Synopsis of the Books of the Bible

Daniel

John Nelson Darby (1800-1882)

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Summary

Some striking points in Daniel

One thing may here occur to the reader as desirable for the understanding of the whole, that is, to combine the agency of those instruments, which the prophecy of Daniel presents as acting in the land of Israel during the latter days, and to identify them — if it may be done — with those that are mentioned in other prophets. But this would be to make a system of prophecy, and not to explain Daniel. The Spirit of God has not done so in this prophet, which is our present subject. I will, therefore, only allude to some striking points.

Daniel 7 gives the character of the Roman empire, especially under its last head. It is the close of the history of the Gentile power. Daniel 8 (although I have often thought that the king, who is described there, might be the instrument in Israel of the western empire) gives to the horn it speaks of a different character — as it appears to me, in carefully weighing the passage — from that which constitutes the western power,* whether as a little horn, or exercised in some local instrument. It is an eastern power arising out of one of the four kingdoms into which Alexander's empire was broken up. His power, however, is derived from another; it is a separate power acting in Syria. In Daniel 9 we find the one who acts among the Jews in Jerusalem itself, in connection with the Roman empire, be the instrument employed who he may. It may be "the king" of Daniel 11 who finds himself between the kings of the south and of the north. But it is very possible that the little horn of Daniel 7 acts itself. Still there is another power dependent upon it, who acts at least religiously upon the Jews, and leads them into apostasy — one who comes in his own name, and does not regard the God of his fathers. {* We may compare Ps. 74 and Ps. 83, which confirm the idea that there will be a destruction in Jerusalem, as well as the compelled cessation of the daily sacrifice accomplished in a religious way by the prince who is to come, the Roman of Daniel 9, who will be among the Jews, and who had professed himself to be their friend.}

Distinguishing marks of "the king" of ch. 11; the kings of the South and North

"The king" of Daniel 11 is a king in Judea, despising the religion of his fathers, and acting in that country in a way morally unbridled, re-establishing idolatry, and dividing the territory among those in favour. The kings of the south and north are Egypt and Assyria in the latter days, who attack the king who has established himself in the Holy Land.

I suppose that "the king" answers to the second beast of Revelation, though in another aspect, as the first does to the little horn of Daniel 7.

Introduction

The connection of the book of Ezekiel with that of Daniel

In the Book of Ezekiel we have seen the government of God on earth fully developed in connection with Israel; whether in condemning the sin which occasioned the judgment of that people, or in their restoration under the authority of Christ, the Branch that should spring from the house of David, and who, in the book of that prophet, bears even the name of David, as the true "beloved" of God, the description of the temple, with its whole organisation, being given at the end. In this development we have found Nebuchadnezzar, the head of the Gentiles, introduced as Jehovah's servant (Ezek. 29:20; 30:24) for the judgment of sinful Israel, who were rebellious and even apostate, worshipping false gods. God had made Israel the centre of a system of nations, peoples, and languages, that had arisen in consequence of the judgment on Babel, and existed before God independently of each other. The nation of Israel was doubtless very distinct from all that surrounded it, whether as a people to whom the true God was known, or as having in their midst the temple and the throne of God; but, whatever the contrast might be between the condition of Israel as a nation, and that of the other nations, still Israel formed a part of that system of nations before God (Deut. 32:8).

Absolute, universal dominion given to Nebuchadnezzar

In executing the judgment of God on Israel Nebuchadnezzar set aside this whole system at once, and took its place in the absolute and universal dominion which he had received from God. It is of this order of things and of its consequences — of this dominion of the head of the Gentiles, and of the Gentile kings, in the successive phases that characterised their history — that the Book of Daniel treats, bringing into notice a remnant of Israel, in the midst of this system, and subject to this dominion. The king of Judah having been given up into the hands of the head of the Gentiles, the royal seed is found in the same position. The remnant becomes the especial object of the thoughts of God revealed by His Spirit in this book.

The Spirit of prophecy and God's faithfulness

Besides the testimony rendered to Jehovah by the fact of the faithfulness of the remnant in the midst of the idolatrous Gentiles, two important things characterise their history as developed in this book. The first is that the Spirit of prophecy and of understanding in the ways of God is found in this remnant. We have seen this raised up in Samuel, when all Israel had failed, and subsist through their whole history under the shadow of royalty. The Spirit of prophecy now again becomes the link of the people with God, and the only resting-place for their faith, amid the ruin which the just judgment of God had brought upon them. The second circumstance that characterises the dealings of God with regard to this remnant is, that, preserved by God through all the misfortunes into which the sins of the people had cast them, this remnant will assuredly share the portion which God bestows on His people according to His government and according to the faithfulness of His promises. We find these in the first and last chapters of the Book we are considering.

The two great divisions of Daniel

This Book is divided into two parts, which are easily distinguished. The first ends with chapter 6, and the second with the close of the Book, the first and last chapters having nevertheless a separate character, as an introduction and a conclusion, respectively making known the position of the remnant, to whom, as we have said, the testimony of God was confided at the beginning and at the end.

Division 1: Gentile dominion animated by pride: idloatry and blasphemy ended by judgment

The two great divisions have also a distinct character. The first sets before us the picture of the dominion of the Gentiles, and the different positions it would assume before God according to the human pride which would be its animating principle. This picture contains historical features which plainly indicate the spirit that will animate the ruling power in its different phases; and then the judgment of God. This division is not composed of direct revelations to Daniel, except for the purpose of recalling Nebuchadnezzar's dream. It is the heads of the Gentiles that are presented. It is the external and general history of the monarchies that were to succeed each other, or the different and successive features that would characterise them, and their final judgment, and the substitution of the kingdom of Christ; and especially, the course and judgment of the one which God had Himself established, and which represents all the others, as being invested with this character of divine appointment. The others did but inherit providentially the throne which God had committed to the first. It was a question between God and Israel that gave this monarchy its supremacy. It is the spirit of presumptuous idolatry, and of blasphemy against the God of Israel that leads to its destruction. Chapter 6 does not give the iniquity of the king, except as submitting to the influence of others. It is the princes of the people who will have none but the king acknowledged as God, and who undergo the same punishment that they sought to inflict on those who were faithful to the Lord.

Division 2: character and conduct of Gentile heads; establishment of a divine kingdom

The second part of the Book, which consists of communications made by God to Daniel himself, exhibits the character of the heads of the Gentiles in relation to the earth, and their conduct towards those who shall acknowledge God; and at last the establishment of the divine kingdom in the Person of the Son of man — a kingdom possessed by the saints. The details of God's dealings with His people at the end are given in the last chapter. We may also remark that chapter 7 gives essentially the history of the western power, chapter 8 that of the eastern — the two horns. Chapter 9, although especially regarding Jerusalem and the people — the moral centre of these questions, is connected on that very account with the western power that invaded them. From chapter 10 to the end of chapter 11 we are again in the east, closing in with the judgment of the nations there, and the establishment of the remnant of Israel in blessing.

Let us now examine these chapters consecutively.

Chapter 1

The faithful remnant in captivity: "the secret of the Lord" there

Daniel 1 sets before us the royalty of Judah, formerly established by God over His people in the person of David, falling under the power of Nebuchadnezzar; and the king, Jehovah's anointed, given up by Jehovah into the hands of the head of the Gentiles, on whom God now bestowed dominion. That which was announced by Isaiah (Isa. 39:7) falls upon the children of the royal seed; but God watches over them and brings them into favour with those that kept them. This was especially the case with respect to Daniel; The two characteristics of the faithful remnant in captivity are prominently marked in this chapter: — firstly, faithful to the will of God, although at a distance from His temple, they do not defile themselves among the Gentiles; secondly, their prayer being granted, understanding is given them, as we see in chapter 2 in Daniel's case, even the knowledge of that which God alone can reveal, as well as His purpose in that revelation. They alone possess this understanding, a token of divine favour and the fruit of their faithfulness through grace. This is the case with Daniel in particular, whose faith and earnest fidelity marks out the path of faith for his companions. This did not interfere with their subjection to the Gentiles, whose power was the ordinance of God for the time being. But this is a most important element: the place of true knowledge, of intelligence of the divine mind, what is called the secret of the Lord, in the days of Babylonish corruption and power, is the thorough keeping oneself undefiled by the smallest contact with what it gives, with the meat with which it would feed us.

Chapter 2

The position of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel

On the other hand, we see in the second chapter the mighty king of the Gentiles made the depositary of the history of the Gentiles, and of God's entire plan, as the recipient of these divine communications; yet in such a manner as to exhibit Daniel, the captive child of Israel, the faithful one who kept himself separate in Babylon as the one whom the Lord acknowledged, and who enjoyed His favour. But the details of this chapter, as a general picture of Gentile power, beginning with the dominion bestowed on Nebuchadnezzar, must be considered more attentively.

The great image

We may first observe that the Gentile kingdoms are seen as a whole. It is neither historical succession nor moral features with respect to God and man, but the kingdoms all together forming, as it were, a personage before God, the man of the earth in the eye of God — glorious and terrible in his public splendour in the eyes of men. Four imperial powers were to succeed each other, as the great head of which God had set up Nebuchadnezzar himself. There should be in certain respects a progressive deterioration; and at length the God of heaven would raise up another power that would execute judgment on that which still existed, and cause the image to disappear from off the earth, setting up in its place a kingdom that should never be overthrown. In the progressive decline in principle and character of imperial power there would be no diminution of material strength. Iron, that breaks in pieces and crushes all things, characterises the fourth power. The peculiar excellency of the head of

gold appears to me to consist in its having received authority immediately from God Himself. In fact the absolute authority of the first power was founded on the gift of the God of heaven; the others succeeded by providential principles. But God, known as supreme, bestowing authority on the head, replacing His own authority on the earth by that of the head of the Gentiles, was not the immediate source of authority to the others. Babylon was the authority established of God. And therefore we found in Ezekiel (and the same thing is seen elsewhere) that the judgment of Babylon is connected with the restoration of Israel and of the throne of God.

God's sovereignty as God of heaven

Observe, nevertheless, that God does not here present Himself as God of earth, but of heaven. In Israel He was God of the earth. He will be so again at the restitution of all things. Here He acts in sovereignty as God of heaven, setting up man, in a certain sense, in His place on the earth (see v. 37, 38). Although more limited, it is a dominion characterised by the same features as that of Adam. It differs in that men are placed under his power; it is more limited, for the sea is not included in his sovereignty, but it reaches to every place where the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven exist. Human strength is found at the end of its history; but the subsisting power is much more remote from the ancient relationship of God with the world.

The mixture of iron and potter's clay; God's indestructible kingdom

The mixture of iron and of potter's clay is a change wrought in the primitive character of the imperial Roman power — another element is introduced into it; the character remains in part, but another element is added. The energetic will of man is not there in an absolute manner. It is the introduction into the imperial Roman power of an element distinct from that which constituted its imperial strength, namely, the will of man devoid of conscience — military and popular power concentrated in one individual without conscience. There are two causes here of weakness — division and the want of coherence between the elements. The kingdom (v. 41) shall be divided, and (v. 42) it shall be partly strong and partly brittle. The "seed of men" is, I think, something outside of that which characterises the proper strength of the kingdom. But these two elements will never combine. It appears to me that the Barbaric or Teutonic element is probably here pointed out as added to that which originally constituted the Roman empire. The fact of a subdivision is seen in verse 43. It is then announced that, in the days of these last kings, He who rules from heaven will set up a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and that shall never pass into other hands. This is properly the only kingdom that, on God's part, takes the place of the kingdom of Babylon. The God of heaven had established Nebuchadnezzar in his kingdom, and had given him power, and strength, and glory, making all men subject to him. Doubtless the three others had followed, according to the will of Him who orders all things. But it is only with respect to the kingdom of verse 44, that it is once more said, "the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom." The character, and some leading features in the history, of the last four of the kingdoms are given. Nothing but the existence of the two preceding ones is stated, except the inferiority of the latter of the two to the first. So that the Spirit of God gives us the divine establishment of the first, the character of the fourth, and the divine establishment of the fifth or final kingdom.

The kingdom of Christ destroying the last form of power and filling the whole earth

We will now observe the manner in which this last kingdom is established; and we see that it is accomplished by means of a judicial and destructive act which reduces the image to powder, bringing about its complete dissolution, so that no traces of it are left (v. 34, 35). The instrument of this destruction was not formed by the wisdom or the schemes of man. It is "cut out without hands." It does not act by a moral influence that changes the character of the object on which it acts. It destroys that object by force. It is God who establishes it and gives it that force. The stone does not gradually increase in size to displace the image. Before it extends itself, it destroys the image. When it has become great — it is not merely a right given by God over men, it fills the whole earth — it is the exalted seat of a universal authority. It is on the last form of power, exhibited in the image, that the stone falls with destructive force — when the empire is divided and is partly strong and partly weak on account of the elements of which its members are composed. We may observe, that it is not God destroying the image in another way to establish the kingdom. The kingdom which He is establishing smites the feet of the image as its first act. It is the outward and general history of that which, by God's appointment, took the place of His throne and His government in Jerusalem, and which had gradually degenerated in its public character with respect to God, and which at length comes to its end by the judgment executed by the kingdom established of God without human agency. The kingdom of Christ, which falls on the last form of the monarchy formerly established by God, destroys the whole form of its existence, and itself fills the world.

The four monarchies named

I have nothing particular to say on the four monarchies. We find Babylon, Persia, and Greece named in the book, as being already known to the Jews, and the Romans introduced by the name which their territory bore, the coasts of Chittim; so that I receive, without further question, the four great empires ordinarily recognised by every one as pointed out in this prophecy. It does not appear to me that these prophecies leave room for any doubt on the subject.

The effect of God's communications on Nebuchadnezzar

The effect of the communication, which proves that God is with the remnant who alone understand His mind, is that the haughty Gentile acknowledges the God of Israel as supreme in heaven and on earth. That which characterises the remnant here is that God reveals to them His mind.

Chapter 3

Babylon's characteristics

After this general picture, we have, historically, the characteristic features of these empires, marking the condition into which they fall, through their departure from God — primarily and principally

Babylon.

In Daniel 3 we have the first characteristic feature of man invested with imperial power, but whose heart is afar from God — a distance augmented by the very possession of power. He will have a god of his own, a god dependent on the will of man; and, in this case, dependent on the depositary of the imperial power. This is man's wisdom. The religious instincts of men are gratified in connection with the supreme power; and the influences of religion are exercised in binding all the members of the empire in one blended mass around the head, by the strongest bond, without any appearance of authority. For the religious wants of man are thus connected with his own will; and his will is unconsciously subject to the centre of power. Otherwise religion, the most powerful motive of the heart, becomes a dissolvent in the empire. But the will of man cannot make a true god; and consequently Nebuchadnezzar, although he had confessed that there was none like the God of the Jews, forsakes Him and makes a god for himself. The Gentile government rejects God, the source of its power; and the true God is only acknowledged by a faithful and suffering remnant. The empire is idolatrous.

Faithfulness and obedience to God in Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego

This is the first great feature that characterises the dominion of Babylon. But the faithfulness that opposes this wise system which binds the most powerful motive of the whole people to the will of their head, uniting them in worship around that which he presents to them — faithfulness like this touches the mainspring of the whole movement. The idol is not God at all; and, however powerful man may be, he cannot create a god. The man of faith, subject indeed to the king, as we have seen, because appointed of God, is not subject to the false god which the king sets up, denying the true God who gave him his authority, and who is still acknowledged by the man of faith. But power is in the king's hands; and he will have it known that his will is supreme.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are cast into the fiery furnace. But it is in the sufferings of His people that God in the end appears as God. He allows their faithfulness to be tried in the place where evil exists, that they may be with Him in the enjoyment of happiness in the place where His character and His power are fully manifested, whether on this earth, or in a yet more excellent manner in heaven.

The king's defiance and rage: God's power and faithfulness

We may observe that faith and obedience are as absolute as the will of the king. Nothing can be finer and more calm than the answer of the three believers. God is able to deliver, and He will deliver; but, happen what may, they will not forsake Him. The king in his fury defies God. "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" God allows him to take his own way. The effect of his headlong rage is that the instruments of his vengeance are destroyed by the fierce flames prepared for the faithful Hebrews. The latter are cast into the furnace, and (outwardly) the king's will is accomplished. But this is only to manifest more brightly the power and the faithfulness of God, who comes, even into the midst of the fire, to prove the interest He takes in the fidelity of His servants. The effect, to them, of the fire is that their bands are consumed, and that they have His presence whose form is like the Son of God, even

in the eyes of the king who denied His almighty power. The result is a decree forbidding the whole world to speak against the God of the Jews, the glory of that weak and captive people.

Remark here that the remnant are characterised by their faithfulness and obedience. They manifest their faithfulness by refusing to have any god but their own God: no concession — it would be to deny Him. For, to acknowledge the true God, He alone must be acknowledged. Truth is but the full revelation of Him and can only recognise itself. To put itself on a level with falsehood would be saying it was not truth.

Characteristics of the remnant

We find three principles marked out with respect to the remnant. They do not defile themselves by partaking of that which the world bestows — the king's meat. They have understanding in the mind and revelations of God. They are faithful in refusing absolutely to acknowledge any god but their own, who is the true God. The first principle is common to them all. The second is the Spirit of prophecy, of which Daniel is here the vessel. The third is the portion of every believer, although there may be no Spirit of prophecy. The nearer we are to the power of the world, the more likelihood there is of suffering if we are faithful. It must be observed that all this is connected with the position and the principles of the Jews.

Gentile recognition of God and the effect of the remnant's deliverance

Remark also that the Gentile will and power recognise God in two ways, and by different means; both being the privileges granted to the remnant. The first of these privileges is having the mind of Jehovah, the revelation of His thoughts and counsels. This leads the Gentile to own the God of Daniel as God of gods and Lord of kings. That is His position in respect of all that was exalted above the earth. He was supreme in heaven and earth. The second is that He interests Himself in the poor remnant of His people, and has power to deliver them in the tribulation into which rebellious and idolatrous (and thus apostate) power has thrown them. The result here is that He is acknowledged, and His faithful ones are delivered and exalted. The first is more general and Gentile — the Gentiles' own recognition of God; the second, the effect of deliverance for this Jewish remnant.

The establishment of idolatrous unity in religion, and the pride of human power, are the characteristics here given of Babylon. This folly, which does not know God, fills the whole course of time allotted to this power — "seven times." At the end the Gentile owns for himself and praises and blesses the Most High. This chapter then gives the Gentile power's own relationship with God, not merely his connection with the God and people of the Jews. Hence the title of God, in chapter 4, is the Most High that rules in the kingdom of men; in chapter 3 it was ‘our God’ for the heart of the faithful remnant, and ‘the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego,’ for the world that saw the deliverance.

Chapter 4

Human pride and God's judgment

In Daniel 4 we see the manifestation of human pride; the king glories in the work of his hands, as though he had created his own greatness. This pride brings judgment. Power is reduced to the condition of the beasts that know not God, and are devoid of man's understanding. The only true privilege of man, that which ennobles him, is that he can look up to God and acknowledge Him. Without this he looks downward; he cannot suffice to himself; he is degraded. Dependence is his glory, for it sets him before God, gives him to know God; and his mind, associated with God, receives from Him its measure and its knowledge. Pride and independence separate man from God; he becomes a beast, devoid of real intelligence. Now this condition depicts that of the kingdoms of which the prophet speaks (looked at as a whole before God, and represented by the head established by God, Nebuchadnezzar). Seven times, or seven years, pass over the head of Nebuchadnezzar deprived of his reason. He had exalted himself; he had been humbled. The times of the Gentiles are characterised by the absence of all such understanding as would put governmental power in connection with God. To make idols, to build Babylon, and not to know God; such were the moral characteristics of a power that God had established in place of His own throne at Jerusalem. Such is the moral capacity of man in possession of that power which has been committed to him.* {* David's throne had been characterised by power in obedience, the king having to write out a copy of the law and observe it; Nebuchadnezzar's throne is one of absolute power, man supreme in the exercise of his own will — the twofold way of testing man in the place of authority.}

Nebuchadnezzar's deliverance and testimony to the Most High God

But the scene closes with testimony to the glory of the Most High God, the King of Heaven. Nebuchadnezzar recognises His majesty and blesses Him, now that His judgment is removed. He acknowledges Him as Him who liveth for ever, who abases and exalts whom He will, doing according to His will in heaven and on earth, all men being but vanity before His power and majesty. Here it is not the deliverance of the faithful which produces its effect, but the judgment that fell on the Gentiles themselves, who, after the judgment, are delivered, and understanding given them with respect to Jehovah; and that in connection with the testimony committed to the Jews by the Spirit of prophecy which God had bestowed on the remnant. The king lifts up his eyes to heaven, instead of being only a beast that looks down upon the earth. He becomes intelligent and submissive, and joyfully blesses the Most High God.

The significance of the title "Most High"

We may remark this title of "Most High." It is the name given to Jehovah in the interview between Melchisedec and Abraham, in which is added thereto, "Possessor of heaven and earth." This is, in fact, the character that God will assume when He shall gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; and Christ shall be the true Melchisedec. The Gentiles shall be fully subjected to God. This will be the time of "the restitution of all things" spoken of by the prophets.

The symbol of "a great tree"

There are yet some detailed observations to be made. It is judgment, followed by deliverance, which produces this result. We may notice the force of this symbol of a great tree. It is a mighty one of the earth, capable of taking others under its protection. In this case it was one in the highest position possible for man. The fowls of the heaven had their habitation in it; that is to say, that all classes of persons sought shelter and protection in it. We learn also that God takes knowledge of the principles that guide the governments of the earth, considered as the depositaries of the power which they hold from God. Although it is not (as in Israel) His throne on the earth, God watches over all, and judges that to which He has committed authority. He does not rule immediately; but He holds responsible him to whom He has entrusted the rule, in order that he might own the authority of God as supreme in this world.

The application of the term "watcher"

With respect to the term "watcher," I do not think that intelligence as to who it was that brought the decree of judgment goes beyond Nebuchadnezzar's religious condition. Daniel ascribes it immediately to the Most High. That angels may be its intelligent instruments, and that its administration may be in some sort committed to them, presents no difficulty; and the epistle to the Hebrews, as well as other scriptures, teaches us that angels are thus employed. The world to come will not be thus subjected to them.

We see, in verse 27, that Daniel sets his responsibility before Nebuchadnezzar, exhorting him to alter his conduct.

Nebuchadnezzar's acknowledgment of God as "King of heaven"

We may also remark here, that it is the "King of heaven" whom Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges. This was necessarily His place. The God of the earth had His throne at Jerusalem. But then Nebuchadnezzar would have had no place there. We never find the throne at Jerusalem in Daniel, either morally or prophetically. His prophecies always stop short of that. He is a captive among the Gentiles, faithful to God there, and taught of Him. But God cannot be to him the God of the earth.* It is the God of heaven, ruling everywhere and over all things, doing according to His will in heaven and on earth; but not yet reigning over the earth as the king of the earth. On the contrary, He had just renounced this; and had committed the power to Nebuchadnezzar, while He withdrew from the presence of His earthly people's iniquity to shut Himself up in His supreme and immutable power; the results of which would not be shewn till afterwards, but according to which He even then governed, although hidden from the eyes of men. {* The seed of David will not be in captivity at Babylon when God takes His place as the God of the earth.}

The reader may perhaps expect more detail. It will be found in the communications made immediately to Daniel. But those who have laid hold of the principles we have been establishing (and the great object of these chapters is to present them) will possess elements of the greatest importance for

understanding all the prophecies of this book; and without these principles the meaning of its revelations will never be clearly apprehended. It must be remembered that we are on the ground here of the Jews in captivity among the Gentiles, understanding God's dealings with them, and His judgment of their condition while the power had been left in their hands.

Chapter 5

Belshazzar's feast

In Daniel 5 the iniquity of the head of the Gentiles with respect to the God of Israel reaches the highest point, and assumes that character of insolence and contempt which is but the effort of weakness to conceal itself. In the midst of the orgies of a great feast to his lords and courtiers Belshazzar causes the vessels of the temple of God, which Nebuchadnezzar had taken away from Jerusalem, to be brought, that he and his guests might drink therein; and he praises the gods of gold and of silver and of stone. The madness of the king puts the question between the false gods and Jehovah the God of Israel. Jehovah decides the question that very night by the destruction of the king and of all his glory. The warning which God gives him is interpreted by Daniel. But, although subject to the king, Daniel does not treat him with the same respect that he had for Nebuchadnezzar. Belshazzar had taken the place of an insolent enemy to Jehovah, and Daniel answers him according to God's revelations of his doom, and to the ostentatious manifestation which the king made of his iniquity, magnifying his own gods and insulting Jehovah. Accordingly the warning was no longer remedial and left no room for repentance. It announced judgment; and the very annunciation sufficed to destroy all the insolence of the impious king. For he had neglected the warning given him by the history of Nebuchadnezzar. This narrative gives us the last character of the iniquity of the sovereign power of the Gentiles, in opposition to the God of Israel, and the judgment which falls in consequence upon the monarchy of which Babylon was the head, and to which Babylon had given its own character. For, whatever may have been the longsuffering of God, and His dealings in other respects towards the monarchy of the Gentiles, as the power to which He committed authority in the world, all was already lost for these empires, even in the days of Babylon.

Chapter 6

Daniel's destruction sought: the exaltation of man to shut out God

Another form of iniquity appears besides that of Babylon (Dan. 6). Cyrus, personally, had better thoughts; and God, from whom they came, made use of him for the temporary re-establishment of His people, in order that the Messiah should come and present Himself to them — the last trial of His beloved people. It is not Cyrus, therefore, whom we find here the instrument of the iniquity which sought to destroy Daniel — of that human will which can never endure faithfulness to God. Here it is not idolatry, nor is it insult offered to Jehovah, but the exaltation of man himself, who would shut out all idea of God, who would have no God. This is one of the features that characterise the depths of the

human heart.

Man and God

Man in general is well pleased with a god who will help him to satisfy his passions and his desires — a god who suits his purpose for the unity of his empire and the consolidation of his power. The religious part of man's nature is satisfied with gods of this kind, and worships them willingly, though he who establishes them imperially may do it only politically. Poor world! the true God suits neither their conscience nor their lusts. The enemy of our souls is well-pleased to cultivate in this manner the religiousness of our nature. False religion sets up gods that correspond to the desires of the natural heart, whatever they may be; but which never call into communion and never act upon the conscience. They may impose ceremonies and observances, for these suit man; but they can never bring an awakened conscience into relationship with themselves. That which man fears, and that which man desires, is the sphere of their influence. They produce nothing in the heart beyond the action of natural joys and fears.

But, on the other hand, the pride of man sometimes assumes a character that changes everything in this respect. Man will himself be God and act according to his own will, and shut out a rivalship which his pride cannot endure. A superiority which cannot be disputed, if God exists, is insupportable to one who would stand alone. God must be got rid of. The enemies of the faithful avail themselves of this disposition. Cruelty is less inventive, save that its subtlety is shewn in this, that, in flattering the higher power, it does not appear to blame any except those who disobey and despise his word.

Daniel's preservation and Darius' acknowledgment of the living God

The contest being with God Himself, the question with men is decided with more carelessness and less passion as to them. Passion allies itself less with the pride than with the will of man. Man, whatever his position, is the slave of those who pay him the tribute of their flattery. Self-will is more its own master. In this case, deceived by his vanity, the king finds himself bound by laws, apparently instituted to guard his subjects from his caprices, under colour of attributing the character of immutability to his will and to his wisdom — a character that belongs to God alone. Daniel is cast into the lions' den. God preserves him. He will do the same for the remnant of Israel at the end of the age. The judgment, which the enemies of Israel sought to bring upon those who were faithful among that people, is executed upon themselves. But the effect of this judgment extends farther than in the former cases. Nebuchadnezzar forbade any evil being spoken of the God of Israel, and He extolled the King of heaven by whom he had been humbled. But Darius commands that in every place the God of Daniel and of Israel should be acknowledged, the only living God, whose kingdom is everlasting, and who had indeed delivered the man that trusted in Him. Historically it appears that Darius had some feelings of respect for God and for Daniel's piety. It was not his God, but the God of Daniel: still he honours Him, and even calls Him the living God.

The characteristics of the great empires: the causes of their judgment

Thus we see that idolatry, impiety, the pride that exalts itself above everything, are the characteristics of the great empires which Daniel sets before us, and the causes of their judgment. The judgment results in owning the God of the Jews as the living and delivering God and the Most High that ruleth in the kingdom of men. The same features will be found in the last days. This terminates the first part of the book.

Chapter 7

The prophetic history of the last form of the Gentile empire

We come now to the communications made to Daniel himself, which contain not merely general principles, but details relative to God's people, and the Gentiles who oppressed them — historical details, though given beforehand prophetically.

The chief object of Daniel 7 is the history of the fourth beast, or the last form of the Gentile empire, which commenced at Babylon — the great western power, in which was to be developed all that man in possession of power would become with respect to God and to the faithful. And with that its relation with the saints is given in the interpretation. But the introduction of this western beast is briefly given. Four beasts come up from the sea, that is to say, from the waves of human population. These powers are not looked at here as established by God, but in their purely historical character. We have seen the empire established immediately by God in the person of Nebuchadnezzar. But here — although every existing power is established by God — they are seen in their historical aspect. The beasts come up out of the sea. The prophet first sees them all at once arising out of the agitation of the nations. This part of the vision contains characteristic features, but gives no date.

1. Babylon

In verse 4 we have Babylon in power and then abased and subdued. The body of a lion with eagle's wings; that which, humanly speaking, was most noble and energetic in strength — that which hovered over the nations with the highest and most rapid flight — characterised this first energy of the human mind, when the will of God had committed to it the empire of the world. This place it loses.

2. Medo-Persia

The second beast devoured much, but had neither the energy nor the rapid flight of the first; it appropriated other kingdoms to itself rather than created an empire; twofold in its strength at first, it raised itself up more on one side than on the other. It is ferocious, but comparatively unwieldy; it is the Medo-Persian empire.

3. The empire founded by Alexander

This chapter says but little of the third; lightness and activity characterise it, and dominion was given to it. It is the empire founded by Alexander.

The fourth is the subject of a separate vision.

The division and arrangement of chapter 7

It will be well to remark, in passing, that the chapter is divided into three visions, followed by the interpretation given to the prophet. The first vision comprises the four beasts seen together, and the character of the first three slightly sketched. The second vision contains that of the fourth beast with much more detail. The third vision presents the appearing of one like the Son of man before the Ancient of days. They commence respectively at the first, seventh, and thirteenth verses; the interpretation occupies the remainder of the chapter from verse 15.

4. The fourth beast: its distinctive character: its "little horn"

The features of the fourth beast are clearly drawn. It is strong exceedingly; it devours and breaks in pieces, and tramples the residue under foot. It has not the same character as the preceding monarchies. It has ten horns; that is to say, its strength was to be divided into ten distinct powers. Strength and rapacity, which spare and respect nothing, appropriating everything, or trampling it under foot without regard to conscience; such are morally the characteristics of the fourth beast. Its division into ten kingdoms distinguishes it as to its form. The uniform simplicity of the other empires will be lacking to it. But this is not all. Another very distinctive and special element attracted the particular attention of the prophet. While considering the horns, he saw another little horn come up among them: three of the first fell before it; it possessed the penetration and intelligence of man; its pretensions were very great. Such was its character. A power rises among the ten by which three of them are overthrown. This power is clear-sighted and penetrating in its intelligence. It not only possesses strength, but it has thoughts and plans besides those of ambition and government. It is a beast that works morally, that occupies itself with knowledge, and sets itself up with pretensions full of pride and daring. It has a character of intelligence, moral and systematic (in evil), and not merely the strength of a conqueror. This horn has the eyes of a man.

The Ancient of Days: the session of judgment

Afterwards the thrones are set,* and the Ancient of days sits. It is a session of judgment, the throne of Jehovah's judgment; it is not said where, but its effect is on earth. The words of the little horn are the occasion of the execution of judgment. It is executed on the beast, which is destroyed, and its body given to the flames. With respect to the other beasts, their dominion had been taken away, but their lives prolonged; the fourth loses its life with its dominion. The scene of judgment forms a part of the vision of the fourth beast, and especially relates to it. {* This translation is almost universally considered to be correct.}

The earthly kingdom given to Christ

In verse 13 there is another vision. One like the Son of man is brought to the Ancient of days, and receives the kingdom and universal dominion — the rule of Jehovah entrusted to man in the Person of Christ, and substituted for the kingdom of the beast. Observe that this is not the execution of the judgment that had been spoken of, but the reception of the earthly kingdom; for, in all this, the government of the earth is the subject.

The interpretation of Daniel's vision: its two great facts

There are two parts in the interpretation. Verses 17, 18 are general; and then, with reference to the fourth beast (v. 19-28), there is more of detail. The general part declares that these four beasts are four kings, or kingdoms, that shall arise out of the earth: but that the saints of the high places shall take the kingdom, and possess it for ever. These are the two great facts brought out in this history: the earthly empire, and that of the saints of the high places (the first being composed of four kingdoms). We are then given some details with respect to the fourth of these. It will be noticed here, that, in the interpretation, an element of the highest interest is added, which was not in the vision to which the interpretation belongs; namely, that which relates to the saints. In communicating to the prophet the meaning of the vision, God could not omit them. Verse 18 already presents them in contrast with the empires of the earth. These empires were seen to arise in the vision according to their public or external character. Here the Spirit of God tells of that which made their conduct a subject of interest even to the heart of God, who would testify this interest to the prophet. The saints are immediately brought into view, but in a suffering condition (v. 21). This is the first characteristic of the little horn, when his actions are in question.

The power of the little horn ended by the coming of the Ancient of Days

But verses 21, 22 demand a few more remarks. The little horn not only makes war with the saints, but prevails against them up to a certain time (that is, until the coming of the Ancient of days). Something more definite is given here than the fact that God will judge the audacity of man. We are no longer occupied with the public history and with general principles, but with explanations for the saints in the person of the prophet. It is the coming of the Ancient of days that puts an end to the power of the little horn over the saints.

The saints on earth and the saints "of the high places"

Other important events are the result of this great change, of this intervention of God: first, judgment is given to the saints of the high places; and, second, the saints take the kingdom. Observe here the especial title "of the high places." The little horn persecutes the saints on earth, and prevails against them until the Ancient of days comes. But it is only to the saints of the high places that judgment is given. "Know ye not," says the apostle, "that the saints shall judge the world?" Nevertheless we must not go beyond that which is here written. It is not said, "to the assembly" — an idea not found in these

passages. It is the saints who are linked with the Most High* God in heaven, while the earth is in the hands of those who do not acknowledge Him, and while His government is not exercised to preserve them from suffering, and from the malice of the wicked. This applies in principle to all times since the fall, until the Ancient of days comes. But there is a period especially characterised by this spirit of rebellion, namely, that of the power of the little horn. There is another class of persons spoken of farther on — the people of the saints of the high places. "The kingdom is given to them." But in this case the Spirit does not say, "the judgment." {* There are four names of relationship which God has taken with men: Almighty (Gen. 17) with the patriarchs; Jehovah with Israel (Ex. 6); Father, with Christians (John 17); and Most High, in the millennium (Gen. 14) and here in Daniel. Compare Psalm go. The name of Father makes a difference in the whole position, associating us with Christ, the Son in whom He is revealed. John's Gospel specially brings out this.}

Thus, in verse 22, when the kingdom is mentioned, it is not said "the saints of the high places," but simply " the saints possessed the kingdom." We have thus the power of the little horn exercised against the saints, and prevailing against them, put an end to by the Ancient of days, the earth being the scene of that which is taking place. This event is accompanied by two other events. which result from it, and which change the whole aspect of the world. Judgment is given to the heavenly saints, and the kingdom is given to the saints. The first of these two events is confined to the heavenly saints. The second is more general, the saints on earth sharing it according to their condition, without excluding the saints in heaven according to their condition.

The general character of the fourth beast; its ten kingdoms; the "little horn"

In verse 23 begin the historical details of the little horn. The general character of the fourth beast is set forth. It devours, treads down, and subjugates everything. It is not only a consolidated empire, of such or such an extent; it ravages the whole earth as by right. There are, then, ten kingdoms arising in the bosom of the empire, and dividing its power. This is its outward and general character. But when the ten are already existing, another power arises of a different character from the ten, three of which it subdues. Now this horn speaks against the Most High — magnifies itself in words against Him. In its malice it destroys the saints who are united in heart to the God of heaven, and confess His name and His authority on the earth. It seeks to change the religious feasts and the laws; and they are given into its hand for three years and a half. In this last circumstance we find pretty clearly the oppressor of the Jews. Their whole system is given into his hands. These three characteristics are sufficiently plain and distinct: he speaks against the Most High; he persecutes those who own God in heaven, and whose hearts turn there (compare Ps. 11:4); and he does away with all public evidences of the earthly religion.

The forms of the Jewish religion given up, but not the saints

It will be remarked that there is no question at all here of the assembly, except in such general terms as must apply to any saints whatever on the earth who looked up higher. It is well also to observe, that it is not the saints (as has been thought) who are given into the hand of the little horn, but the forms of the Jewish religion. God may will and permit, for the good of the saints, that there should be persecution; but He never gives up His saints to their enemies. He could not do it. He cannot leave and forsake His

own. In a word, whatever may be the general principles capable of application during the course of the ages, this prophecy, as an especial and definite revelation, refers, like the whole Book, to the earth, of which the assembly is not, and to the Jews, with respect to whom God exercises His government on the earth.

The three characterisitics of the little horn: his dominion destroyed

This, understood, throws light on the three characteristics of the little horn. He rebels against the Most High . He speaks great words against God, and against all the saints who, rising in spirit above the earth, acknowledge the Most High God in heaven, and expect deliverance at His hand; whose hearts take refuge in Him, when the earth is given up, as it were, into the hands of the wicked. All those who thus maintain a true testimony against the man who arrogates to himself every prerogative on earth, and will have nothing to do with heaven, are persecuted by him. At length, the Jews having re-established their regular feasts and ordinances, his tyranny, which allows no power but his own, destroys all. traces of these ordinances; which, however vain, as restored in unbelief, were nevertheless a testimony to the existence of a God of the earth. But the judgment sits to take cognizance of all this pride. The dominion of the little horn is consumed and destroyed. We may notice here that it is in fact the little horn that in the end wields the supreme power. It is his dominion which is destroyed. Afterwards the kingdom and the dominion under the whole heaven is given to "the people of the saints of the high places." It appears to me that the meaning of this expression, remarkable as it is, is yet sufficiently plain. The Most High reigns, but He reigns in connection with the system which makes it manifest that "the heavens rule" (as it is said on this subject in the case of Nebuchadnezzar). The man of the earth would reign, and he defies heaven; and, withdrawing the earth from the government of Him who dwells in heaven, he would possess it independently of God. But the judgment proves his folly, and the Most High reigns for evermore. The saints who have acknowledged Him are given the judgment and the glory, and the people who belong to them on the earth have the supremacy and reign. These are the Jews. But, definitely, it is God who reigns.

"The heavenly places"

There are two words translated "Most High," the one singular and the other plural. The latter signifies "the high (places)." I do not doubt that this word gave rise to the expression "heavenly places" in the epistle to the Ephesians, which however goes much farther in the revelation there made. For here government only is the subject, and in the Ephesians it is the things that belong to the heavenly places, or that are in them. This distinction enables us to understand the difference between the assembly, or even Christians, and the saints of the high places in Daniel 7. With respect to the Christians, it is those who enjoy — in spirit at least — the blessings of the heavenly places, sitting there in Christ, and wrestling against the spiritual wickedness that is there. Here, on the contrary, it is the government which belongs of right to the heavens and to Him that reigns there which is to be recognised, in the presence of a power that denies and sets itself up against this, choosing to own no other power than itself on the earth. The meaning of the prophecy is plain and easily understood. To recognise the right of government in the heavenly places, and to be sitting there in the enjoyment of the blessings proper to

them, are two very different things. Everything has its own place in the mind of God, where perfect order reigns.

Summary of the interpretation given in Daniel 7:17-27

In sum we have, besides the power of the four beasts in general, the western power divided among ten, and at last the empire in the hands of the little horn, which subdues three of the ten horns, and sets itself up against God in heaven, persecutes and prevails against the saints, destroying by its persecutions those who identify themselves with the God of heaven, abolishing all the Jewish ordinances, and finally is itself destroyed. This abolition of the Jewish system continues for three years and a half, or 1260 days; which period of time belongs only to this last point. All the others are characteristic and not chronological.

The government of the earth, formerly given to man in the person of Nebuchadnezzar, is not again established — as it had been at Jerusalem — in a merely earthly throne. During the interval, in the presence of the rebellion of the earthly power against the Most High, the saints have assumed a character which is the result of their looking to heaven and to Him who reigns there (God, with respect to His government of the earth, having taken the name of the God of heaven) — a very intelligible position, seeing that He had forsaken Jerusalem.

Three elements in God's dealings; the character of Him who receives the kingdom

It is the saints of the high places who will take the kingdom; but after the judgment of the rebellious horn, the earthly people possess the dominion under the whole heaven, in dependence on those who are seated in heaven.

So that we have three clear and important elements in the dealings of God. Firstly, the earthly throne at Jerusalem is forsaken; the Gentile throne established by the authority of God, the God of heaven; the rebellion of this Gentile power against Him that had given it authority. Secondly, the saints are distinguished by their acknowledgment of that God whom the earthly power denied; they are of the heavens, where God had now His place and His throne, being no longer on earth at Jerusalem. Thirdly, we have, then, judgment executed on the rebellious power; judgment given to these saints of the high places; the earthly people established in the kingdom under the heavens, in connection with them. This was the dominion of the God of heaven which should not pass away. In connection with this is the character given to Him that pre-eminently receives the kingdom. It is not now the Messiah, owned as king in Zion, but ONE in the form of the Son of man; a title of far greater and more wide significance. It is the change from Psalm 2 to Psalm 8.* Nor this only; for, when the events are accomplished, we find that it is the Ancient of days Himself who comes and puts an end to the power which afflicted the saints — that Christ (as the Psalms so largely shew and the gospels too) is Jehovah. {* Brought about by the rejection of the Messiah.}

We have here the great picture of man's government — coming into all its characteristic development at the end — and its setting aside by the government of God, which establishes the faithful in authority, and, above all, the Son of man Himself, and His people on the earth.

The heavenly saints and the spared remnant on earth

The saints of the high places would be thus those who, when the assembly, not noticed here, is gone, look up and own power there, and, if put to death by power in rebellion, have their place above. We find them again in Revelation, specially in Rev. 20, and there two classes. The people of the saints are the spared remnant on earth.

Chapter 8

The empires of Persia and Greece

Daniel 8 gives details of that which takes place from another side of Judea, with reference to the Jews. The two empires of Persia and Greece, or of the East, which succeeded that of Babylon under which the prophecy was given, are only introduced to point out the countries in which these events are to take place, and to bring them before us in their historical order. The Persian empire is overthrown by the king of Greece, whose empire is afterwards divided into four kingdoms, from one of which a power arises that forms the main subject of the prophecy.

The time to which the prophect refers

In the interpretation, we find the positive declaration that the events here related happen "in the last end of the indignation." Now it is the indignation against Israel that is here meant (Dan. 11:36). This time of indignation is spoken of in Isaiah 10:25; it ends with the destruction of the Assyrian, who (v. 5) is its principal instrument. All these passages shew us, especially in studying their context, that it will be in the last days that the events of these prophecies will be fulfilled. It will be "the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be delivered out of it." The Lord Himself alludes to this period (Matt. 24) calling His disciples' attention to that which Daniel says respecting it (compare Daniel 12:1-11 with the Lord's words). It appears to me that the prophecy in our chapter does not relate so absolutely to the last days as the interpretation does.* The thing spoken of in the prophecy is not the last end of the indignation; but the fact that a little horn arises out of one of the four kingdoms, which had succeeded Alexander. Nevertheless, the grand object of the Spirit is to reveal that which will happen at the time of the end (v. 17). {* This appears to me to be the case, because events that took place under the successors of Seleucus, the first king of the north, have served as a type, or partial and anticipative fulfilment, of that which will happen in the, last days. In chapter 11 and here, there is a description of, or a strong allusion to, that which Antiochus Epiphanes did. The eleventh chapter relates it, I think, historically. The object of God in the prophecy is found in the events of the last days; and this is all that is given in the interpretation. It is well to observe, that no interpretation of a parable or obscure prophecy, either in the Old or New Testament, is simply an interpretation. It adds that which reveals by the result the meaning

of the ways of God, or facts described in what is obscure, either by outward judgments which justify the spiritual judgment of His people when faith only would discern God's mind, or by some new features that give the true import of the events for the saints. Actual judgment makes openly plain what spiritual judgment alone discerned before, and thus is an interpretation. But other circumstances may be added in order to show the mind of God in the matter. In a word, it is God who communicates to His people that which gives its true value to that which precedes, or who directs them in their thoughts as to what has been said, by the revelation of His judgments. It is this which practically confirms them in His thoughts.}

The principal features of "the little horn" of chapter 8

Let us examine the principal feature of the little horn. The power designated by "the little horn" enlarges its territory towards the east, and towards the pleasant land, or ornament [of the earth], that is to say, as it appears to me, towards Jerusalem or Zion. This horn exalts itself against the host of heaven, and casts down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and tramples on them.

"The host of heaven and the stars"

Who are the persons intended by this expression — "the host of heaven and the stars?" Let us remember, that it is the Jewish system that is before us. When once we have got hold of this, the application of the passage is not difficult. The expression applies to those who, professedly at least, surround the throne of God, and particularly those who shine eminent among them. It is not the faithful who look towards heaven, of which chapter 7 speaks. To be the host of heaven describes a position and not a moral state (compare v. 24). But this passage assumes that the Jews are again in this position before God, even although it would be but for judgment. That is to say, they are again under the eye of God as in relation with Him, as an object about which He concerns Himself, as a people still responsible for their former relationship with Him, although the Gentile power still exists. Now, if their condition does not answer to the position they reassume in His presence, they are, by the very fact of this position, the object of God's judgments.

Observe here, moreover, that transgression is the thing spoken of, and not the abomination which some one sets up, and which makes desolate; and in the interpretation also, the transgression is come to its height.

The horn opposing Christ as the Prince of Israel

This horn is, then, the instrument of chastisement on the Jews, who have returned — as to profession — into relationship with Jehovah, and into their land, assuming the character of His people, yet carrying transgression against Him to the highest point. The horn completely destroys some of them. But this is not all; he (for the word is no longer it, in agreement with the word horn — perhaps changed to designate the king in person) magnifies himself even against the Prince of the host. He carries his pretensions so far as to oppose himself to Him, to set himself against Christ in His character of Prince of Israel, against the Judge who comes, the Head of Israel, who is Jehovah Himself; for it is the Ancient

of days who comes. Here, however, all is looked at in a Jewish aspect. He is the Prince of Israel. We see that it is Jehovah, because it is His sacrifice that is taken away — His sanctuary that is cast down; but He is presented as the Prince of the host.* The daily sacrifice is taken away from Him, not "by him."* {* I have questioned a little whether the host of heaven may not mean the powers of the earth (the Jews only taking their place in it because they ought to be under the government of God, and are so to the spirit of prophecy). I do not reject this idea; but it appears certain that the Spirit has the Jews especially in view (see v. 13). Verse 24 might lead us to believe that He destroys others beside the Jews. Christ, exalted to the right hand of God, is the head of all power. But He is especially the head of the Jews. If any would even apply the title "Prince of princes" to this supremacy, the analogy of the word would justify the application. The connection between the host and the sanctuary in verse 13, appears to me to shew, that the Spirit had those Jews especially in view who surround the place of the throne of Jehovah. There is no doubt that the text says, that the sacrifice is taken away from the Prince of the host. The question still remains, by whom? The Keri (which is generally, I believe, the best authority when there are variations in the Hebrew) reads, "was taken from him," without saying by whom; the Ketib, "he took away from him," which ascribes it to the little horn.}

The Jewish worship rendered to Jehovah is suppressed, His sanctuary cast down, and a time of distress appointed for the daily sacrifice (it is thus that I understand the verse), on account of transgression; and the little horn* (for here the it, agreeing with horn, is again used) casts down the truth, practises and prospers. The duration of the whole vision, with especial reference to the transgression which occasions it, and, it may be, comprising also the duration of the transgression that maketh desolate; in a word, the whole scene of transgression, and consequent desolation (the sanctuary and the host being trodden under foot), continues for 2300 evenings and mornings. {* In the Hebrew there is a difference of gender. He who magnifies himself (v. 11) is masculine; while at the end of verse 12, the word, "it cast down," is feminine, agreeing with horn, which in Hebrew is a feminine noun.}

The time of the prophetic fulfilment: the subtle king, his course and his end

In verse 19 we see that the interpretation relates to the time of the end — a very important notice for the understanding of the passage.* And this is what shall happen in the last end of the indignation (upon Israel) when the transgression of the Jews is at its height. A king of fierce countenance, who understands dark sentences, shall arise; a kind of teacher or rabbi, but proud, and audacious in appearance. He will be mighty, but not by his own power. He will make great havoc, will prosper and practise, destroying the mighty, or a great multitude of persons, and especially "the people of the holy ones," that is, the Jews (Dan. 7:27). He is subtle, and his craftiness is successful. He will magnify himself in his heart, and will destroy many by means of a false and irreligious security. At length, he will stand up against the Prince of princes. He will then be destroyed without human intervention. That is to say that at the time of the end, when the purposes of God will be unfolded, when His indignation against Israel draws to an end, the transgression of this people being already at its height, a king shall arise in one part of the former Grecian empire, whose power will be characterised by its increase towards the east and south, and towards Jerusalem; that is, it will be established in the present Turkey in Asia — Jerusalem being the point it aims at. This power will cause much destruction, and its strength

will be great; yet, properly speaking, it will not be its own strength. The king will be dependent on some other power. He will also destroy the Jewish people. But there is something more than destructive power; there is a character of wisdom resembling that of Solomon in some respects. He is very subtle, and succeeds in destroying the Jews, by lulling them into a security in which they forget Jehovah. We see him then occupying himself about the Jews, not only as a conqueror, but as a teacher, by craft and by a deceptive peace. At length he stands up against Christ in His character of the Prince of princes or kings of the earth, that is, in His character of earthly supremacy. He is destroyed by divine power, without the hand of man. {* The vision speaks particularly of the Seleucidae, or Asiatic successors of Alexander; and their acts, I doubt not, particularly those of Antiochus Epiphanes, are referred to in the vision, though verse 11 and the first half of 12, as noticed, are distinct. Thus the 2300 evenings and mornings are not necessarily applicable to anything beyond the acts of the Seleucidae, and verse 26 confirms this. The interpretation (v. 23-25) applies only to the latter days. The sanctuary is not spoken of, but the destroying the "people of the saints" (the Jews), and standing up against the Prince of princes. In verse 26 read, "and thou, shut up the vision," not "wherefore."}

"The little horn" of Daniel 8 distinct from that of Daniel 7

This king is distinct from the little horn of chapter 7, who rules the great western beast. He is a king of the east, who arises, not from the Roman empire, but from the former Grecian empire established in Syria, and the adjacent countries, who derives his strength from elsewhere, and not from his own resources. He will interfere (in his own way) with the religious affairs of the Jews; but it seems to me that that which is said of him is more characteristic of the desolator, whom God allows the enemy to raise up on account of the transgressions of His people, than of the one who makes a covenant with them for a time, in order to ruin and drag them afterwards into the depths of apostasy. It is one who will oppress them, having his seat of action in the east, as the little horn of chapter 7 rules in the west.* The desolation is brought before us on the occasion of this little horn. Verse 11 is a kind of parenthesis which relates entirely to the Prince of the host; and the two last things it mentions (namely, that the sacrifice is taken away from Him and His sanctuary cast down) are introduced in connection with the Prince of the host, as a part of the desolation of Israel, to complete its description, without, as it appears to me, pointing out who it is that does these things. They are not spoken of in the king's own history, at the end of the chapter. They form a part of the desolation of the days alluded to in verse 11. {* Chapter 7 gives the power or horn of the west; chapter 8 that of the east; chapter 9 gives the state of Jerusalem under the power of the west; chapter 10, 11 the state under the powers of the east, including the wilful king. The first half of the twelfth, closing with the word, "transgression," forms indeed part of this parenthesis. The 2300 days refer thus to the historical times. All we have of them, in the interpretation which unfolds what is yet to come, is that the vision is true. The parenthesis is from "Yea" (v. 11) to "transgression" in verse 12, connected with "he," not with "it."}

Chapter 9

Daniel's confession, intercession and plea. God's answer

Daniel 9 gives us a vision concerning the people and the holy city, consequent on Daniel's confession and intercession. It is, as has been remarked, in connection with the oppression of the western power. Indeed, the details relate to oppression. The prophet had understood (not by a direct revelation, but by the study of Jeremiah's prophecy, by the use of those ordinary means that are within the reach of the spiritual man) that the captivity, the duration of which Jeremiah had announced, was near its end. The effect on Daniel's mind (true sign of a prophet of God) was to produce an ardent intercession on behalf of the desolate sanctuary, and the city which Jehovah loved. He pours out his heart in confession before God, acknowledging the sin of the people and of their kings, the hardness of their hearts, and the righteousness of God in bringing evil upon them. He pleads the mercies of God, and demands favour for Jehovah's own sake. The prophecy is God's answer to his prayer. Seventy weeks are determined upon the people of Daniel and upon his holy city. Jehovah does not yet acknowledge them definitely for His own; but He accepts the intercession of the prophet, as He had formerly done that of Moses, by saying to Daniel, " thy people and thy city." Daniel stands in the place of mediator. He has the mind of God — His words; and thus he can intercede (compare on this deeply interesting point, Gen. 20:7; Jer. 27:18; John 15:7).

God's revelation: His seventy weeks upon the people and the holy city

At the end of these seventy weeks, separated from among the ages, the time should come, decreed of God, to finish the transgression, to seal up, that is, to make an end of sin, and to put it away; to pardon iniquity and bring in everlasting righteousness; to seal up [all] vision and prophecy, and to anoint the holy of holies: this, observe, with respect to the people of Israel and to the city. It is the entire re-establishment of the people, and of the city, in grace.

The three parts of the seventy weeks

This period of seventy weeks is divided into three parts — seven, sixty-two, and one. During the first part, or the seven weeks, the desolate city and its overthrown walls would be rebuilt in troublous times, or in the strait of times. After sixty-two weeks, that is, after sixty-nine altogether, the Messiah should be cut off, and should have nothing (this is the true sense of the words). He to whom the kingdom and the glory belonged, instead of receiving them, should be cut off and have nothing. But after this event the city and the sanctuary, which had been rebuilt, should be destroyed, and the end should be like a desolating flood; and there should be an ordinance, or determinate decree, of desolation until the end of the war. This is, in general, the complete history of the desolations. Sixty-nine weeks have been accomplished — after that, the Messiah is cut off; but the precise moment at which this takes place is not indicated. The course of the seventy weeks is thus entirely interrupted. The cutting off of the Messiah was not the moment of the re-establishment of the people and of the city. The result is plainly announced — a period of desolation until the end: its duration is not given. We shall find in Daniel 11 the same manner of treating an analogous period. The people of a prince who was yet to come should destroy the city.

The seventieth week: its last half

After this, the Spirit of God takes up the seventieth week, the details of which were not yet unfolded. The prince that shall come confirms a covenant with the mass of the Jews. (The form of the word many * indicates the mass of the people). This is the first thing that characterises the week; the Jews form an alliance with the head, at that day, of the people who had formerly overthrown their city and their sanctuary. They form an alliance with the head of the Roman Empire. This refers to the week as a whole. But, the half of the week spent, things assume another aspect. This head causes the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and on account of the protection of idols, there is a desolator; and until the consummation that is determined,* there shall be poured [judgment] upon the desolate. {* The word "many" has an article prefixed to it in the Hebrew. The same thing is the case in other parts of Daniel, to which we shall draw the reader's attention, and which clearly prove that the mass of the people are in question — "the many." The same form of phrase is found in Greek. 2 Cor. 2:6; 9:2. We may observe that the Lord only speaks expressly of the last half-week, of the time of tribulation which follows the setting up of the idol that maketh desolate in the holy place. Some have thought that there would be only this half-week to come, Christ having been cut off in the midst of the week. Others have thought that the seventieth week had entirely elapsed before the Lord's death, but that it is not reckoned, Jesus having been rejected, and that this week is found again at the time of the Jews' connection with the wicked one. What the passage tells us is this: first, the prince, the head that is of the Roman empire, in the latter days makes a covenant referring to one whole week; on the other hand, the Lord speaks of the last half of the week as being to take place immediately before His coming, as the time of unequalled tribulation that precedes it. If this were all, the foregoing history of the prince to come, who makes a covenant, would fall into the general history of the state of things. The question whether one or two half-weeks remain to be fulfilled, and in what way, during the manifestation of the power of evil, I reserve (as to its full development) for the book of Revelation; remarking only that Messiah is cut off after the end of 69 weeks. We know from the New Testament that His ministry lasted just half the week. Of this clearly the prince or Jews, with whom he makes alliance, would make no account. The interpretation of this passage is clear; the covenant for a week with the prince to come, as if 69 weeks alone were run out, Messiah and His cutting off being ignored, and a half-week of utter oppression because of idols, till the consummation decreed. *This is an expression constantly used for the last judgments that shall fall upon the Jews (see Isaiah 10:22; 28:22). The second verse of this last chapter compares the desolator to a flood, as in verse 26 of the chapter we are considering. The attentive reader will observe that these passages refer also to the events of the last days. Remark also the covenant in Isaiah 28:15 &18. Some doubts might be thrown upon the translation "the desolate"; some render it "the desolator," and "until the destruction that is decreed there shall be poured [judgment] upon the desolator," or rather, "until the destruction decreed shall be poured upon the desolator." To any one that is not very familiar with the word, this seems to end the sentence better; but it appears to me that those who are conversant with the whole contents of the Bible and with its phraseology will allow that the reading I have given is its truer meaning. The import of the prophecy is the same in either case. The one translation says that the desolation shall continue until the end of judgment, fore-ordained by God; the other, that it shall not cease until the destruction of the desolator, which comes to the same thing. The translation I have given appears to me more exact, more in accordance with the word. Our English translation reads "desolate," giving "desolator" in the margin. But the word has not the same form as that which is translated "desolator" in other places where the meaning is certain. The previous clause I

have rendered "on account of the protection of idols." The word is literally "wing" — upon, or on the account of, the wing of abominations. And we know that the word wing is habitually employed for protection .}

The seventy weeks as a brief history of the period to elapse until judgment on the Jews was past

That which is here announced, then, is, that seventy weeks are set apart for the history of the city and people of Daniel. During these seventy weeks, God is in relationship with Israel;* nevertheless, not immediately so, but in connection with the faith of the believing remnant, of a Daniel, of an intercession which, linking itself with the existence of a remnant, serves as a bond between God and the people: an intercession without which the people would be rejected. It is the same principle as that which governed the relations between God and the people by means of Moses, after the golden calf — the people being called the people of Daniel, as formerly the people of Moses. This position is remarkable, as taking place after the establishment of the authority of the Gentiles. The Jews are at Jerusalem, but the Gentiles reign, although the empire of Babylon is overthrown. In this anomalous position prophetic faith seeks the complete re-establishment of the city, the seat of government of God and of His people. It is to this that the answer of God refers. A brief but complete history is given of the period which should elapse until the judgment upon the Jews was accomplished and past. {* The power of the Gentiles existing at the same time. We know from scripture that the restoration of Jerusalem took place under the reign of the Gentiles, as well as the whole course of the sixty-nine weeks which have assuredly passed away. The seventy have all the same character in this respect. It is only at the end of the seventy that pardon is granted. Whoever may be the instrument of establishing the covenant the fourth beast will be at that time the ruling power of the Gentiles, to whom God has committed authority. It is very important, if we would understand the seventy weeks, to remark this state of things — the Jews restored, the city rebuilt, but the Gentiles still occupying the throne of the world. The seventy weeks have their course only under these conditions. It must be well understood that it is the people of Daniel who are meant, and his city, which are to be re-established in their former favour with God. The longsuffering of God still now waits. The Gentile power has already failed in faithfulness; Babylon has been overthrown; by means of intercession, the Jews provisionally restored, and the temple rebuilt. The seventy weeks had very nearly elapsed when Christ came. If the Jews, and Jerusalem in that her day, had repented, all was ready for her re-establishment in glory. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob could have been raised up, as Lazarus had been. But she knew not the day of her visitation, and the fulfilling of the seventy weeks, as well as the blessing that should follow, had necessarily to be postponed. Through grace we know that God had yet more excellent thoughts and purposes, and that man's state was such that this could not have been, as the event proved. Accordingly all is here announced beforehand. (Compare Isa. 49:4-6.)}

Messiah cut off: the consequences

A new element of great importance is also introduced: the Messiah should be cut off. He would have nothing of that which in right belonged to Him. The consequence of this would be the destruction of the

city and of the sanctuary, desolation and war. It would be the prince of another empire, not yet in existence, who should thus destroy the city and the sanctuary. The relations between God and the people were now completely broken off for the time — even as regarded a believing remnant. The faith of Daniel was rejected in the Person of Christ as the prophet, and in the denial of Christ expressed by the declaration that they would have no king but Caesar; and the people and the city were given up to desolation.

The covenant and the idolatry

But there remained one week yet unaccomplished with this faithless and perverse, but yet beloved, race, before their iniquity should be pardoned, and everlasting righteousness brought in, and the vision and the prophecy closed by their fulfilment. This week should be distinguished by a covenant which the prince or leader would make with the Jewish people (with the exception of the remnant), and then by the compulsory cessation of their worship through the intervention of this prince. After that the Jews having placed themselves under the protection of idols — this unclean spirit, long driven out of the people, having again entered into them with seven others worse than himself, the desolator comes, and the final judgments are inflicted on the people — terrible judgments; but the extent of which is definitely fixed by God when their measure shall be full. Thus we find a very precise answer is given to the prophet's request; an answer which very distinctly unfolds the consequences of the connection of Daniel's people with the Gentile power. Their position is very clearly set forth, while the relationship with God, by means of the prophet's intercession, still exists.

Messiah's rejection, the Jews dispersion and the great tribulation

The prophecy announces at the same time the general fact of the people's desolation after the sixty-ninth week was past, and (with a seeming lull from the favour of the beast), on to the end of the seventieth, occasioned by their rejection of the Messiah, which took place at the very time when the promise attached to the prophecy should have been on the point of fulfilment; and the rejection of whom (coming in the name of His Father) has led to the long dispersion of the Jews, which will continue until the time of their being gathered, a prey to the iniquity of the head of the Gentiles; the time, in fact, of their falling into the hands of the one who should come in his own name — a sorrowful condition developed during the last week, but to which God has set a limit; and beyond that, no malice of the enemy can reach.

Chapters 10 and 11

Further revelations to Daniel as to the future of his people and the Gentiles

In Daniel 10 we return to the East.* Chapters 10, 11 and 12 form but one prophecy; only chapter 11 closes the history of the Gentiles, and chapter 12, as we remarked at the beginning, is occupied with the condition of the remnant during the last period of the Gentile power, and with their deliverance (concluding thus the revelation of God's mind with respect to the remnant who are preserved in the

midst of the Gentiles). {* It may be remarked that in both cases the revelation given to Daniel, as to his people, is in reply to his exercises of heart in intercession or fasting; the revelations in chapters 7, 8 as to the western or eastern destroying powers are not. They are given when God pleases. These were in the time of Belshazzar; the two former, after Babylon was taken The Jews were then really in a new position till Christ was rejected, and then the great forsaking came, when time does not count till they are in their own land, and God begins to deal with them again. Then, after the display of their unbelief in receiving the power of evil and in idolatry the last grand tribulation comes, and then judgment in the Person of the Lord from heaven.}

Daniel, ever intent on the welfare of his people, made supplication (v. 2, 3, 12) to God, with a renewed and a persevering desire to understand His dealings. After three weeks of fasting and prayer an angel is sent to him, revealing the opposition of the enemies of God's glory to the accomplishment of His purposes of favour to His people, and to the communication of these purposes for their encouragement. But if faith is exercised, God is faithful; and the perseverance of Daniel puts him morally in a condition to appreciate the communications of God, being a proof of his fitness to receive them. The angel informs him that the vision has reference to the Jews, and that it belongs to the latter days (chap. 10:14). The strength which is given him enables him to receive the communication. The kings of Persia, under whose reign he received the vision, are enumerated; and the attack on Greece by one amongst them is announced. This gives rise to an attack on Persia by Greece; and the Greek empire is established; but it is afterwards divided into four parts. Two of these four monarchies shall be more powerful than the others. They are also territorially in relation with the Jews. It is on the territory of the latter that their wars are carried on. The history of the kings of these two monarchies, thus in conflict on the territory of Israel, is given with considerable detail under the names of king of the north and king of the south. I do not enter into these details.

The history a type of what shall heppen in the last days

The history is carried on until the intervention of the Romans, the ships from the coast of Chittim [2] , and the attack upon the Jews, and the temple, and the holy covenant. The king of the north allies himself with the apostate Jews; he pollutes the sanctuary, and sets up an idol; he takes away the daily sacrifice; he leads the wicked into apostasy (this is the force of the expression in verse 32). But they who know God shall be strong, and shall act with energy. They who understand, being taught of God, shall instruct the many. Thus far is the succession of the first kings, and the history of the Maccabees, and of Antiochus Epiphanes. {* The intervention of these in favour of the young king of Egypt, whom Antiochus Epiphanes had conquered, led to his going back and raging against the Jews, profaning the temple, and forbidding Jewish worship.}

The result, on to the end, is then given in general terms — the last part of the preceding history being a type of what shall happen in the last days. The people again fall for a time under the hands of their enemies. They shall be helped a little: some shall cleave to them with flatteries. A few even of those who understand, who might have been expected to be preserved providentially by God, will also fall by violence, to try the faith of all, and purge them, until the time of the end. For this state of things is to continue until the period appointed by God. It is the condition of the Jews, especially in those days, that

is, of the Seleucidae and Lagida, kings of north and south, and in general, until the last days.

The use and meaning of "many" and "the Maschilim"

Some observations on the details may here be of use to the reader. In Daniel 9:27, 11:33, 12:3, the word translated "many" has the article in Hebrew, and signifies the mass of the people, which makes the force of these verses much more simple. The reader will also remark, in contrast with the masses (Dan. 11:33), "the Maschilim," a word found in the titles of many of the Psalms. They that understand, they that are taught of God, shall instruct the many: there will be the activity of love for the truth in these times of trial. In Daniel 12:3, we have again those that understand associated with those that instruct the many in righteousness. Compare Dan. 11:33. They become victims, in verse 35, to violence. This last verse reaches, as we have seen, to the end of this people's history, while under the dominion of the Gentiles. But more positive details are given with respect to the end.

The king * is introduced — the wicked one who will exercise power in Judea at the end of the age; and will prosper until the indignation comes to an end — a period of which we have already spoken. It is a king who acts in the land of Judea; one of an impious character, and who follows his own unbridled will, exalting himself above all, forsaking the religion of his fathers, regarding neither Christ nor any God, blaspheming the God of heaven, and establishing idolatry; but in a way of his own; "he shall cause them to rule over the many, and shall divide the land for a reward." It is rather difficult to say who these are that he will cause to rule — I apprehend his followers; but the general character of this self-willed, impious, and idolatrous king who magnifies himself above all, is sufficiently plain. We find, as the chapter goes on, that the king of the south pushes at him, and the king of the north comes against him like a whirlwind, overflows and passes over and enters into the land of delight, Judea. But Edom, Moab, and Ammon escape his power, being reserved (Isa. 11:14) to be subdued by Israel itself. But he stretches out his hand over the countries and pillages them. Egypt does not escape, and they who dwell in Africa are at his feet. But, disturbed by tidings from the east and north, he sets up his tabernacles between Jerusalem and the sea, and comes to his end, with none to help him. The end of the king is not given here. It is the end of the king of the north, the subject here being the nations and the land of Israel, and that which shall happen to the people of Daniel in the last days. In the land there will be the wicked and impious king, who shall be attacked by the king of the south. The king of the north then pillages all the countries round, with the exception of three, and he perishes in the land of Israel. {* Compare Isa. 30:33 (reading "for the king also") and Isa. 57:9. He has the title of "the king" in the eyes of the Jews — a title which of right belongs only to Jesus, the true Messiah and King of Israel. This is the regular meaning of the Hebrew.}

Chapter 12

Israel's own history: the faithful remnant, their deliverance and reward

Daniel 12 gives us more of Israel's own history. In the midst of all these events Michael, the archangel, stands up in behalf of the people of Daniel. There is a time of trouble, such as never has been nor will

be. Nevertheless the people shall be delivered, that is to say, those who are written in the book (the remnant belonging to God). Jeremiah has already spoken to us of this period, and of the deliverance (Jer. 30:7). The Lord speaks of it also in Matthew 24, drawing the attention of His disciples to the abomination of desolation here mentioned, shewing clearly that He speaks of Jerusalem, the Jews, and the last days, when the Jews shall be delivered. He also points out the way in which the faithful are to escape, while the tribulation continues. Taking these passages together makes it easy to understand them both. The second verse extends beyond the land of Israel, which had been the scene of the prophecy until this. But their condition is stated in a way not to own the countries of their dispersion. Many of the race of Israel arise from their long abasement, some to everlasting life, but others to everlasting shame. They that understand shall shine as the firmament. They who have instructed the many in righteousness shall shine as the stars (compare the host of heaven and stars, Dan. 8). God will clothe with the brightness of His favour those who will have been faithful during this period of rebellion and distress.

The length of the tribulation

After this one of God's messengers inquires of the man clothed in linen, who was upon the waters of the river, how long it should be to the end of the wonders (that is, of the tribulation) by the intervention of God in deliverance for Israel. The answer is, three years and a half, or 1260 days; and that, when God should have put an end to the dispersion of the holy people, all these things should be finished. Daniel asks for a fuller revelation with respect to the end; but the oracle is sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be tried and purified and made white, but the wicked shall do wickedly. Alas! this must be expected. None of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand — these "maschilim," whom the Spirit of God has mentioned.

Full blessing comes a little later, in which Daniel shall have his part

Now, from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be 1290 days. But the accomplishment of 1335* days has still to be waited for; there shall be full blessing to him that waits and arrives at their fulfilment. Daniel himself shall have his part in this time of glory. {* I have thought it possible that this computation may arise from this. An intercalary month to the 1260 days, or three years and a half, and then 45 days, if the years were ecclesiastical years, would bring up to the feast of tabernacles: but I offer no judgment on it. At any rate, the statement is clear that then the sanctuary of God will be cleansed in Jerusalem.}

The scope of Daniel's prophecy

It is to be observed, that Daniel never describes the period that succeeds to the times of the Gentiles. He gives the history of those monarchies, the oppressors and seducers of the Jews in the latter days, and the deliverance of the people; but there he stops. He is the prophet of the times of the Gentiles until the deliverance.