

## CHAPTER ONE

**Introduction****The Messiah**

Christians believe that Jesus Christ is both Man and God, and the Saviour of the world. This belief depends to a large extent on the reliability of the New Testament documents — but not entirely. We have, for instance, a completely independent testimony in the shape of the Old Testament, a collection of writings formed long before Christ was born and held sacred by a people who are often hostile to the Christian faith. In these writings God promises that He will send a Saviour into the world — a God-Man known to the Jews as the ‘Messiah’. ‘Christ’ means exactly the same thing as ‘Messiah’ — that is, ‘the anointed one’. The former word is derived from the Greek and the latter from the Hebrew. Now Jesus’ whole teaching was saturated with the claim that He was the Messiah. The following is an example:

‘The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ); when he comes, he will show us all things.” Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.”’ (John 4:25, 26)

Again and again Jesus showed how He was fulfilling all the Messianic prophecies. The early Christian church (which was itself at first largely Jewish) continued to lay tremendous emphasis upon this when witnessing to the Jews.

‘... they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul went in, as was his custom, and for three weeks he argued with them from the scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.”’ (Acts 17:1-3)

The Old Testament builds up a very detailed picture of the Messiah, and the first piece of this picture can be found right at the beginning of the Bible, in the third chapter of Genesis. Genesis 3:15 seems to indicate that the first promise of the coming Saviour was given to the human race immediately after it had become separated from God by sin. The Saviour was to be a human being, a descendant of Adam and Eve. He was to crush Satan, but in the process the Saviour Himself would be hurt in some way. As we read on through the Old Testament, we find that He was to be a descendant of Abraham, Jacob, Judah and David. Although He would be born a man, He would also be God. He would be a prophet, priest, king and ‘shepherd’. He would be the Saviour not only of the Jews, but also of the whole world. He would be born of a virgin<sup>1</sup> and would come from Bethlehem. He would bring His glory to the regions of Zebulun (containing Nazareth) and Naphthali (containing Capernaum) by Galilee. He would come into Jerusalem as the Messiah, riding on the colt of an ass. He would be despised and rejected. He would humble Himself and allow Himself to be led as a lamb to the slaughter, and He would be killed. In His death He would be associated with both the wicked and the rich. He would suffer greatly, but in doing so He would be receiving the punishment due to *us* for *our* sin. His body would never see corruption.

These are only some of the Messianic prophecies.<sup>2</sup> In this book we shall deal with some of the others — those found in the book of Daniel. These latter prophecies are among the most amazing to be found in the Bible. They give us many details about Christ, but in particular, so I believe, they predict the actual year of His coming, together with its setting in world history. These prophecies are like a great searchlight directed upon the Messiah and in its beam we can see the path of history which led up to Jesus Christ. The prophecies are full of rich meaning, but in this book we shall deal largely with only one side of them. We shall see how

the date and historical setting of Christ's arrival was accurately foretold long before His birth.

The early Christians were thrilled and excited by the way in which Christ fulfilled Old Testament prophecies. It is a vital aspect of the Bible's teaching and should be known and understood to some extent by all Christians. May we not be found worthy of the rebuke the risen Christ gave His two disciples on the way to Emmaus:

'And he said to them, "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.' (Luke 24:25-27)

### **The book of Daniel**

The book of Daniel is a part of the Jewish scriptures which are known to us as the 'Old Testament' of the Bible. Its author claims (in the case of chapters 7 to 12, at least) to be a man named Daniel, a Jewish statesman, probably of royal blood, who lived and prophesied during the time of the Jewish exile in Babylon in the sixth century before Christ. The book contains, among other things, a series of prophecies which predict the course of history from the time of Daniel up to the coming of the Messianic kingdom of Heaven.

In the Hebrew Bible the book of Daniel is found in the third division, the 'Writings', and not in the second, where the prophetic works occur. This is because Daniel was not a prophet in the technical sense — he was a statesman who possessed the gift of seeing and interpreting visions and dreams. He possessed the prophetic *gift*, but not the prophetic *office*. It is interesting that another Jew who rose to high office in a foreign court (Joseph) possessed a similar gift — and in both cases it was partly because of their prophetic gifts that they did rise to high office.

The prophecies of Daniel are the chief Old Testament example of a form of literature known as 'apocalyptic' (apocalyptic features can be found also in other parts of the Old Testament, such as Isaiah, Ezekiel and Zechariah). The book of Revelation, in the New Testament, is the other major apocalyptic work in the Bible. Apocalyptic literature was very popular during the two centuries before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., and large quantities were written around that time. The relationship between the book of Daniel and these later, far inferior, non-canonical apocalypses will be referred to briefly a little further on.

The book of Daniel can be divided into two parts. Chapters 1 to 6 contain straightforward narrative material (for the most part), and chapters 7 to 12 contain prophetic or apocalyptic material. In spite of this division, the two parts are closely integrated (the first vision, for example, comes in chapter 2, thus forming part of the narrative section) and a common theme runs through the whole book — the theme that the God of Israel is the only true God and that He is far above all heathen idols, kings and empires. He is in control, and His ultimate victory is certain. His saints will be gloriously vindicated, but they must remain faithful to Him, whatever the cost.

The narrative section contains several stories which illustrate this theme. They are set in Babylon and involve Daniel and his three friends, and also three different kings — Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar and Darius the Mede. This narrative section will be referred to when it helps us to understand the prophecies, but I shall not deal with it in any detail. In this book I shall concentrate almost entirely on the prophetic section (including chapter 2).

### **The critical view**

Now critical scholars claim that Daniel was not the real author, and that possibly he never

even existed. They believe that the book was composed much later, in the second century before Christ, at a time when the Jews were being savagely persecuted by Antiochus Epiphanes, a Greek king. At this time, most of the ‘predicted’ events had already taken place. Thus most of the ‘predictions’ were not predictions at all — they were simply a record of past history. According to the critics, the book was concocted (perhaps with the inclusion of a certain amount of pre-existing material) for the purpose of encouraging the Jews in their resistance to Antiochus’ persecution — and in fact the prophecies do concentrate very much on the Greek empire, particularly the period of Antiochus’ reign.

It is certainly true that a very important purpose of the book of Daniel was to strengthen and encourage those who were persecuted for their faith in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes — and in all other times too. It reveals the one great true philosophy of history — which is that God is in control. Godless man may appear to be all-powerful; but God is in control. In His own time, He will destroy His enemies, and His saints will be vindicated and exalted. This is true. But to critical scholars, this is the book’s only real value. As far as they are concerned, the book deals only with the time of Antiochus. There is no reference — of a *specific* sort — to the coming of Christ or any other future event.

They point out that the ascribing of a work to some well-known earlier historical person (a device known as ‘pseudonymity’) and the presentation of historical material in the form of predictive prophecy (although it was actually past history) were literary devices used quite commonly in those times — especially in apocalyptic literature. They suggest that it is wrong for us to judge this type of literature by modern Western literary conventions and to describe it as ‘fraudulent’. They claim that there is no reason why a piece of literature of this type should not be included in the canon of Scripture and be regarded as ‘divinely inspired’.

Up to this point, the critical argument may well be acceptable to some evangelicals. But the critics claim also that the book of Daniel contains many historical errors and that when the author does attempt to make some *genuine* predictions, they are completely wrong. In my view, this latter aspect of the critical argument degrades the book of Daniel to the level of ordinary literature, robs it of any right to be regarded as ‘divinely inspired’ and is incompatible with the teaching of Jesus. He regarded the Old Testament as the Word of God and ‘unbreakable’ — and this view underlies all that He said and did. He repeatedly showed His disciples how it had foretold His coming, and He continued to do this *after His resurrection* (Luke 24:25-27, 44-47). Furthermore, He referred directly or indirectly to Daniel’s prophecies on several occasions, and He applied them to Himself or to events which took place around the time of His first advent. His acceptance of the book of Daniel is shown both by His attitude towards the Scriptures as a whole (see, for example, Matthew 5:17, 18; 22:29; John 5:46, 47; 10:35) and by His references to the book itself, including the specific mention of Daniel by name (Matthew 24:15).

### **Predictive prophecy**

The critical argument fails to do justice to the importance which the Bible attaches to predictive prophecy. According to the Bible, one of the tests by which we can know whether a prophet is true or false is that of seeing whether or not his predictions are fulfilled. If the events he predicts do not come to pass, we can know that that prophet was not inspired by God.

‘When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously, you need not be afraid of him.’ (Deuteronomy 18:22)

This means, surely, that if the critics are right about Daniel's prophecies, the author was a false prophet who was not inspired by God — and the book of Daniel has no right to be included in the canon of Holy Scripture.

According to Isaiah, one of the things that distinguishes the true God from false gods is the fact that God is able to, and does, reveal the future through predictive prophecy. He is in control of world history and knows both the past and the future, right up to the end of time (Isaiah 41:21-23; 44:6, 7; 46:9, 10; 48:3-5).

This teaching is at the heart of the theology of the book of Daniel. One of the things the book is saying is that because God has predicted the future, we can be sure that He is superior to the heathen gods and *He is in control*. If Daniel's predictions are not genuine, one of the book's major arguments is invalidated — it is based upon false evidence. If God did *not* predict the future, what guarantee is there (in this context) that He *is* superior to the heathen gods and that He *is* in control?

As I have agreed, an important purpose of the book of Daniel was to encourage the Jews who were persecuted by Antiochus Epiphanes. This was the first time they had been persecuted for their faith, and some sort of encouragement was desperately needed. When the persecution arose, they found that it had been predicted by God long ago in the book of Daniel; and they were assured that it was all part of God's plan — *He was in control*. But if they had known that the prophecies were not truly predictive, they would not have got much encouragement from them. If the predictions are not genuine, the book loses much of its force and authority — it is little more than a piece of eloquent, but human, exhortation. It provides no real evidence that God *is* in control.

We know, however, that the Jews regarded the book as very much more than a piece of eloquent exhortation, because they accepted it into the canon of Holy Scripture. Although large quantities of apocalyptic literature were written between the times of Antiochus and Christ, none of it was accepted into the canon. The book of Daniel was given a unique place. If the Jews rejected the later apocalypses as unworthy of the canon, why did they accept the book of Daniel? The most likely reason is that they regarded it as completely genuine. If they had known it to be pseudo-predictive, it is unlikely that they would have accepted it into the canon, and it is equally unlikely that they were deceived into thinking it was genuine when it was not. (If the Jews *were* deceived, incidentally, there is good reason to question whether the book has any right to be included in the canon.)

Although it is something of a digression here (I am discussing the importance of predictive prophecy in the Old Testament), I must add a word about another aspect of the book's message of encouragement. An essential part of this message was its prediction that although the forces of evil would appear to triumph, this would not be the end. God would intervene and establish His kingdom. Thus the book pointed beyond Antiochus to the coming of Christ and His kingdom. If we fail, like the critics, to recognize that the book really did point to Christ, we reduce it again to a piece of eloquent, but erroneous, exhortation.

Returning to the question of predictive prophecy, therefore, we have seen that the Old Testament attaches great importance to it. But so also does the New Testament — and Jesus Christ Himself is its chief exponent. He often referred to the predictions about Himself in the Old Testament (e.g. Luke 24:25-27, 44-47). *A fundamental, vital and central aspect of Christ's teaching was His claim that He was fulfilling the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament.* Furthermore, the New Testament indicates that these prophecies were specific and detailed — not vague and indefinite (e.g. Matthew 2:4-6; 4:12-16).

Jesus also made His own predictions (e.g. Mark 13), and one of the reasons He gave for

doing so was very similar to the reasons given by God in the book of Isaiah (see references listed above).

‘And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place, you may believe.’ (John 14:29)

In saying that Daniel’s ‘genuine’ predictions are erroneous, the critics are saying — whether or not they intend it — that the author was a false prophet who was not inspired by God. Jesus Christ, on the other hand, referred to Daniel as ‘the prophet Daniel’ (Matthew 24:15). This seems to indicate that He accepted the real existence of a prophet named Daniel and He accepted him as a genuine prophet of God. He accepted the book as a part of Holy Scripture, and He applied at least one of its predictions to events yet future at that time. I believe therefore that full acceptance of the critical view of Daniel is tantamount to rejection of the teaching of Jesus.

Now predictive prophecy is a supernatural phenomenon — a kind of miracle — and whatever critical scholars may say to the contrary, they tend to make the assumption that ‘miracles do not happen’. One of the reasons they give for a second century date of authorship is that some of Daniel’s predictions are *so detailed and accurate* that they cannot be genuine — they must have been written after the events described had taken place. Predictive prophecies as detailed and accurate as this simply ‘do not happen’.

But to eliminate every miraculous element from the book of Daniel, as the critics do, is gratuitous. There is a vast amount of evidence, both Biblical and extra-Biblical, that miracles *do* happen. And, furthermore, it is entirely reasonable and appropriate that God should perform miracles sometimes. If He never revealed Himself in supernatural ways, how could we be sure that He is not a figment of the imagination? And concerning that supreme miracle, the resurrection of Jesus, the Bible itself says, ‘If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile’ (I Corinthians 15:17).

Daniel’s prophecies are of a very specific and detailed nature. It may not be God’s usual practice to reveal the future in the sort of detail we find in the book of Daniel — but the incarnation was not exactly a ‘usual’ event. The prophecies of Daniel look forward to the most important event in world history. And not only was it the most important event, but also it was a unique event. In order that He might redeem rebellious and lost mankind, God became man. God the Son put aside His glory and took upon Himself the human form and nature. Compared with this miracle, the miracle of Daniel’s prophecies is small indeed. If these prophecies do indeed look forward to the coming of Christ, it is entirely appropriate that they should be unique.

### **Historical accuracy and date of authorship**

Now the critics say that some of Daniel’s prophecies are historically inaccurate — particularly those which concern Babylon, Media and Persia, and also those which concern events after about 165 B.C. (when, they say, the prophecies were actually written). The former prophecies are inaccurate because they are about the distant past (relative to the time when they were written), and the latter ones are inaccurate because they are attempts at genuine prediction. Prophecies which concern the Greek empire up to about 165 B.C., on the other hand, are both detailed and accurate — because the author was writing about recent past history. Thus the closer the author comes to his own time, the more detailed and accurate is his historical knowledge. But when he passes over into genuine prediction, he loses all contact with historical reality.

These assertions form *the most important part of the critical argument for a second century*

*date of authorship.* However, we shall show in the following pages that as far as the historical inaccuracies are concerned, the critical argument is completely wrong. We shall show that *all* the predictions are extremely accurate, even when they speak of events which took place long after the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, the very latest possible time of authorship (Antiochus died in 163 B.C.). We shall see that *events leading right up to the time of Christ are described in accurate detail.* To a large extent, therefore, the critics' main argument for a second century date of authorship is invalidated.

Furthermore, it has become increasingly apparent that the author of the book of Daniel was extremely familiar with the Babylonian, Median and Persian empires. He was accurate in his descriptions, both of history and of background detail. Archaeology has confirmed dramatically the truth of certain historical and cultural details in the book of Daniel, and has led many critical scholars to suggest that the stories (chapters 1-6) came into circulation well before the second century B.C.

For example, critical scholars used to deny the historicity of Belshazzar, because there was no record of his existence outside the book of Daniel. But then the archaeologists unearthed cuneiform texts which confirmed that Daniel was right after all. Dougherty wrote: 'The fifth chapter of Daniel ranks next to cuneiform literature in accuracy .... The total information found in all available chronologically-fixed documents later than the sixth century B.C.... could not have provided the necessary material for the historical framework of the fifth chapter of Daniel.'<sup>3</sup> Archaeology has proved that the historical and cultural background to the stories in the book of Daniel is far more accurate than the critics realized. It has provided powerful external evidence for an early date for at least parts of the book.

Another example of Daniel's familiarity with the Babylonian, Median and Persian empires is his accurate dating of events. For example, we are told that the vision of the ram and the he-goat (chapter 8) took place in the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar. The ram (which Daniel saw at the beginning of the vision) represented the Persian-dominated Medo-Persian empire. The third year of Belshazzar's reign was the very time at which Cyrus the Persian created the Medo-Persian empire (550 B.C.) This date was not only accurate, but also it was given as a particular year in the reign of a king who was forgotten in later times. The Greek historians did not even know that Belshazzar existed. It is highly unlikely that a second century author could have dated the vision so precisely and in such a manner. Note also that this date appears in the book's *prophetic* section, which critical scholars insist must have been written in the second century B.C.

Further evidence for a sixth century date of authorship can be found in the book of Ezekiel, in the first book of Maccabees (in the Apocrypha), and in the works of the Jewish historian Josephus:

'Other lines of evidence of the historicity of Daniel, as adduced by the late Professor R. D. Wilson of Princeton, are these: He is twice mentioned by Ezekiel,<sup>4</sup> who was carried off to Babylon about eight years after Daniel.

The first book of Maccabees presupposes the existence and common knowledge of the book of Daniel prior to the Maccabean age. In chapter two specific reference is made to Daniel and his three friends, who are grouped with such historical characters as Abraham and David.

That the Jews believed Daniel to have written long before Antiochus Epiphanes, appears from the story of Josephus, of the high priest Jaddua's encounter with Alexander the Great. When Alexander came to Jerusalem, the high priest sought to placate him by showing him the prophecy of Daniel that a king of Greece should overthrow Persia.'<sup>5</sup>

Professor Wilson mentions three different authors who referred to Daniel by name. The first

is Ezekiel, who wrote of Daniel's righteousness and wisdom. Needless to say, many scholars do not accept that Ezekiel was referring to his contemporary in Babylon — and in fact there *are* some apparent problems with this identification. In particular, Ezekiel associates righteous Daniel with Noah and Job, both of whom lived in the remote past and were not Hebrews (Ezekiel 14:12-20). The order of the names (Noah, Daniel, Job) is further problem. It is objected also that if Ezekiel wanted to name a *Hebrew* man who was outstandingly righteous, he could have named someone like Abraham, who had lived long ago like the others.

In the Ras Shamra (Ugaritic) texts, a certain King Dan'el is described as being just and pious. He was a non-Hebrew and he lived several centuries before Ezekiel's time. It is possible also that the Jewish exiles in Babylon had heard of him, although there is no specific evidence of this. Many scholars believe therefore that this was the 'Daniel' to whom Ezekiel was referring. However, there are problems with this identification also. In particular, as Dressler puts it, 'Is it conceivable that the same prophet [Ezekiel the priest] would choose a Phoenician-Canaanite devotee of Baal as his outstanding example of righteousness? Within the context of Ezekiel this seems to be a preposterous suggestion.'<sup>6</sup> One way of answering this is to assert that Ezekiel is talking about personal integrity — not religious adherence. Another is to suggest that the Ugaritic Daniel was righteous according to the light that he had (Romans 2:14, 15). Nevertheless, I believe it is extremely unlikely that Ezekiel's Daniel could have been a polytheistic Baal-worshiper.

For the following reasons, I believe it is much more likely that he was the man of the book of Daniel. Ezekiel was a priest who had denounced idolatry in no uncertain terms (8:5-18; 14:1-11), and in 14:12-20 he was speaking 'the word of the Lord'. I believe therefore that the Daniel to whom he referred must have been a worshiper of the one true God. Also, he must have been well-known by name and reputation to the Jews of that period, as well as being righteous and wise. The outstandingly wise and godly hero of the book of Daniel matches this description in every respect. The fact that he is classed as a righteous man with Noah and Job seems rather strange at first sight. But it does not disqualify him. To me, these three names convey the message that God's people are drawn from every period of history and from every race — from the beginning to the end of human history, and from Jews and Gentiles. Noah, Daniel and Job illustrate this well. Noah had lived long ago and was the ancestor of all peoples on earth, both Jews and Gentiles. Daniel was a Jew, and lived in the present, whereas Job was a Gentile, and had lived in the past. Another point is that although Noah and Job were not Hebrews, they *were* Biblical characters, and they *did* worship the one true God (unlike the Ugaritic Daniel).

Ezekiel mentions Daniel again later, but this time as an outstandingly wise man, and he compares him with someone from whom 'no secret can be hidden' (Ezekiel 28:3). *This is the very type of wisdom attributed to Daniel in the book of Daniel.* Furthermore, the Ras Shamra text does not explicitly refer to Daniel as a wise man. I suggest therefore that the reference to Daniel's wisdom confirms that Ezekiel's Daniel is Daniel's Daniel. The events of Daniel 2 took place in 603/602 B.C., and Ezekiel 14 and 28 are internally dated to 592/591 and 587/586 B.C. Therefore Daniel's reputation was established in Babylonia already (Daniel 2:48). He was well known to the Jewish exiles for his righteousness and wisdom, and doubtless they were aware that the secret of Nebuchadnezzar's dream 'had not been hidden from him'. By contrast, we do not know if the exiles had even heard of the Ugaritic Daniel.

The second author cited by Professor Wilson is the writer of I Maccabees. This man wrote in about 103 B.C., only sixty years after the death of Antiochus Epiphanes. Therefore his life may well have overlapped that of Antiochus. Clearly he was in a much better position than we

are to judge whether Daniel was a historical person or an invention of the second century B.C. He quoted from the book of Daniel and regarded Daniel as fully historical.

The third author is Josephus, who was born in 37 or 38 A.D. He accepted without question that Daniel was a historical person and was the author of the book which bears his name. He wrote about two centuries after the death of Antiochus Epiphanes; so his evidence is not as direct as that of I Maccabees and Qumran (see below). But he lived close to the time of Jesus. Therefore he provides powerful evidence that the Jews of Jesus' time accepted the book of Daniel as a work of the sixth century B.C. This, in turn, indicates that when Jesus referred to 'the prophet Daniel', He was thinking of a sixth century prophet, and not of some unknown writer living in the second century B.C. (see 'Jesus and Pseudonymity' below).

Evidence of another kind has been provided by the 'Dead Sea Scrolls' of Qumran. The book of Daniel is well represented amongst the scrolls, and it is worth quoting R. K. Harrison on the subject: 'Since the community was itself Maccabean in origin, it testifies to the way in which Daniel was revered and cited as Scripture in the second century B.C..... That this prophecy was unquestionably popular with the sectaries is evident from the number of fragments and copies of the book found in the Qumran caves. But since all these manuscripts are copies, and not the original composition, the date of the autograph of Daniel must of necessity be advanced by half a century at the very least, so as to allow the absolute minimum of time for the book to circulate and be accepted as Scripture.'<sup>7</sup>

There is much more that has been written, both for and against a second century date of authorship. But we cannot enter into all the pros and cons of the debate here. For further details, the reader is referred to other works by evangelical scholars.<sup>8</sup>

### **Apocalyptic literature**

As mentioned already, apocalyptic literature (characterized by visions, lurid symbolism, pseudonymity, etc.) was very popular during the two centuries before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., and large quantities were written around that time. There are certain very obvious similarities between this literature and the book of Daniel, and it is generally accepted that to a large extent it was actually imitating Daniel.<sup>9</sup> Now the critical view is that the book of Daniel was written around the same time as these imitations. We should note, however, that apocalyptic features can be found in parts of the Old Testament other than the book of Daniel (particularly Isaiah, Ezekiel, Joel and Zechariah) — parts which even the critics agree were written long before the second century B.C. So the mere fact that Daniel's prophecies are apocalyptic in nature is no reason for assuming a second century date of authorship.

Furthermore, it is widely recognized that the book of Daniel is vastly superior to, and in certain ways very different from, these later apocalypses. It is, in fact, a distinctive piece of literature in a class of its own. It is highly significant that Daniel was accepted into the canon of Scripture, whereas the later apocalypses were not. The book of Daniel has strong affinities with prophecy and the Wisdom literature, and in some ways it is 'definitely misleading', to quote Heaton, to class it with apocalyptic writing. 'Daniel has suffered the misfortune of being classed with his second-rate imitators.'<sup>10</sup>

If the non-canonical apocalypses are 'second-rate imitations', we can describe the book of Daniel as 'the genuine article'. These 'second-rate imitations' are frequently pseudonymous and contain pseudo-predictive prophecy — but it is completely unwarranted to assume that this must be true also of 'the genuine article'.

'Pseudonymity' is the device of attributing a work to some well-known hero of the past, such as Enoch or Moses. But Daniel is known to us with certainty only from the book itself;

so it cannot be said that the book was attributed to a well-known hero of the past. Hence it cannot be said that the book is typically pseudonymous. Why should there be this difference? In the light of the factors outlined above (including the author's special knowledge of historical details forgotten in later times — e.g. the regency of Belshazzar), there is good reason to believe that the book of Daniel is not pseudonymous at all — it was written by Daniel himself.

### Jesus and pseudonymity

I believe that if Jesus accepted that Daniel's prophecies were written in the sixth century B.C., then they *were* written then. I find it impossible to believe that God the Son, who was in full communion with God the Father, could have allowed Himself to swallow the idea that Daniel's astounding prophecies were genuine when they were not.

If Jesus was deceived by the device of pseudonymity, He was not merely deceived over a matter of authorship. He was deceived into believing that God had predicted the course of history hundreds of years in advance, whereas He had not. He was deceived into believing that God had mightily demonstrated His power — in the way described by Isaiah — whereas this was not so.

It is true that Christ was not omniscient during His life on earth; but this is very different from saying, as many critics do, that He could be deceived and could propagate error. Jesus plainly indicated that His teaching was both divinely inspired and infallible. The words that He spoke were the very words of God (see below).

As I have pointed out already, Jesus continued to explain to His disciples *after His resurrection* how the Old Testament had foretold His coming. Now it is safe to assume that after His resurrection, Jesus was free of the limitations He had during His life on earth. Did He modify or alter the teaching which He had given before His resurrection, when His knowledge had been limited? No! His attitude towards the Scriptures (including the book of Daniel) was exactly the same as it had been before. He had said, 'The word which you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me' (John 14:24). 'Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away' (Matthew 24:35). I repeat that if Jesus accepted that Daniel's prophecies were written in the sixth century B.C., then they *were* written then.

In Matthew 24:15 we read that Jesus said, 'So when you see the desolating sacrilege spoken of by the prophet Daniel....' But do these words mean necessarily that Jesus believed in the existence of a sixth century Daniel? Almost certainly the correct answer is that they do mean this — unless it was common knowledge that the book was pseudonymous, because in that case the disciples would have understood clearly that Jesus was referring to a pseudonymous Daniel. Pseudonymity was a literary device with which the Jews were perfectly familiar. If there *is* any possibility that it was a well-known fact that Daniel was pseudonymous, then obviously there is a possibility that Jesus did not believe in a sixth century Daniel. As I have shown, however, we have solid evidence that the Jews of that time accepted without question that the book of Daniel was written in the sixth century B.C. by Daniel himself.

An evangelical scholar has argued recently that acceptance of a second century date of authorship is not incompatible with belief in the divine inspiration of Scripture.<sup>11</sup> Most evangelicals would disagree with this; but the fact is that evangelical scholars are recognizing more and more the *humanity* of Scripture (without denying its divinity). The Bible is written in ordinary human language, and often in the form of ordinary human literature. Critical scholars led the way in recognizing the humanity of Scripture — this we acknowledge — but they did so at the expense of its divinity, with disastrous results. A right balance must be

reached in understanding both the divine inspiration and the humanity of Scripture.

It seems to me that pseudonymity could, in theory, be compatible with divine inspiration — provided there was no element of deception. That is, provided it was openly pseudonymous, and was clearly recognized for what it was by the original readers. However, for several reasons (which I have outlined already), I believe that the book of Daniel is not pseudonymous. All the reasons which I have given are compelling; but the most important one is that the Jews, and above all Jesus Himself, accepted that ‘the book of Daniel’ was indeed written by Daniel in the sixth century B.C.

### **Pseudonymity and the coming of Christ**

However, let us suppose for a moment — for the sake of argument — that evangelicals are mistaken, and that the book of Daniel *was* composed in the second century B.C. Should we, if the book were proved to be a second century work, abandon our belief that the prophecies look forward to Christ?

I would answer this question with an emphatic No! Even if the book of Daniel were proved to be a second century work, I would still insist that it looks forward to the coming of Christ. And by that I would mean that it looks forward to the coming of Christ in a *specific* way — not in the rather vague and indefinite way allowed by some critics. It was not just an accident or happy coincidence that Christ fulfilled the prophecies.

I would concede that the book was written originally to encourage those who were being persecuted for their faith by Antiochus Epiphanes. I would even be willing to concede that the author may have *thought* that God’s kingdom would be established immediately after the death of Antiochus. The author may have *thought* that 9:24-27 was entirely concerned with the events of his own day, and he may have *thought* that 11:40-45 described the last days of Antiochus. All this I would be willing to concede.

I would believe, however, that *guided by the Holy Spirit*, the author actually pointed to the coming of Christ more than a century and a half later. He may not have appreciated the full significance of what he was predicting — but in the case of predictive prophecy, how can the prophet possibly understand the full significance of his divinely inspired utterance? That the prophecies of Daniel really do point to Christ will be shown clearly in the following pages.

The critical view is that the book predicted that God’s kingdom would be established in its full glory immediately or very soon after the death of Antiochus Epiphanes. And since this did not happen, it follows (so the critics tell us) that the author was grossly mistaken. However, in this book we shall see that this view can be refuted simply by examining Daniel’s prophecies very carefully and comparing them with the facts of history.

We shall see that Daniel did *not* say that God’s kingdom would be fully established immediately after the death of Antiochus. Whatever the author may have thought, what he actually *said* was that it would be fully established after the death of Antiochus *and the total destruction of the Greek empire* (assuming 2:33 and 7:7 refer to the Greek empire). As a matter of historical fact, this destruction was a process which continued up to 27 B.C., only a few years before the birth of Christ.

The critics have been so engrossed in the details of their theory (that the book was written to help the Jews persecuted by Antiochus) that they seem to have completely overlooked the fact that Daniel’s prediction *actually was fulfilled*. It is the critics who are mistaken — not the book of Daniel.

### **Basic assumptions**

All books which deal with controversial subjects are written from a certain point of view and make certain assumptions; and this is particularly true of non-academic books. The present work is no exception; so it will be helpful if I indicate very briefly the nature of its basic assumptions.

These assumptions are based upon certain facts of history — facts which any open-minded person can verify, if he or she takes the trouble to examine the evidence. Our chief source of information about these facts is the New Testament, and the weight of evidence which it provides is far greater than most people realize. For example, it has been proved beyond doubt that the author of Luke and Acts was one of the best and most accurate historians of ancient times. It is very highly probable that he was a companion of Paul, and that he was personally acquainted with many of those who knew Jesus during His life on earth. He was an educated man, and in the prologue to his Gospel he specifically states, ‘Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you ..... so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught’ (Luke 1:3, 4, N.I.V.). Outside the New Testament, supporting evidence is found in the writings of Pliny, Tacitus, Suetonius and Josephus, the Jewish Mishnah and Gemara and one or two other sources. There is also some archaeological evidence.<sup>12</sup>

These historical facts concern a unique historical person — Jesus Christ — and the main details are as follows. Jesus Christ was a Jewish teacher who lived from about 6 B.C. to about 30 A.D. He was born of a virgin in Bethlehem and was of the family of David, but He lived most of His life in Nazareth. He performed many miracles and claimed to be the Messiah. And by implication, at least, He claimed also to be God incarnate. He was crucified during the reign of the Roman emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was Prefect of Judaea. He died on Passover eve, which was a Friday, and on the following Sunday He rose from the dead. As a result of this event, the Christian church was formed, thus changing the whole course of world history.

I believe that if Jesus rose from the dead, it is reasonable to assume that His teachings are true, with all that that implies — including His deity and the divine inspiration of the Old Testament. It is also reasonable to assume that He enabled His disciples to produce a body of divinely inspired writings which incorporate a reliable record of those teachings (John 14:26 and 16:12-14 support this assumption).<sup>13</sup>

If the New Testament is divinely inspired, we should accept and believe what it says — and that includes its teachings on the subject of Old Testament prophecy. If we want to know what *God* meant by the prophecies of Daniel (and what could be more reasonable if it was He who inspired them?), we must pay attention to what He says about them in the New Testament.

As indicated already, *one of the most fundamental aspects of New Testament teaching* is the claim that Christ was fulfilling the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. However, we can show that Daniel’s prophecies look forward to the first coming of Christ *even if we leave out the teaching of the New Testament, and even if we accept a second century date of authorship*. All we ask of critical or unbelieving readers is that they do *not* start off with the assumption that miracles never happen and that predictive prophecy is impossible.

### **Daniel's prophecies**

We shall turn now to the prophecies themselves and view them briefly as a whole before studying the details. The first two prophecies are revealed in two very similar dreams. In both of them, four great empires are seen to arise in turn, the God of Heaven finally destroying the fourth empire and setting up His own kingdom. The fourth empire is described in much

greater detail than the others.

In the first dream (chapter 2) Nebuchadnezzar sees a great image composed of four different metals. The fourth empire is symbolized by legs of iron and feet of iron mixed with clay. In the second dream (chapter 7) Daniel sees four great beasts. The fourth beast has ten horns, but then another 'little' horn grows up and fights against God and His saints.

In the third vision (chapter 8) we are treated to a description of the Medo-Persian and Greek (Macedonian) empires. The description of the latter includes a detailed account of Antiochus Epiphanes. The two empires are symbolized by two beasts, and of the two the Greek is described in much the greater detail.

The fourth prophecy (chapter 9) takes an entirely different form. In it Daniel is apparently given the exact date of the Messiah's arrival, together with certain details about His work and the subsequent destruction of Jerusalem.

The fifth prophecy (chapters 11 and 12) consists of two parts. The first consists almost entirely of a detailed account of the rise and fall of the Greek empire, and includes an elaborate description of Antiochus Epiphanes. It is preceded by a very short description of the Persian empire. The second part deals with a time of deliverance and glory awaiting the people of God.

The controversy over interpretation centres mainly on the first two visions. There are three main schools of interpretation:

1. *The orthodox school.* This school believes the four empires to be Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. The ten horns stand for kingdoms which exist during a second phase of Rome's history. It may be that they are merely able to trace their origin back to the Roman empire. The little horn appears during a third phase and may represent a man, government, coalition of governments, or an ideology. It opposes the saints until the judgment of God brings about the complete destruction of the Roman empire.

2. *The dispensationalist school.* This school also identifies the empires as Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. They believe there will be a revived Roman empire which will be divided into ten kingdoms, and so the ten horns of the fourth beast are compared with the ten toes of the image — although Daniel does not tell us how many toes this image has. This period, yet future, will occur after the return of Christ for His people. There are others who believe that Christ will return for His people *after* this period. The little horn represents a satanically inspired prince of the revived Roman empire (the 'Antichrist'). This period will last seven years (the seventieth 'seven' of chapter 9) and will be ended by yet another return of Christ, who will reign on earth with His saints for a thousand years (Revelation 20:1-7). He will then withdraw and chaos will prevail until He finally appears for the third or fourth time.

3. *The critical school.* This school identifies the four empires as Babylon, Media, Persia and Greece (the Macedonian empire). The little horn is identified as Antiochus Epiphanes, a king of the Syrian part of the Greek empire.

My own belief is that the four empires should be identified as Babylon, Media, Persia and Greece. Many people feel that belief in this interpretation is tantamount to acceptance of the critical school's version of the book's authorship. But this is not so. I believe that all the prophecies are genuine predictions and that the events described are historically true. (Incidentally, there were conservative Christians who held the 'Greek' view long before it was adopted by the critics.)

Let the reader consider, for a moment, the fact that critical scholars believe the fourth kingdom is such a detailed and accurate picture of the Greek empire that the author must have

lived during the time of that empire after the events described had taken place. Clearly we must give very serious consideration to the possibility that the fourth kingdom *was* the Greek empire, even if we do not accept the critical version of the book's authorship. Evangelicals must not allow their judgment to be warped by their distaste for critical theology. We may not agree with the critics' view of the book's authorship; but this does not mean that they have nothing to teach us. Their observation that Daniel's fourth kingdom accurately pictures the Greek empire is perfectly valid. In fact one can think of several reasons (they are summarized in chapter 5) why Greece should be given greater prominence than Rome. Furthermore, at least one of these reasons should commend itself to conservative scholars *more* than to critical scholars.

One of the reasons critical scholars give for their belief in a second century B.C. date of authorship is the fact that the Greek empire is described very accurately and in much greater detail than the preceding empires. They claim that the author's knowledge of the Babylonian, Median and Persian empires is both scanty and inaccurate, and they point out various supposed errors concerning them in both the prophetic and narrative sections of the book. They believe that Daniel's first three kingdoms are supposed to represent Babylon, Media and Persia, but that his description of them is inaccurate.

Against this, conservative scholars have shown that there is good reason to believe that all the historical details in the stories are perfectly accurate. As mentioned earlier, archaeology has confirmed the accuracy of the historical background to such an extent that many critics now reckon that these stories came into circulation well before the second century B.C. — some perhaps even as early as the sixth century. In the present work I will show that *the prophecies also* are completely accurate. In particular, I will show that the 'four kingdoms' are an *accurate*, true-to-history description of the Babylonian, Median, Persian and Greek empires.

Daniel, like all other Old Testament writers, is ultimately looking forward to the New Covenant and all the glories of the Messianic kingdom — the New Israel. When Christ came, He taught that He was the Messiah, that the New Covenant is through His shed blood and that the New Israel, the Israel of God, is not an earthly kingdom, but is a heavenly kingdom whose citizens are drawn from all nations. The New Testament makes it quite clear that the kingdom of God was established at the time of Christ's first advent.

I believe therefore that Daniel is looking forward primarily to the first coming of Christ. He describes how four empires will precede the kingdom of Heaven. God will begin setting up His kingdom by destroying the fourth empire (the Greek one) and He will strike the first blow in the reign of a particular king (Antiochus Epiphanes). In some very wonderful way, His kingdom will appear *after the total destruction of the Greek empire*.

In fact the Greek empire did begin to crumble at the time predicted, and Christ entered the world almost immediately after the final destruction of the Greek empire. Rome began her real conquest of the Greek empire (at this time consisting of a number of separate kingdoms) by defeating Macedon in 168 B.C. and the Jews began their successful war of independence in 167 B.C., all during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes. Syria was annexed in 65 B.C., and the last vestige of the empire vanished when Egypt became a Roman province in 27 B.C. Shortly afterwards, in about 6 B.C., Christ entered the world to complete the process of setting up His kingdom. This kingdom is now undergoing a process of development, and a final consummation awaits it; but the initial establishment of the kingdom has already taken place.

(Note that the ninth chapter of Zechariah also seems to associate the coming of the Messiah with the passing of the Greek empire.)

## Objections

I have indicated that I believe the destruction of Antiochus Epiphanes and the Greek empire heralded the coming of Christ. I have shown also that the final destruction of the Greek empire *was* followed — almost immediately — by the birth of Christ. But, the reader objects, if the death of Antiochus and the destruction of the Greek empire were supposed to herald the arrival of the Messiah, why is there a gap of over a hundred and fifty years between the death of Antiochus and the birth of Christ? Why did it take so long for the Greek empire to be destroyed?

It is natural for us to feel that a rapid destruction of the Greek empire, followed immediately by Christ's arrival, would have been more impressive and convincing. But God's ways are not our ways. He does not do things the way we expect. (An example of this was the way in which Christ came as a suffering servant and not as an earthly, conquering, Davidic king.)

The period of delay may have been unexpected, but it was, in fact, remarkably fruitful. A *tremendous hope and expectation of a coming Messiah built up over the years after the time of Antiochus*. And this expectation was very strong — almost at fever pitch — around the time of Christ. This, perhaps, is one reason why Christ delayed His coming.

The rise of a Messianic hope was closely connected with the development of apocalyptic literature. And as we have noted, this literature was, to a large extent, inspired by the book of Daniel. It is likely that during the persecutions of Antiochus, people began to 'run to and fro' (12:4) through Daniel's prophecies as they saw his predictions coming to pass. A flame of Messianic hope was kindled in their hearts — a flame which burned ever more brightly as the years passed by. It is true that their concept of the Messiah was a mistaken one, but they *were* expecting Him.

Measured by the scale of a man's lifetime, a hundred and fifty years does seem rather a long time. But is this the sort of scale we should use? The book of Daniel describes history from six hundred years before the birth of Christ, and the Bible as a whole covers the entire span of human history — a period of several thousand years. If we think a hundred and fifty years is a long time, we are getting things out of perspective. We need to stand back (mentally) and try to visualize the whole course of human history. Measured on this scale, a hundred and fifty years is actually a very short time.

Another factor which has to be taken into account is the phenomenon of 'foreshortening' in Biblical prophecy. Events which actually take place over long periods of time are sometimes squeezed together so that they seem to happen all at once, over a short period of time. We shall discuss this phenomenon a little further on in this chapter.

If the conservative reader finds the gap between Antiochus and Christ difficult to understand, the critical reader finds it even more so — or perhaps one should say that he thinks he understands it perfectly. To him, it is confirmation that the prophecies have nothing at all to do with Christ. The second century author was simply writing about the events of his own day. His prediction of God's kingdom was no more than a noble, but over-optimistic, hope.

To the critic, this is a thoroughly rational explanation which ties the whole thing up very neatly. In support, he cites the evidence for a second century date of authorship, including the book's tremendous emphasis on the persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes. In addition, he asserts that some of the predictions which evangelicals say refer to Christ were actually fulfilled during the time of Antiochus (e.g., the prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27). Predictions which were *not* fulfilled around the time of Antiochus are dismissed as erroneous, and the fact

that they *were* fulfilled by Christ is largely ignored.

What is my answer? I have discussed the question of authorship already, so this point need not detain us. I have indicated that the prophecies would still point to Christ even if a second century date were proved. I have agreed also that the book had a special message of encouragement for the Jews who suffered under Antiochus.

But how can we explain the fact that some of the predictions about Christ were also fulfilled (apparently) around the time of Antiochus? We can begin by noting that the events of Antiochus' reign fulfilled these predictions *imperfectly*, whereas those of Christ's time fulfilled them *perfectly*. One highly unlikely explanation is that the book was, as the critics say, written in the second century B.C. The author *thought* that he was writing about his own time only; but guided by the Holy Spirit, he was actually pointing forward to the coming of Christ.

But what if the book of Daniel is a work of the sixth century B.C.? I emphasize that these prophecies (9:24-27; 12:1-3, 7) were fulfilled *perfectly* by the coming of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., but *imperfectly* in the time of Antiochus. There is a superficial similarity between the events of Antiochus' reign and the events described in 9:26, 27 and 12:7, but there is very little, if any, correspondence with the other parts of these prophecies (9: 24, 25 and 12:1-3) — these parts were fulfilled by Christ, and Christ alone.

The similarities could be passed off as a coincidence, but there seems to be more to it than this. As we shall see, Christ Himself applied the prophecy of 9:26b, 27b to the events of 70 A.D., but He seemed also to link it with the persecution of Antiochus (which preceded His first advent) and the tribulation which is to precede His second advent. The primary reference is to the events of 70 A.D., but there seems to be some sort of secondary reference to the 'tribulation' which preceded the first advent and to another one which will precede the second advent. (This problem of 'primary' and 'secondary' fulfilments is discussed a little further on in this chapter.)

I cannot help feeling also that part of the answer may be that Daniel's prophecies are something of a riddle — and that God made it this way deliberately. Jesus sometimes obscured His message by speaking in parables — and He did it *deliberately*, for a reason (Matthew 13:10-17). In other words these predictions were deliberately inspired by God in such a way that people can avoid seeing that they point to Christ. If a person has decided the issue in advance, there are some things that he simply does not want to see — and God does not force people to see the truth against their wills. If the reader finds this idea difficult to accept, he should look up the passage I have just referred to (Matthew 13:10-17). The way in which some of Daniel's predictions about Christ appear to apply to the time of Antiochus provides an easy way out for those who do not want to believe. But I believe these people are deceiving themselves.

It is easy to feel that God would have done better to have made these predictions absolutely plain and obvious. But I repeat that His ways are not our ways. He does not always lay everything on a plate before us — He wants us to search for the truth. The kingdom of Heaven is like hidden treasure (Matthew 13:44). If we approach the subject with truly open minds, with attitudes of belief and expectation, and of respect for God's Word, our search will be rewarded. 'Seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you' (Matthew 7:7).

### **Doubts and uncertainties**

Now a good many readers, both critical and conservative, will disagree already with much of what has been said so far. And I acknowledge that the whole subject is highly controversial

and that it is unwise to be dogmatic.

Although the New Testament lays great stress on the fact that many things about Christ were prophesied in the Old Testament, it does make it plain that the prophecies are not crystal clear in meaning. The Jewish people as a whole did not understand them, and most of them did not recognize Christ when He came. Even the disciples of Jesus were slow to understand. And even with our present knowledge of Christ, with the advantage of hindsight, it is still possible for Bible-believing Christians of equal sincerity to differ over the interpretation of some parts.

Having thus cautiously admitted the controversial nature of the subject and the inadvisability of being dogmatic, I will now proceed to stick my neck out slightly further. The interpretation expounded in the following pages is largely concerned with *known facts of past history*. Clearly, such an interpretation is capable of a greater degree of proof than interpretations concerned with the unknown future. I myself feel that Daniel's prophecies apply so perfectly to events preceding and immediately following Christ's first advent, that I have considerable confidence in the correctness of this interpretation. However, I feel that these past events undoubtedly *typify*, at least, certain events yet to come. Whether the prophecies will find more specific fulfilment than this in the future is a matter for debate and conjecture. It may or may not be so. Time will tell.

It seems that some predictive prophecies in the Bible had primary fulfilments which took place soon after the prophecies were given, but also more distant secondary fulfilments. It is possible that Daniel's prophecies are of this type. I suggest that if they are, the interpretation expounded in this book is the primary fulfilment, and the secondary fulfilment is the one that is yet to come. I do indicate in the final chapter of this book what sort of secondary application I prefer, but I am not dogmatic about it — I acknowledge the possibility that there may be a more specific future fulfilment. I maintain, however, that even if there is such a future fulfilment, it will be a secondary one which need not alter in any way the primary fulfilment expounded in the following pages.

In connection with this question of 'primary and secondary' fulfilments, it is worth reminding ourselves here that apart possibly from the books of Luke and Acts, the entire Bible was written by Jews. And Jesus Himself was a Jew. If we are to understand the Bible fully, therefore, it is sometimes necessary for us to see it through the eyes of the Hebrews. People often get very perplexed and confused over the question of whether Daniel's prophecies look forward to the first advent or the second advent, and whether Jesus was referring (in Matthew 24) to 70 A.D. or to His second advent. In fact Jesus was probably referring to both events at one and the same time — and it may well be that this was perfectly natural to Hebrew thought. Although separated by hundreds of years, these two happenings are, in some sense, a *single event*. Daniel's prophecies look forward to the first advent *and* the second advent. The prediction of Israel's punishment in Deuteronomy 28 looks forward to Nebuchadnezzar's siege *and* the siege of 70 A.D. Let us remember that Daniel's prophecies come to us from the East, and that they do not necessarily conform to the Western concept of time. (I am indebted to Martin Goldsmith, a Hebrew Christian, for this insight.)

In Biblical predictive prophecy, therefore, events which are separated by long periods of time are sometimes telescoped together in such a way that they seem to be (because in one sense they *are*) one event. Likewise, events which take place over long periods of time are sometimes squeezed together or 'foreshortened' (like a range of mountains viewed from a distance) in such a way that they seem to happen all at once. Daniel saw that God's kingdom would be established at a certain point of time in world history, and he saw that it would fill the earth and have absolute dominion. But he did not see that many centuries were to elapse

between the founding of the kingdom and the time when it would, in every sense of the phrase, ‘fill the whole earth’. Likewise he did not see that a number of years were to elapse between the death of Antiochus Epiphanes and the final destruction of the Greek empire.

I believe, therefore, that Daniel’s prophecies look forward to the first coming of Christ, but they look beyond it to the second coming also. They *were* fulfilled by the first coming, to a large extent; but it is only when Christ returns at the end of this age — when God destroys the present universe and creates ‘a new heaven and a new earth’ (Revelation 20:11; 21:1) — that the fulfilment will be total and complete.

### Times and numbers

Before concluding this chapter, I would like to say a few words about the vexed question of ‘times and numbers’ in the book of Daniel. Daniel’s prophecies contain references to certain mysterious measurements of time, together with cryptic numbers, which have always been a cause of some confusion. The tendency amongst evangelical scholars is to assume that these numbers and units of time are entirely symbolical and are not to be taken literally.

I agree that these numbers are highly symbolical, but as far as I can see, there is no good reason why they should not have a literal significance also. In the case of the ‘seventy weeks’ (9:24-27), for example, we shall see that there *was* a literal fulfilment; but at the same time, the number seventy does have a symbolic significance.

Another period of time which crops up more than once, but in different forms, is that of three and a half years. The figure three and a half has a definite symbolic significance, yet at the same time it is a fact that Antiochus’ persecution did last for approximately three and a half years — as did the public ministry of Jesus and the Jewish War of 67-70 A.D. We shall deal with the literal aspect of these ‘times and numbers’ as we encounter them, but their symbolic significance will be dealt with in the final chapter.

In one case, incidentally, the numbers seem to serve the purpose of helping us to distinguish between different historical events which might otherwise be confused with each other. In 7:25 we are told that Antiochus’ persecution lasted three times and part (*pelag*) of a time. In 12:7, however, mention is made of a period of three times and half (*chatsi*) a time. The difference is small, but as we shall see, it indicates that these verses describe two completely different events. In the former case it is Antiochus’ persecution, and in the latter it is the Jewish war of 67-70 A.D.

### Conclusion

I would like to emphasize again that in this book I do not deal with every aspect of Daniel’s prophecies. I concentrate mainly on showing that the historical predictions were accurate, and that they foretold the date and historical setting of Christ’s first coming. However, I do also relate the prophecies to the age in which we are living now. I do this in the final chapter, mainly; but also, to some extent, throughout the book.

Several issues have been raised in this introduction, not all of which have been dealt with very thoroughly; but enough has been said for this book’s purpose. For a more thorough treatment of some of these issues, see *Introduction to the Old Testament*, by R. K. Harrison, and *Daniel*, by J. G. Baldwin. So without further ado, let us now examine the prophecies in detail.

---

1. The precise meaning of *almah* in Isaiah 7:14 is disputed. See articles on ‘Immanuel’ and

- ‘virgin’ in *The New Bible Dictionary*, Inter-Varsity Fellowship.
2. Genesis 3:15; 12:3; 49:10; Numbers 24:17; Deuteronomy 18:18, 19; Psalms 16:10; 110:4; Isaiah 7:14; 9:1, 2, 6; 49:6; 53:1-12; Jeremiah 23:5; Ezekiel 34:23, 24; 37:24; Micah 5:2; Zechariah 9:9.
  3. R. P. Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar*, (New Haven: Yale, 1929), pp. 199f.
  4. Ezekiel 14:14-20; 28:3. Ezekiel spelt his name in a slightly different way — Dani’el rather than Daniy’el. But this does not matter, for in personal names the vowel letters were in free variation with one another, just as Do’eg (1 Samuel 21:7; 22:9) was spelt Doyeg only a few verses later (22:18, 22). See ‘Daniel’ in *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, Inter-Varsity Press.
  5. J. Oswald Sanders, *Bible Men of Faith*, (H.E. Walter, 1982), p. 66.
  6. H. H. P. Dressler, ‘The Identification of the Ugaritic DNIL with the Daniel of Ezekiel’, *Vetus Testamentum* 29 (1979), p. 159. See also D. B. Wallace, ‘Who is Ezekiel’s Daniel?’, bible.org.
  7. R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, (Tyndale Press, 1970), pp. 1107, 1118.
  8. See, for example, the chapter on Daniel in *Introduction to the Old Testament*, by R. K. Harrison, also the chapter on Problems of Old Testament History, particularly the section on the Captivity and Return, pp. 338-347. See also the article on Daniel in *The New Bible Dictionary* (Inter-Varsity Press, 1962) and the Introduction in *Daniel*, by J. G. Baldwin (Inter-Varsity Press, 1979).
  9. Leon Morris, *Apocalyptic*, (Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), is a good introduction to the subject.
  10. E. W. Heaton, *The Book of Daniel*, (S.C.M. Press, 1956), pp. 35, 37.
  11. J. E. Goldingay, *Themelios*, January 1977.
  12. A helpful book on the subject of New Testament reliability is *The New Testament Documents*, by F. F. Bruce (Inter-Varsity Press, 1960).  
[<http://www.worldinvisible.com/library/ffbruce/ntdocrli/ntdocont.htm>]
  13. A helpful book on the subject of Biblical inspiration is *Christ and the Bible*, by John W. Wenham (Tyndale Press, 1972).

---

© 1980, 2006 R.J.M. Gurney.

Revised and updated for the Web by the author.

[http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/book\\_god-in-control\\_gurney.html](http://www.biblicalstudies.org.uk/book_god-in-control_gurney.html)

---