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and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. We do not now ask for the Holy Spirit, for we have already received Him. We ought to desire to be continually 'filled with the Spirit' (Eph. 5:18); but to pray for the Holy Spirit to be given, after He has come, would be to forget one of the distinctive features of Christianity, and to be unaware of the fact that 'the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost Who is given unto us' (Rom. 5:5). But the precious lesson abides: if an earthly father's love can be trusted to give good gifts unto his children, how much more can we trust our Father to give what is best to us?

## THE PROPHECIES OF DANIEL

A. NAISMITH, M.A.

### II. The Four Beasts of Daniel's Visions

The record of Daniel's visions in the seventh chapter of the book concludes the portion of the book written in the Chaldee or Aramaic language. They occurred to the prophet in the first year of the reign of King Belshazzar (Dan. 7:1), a ruler not mentioned by the Babylonian historians, Berosus and Abydenus, but frequently mentioned on tablets excavated by Sir Henry Rawlinson from the ruins of ancient Babylon as son and vice-regent of King Nabonidus who, according to Berosus, was the last king of Babylon. The wife of Nabonidus and mother of Belshazzar was a daughter of King Nebuchadnezzar who is in Dan. 5:2, 18 referred to as the father of Belshazzar. When interpreting the writing on the wall, Daniel addressed Belshazzar as Nebuchadnezzar's son. The Chaldean language had no word for 'grandfather' or 'grandson', hence the use of the words 'father' and 'son' to indicate the relationship. The four chapters in Daniel following on Chapter 2 are purely historical and contain the inspired account of the outstanding events in Babylon, the first great world-empire, from the Divine standpoint and in relation to Daniel and his companions, and the early years of the Medo-Persian Empire. Each incident demonstrates the strength and weakness, the glory and the ruin, of human dominion in

those early years of 'the times of the Gentiles'. The overruling power, providence and sovereignty of God in the empires of men is unmistakable throughout, for the keynote to those incidents is 'There is a God in heaven' (Dan. 2:28) and 'the Most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men' (Dan. 4:25). Though there is no direct prophecy awaiting fulfilment in any of these chapters, they undoubtedly contain prefigurations of the last days which occupy so much of the eschatological teaching of both Daniel and Revelation.

The measurements of the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar set up in the Plain of Dura—disproportionate unless we take the height as including a pedestal on which the figure itself was mounted—were 60 cubits by 6 cubits. These dimensions are suggestive of the number of the Beast, the superman who is to be the last ruler at the end of the times of the Gentiles, namely 666 (Rev. 13:8), 'the number of man'. The three Hebrew youths' unswerving loyalty to God, as they refused to be captivated by the attractive music, compelled by the despotic edict, or convinced by the specious logic, of the Babylonian monarch, foreshadows the faithful stand of the godly Jewish remnant who, in the era of great tribulation, will refuse to worship the Beast (Rev. 13:15). Like the three Hebrews of Dan. 3, the faithful in the last days will not fear the threats of a despot nor the terrors of death, because their trust is in the triumphs of their Deliverer (Dan. 3:17). The end of the times of the Gentiles, like its beginning, will have its martyrs who by faith will 'quench the violence of fire', both literal and figurative, and go through in triumph, counting on the unfailing promise, 'When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee' (Is. 43:2).

Chapter 4 narrates how the God of Heaven drove Nebuchadnezzar, the mighty conqueror and founder of the great Babylonian Empire from his kingdom, and Chapter 5 describes how He removed the great Babylonian Empire from its last monarch, Belshazzar. On his recovery from his two pitiable diseases, megalomania and lycanthropy, the former making him in his arrogance consider himself a god upon earth and the latter reduc-

ing him to the level of the brute creation because 'a beast's heart was given unto him' (Dan. 4:16), Nebuchadnezzar made the last of his three recorded proclamations (Dan. 2:47; 3:29; 4:37) concerning Daniel's God. At the end of the times of the Gentiles, when the victorious Christ returns as 'King of kings and Lord of lords', Rom. 14:11; and Phil. 2:9-11 will have their complete fulfilment. 'Every knee shall bow to me and every tongue shall confess to God', saith the Lord.

The fifth chapter of Daniel graphically depicts the licentious revelry and impious mockery of the last ruler of Babylon on the last night of its glory and dominion within the walls of the hall of splendour in the most luxurious and wealthiest city of its day. Belshazzar had despised the light, desecrated the vessels that had been consecrated to the worship of Jehovah, and defied the living and true God. The writing of God on the palace wall shook the defiant monarch as he had never been shaken before, and the words of Daniel as he rebuked him and interpreted the writing must have convinced him that his end was near. Philip Henry Gosse has given us the following vivid account of the capture of Babylon and the death of Belshazzar:

'All through Belshazzar's reign there had been a war between Babylon and the advancing power of the Medes and Persians. This ancient and mighty city was the only one that now held out against the victorious arms of Cyrus the Persian. Two years the siege of Babylon had lasted, but such was the strength of the city, so high and massive the walls, so impregnable the fortifications, so innumerable the warriors, so abundant the supply of all kinds of provisions, that no hope seemed to exist that Cyrus would be able to effect an entrance. The city was provisioned for twenty years.

'At length stratagem succeeded where force had failed. Having learnt that a great festival was approaching in which the Babylonians were accustomed to devote the whole night to revelry, Cyrus determined to surprise them in the midst of their debaucheries. One of the great works of Nebuchadnezzar had been the construction of an artificial lake above the city for the sake of receiving the superfluous waters of the Euphrates in the annual

floods. This lake was square, 52 miles every way and 55 feet deep, so that it was capable of holding an immense volume of water. Into this lake Cyrus determined to draw off the water of the Euphrates and enter the city through the bed of the river. In the evening of the eventful day he sent a party of men to cut the dam that separated the river from the lake. Some hours elapsed before the river was sufficiently shrunk to be fordable. About midnight the soldiers were able to march in the diminished stream and entered the city. In the neglect and disorder of the festival, the brazen gates that led to the streets from the river had been left open, so that the armies met with no impediment but marched up into the streets. At the royal palace they surprised the half-intoxicated guards and soon dispatched them.

'The king, trembling under the judgement just pronounced upon himself and his kingdom, heard the noise from within and commanded some to see what it meant. No sooner was the great gate opened than the victorious Persians rushed in and took the palace, and the wretched monarch was put to the sword'.

The development of the character and abilities of Daniel, a captive in a strange land, a pure ambassador of Heaven in a court defiled by all the vices of earth, can be traced through the book. Chapter one portrays Daniel the Saint; Chapter two, four and five—Daniel the Sage, interpreting dreams and deciphering hieroglyphics; Chapter six—Daniel the Statesman flawless in character and faultless in administration; and the remainder of the book (Chs. 7 to 12)—Daniel the Seer. In the sixth chapter the guileless and unostentatious character of Daniel's devotion to his God is seen in striking contrast to the deceitful knavery of his envious colleagues in office: and the helplessness of an earthly monarch in contrast to the mighty power of the King of Heaven. After his ordeal in the den of lions is over, Daniel bears witness to that might in the words, 'My God hath sent His angel and shut the lions' mouth that they have not hurt me' (Dan. 6:22).

The first visions that Daniel had were during the reign of Belshazzar toward the end of the Babylonian Empire (Dan. 7:1; 8:1). Three distinct visions are recorded in Chapter 7, with probably very little time intervening between each, and their

interpretation indicates consecutive events. The four empires of Nebuchadnezzar's dream appear to Daniel as fierce, unclean, carnivorous beasts of prey. The true character of the times of the Gentiles, as God sees them, stripped of the splendour and glory that the Babylonian monarch saw in them, is indicated in Daniel's visions. His first vision is in verse 1, his second in verse 7 and his third in verse 13. It will be observed by the careful student that, while this chapter covers the same period as Chapter two, with the same four mighty kingdoms prefigured, many additional details concerning the time of the end which were not revealed to Nebuchadnezzar because of his lack of spiritual knowledge and interest, are revealed and explained to God's prophet.

The great sea out of which the beasts were seen to rise is generally considered to be the Mediterranean, the natural and geographical centre of all four Empires. The striving of the four winds seems to imply a ferment among the wicked spirit-forces under the control of Satan, the prince of the power of the air. (See Eph. 2:2; 6:12). Is. 17:12 and Rev. 17:15 make it clear that the sea in a state of turmoil represents the nations of the earth in a state of tumult and agitation. Daniel sees four beasts rise out of the sea, one after another, and the interpretation given to him is—'These great beasts, which are four, are four kings which shall arise out of the earth'. They therefore symbolise the four great world-empires and their founders, Nebuchadnezzar, Darius, Alexander and Augustus Caesar respectively, who achieved their conquests and acquired their dominions during political upheavals.

The lion—corresponding to the head of gold in the image—represents Babylon: the bear—corresponding to the breast and arms of silver—Medo-Persia: the leopard—corresponding to the belly and thighs of brass—Greece: and the nondescript, ferocious beast with ten horns—corresponding to the legs of iron and feet of iron and clay—represents Rome. Babylon appears as a lion with eagle's wings,—the lion, king of the forest, the eagle, king of the air, and gold, the most highly-prized metal in the mineral kingdom, being fittingly cognate emblems of such a wealthy and

powerful empire. The following Scriptures definitely refer to Babylon as a lion—Jer. 4:7; 49:19; 50:44: and as an eagle: Jer. 49:22; Ezek. 17:3, 12. The first beast is therefore symbolic of the strength and speed of the Babylonian conquests, and Nebuchadnezzar's fall is symbolised by the plucking of the beast's wings, and his restoration by its standing as a man possessing again a man's heart (cf. Dan. 4: 15, 16, 34). The bear that raised itself on one side, symbol of the double-sided kingdom of the Medo-Persians, had three ribs in its mouth. The victorious Medes plucked the flesh clean from the lands of Susiana, Lydia and Asia Minor. The rapidity of the conquests of Alexander the Great and the suddenness of his attacks, his rapacity and agility, are prefigured in the leopard with its four wings. After his death his four generals—represented by the leopard's four heads—divided the Grecian Empire among them, Cassander ruling Greece, Lysimachus Bithynia, Ptolemy Egypt and Seleucia Syria.

The fourth beast had such a monstrous appearance that no animal on earth could be found to describe it. It was the central figure of the second vision given to Daniel in this seventh chapter, and the prophet requested, and was granted, a detailed explanation of it. Its five outstanding characteristics are described in verses 7 and 19. It was *different* from all the others, *dreadful* in appearance, *destructive* in nature, *devouring* whatever it could find to swallow up, and *dominating* all the others ('stamping the residue with its feet'). The ten horns of the beast, corresponding to the ten toes of the image, are ten vassal kings of the revived Roman Empire at the end of the times of the Gentiles, just antecedent to the return of Christ, the smiting Stone, and the establishment of His Kingdom on earth. From among them there would arise another 'little horn' that would oust three of them from their position, possibly by a 'blood-purge'. This is a king who is to attain to pre-eminence in the final days of the fourth great world-empire over which he will have dominion. His rise and his fall are still future (Dan. 7:24-25). The first three beasts lose their dominion but are permitted to live on for a time. Utter destruction awaits the fourth beast, the fourth kingdom which, in the vision of John in Rev. 13:1-2, will combine the character of the first three beasts,

leopard, bear and lion, and have its power and authority from Satan himself (Rev. 13:4) The 'little horn' mentioned in Dan. 7: 8, 20, 24, 25 is to be distinguished from the 'little horn' of Dan. 8:9. The little horn of Dan. 7: is the prince of the revived Roman empire, the future world Dictator. He will be a superman with penetrating insight ('eyes like the eyes of man'—v. 8), persuasive oratory ('a mouth speaking great things'—v.8), and proud demeanour ('whose look was more stout than his fellows'—v. 20): but his dominion will be short-lived, only—'a time, and times, and the dividing of a time' or a year plus two years plus half a year, namely  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years. That period, however, will be a time of unprecedented persecution for 'the saints of the Most High' (Dan. 7: 18, 21, 22, 25, 27; Rev. 13:7), a faithful remnant of godly Jews who will refuse to worship the Beast or to receive his mark or number (Rev. 13:15, 16, 17; 15:2).

In addition to the vision of the fourth beast on earth, Daniel was immediately permitted to witness a judgement scene in Heaven (Ch. 7:9-12). This is not the final judgement of the Great White Throne described in Rev. 20, but precedes it by 1000 years. The Ancient of Days is here our Lord Jesus Christ, this is unmistakably clear if we compare the description of the Ancient of Days here with that of the Son of Man in Rev. 1:12-14. His sentence of judgement is passed upon the fourth great world power and its ruler, the little horn, who will be destroyed.

The third vision recorded in this chapter in verses 13 and 14, and its interpretation in verse 27 introduce us to the glorious earthly kingdom of our Lord Jesus, the Son of man, on earth. It has its counterpart in the smiting Stone that became a great mountain and filled the whole earth, the indestructible kingdom described in Dan. 2:44. When the kingdoms of the world become the Kingdom of God and His Christ, the 'saints of the Most High' will have places of honour in that day of Millennial glory.

*(To be continued)*