for although the prayer of Chapter 9 is extensive and very moving, it is limited to confessions and appeals. Why should he start giving thanks now, and what was there to be thankful about? Well, in the first place he could give thanks for answered prayer. He was no longer battling in prayer over Jerusalem. He had done that, and he had won through and received a full assurance from God that his prayer had been heard and would be answered. His clear course, therefore, was to do what we are told to do, "to watch in the same with thanksgiving" (Colossians 4:2). So he was able to thank the faithful Jehovah that his prayer for the restoration of Jerusalem had been favourably received. He knew that nothing and nobody could prevent that prayer being answered. Even if he himself were devoured by lions, God would see to it that Jerusalem was restored. How much better to die with thanksgiving that one's prayers live on, than to live on oneself and allow one's prayer life to die!

In addition, however, Daniel was able to praise Jehovah because he knew himself to be so enveloped in covenant mercy that nothing could happen to him outside of

the will of God. Daniel was an old man. His life already had had most satisfying fulfilment. If the issue of the captivity was now decided and his part in it completed, a rest remained for him (12:13) and he could go to it with a song. How better can a man die? If, on the other hand, God wanted him to see and even have a part in that deliverance from captivity, then no power could stop that happening -- lions or no lions. Darius might well spend a sleepless and cheerless night of worry. Poor man, he did not know Jehovah! He was outside of the covenant, so he was bound to worry. Daniel, however, did know Jehovah and found that such knowledge gave him peace of heart, even as he faced the grimmest of prospects. We know that he had read Jeremiah but no doubt he had read Isaiah's prophecies too, and was familiar with the words: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee ... Trust ye in Jehovah for ever ..." (Isaiah 26:3-4).

His behaviour in the prayer chamber gave no hint of emergency but rather the opposite -- "as he did aforetime". The servants of God can so easily give way to unrest if they imagine that everything depends upon them. It is possible to persuade ourselves that we are thinking only of the Lord's interests, while in fact there lurks somewhere in our sub-conscious mind the feeling that the purpose of God can only be realised if we have a part in it. Old people are more prone than others to this kind of anxiety. Daniel was an old man, yet he was free from all fretfulness. He believed that Jehovah was pledged to recover and restore His people. In a sense it did not matter what happened to him, for he had done his part in prayer. He had no special wish to die, especially in such a violent way, but he knew that even if he were eaten by hungry lions, that would make no difference at all to the outcome. Prayer had been made. The answer had been promised. Daniel could therefore accept any personal calamity with complete calm. So he kept on praising. In any case he knew that the lion's den would not be the end for him, since "at the end of the days" he would stand in his lot (12:13).

Futility of the Opposition

His was a directed prayer: he prayed before the opened windows. Had he prayed with the four walls of Babylon as his outlook, there would have been nothing but gloom, for the empire was as strong as ever. Had he prayed towards a mirror he would have found plenty to worry about, as we all find when our prayers become introspective and centred on ourselves. No, his prayer was outgoing towards the purpose of the heart of His God. He could not see Jerusalem, but his windows were opened in that direction because his faith gave substance to his hope. On this day of crisis in the kingdom, therefore, and in the face of the inevitability of the cruel decree, Daniel quietly carried on with his ministry of praise and prayer.

The third prayer, the evening one, was his last -- or so it seemed. The plotters had pressed their case and the king found himself obliged to honour his own signature.

When the sun went down, he had found no way out of his predicament and so had no other alternative than to hand Daniel over to the lions. It is striking to observe his genuine affection for Daniel, but rather pathetic to hear his feeble suggestion that perhaps Daniel's God could do a bit better than he: "Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee" (v.16). Although he spoke the words, the idea gave him no comfort, and he spent a miserable night nursing his doubts. Dawn came at last, as it always does, and he seized the very first opportunity of morning light to hurry down to the animals' lair, enquiring with what is called "a lamentable voice", if by any chance Daniel had survived. He certainly had! The signed decree had proved futile, for faith had once more given the victory.

How quickly the tables were turned! Daniel was restored to liberty unharmed, while his accusers were themselves cast to the lions. God is not mocked! When Pharaoh drowned the Hebrew babies, he himself died by drowning. When Haman built a gallows for Mordecai, he himself was hanged on those same gallows. The city of God was burned by the Babylonian invaders, and it is prophesied that Babylon herself will be destroyed by fire (Revelation 17:16). So Daniel's accusers were thrown to the lions through whom they had plotted to destroy him. To our ideas it may seem unspiritual to record this feature of the story, but at least it shows that these were no phoney lions. Daniel's survival was a miracle.

It does not need much imagination to suggest that the first thing which Daniel did when he arrived home was to go into that special room whose windows were opened towards Jerusalem and kneel afresh to pray and give thanks before his God "as he did aforetime". No doubt he did not look as neat as usual -- he had slept rough. No doubt that there was special thanksgiving this time -- he had proved God in a new way. But prayer went on. In fact it had never stopped, for Daniel's last prayer of the previous evening was followed by this first prayer of a new day. For all we know, there was probably some extra prayer and praise as he rested there among the lions. Daniel was "more than conqueror". Satan cannot prevent prayer. He cannot hinder God from answering prayer. But we, alas, can so easily stop praying. That is precisely what Daniel did not do.

In the previous chapters we have been encouraged by some of the wonderful titles and names of God -- The King of Heaven, The Most High God, etc. In a sense this Self-revealed name of Jehovah is the greatest of them all. It stands in a class by itself. This personal name would never have been known if He Himself had not disclosed it. We are privileged to have an even greater understanding of Him, for we have come to know the "I AM" in the Person of the Lord Jesus Himself. We can and we must pray in His name. Our New Testament shows us that He has a people and is building a city which is to be for His eternal satisfaction and glory. That is the "Jerusalem" towards which the Christian prayer-chamber windows are opened, and that should be the inclusive objective of all our lesser and more

detailed prayers. It may be that our praying in the Spirit will provoke fierce opposition, as it did in Daniel's day. He ignored the opposition, and got on with the job. Should we not follow his example?

Chapter VII. THE ANCIENT OF DAYS

*"Behold, there came with the clouds of heaven
one like the son of man,
and he came to the Ancient of Days"* Verse 13

WE have already noted that in the book of Daniel the chapters are not placed in chronological order. A glance at 7:1 and 8:1 will show us that these experiences occurred during the period between chapters 4 and 5. Since, however, chapter 7 focuses upon God's ultimate, it seems right that this should occupy our final study which is headed by the very significant title: "The Ancient of Days". Chapters 10 and 11 deal with events moving towards that ultimate, and the book terminates with the consummation in chapter 12.

THE GLORY OF THE SON OF MAN

The title "Ancient of Days" appears three times in this chapter and is found nowhere else in the Bible. It is the name given to the eternal God. Before ever time began, He is the great I AM. He has always had one clear objective which is described as His "eternal purpose" (Ephesians 3:11). He has never deviated from this intention of His and when time is no more, He will still be the I AM, though now with the full realisation of that heart purpose of His. This purpose can all be summed up in the other title of our chapter: "The Son of Man".

Amid all the symbolism of the everlasting burnings of the holy throne of The Ancient of Days, we see Him adjudicating concerning the full and final rulership of His kingdom. This He does by conferring it upon the Person described as being "like the son of man" (v.13). It makes no difference if the actual words are "a son of man", since there can only be One so honoured. The identification is authenticated by the Lord Jesus who chose for Himself this title and used it constantly. At the end He confronted the high priest with the dread prospect of seeing this Son of Man, "sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Matthew 26:64). This must surely have been Christ's own interpretation of this part of Daniel's vision.

We may wonder why Daniel was so perturbed by it all (v.28). There hardly seems justification for such an overwrought mind in the simple central fact of the Coming of Christ in glory. Was his perplexity due to the rest of the vision? Was he troubled by the succession of beasts whose activities would lead up to the great event? It may well be so, for these are fearsome disclosures of the true nature of the kingdom of men, much more so than the metals of the image of chapter 2. Or was it in some way connected with the extraordinary way in which the vision of the throne passes from one Ruler to be shared by "the saints of the Most High" (v.22)

of which he could claim to be one? We know now that this divine purpose provides for the development from the personal Christ to the corporate Christ, from the Unique Son to the host of redeemed sons whom the New Testament calls "saints".

When dealing with chapter 2 we referred to the disclosure in the New Testament of that hitherto hidden "mystery" which deals with this very matter. It is just possible that Daniel received a faint hint of it which was almost too much for him to bear. For our part we now know that the throne is to be given to the Son of Man, but that He plans to share it with those who, in Him, are called to be "joint heirs with Christ". I suggest that the early Church so interpreted this chapter. Otherwise how would Paul have challenged the Corinthians with the question: "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?" (1 Corinthians 6:2). It is not unreasonable to suggest that the apostle implied that the believers, simply by studying Daniel 7, should have been aware of their own destiny in Christ. If so, this confirms the fact that this was never meant to be a special truth, reserved for the super-spiritual, but should have been common knowledge among Bible loving Christians. It certainly ought to be so today, and it may be helpful to note that Paul used this citation to help the saints in Corinth in the matter of practical holy living.

God's purpose from all eternity has been to have a family of mature sons, perfect in their likeness to Himself and spiritually competent to rule the universe for and with Him. This family kingdom would be eternal in the sense that it would never suffer any deterioration through endless ages. This was the design. In and through Christ, redemption has made it gloriously possible: "If we endure, we shall also reign with him" (1 Timothy 2:12). It is a prospect which we hardly dare to contemplate. It seems too high and majestic to be possible. Yet this is the theme of Daniel's vision of The Ancient of Days as well as being the theme of heaven's song of redemption (Revelation 5:9-10). The destiny is for those purchased by the blood of the Lamb from all nations. Who can these be but the "saints of the Most High"? It may be worthy of note that Daniel 7 is included in and terminates the section of the book not written in Hebrew and that in this chapter no mention is made of Jerusalem or the Jews.

The joint-heirs suffer with Christ that they may reign with Him (Romans 8:17). Perhaps part of Daniel's troubled thoughts was due to the trials awaiting the faithful saints, whose holy vocation permits God to allow them to pass through strange and harsh discipline. Evil powers will fight against them (v.21) and seek to "wear them out" (v.25). Their destiny of reigning with Christ is to be realised by triumph through testing: they will come to the throne as Jesus did, through trial and overcoming (Revelation 3:21). Was this chapter in Paul's mind when he encouraged God's suffering people with the words: "through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22)?

SOME SPIRITUAL IMPLICATIONS

The stark facts of the vision associated with this threefold reference to The Ancient of Days are simple and clear. Chapters 8, 10 and 11 provide some background to this central truth. It is quite beyond the purpose of these articles to offer any interpretive definition of the people and nations involved, since we are just seeking to learn how in his day Daniel gained spiritual strength from his ever-increasing knowledge of God in order that we, in our day, may be strong and do exploits. In this connection various points emerge, and we notice that from now on Daniel takes up the narrative in a personal way, as well as reverting to the Hebrew language: "A vision appeared unto me, even unto me, Daniel ..." (8:1). This personal way of speaking has already marked the prayer of chapter 9 and continues through to the end. This encourages us to take personally to heart the principles here revealed. They are:

1. Evil men and powers are given amazing latitude by the All-Powerful God.

Poor Daniel was confronted by a bewildering succession of tyrants and rebels against God. The terrifying prospect produced by the symbolism of beasts was intensified by accounts of more personalised violence in evil men yet to arise. Some Bible students feel that they can trace past historical events and characters from Daniel's visions, while others opine that most of these despotic aggressors are yet to darken the pages of human history. Be that as it may, the obvious implication, abundantly verified in our own times, is that God gives surprising latitude to evil men as they engage in their murderous violence. Daniel was prostrated at the very contemplation of them (8:27) and we ourselves are often sickened by human bestiality. God sees it all. He must be much more sickened than we are; yet, in His permissive will, He endures what He could so easily end.

Unenlightened men are irked by His long-suffering, forgetting that once He begins to execute His total judgments on sinners, no-one outside of Christ can escape His righteous wrath. "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand" (Psalm 130:3)? Happily for us the psalmist goes on to affirm: "But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared". God wishes that as many as possible may find forgiveness, so that this mercy aspect of the matter partly explains His long-suffering. Peter's final message to the Church stresses this very point, arguing that God is by no means unable to hurry along to the end of the story, but is "longsuffering ... not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" before it is too late (2 Peter 3:9-10).

What must be particularly noted in this connection is that the sum total of the evils of this world's kingdom is both foreknown by God and deliberately permitted by Him. It must have been a great shock for Pilate, a provincial representative of one

of the greatest of world powers, to find that Christ's response to his threats was the composed and dignified: "Thou wouldest have no power against me, except it were given thee from above" (John 19:11). What was true of Pilate with regard to Christ is equally true of every enemy of even the least of His people. Concerning the fourth evil beast Daniel was told that powers "shall be given into his hand until ..." (v.25). This phrase, "it was given" is a most significant one and becomes almost a refrain in the book of the Revelation, where more details are provided concerning the enemies of God's people (Revelation 6:2, 4ff). If we would read more of Daniel than we do of our newspapers, or if we would read the two together, we might enjoy more of the stability of heaven and experience less of earth's traumas and the tensions of modern life.

2. Every form of man's kingdom is doomed to failure.

The apparent prosperity of sinful men is short-lived. This truth emerges very clearly from all of Daniel's visions. We are informed that in due course these human rulers will either be destroyed by one another or be crushed by the direct judgments of God. Daniel himself witnessed the overthrow of the tyrannical Chaldean empire (5:30-31). His message to us is that all tyrannies will eventually perish.

We return to the awe-inspiring title, The Ancient of Days. To the believer this signifies that He is the Rock of Ages, serene in His everlasting strength and imparting perfect peace to those who put their trust in Him (Isaiah 26:3). But what to the unbeliever? To him it should be a sober reminder that God will always have the last word, both with us as individuals and with world powers. Daniel is told of a "king of fierce countenance" whose power is mighty and who shall destroy wonderfully and shall prosper, but is reassured by the last words about this despot: "he shall be broken without hand" (8:23-25). Again, there will be a king who will "go forth with great fury to destroy and utterly to make away many ... yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him" (11:44-45).

Even if we cannot make historical identifications, as we follow the careers of these devotees of the god of this world here sketched out for us, we must marvel at how much evil our wise God will permit. The prophet assures us, though, that things will never get out of hand -- out of His hand! Even death cannot shield men from the evil fruits of their rebellion against God, for they will find themselves among the many who sleep in the dust of the earth who will awake "to shame and everlasting contempt" when the time for resurrection comes (12:2). We live in a moral universe, in spite of present appearances which are foretold by God, though for the moment they are most perplexing to us. But never fear! The Judge of all the earth will do right.

3. God is working to a time-table.

Bible students rightly insist that God is working to a Self-imposed time-table, though sometimes they contradict themselves and often contradict one another in their efforts to pinpoint its arrangements. Certainly these chapters are full of time indications. There are the weeks, the months and the days; the times, time and half a time; there is even the promise of blessing for those who will wait from the thousand two hundred and ninety days to the thousand three hundred and thirty-five days (12:11-12). These are divine revelations, not human speculations, so they must be treated reverently. We cannot question these figures; even when we do not understand them.

Daniel certainly could not and was not ashamed to confess his ignorance: "I heard, but I understood not" (12:8). But although -- or because -- he was not clear about the timing of the "end", he did not argue but made an earnest enquiry about what lay beyond that end: "O my lord, what shall be the issue (or latter end) of these things?" What is it all about? What is the final objective of the great Ancient of Days? That is a good question which the New Testament will answer for us, but meanwhile we can get much spiritual help from these reminders of the simple fact of God's exact timings as we read these prophecies.

The captivity period was fixed as seventy years (9:2). Nebuchadnezzar's mental unbalance was due to last for seven years and, "at the end of the days", he fully recovered (4:34). Concerning Belshazzar God's fingers wrote the significant word MENE -- numbered -- and sure enough, "*that night* the king was slain" (5:30). Such words as "till" and "until", and such phrases as "the time appointed" emphasise and re-emphasise the exactness of God's ways. We are told that "the vision of the evenings and the mornings which hath been told is true" (8:26). There is even one man whose appearance on the stage of world events is to be limited to "within a few days" (11:20). God has it all mapped out. He has fixed the time of the end. Incidentally the time indication that at the time of the end "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase" (12:4) may suggest that the sands are fast running out.

Let us be encouraged! Let us allow to sink into our spirits the conviction that God is keeping very closely and very exactly to His planned programme. If we cannot identify all the people and events, we can derive much comfort from "what is inscribed in the Scriptures of Truth" (10:21).

4. Sufferings are designed to prepare for a glorious destiny.

"Some of them that be wise shall fall, to refine them, and to purify, and to make them white, even to the time of the end" (11:35). This prophecy points on to one of

the main themes of the New Testament epistles, namely that God's purpose in allowing His saints to suffer is that He is working towards the day when they will not only see Christ as He is, but be like Him. Some of the final words spoken to Daniel return to this theme: "Many shall purify themselves, and make themselves white and be refined ... they that be wise shall understand" (12:10). The early chapters of this book describe some of Daniel's trials and hint at many more. The last chapter reminds him -- and us -- of how small are any trials compared with the coming glory when "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (12:3). What do fiery furnaces and lions' dens matter to men who have such a glorious destiny awaiting them?

When we pass from the narratives of the earlier chapters to the future events portrayed from chapter 7 onwards, we may well be appalled at what is foretold concerning God's saints who are being prepared to reign with Christ. Several times in chapter 7 we are given a glimpse of Daniel's distress at what he was seeing. His troubled thoughts were justified, for he saw a "horn" which not only warred against the saints, but prevailed against them (v.21), and was told of the power which would "wear out the saints" (v.25). The story is one of ultimate triumph, with the saints eventually possessing the kingdom, but the various descriptions of the bestial persecutions they must first endure took the brightness from Daniel's face (v.28), and the prospect of destructive violence made him quite ill (8:27).

There are those whose prayerful expectations of Christ's Coming are mingled with a conviction that first the world will witness an unprecedented outpouring of divine blessing in what is termed, Revival. My own exercise in the Word with regard to this matter has rather led me to anticipate growing darkness and greatly intensified opposition. Perhaps both are possible. There can be no doubt, however, that both the Lord Jesus and His Spirit-inspired apostles laid considerable emphasis on the "suffering" features of the last days. This accords with Daniel's visions. "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake", Jesus warned, adding "By standing firm you will save yourselves" (Luke 21:17-18). Paul wrote about being "counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye suffer ... to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven" (2 Thessalonians 1:5-7). James adds his voice. "Ye have condemned, ye have killed the righteous; he doth not resist you. Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord" (James 5:6-7). The apostle Peter agrees: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which cometh upon you to prove you ... rejoice that at the revelation of his glory ye also may rejoice" (1 Peter 4:12-13). By the special speaking of the Spirit to the churches, John confirms the matter: "Ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10). These are representative New Testament amplifications of Daniel's disclosure that

men destined for the throne must first be capacitated by suffering. Happily death itself is no calamity for such, since they will rise from their sleep in the dust of the earth to everlasting life and glory. God's last word to Daniel also applies to every tried and suffering saint: "Go thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest, and shalt stand in thy lot, at the end of the days" (12:13). Resurrection is always God's answer.

5. Our immediate task is intercessory prayer.

Although Daniel is not actually named among the heroes of faith, he is given a place with those who "stopped the mouths of lions" (Hebrews 11:33). As we have seen, God's last word to the old warrior was an assurance that although he had not been a member of that privileged group which returned to re-build Jerusalem, he could rest in the certainty of a secure place in God's eternal city. When he was prostrate with weakness and a sense of his own unworthiness, he was twice assured that he was a man greatly beloved (10:11 & 19).

Why was he so loved and honoured? Possibly because he was such a man of prayer. God loves intercessors. His beloved Son is the Chief of them. Daniel had other virtues. He was a most effective speaker for God, and what is more, he had the proper background for a preacher in that his private and public life were beyond reproach -- he had a good testimony in the world. This, however, leads us back to the matter of intercession, for the effective preacher should first of all be a man of prayer. Daniel did not talk about praying -- he actually prayed -- and it was at the end of a prolonged prayer session that he was told how greatly God loved him. Whatever else the book of Daniel is, it is a powerful argument concerning God's need for intercessors. In this connection we observe:

i. Prayer makes a way for God's on-going purposes.

Jeremiah prayed (Oh, how he prayed!) and Daniel entered into the good of his prayers. Daniel prayed, and as a result Ezra and Nehemiah were sent back to re-build Jerusalem. Nehemiah himself became a notable example of prayer and work and it is interesting that in the books of Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah, chapter 9 is always the prayer chapter. No doubt others continued the prayer link in between, but when we take up the New Testament we are confronted in Luke's Gospel with a faithful praying remnant, Zacharias, Simeon, Anna and others, who were all looking for the redemption of Jerusalem (Luke 2:38).

It has usually been a relatively small group which has grasped this feature of their calling and persisted in prayer, but nothing in the New Testament suggests that there is any special value in *large* prayer meetings. Large or small, the need is as great as ever. In Christian service there are so many other more interesting things

to do, that prayer tends to be neglected. But prayer must go on until our Lord returns. It was in connection with His parable about the importunate widow that the Lord Jesus posed His question: "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find (this) faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8).

ii. Bible study should lead to prayer.

Such study is of doubtful value if it does not drive a man to his knees. From chapter 9 we know that it was his reading of Jeremiah which led Daniel to the Throne of Grace. Although his prayer contained a powerful element of confession, it was in no way introspective but concentrated on intercession for the honour of the Lord's name in His people and His city. Prayer must be outgoing, as Bible reading will show us. The Scriptures present us with men's need of salvation and then urge us to take up this matter in prayer. They major on the all-important matter of spiritual growth among God's people, and provide us with many prayers which we may use to this end. There are the needs of the world and the needs of the Church which call for prayer, but even more, there are the Lord's own needs. "Men shall pray for him continually" (Psalm 72:15). How can God's purposes for Christ be brought to fulfilment unless we co-operate with Him in prayer?

We have been given the skeleton or framework of intercession in what we call The Lord's Prayer. In this, priority is given to the Father's name, His kingdom and His will. We must do more than repeat the familiar words if we are to be effective intercessors. This is the framework. We are meant to work within it, expressing our prayerful concern for His name and kingdom and will as applied to actual lands, actual people and actual situations. We bind it all up with the declaration: "Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever", since if we stop short of that disputed finish we terminate our prayer with "the evil one", and none of us can bear to do that.

iii. Prayer involves spiritual warfare.

Not that the Evil One is very far away when we are praying. There is nothing more disturbing to the kingdom of darkness than believing prayer. In chapter 2 we read of three young men at prayer. In chapter 3 we find those same three men in the burning fiery furnace. In chapter 9 we read the moving intercessory prayer of Daniel, and the sequel in chapter 6 is the den of lions. We have to wait until chapter 10, however, to get a glimpse behind the scenes and be informed of the activities of principalities and powers in heavenly places who are affected by true praying. It was a revelation to Daniel, this uncovering of the spiritual forces which had been set in motion by his praying. In the New Testament there are clearer explanations of this fact, with a warning that those who pray in this way need to put on the whole armour of God to do so (Ephesians 6:13).

My own view is that it is seldom helpful for us to become pre-occupied with these unseen beings -- whether they are good angels or bad demons. What we need to do is to pray to God. But it is healthy for us always to have a realisation of the spiritual battle involved in intercession. We need to remember that Satan either tries to keep us from praying or else works to deflect the Church's prayers from the really big issues so that we pray about our sins (which in any case, God says are blotted out!), or about our aches and pains which He has promised to care for if we seek first His kingdom. So we need to *watch* and pray. And we need to keep at it. The astonished Daniel was informed that although his prayers had been heard as soon as they were uttered, it took heaven's emissary three weeks to get through with the answer (10:12-13). And above all, we need to keep humble, as Daniel did (10:12).

The apostle John was given fuller unfoldings of the visions granted to Daniel, and in his Revelation he confirms this factor of the importance of the Church's prayers (Revelation 5:8 and 8:3). Without the sweet incense of Christ's worthiness, our prayers would be unacceptable, but through Him they are both precious to God and vital to the fulfilment of His purposes. At His Coming, will the Son of Man find this kind of faith on the earth? We can only trust that these seven studies in the book of Daniel will make some small contribution to ensuring that He will.