

DANIEL

A sermon series of 9 messages by Ray C. Stedman
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WHEN DREAMS COME TRUE

by Ray C. Stedman

I am encouraged to undertake a study in prophetic matters by the increasing realization that these are peculiarly times in which the prophetic word needs to be declared. I am struck by Peter's characterization of prophecy as "a more sure word ... which shines as a light in a dark place," {cf, 2 Pet 1:19}. Surely 1968 has brought a noticeable darkening of our world. I am joined in that opinion by others, not only by religious men but secular writers as well. The British novelist, C. P. Snow, said that he felt he has never come so close to despair in his life as he did in 1968. The things which he felt in 1967 were all present and visible in 1968.

I wonder if there are any of us who have any real idea of how despairing many are today. Do we have any concept at all of how hopeless life appears to many young people in our day? They are thwarted on every side and do not know where to turn. They find no sense or meaning to life. These are not merely passing fancies, they are conditions under which some live all the time, without a ray of hope. I feel strongly that we need to lift up our voices on prophetic matters because they are designed to be light to shine in a dark place.

A number of men were discussing the despair and hopelessness of our age recently and among them was Dr. Gerhard Dirks, the inventor of the memory systems for the great computers. He offered a very helpful analysis of the reason why so many young people are living in despair. There are, he said, three instruments which have been used to bring about widespread despair: television, the computer, and the nuclear bomb.

Television, with its remarkable ability to bring to us the sufferings, heartaches, sorrows, and problems of an entire world has made a great difference to our present generation. We are all confronted daily with difficulties and problems occurring all over the earth, which come flooding into our living rooms. Though we may not pay much attention to such news reports, there is a subliminal concern, fear and anxiety that results from this. Further, we are not content, apparently, with actual problems, but we plunge ourselves into fantasy problems which come in serial form: what can explain the popularity of Peyton Place to so many if not that they are involved in others' contrived problems? It is thus we find ourselves unexplainably possessed by a sense of utter frustration. Where can you begin to solve problems of this magnitude?

The computer has added to all this by making possible the registering and filing of facts about everyone, but on a most impersonal basis. It majors in numbers and has tagged us with a series of numbers indispensable to life, and, as a result, we all feel de-personalized. The only way anyone can make an impression now is to bend

his IBM card. Youth feels this namelessness particularly. It is one of the reasons why they are so restless and disturbed.

The third instrument that contributes to world despair is the nuclear bomb, with its frightening threat of genocide on a worldwide basis; its ability to wipe out cities, whole nations, even entire races, in one awful atomic holocaust. These three factors together contrive to produce a terrible sense of despair, frustration and meaninglessness to life.

But the Scriptures set forth what is called, in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, "the helmet of salvation" {Eph 6:17}, salvation there not in the sense of regeneration but of deliverance from a coming catastrophe, a way out. A helmet, of course, is designed to protect the mind. One of the reasons we are facing such mindless despair today, such deterioration of the thinking and intelligence of men -- and our mental hospitals are crammed to the full so that we cannot build them fast enough -- is because the human mind is exposed to the disembodied frustration and fear of our day. We need then the helmet of the hope of salvation, and that is exactly what the prophetic word is -- the word of reassurance that God is in control of human affairs.

The book of Daniel begins with Daniel as a young captive in Babylon. The time of the book follows the captivity of Israel when, in 583 B.C., the city of Jerusalem was destroyed and Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, took the Israelites to live in the city of Babylon and the provinces of the Babylonian empire. Daniel was one of these captives, a young man of royal blood who, as a teenager, was taken away from Jerusalem. The book ends with him as an old man, but an honored and respected leader, having served under several kings of both the Babylonian and Medio-Persian empires.

The book is partly made up of certain personal incidents which Daniel and his friends experienced but upon which we will not comment in this series. They are, however, extremely helpful incidents, especially for young people today. I heartily recommend the book of Daniel as the best book of the Old Testament for young people, for its theme is: How to live a godly life in a pagan world. There are many wonderfully helpful incidents recounted. They show how to face the pressures that a young person experiences in the midst of a godless environment. But we shall begin with Chapter 2, the remarkable dream of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon.

I shall not dwell much on the nature of the dream itself though it was somewhat of a nightmare. The king saw a great image, a colossus, a statue of a man divided into four sections: a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, and legs of iron with its feet of mingled iron and clay. Naturally he was puzzled by this and did not know what to make of this strange dream. He called in his wise men, enchanters, magicians and astrologers, to discover the interpretation of the dream.

The empire of Nebuchadnezzar has long ago crumbled into dust. Even the great capital of Babylon is today an uninhabited desolation of ruins covered by the dust of centuries. But the dream that this king dreamed is still being fulfilled in our day, and it is this that makes it so significant to us. We have not yet reached the end of Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its meaning.

The wording of the King James Version suggests that the king forgot his dream in the morning and demanded that his wise men make known to him the substance of the dream as well as its interpretation. But the RSV is quite right in changing the phrase of Verse 5 from "the thing is gone from me" to the more accurate "the word from me is sure." The king did not forget his dream at all. He remembered it well, but he is testing his counselors and he was a wise king to do so. He well knew that these men would concoct an allegedly supernatural interpretation of whatever it was he told them, and he would be helpless to challenge their meaning. Of course, they could use this as a clever gimmick to obtain whatever they wanted from the king. No wonder he was suspicious of these men for he knew they operated on the basic philosophy, "You tell me your dream, and I'll tell you mine." So he tested them by this strange demand on his part. That explains what some have felt to be an extremely cruel demand on the part of this king. Of course, the counselors rebelled at that, as well they might, for they realized they were on the verge of exposure. If they were truly able, by supernatural power, to interpret dreams then it would have made no difference to them to tell the original dream and its interpretation, or the interpretation alone. But the king has hit upon a very fine device to expose their duplicity.

There are many today who think that this kind of thing belongs to the dark ages of primitive superstition. But it is amazing how many still believe in astrologers, soothsayers, enchanters, etc. When I was at the Congress on Prophecy in Dallas recently I was interviewed on one of those radio talk programs where people could call in and ask questions. The interviewer said to me, "What do you think of Jeane Dixon?" Then he added, rather significantly, I thought, "Miss Dixon was here as our guest not long ago and she said some very amazing things about the future."

He said this so meaningfully that I realized I had to tread carefully. I said to him (and this was on the air), "Well, I am not in a position to judge Miss Dixon personally, but one thing I do know: she admits that she sometimes misses in her prognostications. She has been wrong on occasion but many people seem to be impressed when she bats .500. The impressive thing to me, however, is that the Word of God is always 100 percent right. Its batting average is 1.000; it hits it on the nose every time." We do need to be aware of those who, in strange ways, seem able to predict the future, and oftentimes they are right.

But Daniel is perfectly right when he says to this pagan king,

"No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery which the king has asked, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days." {Dan 2:27b-28a RSV}

In that passage Daniel uses a phrase which is really the key to this dream and even to the book itself. It is the phrase, "in the latter days." Daniel indicates that what has been shown to the king is a vision of the future. He says very plainly in Verse 29:

"To you, O king as you lay in bed came thoughts of what would be hereafter, and he who reveals mysteries made known to you what is to be." {Dan 2:29 RSV}

This is a vision of the future. It clearly predicts events that would come to pass in the near future and in the far distant future as well.

This predictive element is why the book of Daniel has been under attack by liberal scholars. Liberals, by and large, reject any evidence of the supernatural. That is why they attack the Virgin birth, and why they attack the resurrection of Jesus. They deny that these things can occur, and the only proof they advance is simply to deny them. They base their arguments upon a preconceived position in which they simply assume that nothing supernatural can occur. But, of late, there has come increasingly important evidence to substantiate the fact that Daniel was not written at a late date, as the liberals tell us. Their explanation of these predictive passages in Daniel is that the book was not written about 600 B.C., as conservatives claim, but rather, it was written two centuries after the events had already occurred, and is really only history cast in the form of prediction.

But this late-dating of Daniel has been challenged by some very impressive evidence, not least of which is a fragment of Daniel found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. All scholars agree that the Dead Sea Scrolls date from the second century before Christ, about the time when the liberal scholars claim the book was written. But, of course, if it were already a part of the Scriptures, held sacred by the group which wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls, then it could not have been written at that time. It was not contemporary literature; for it was already known and respected, and had formed a part of the body of Scripture long before their day.

The phrase, "the latter times," concerns itself with a particular area of the future; a future called elsewhere in this book, "the end times," or, "the time of the end." The phrase, "the latter times," is used in a number of other places in the Old Testament. One striking instance of it occurs in the very next book to Daniel in the Bible, the prophecy of Hosea. In a striking passage in the third chapter of Hosea, the prophet gathers up the whole of the history of Israel after their captivity in Babylon. He says, in Verse 4,

"For the children of Israel shall dwell many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or teraphim." {Hos 3:4 RSV}

This reference to Israelites living without a sacrifice places the fulfillment of this after the time of our Lord, for, in New Testament times they were still sacrificing in the temple. But here is a prediction that there would come a time when Israel would abide without sacrifice. As most of you know already, from the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. until this present hour, through 1900 and more years of history, the Jews have never had a blood sacrifice. The prediction continues:

"For the children of Israel shall dwell many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or teraphim. Afterward the children of Israel shall turn and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and they shall come in fear to the Lord and to his goodness in the latter days." {Hos 3:4-5 RSV}

There is the same phrase that Daniel uses. It confirms the king's dream as a prophecy that concerns itself with the end of times and, specifically, with the end of the times of the Gentiles.

This prediction takes on increased significance to us in view of our Lord's words about Jerusalem when, 40 years before the city was destroyed by the Romans, he uttered these remarkable words,

"Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." {Luke 21:24 KJV}

Jerusalem was to be in the hands of Gentile overlords, and the Jews would never possess the city again until the times of the Gentiles should be fulfilled. A most remarkable thing has taken place in our own day. On June 6, 1967, the Jews recaptured Jerusalem. It is a most moving thing to visit that ancient city and see Jews thronging the streets of the Old City once again. Orthodox Jews, with their long curly sideburns and their strange hats and garments stand around looking longingly into the temple courts from which they are still excluded because it is such a holy enclosure. Each Sabbath they gather at the Wailing Wall in great numbers, running through the streets of the city in order that they might be present at the beginning of the service to remember Jerusalem's glory, and wail over her present desolation. This most remarkable event would indicate, in the light of our Lord's words, that we have reached the last of the times of the Gentiles.

I must point out to you that the word, "times," in that expression, is an inaccurate one. There are two words used in Scripture to indicate passage of time: "times," and "seasons." Jesus said to his disciples after the resurrection, "The times and seasons are not for you to know, but the Father has kept them in his power," {cf, Acts 1:7}. The "times" are great overall divisions of time in which God is working out some major purpose with man, such as, "the times of ignorance" that Paul refers to in Romans, which covers the whole of the Old Testament. The times are divided, in turn, into "seasons," which are marked by some special development within these time periods, much as we refer to the seasons of the year.

Some time ago I ran across a quotation by Archbishop Trench that was most illuminating in this respect:

The seasons [in Greek, the word *kairoi*] are the joints or articulations in the times: The critical epoch-making periods foreordained of God, when all that has been slowly and often without observation ripening through long ages is mature and comes to birth in grand, decisive events which constitute at once the close of one period and the commencement of another.

If you set June 6, 1967 in that context you will see that here indeed was a "grand, decisive event" which marked the close of one period and the commencement of another. If we are right in this, then it indicates that the last "season" in which Gentile authority will reign unchallenged in this world has already begun. Who knows how long it will last? We cannot set dates. There are no limitations on how long these seasons take to run their course. But according to our Lord's own prediction, this last of the seasons of the Gentiles has already begun.

Within this lengthy period called "the times of the Gentiles," which began with Nebuchadnezzar. this dream of the king as interpreted by Daniel indicates that there would be four world powers, and only four. It would begin with Babylon itself, the kingdom headed by Nebuchadnezzar. Let us read that now and quickly comment on a few things, leaving the rest for our next study.

"This was the dream; now we will tell the king its interpretation. You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory, and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the sons of men, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the air, making you rule over them all -- you are the head of gold. After you shall rise another kingdom inferior to you, and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things; and like iron which crushes, it shall break and crush all these." {Dan 2:36-40 RSV}

We shall be content now with identifying these four kingdoms. The first one, Daniel himself tells us, is the Babylonian empire headed by King Nebuchadnezzar. This would be followed, he says, by a second kingdom which would be inferior to the first. History identifies that clearly for us and, in fact, it came into the picture even before the book of Daniel closes. At the end of the book, Daniel is no longer under the Babylonian empire but is now serving under the Medio-Persian empire, that divided kingdom which followed Babylon as the ruler of the world. This, in turn, was to be followed by a third empire which would come upon the scene quickly. It is identified for us in Chapter 8 as the kingdom of Greece, under Alexander the Great. History has confirmed this, exactly as the book predicts.

The fourth empire is really the central study of this chapter. This strange, rather mysterious kingdom comes upon the scene after the Grecian kingdom. We usually call it the Roman Empire, but it is very striking that it is never so called in the Bible. It is never identified by name though it includes the Roman Empire, and there is no doubt about that. It began in Rome as certain predictive passages in the New Testament make very clear. In Revelation, we have a clear identification of this empire with the city of Rome, seated upon its seven hills, so there is no question but what this fourth empire began with Rome.

But, since the period encompassed by the image covers all of time down to the second coming of Jesus Christ, the fourth kingdom must include far more than what we call in history, the Roman Empire. That is why it is never so named in the Bible. We will be much closer if we simply refer to it as "the West." That is the way we identify it today, "the Western nations." The prophecy centers upon what happens to these nations, especially as they near the end.

In our next study we shall give ourselves to the details that Daniel reveals about the West and its remarkable place in the processes of history. But I do want to point out one thing before we leave this, and that is that, in this image, there is a decreasing value from the head down to the feet. It begins with a head of gold, then silver, then bronze and, finally, iron -- so it is decreasing in value but increasing in strength -- until the final stage is reached, which is a mingling of iron and clay and there is no strength at all.

That is surely significant to us. It is important to note that Nebuchadnezzar was the most autocratic king to ever rule in all the world. Daniel himself says that God had given him authority over all the earth and he had the right to rule over all the world. He did not exercise it to that extent, but he exercised it to whatever degree he chose. No one ever withstood him; it was his successors who were finally overthrown by the Medio-Persian empire, as Daniel had predicted.

All this indicates that in God's sight the most perfect form of government is not a democracy but a monarchy. A monarchy is headed by a single individual whose will obtains throughout the length and breadth of his kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar symbolizes God's ideal of the best kind of government, but Nebuchadnezzar was by no means God's ideal monarch. This is made clear by other events in this book. The value of a monarchy is directly related to the individual who occupies the throne. Ultimately God's kingdom will prevail over all the earth with the right monarch on the throne -- the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why Paul refers to him as "that blessed and only sovereign" {1 Tim 6:15 RSV} who is about to appear -- the "Potentate" he is called in the King James Version, the Lord Jesus Christ, God's rightful King.

There are many fascinating things to be said about this, but I shall close with this emphasis: The remarkable thing about this dream is not these four divisions of man's kingdoms, but the strange, final kingdom which comes out of heaven as a stone cut without hands, and which strikes the feet of the image to destroy it.

It symbolizes what the Bible universally declares, that all the kingdoms of men will end at the appearing of God's kingdom. The prayer we so frequently pray in the Lord's prayer will at last be answered: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," {Matt 6:10b RSV}. This is what gives hope to our day.

We must be realistic as we look at life and realize that the investments we make in earthly kingdoms can, at best, only be of temporary value to us. The time that we have given to us is to be spent in that which lasts. The Bible does not prohibit making investment in earthly affairs, but it does urge that we handle these things realistically. Do not get yourself involved in them too deeply. Do not live for these things and make them a life-or-death matter. No, hold these things loosely and, rather, be sure you are investing in that which endures. Is this not what Jesus meant when he said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth but rather lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where rust does not corrupt, and moths do not eat, nor thieves break in to steal," {cf, Matt 6:19-20}. Our effort is to be invested in that which will endure beyond us, be worthwhile and meaningful far beyond the limits of this life.

That is why these predictive matters are set before us. There is a fatal flaw in man's kingdom. It is built upon a false foundation. As Jesus pointed out in the story of the two houses, one built on the rock and the other on sand, the ultimate explanation of what survives is the foundation. It is only that which is built upon the rock that will endure. Man's day, and man's kingdom (the Great Society, the New Deal, the Fair Deal, the New Frontier, and all the other political slogans that we are so used to) shall all be blown away before the wind. They are not wrong. There are elements in these that we must become involved in. But the final question is: "Where has the thrust of your life been put?"

These prophetic matters are given, not to make us curious but to make us cautious; to lead us to invest in that which endures, to have a part in that which is real. Surely the greatest tragedy of all is to arrive at the end of life and, in the judgment of an eternal God, discover we have lived a wasted life. These things are needed, and are set before us, that we might have something by which to measure our life and help us distinguish between the temporary and the eternal, between the passing and the permanent. May God grant wisdom and understanding as we study these things together, to learn what is to happen in the days to come.

Prayer:

Grant to us, our Father, an understanding of these matters, even as Daniel, this mighty man of God who served so faithfully in his own day, prayed. Lord, give us understanding, give us insight, give us a sense of reality about these things that we may understand that this is indeed the mold into which history is being poured, and we would do well to know it and to follow it and to adjust our lives accordingly. We ask in Jesus' name, Amen.

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THE LAST ACT

by Ray C. Stedman

We are attempting now to interpret the prophecies of Daniel. In our introductory message we noted that this book of Daniel is rejected by many today as uninspired, having been written by another than the historical personage of Daniel, and containing a lurid sample of what is called "apocalyptic" literature which has no real historic value.

Despite the fact that many critics reject the book of Daniel, it is most interesting to observe that the Lord Jesus highly recommends this prophet. As he sat with his disciples on the Mount of Olives, overlooking the city, among many other things he said to them, "When you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place" {Matt 24:15 KJV}. Then Matthew adds these words in parenthesis, "let the reader understand." By that, Jesus indicates that there is considerable profit to be gained by studying the book of Daniel.

We are now in the second chapter of Daniel, trying to determine the meaning of the great dream image which was first seen by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, and later recalled to him by Daniel the prophet, and interpreted for him. As we saw, this great dream image, consisting of a man divided into four sections, with a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of mingled iron and clay, constitutes a great outline of history into which all other prophetic passages of the Scripture can be placed. It is our task now to investigate Daniel's interpretation of this dream and especially that part of it which has to do with the fourth division, the fourth kingdom which is to come upon the earth.

Beginning with Verse 36 of Chapter 2, Daniel gives us the interpretation of the dream.

"This was the dream; now we will tell the king its interpretation. You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory, and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the sons of men, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the air, making you rule over them all -- you are the head of gold. After you shall arise another kingdom inferior to you, and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth." {Dan 2:36-39 RSV}

We saw in our last study that these first three divisions of the image have been already fulfilled in history, and were fulfilled exactly according to the pattern predicted here by Daniel. The head of gold was the empire of Babylon, headed by Nebuchadnezzar, and existing within Daniel's own lifetime. It was superseded as the world power of its day by the divided kingdom of Media-Persia -- first the Medes and then the Persians coming in -- and yet history recognizes it as essentially one kingdom, though there were two ruling families involved. Then this was followed, as we know now from history, by the rapid-fire conquests of Alexander the Great, who swept across the world of his day, conquering the known kingdoms of earth and weeping because he had no other worlds to conquer. This was the "belly and thighs of bronze."

Then Daniel comes to the fourth kingdom. This is of peculiar interest to us because it is within the scope of this kingdom that we still live. As Daniel made clear, this kingdom is to last from the disappearance of the Grecian empire until the time when God sets up his own kingdom on earth. As we focus now on this fourth kingdom we shall have several matters of intense interest suggested to us. Let us look first at Verse 40:

"And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things; and like iron which crushes, it shall break and crush all these." {Dan 2:40 RSV}

This is the prophet's interpretation of the fourth division of the image consisting of the legs of iron and extending clear down to the feet and toes of mingled iron and clay. This was to be the fourth empire. There are several things we can note immediately about this. History interprets a good deal of this for us as we look backward from our twentieth-century vantage point. It is clear now to us, as it must have been even to those in our Lord's day who read the prophecy of Daniel, that the fourth kingdom began with the Roman Empire.

For three hundred years before Christ, the city-state of Rome, located on the banks of the Tiber River in Italy, had already dominated other city-states and tribes of Italy and had begun to thrust out into the Mediterranean world. Gradually its legions conquered territory throughout Italy and around southern France and into Spain, had crossed the seas into North Africa, was doing long-term battle with Carthage, and had begun to thrust out into Egypt, Greece, and east, almost to India. By our Lord's day, this kingdom was enthroned as the dominant power of earth. It is clear to us, as we look at history, that the Roman Empire was aptly symbolized by the iron of this image, because, as the prophet said, iron breaks to pieces and shatters and crushes. Anyone who has read the story of the Roman Empire knows how characteristic this was of Rome. They were dominated by a

passion to rule the world and they had the power to achieve it and to continue that rule. Roman legions were known everywhere for their ability to fight, to march in and overwhelm all opposition, utilizing the short sword which became the famous mark of the Roman soldier. The Roman phalanxes and legions moved throughout the earth and eventually dominated every kingdom known to the Western world.

The chief mark of Rome was its resolute will to conquer. Will Durant, in his remarkable volumes, *The History of Civilization*, tells us that the Roman senate sometimes deliberately began wars in order to acquire further wealth for Rome or to quiet unrest among the plebeians and slaves at home. The Roman legions became synonymous with peace so that men boasted of what they called the *Pax Romana*, a peace of conquest by military might which kept everything stable and quiet throughout the Empire.

The third thing suggested by this prophecy is that Rome would stamp its image upon the entire Western world. Here is where we of the Western hemisphere enter the picture. The Roman government was marked by a passion to establish colonies and then to defend these colonies by military power. That characteristic of Rome has continued throughout the history of the West. Western nations have been colonizing nations who have reached to the uttermost parts of the earth. With the colonizing came the necessity for great military power to protect the trade routes and the colonies from being overwhelmed by others. Thus the Western nations became mighty militarily, protecting the colonies which they had established.

The Roman Empire was soon divided into two portions, corresponding to the two legs of iron of this image. One division was in the West, centered in Rome; the other was in the East, with Constantinople its capital, and became the Byzantine empire which colonized toward the north, into Russia, and into the east, to Persia, Iran and Iraq, and spread Byzantine culture all through the area.

In the West the empire centered on Rome. It first mastered the whole of the Mediterranean area and Western Europe and even after the fall of Rome itself continued to dominate as the kingdoms of Europe, the monarchies of France, of Germany, Spain, Great Britain and Portugal. These, in turn, began to reach into the western hemisphere after Christopher Columbus discovered the New World. The interesting thing now is that every single nation of this western hemisphere was begun by one of the nations of the Roman empire. Our entire Western world is Roman to the core. You can see that even in our own history. We have a senate which is one of the fundamental bases of our government, and which we copied directly from the Roman senate. The very republican form of the United States government is based upon the republic of Rome. Our courts, our laws, our military, all reflect the courts and laws and military forms of the Roman Empire. We even derived our national symbol from Rome. The American eagle is known throughout the world as were the Roman eagles in the days of Rome's power.

In Europe today there is an even more remarkable tracing of Roman heritage possible. As students of history know, the Goths and Huns and other pagan tribes of the north swept down over the Alps, overran Italy, and finally sacked the city of Rome. There emerged from this chaos what is called in history, "the Holy Roman Empire." The Church became a stabilizing influence through all that time and the Pope emerged finally as a Roman ruler. It was still Roman, but it was now a religious empire. The seat of imperial government was transferred first to France, then into Spain, and finally ended up in Germany. The German rulers were called *Kaisers*, which is simply the German spelling of the word *Caesar*, so it is apparent that the Roman Caesars were perpetuated in the Western empires as the Kaisers.

A strikingly similar thing took place in the Eastern empire under the Byzantines. In about 1453 the city of Constantinople was sacked by the northern tribes and the seat of government was ultimately transferred from Constantinople to Russia. The ruler was called the *Czar*, which is the Russian spelling of *Caesar*. Thus the Roman Caesars have continued right up to modern times. What to me is a fascinating footnote to history is that both of these divisions of the Roman Empire, in its imperial form, ended in the same year, 1918, when the Russian Czar was overthrown and murdered by the Bolsheviks as they came into power in Russia, and the German empire with the Kaisers ended at the close of World War I. So we have the whole of the Western world as an extension of this mighty fourth kingdom which Daniel saw was to dominate the earth. It is stamped with the Roman image from that day to this. It is still Roman, and only recently has ceased to colonize, and thus dominate, major parts of the earth. Vast military power is characteristic of the fourth kingdom throughout its duration.

In Verse 41 a strange and remarkable new element enters into the picture. Daniel says to the king,

"And as you saw the feet and toes partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom; but some of the firmness of iron shall be in it, just as you saw iron mixed with the miry clay." {Dan 2:41 RSV}

There was a sense in which the Western kingdom was "divided" between the Roman and Byzantine Empires, analogous to the legs of the image, but now here is a different division. This is a division in character which comes in at the foot stage of the image. The legs were made of solid iron, but Daniel saw that the feet of the image were made of mingled iron and clay.

What is the symbolism of this? The clay is obviously the opposite of iron. Iron symbolized an imperialistic attitude or form of government, the power and might of imperialism seeking to dominate and to rule by brute force and strength. Clay, on the other hand, is weak, pliable, easily molded. Most Bible scholars are right in identifying this as the principle of democracy. Perhaps that may cause us to bristle a bit. We do not like to see democracy attacked. We like to think that the reason the United States and Great Britain have become strong nations is because they are democracies; that it is the voice of the people that gives strength. But if you look at history, especially the history of the West, in the light of the revelation of Scripture and in an honest evaluation of democracy, you will discover that democracy is not really a very good form of government.

The voice of the people is always a fickle voice. It is easily molded, like clay. That is what politicians capitalize on. Every election year you can hear them shaping the clay, molding the clay into the opinions they want them to have. Today we are subject to the tremendous pressures of mass media which play upon our minds to mold the will of the people. That is the weakness of democracy.

Let me share with you an interesting quotation which I think you will find most significant, especially in view of when it was uttered. It is called, *Why Democracies Fail*.

Democracy cannot exist as a permanent form of government. It can only exist until the voters discover they can vote themselves largesse out of the public treasure. From that moment on, the majority always votes for the candidate promising the most benefit from the public treasury, with the result that democracy always collapses over a loose fiscal policy, always to be followed by a dictatorship, and then a monarchy.

That sounds as if it was written today, does it not? But it was written by professor Alexander Fraser Tytler, nearly two centuries ago, while our thirteen original states were still colonies of Great Britain. At the time he was writing of the decline and fall of the Athenian Republic, over two thousand years before. It is a clear and honest evaluation of democracy. No, it is not democracy that has made the United States great; it is another element -- the same element which produced greatness for a considerable period in Great Britain and other nations. Scripture reveals that the element which makes a nation great is righteousness. When righteousness pervades a nation that people is strong; without righteousness it begins to falter. That is why we are seeing our American democracy beginning to totter, stagger, and crumble. The element of righteousness is fast disappearing within it. Democracy has no power to stand or be strong unless righteousness is there. This one thing God's word clearly reveals: "righteousness exalts a nation, but shame is a reproach to any people." In the words of the motto of the state of Hawaii, *Ua mau ke ea o ka aina i ka pono*, which means, "The life of the land is preserved in righteousness." That has been the fundamental secret of the strength of the United States.

In this passage the prophet Daniel says the kingdom is to be so divided. In the final stage of this collection of Western nations, dominated by Roman principles, there would come a struggle for dominance between two principles: the iron of imperialism, and the clay of democracy. These two things would struggle and attempt to mingle together.

As we look back in history we can see that World War I marked the beginning of the end of an era. The end of that war was characterized by the fall of crowned heads all over the world. Many monarchies ended then, either abruptly and completely, or they were transformed into representative monarchies in which the king became merely a figurehead, exercising no power or authority at all.

World War II completed the picture; the age of kings ended in that interim period. From that time on there has been clearly emerging a new age, a new condition among nations. It is described for us in Verses 42-43, when we come to the very toes of the feet of the image.

"And as the toes of the feet were partly iron and partly clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle. As you saw the iron mixed with miry clay, so they will mix with one another in marriage, but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay." {Dan 2:42-43 RSV}

The phrase translated in the RSV, "in marriage," is not too accurate. Literally, it is (in the King James), "they shall mingle together with the seed of men," which seems to imply a universal application, i.e., this is a grass roots matter, it permeates the masses. In the stream of humanity these two conflicting currents struggle together, and as we near the end of this fourth kingdom it becomes a struggle at the grass roots level. It strikes me as highly significant that this is what we see arising in our own day. I am not going to be dogmatic on this as being positively the fulfillment of this prophecy, but the trend seems to be unmistakable.

What is happening in the nations of the West in our day? Well, clearly they are torn by domestic strife. They are being weakened by internal conflict. There is enough iron yet to threaten with the power and strength of ancient Rome, but there is enough clay to weaken and paralyze so that nations are unable to accomplish their objectives. Thus we have the sight of great and powerful nations which are almost helpless to carry out what they set themselves to do. They are being throttled and thwarted by internal weakness, by struggles breaking out from within, by the unmixable principle of the voice of the people and the iron will of authority in conflict.

This is what sets the stage for the final act of history. By this the world becomes ripe for the invasion of God. That last act is given to us now in Verses 44-45:

"And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall its sovereignty be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand for ever; just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be hereafter. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure." {Dan 2:44-45 RSV}

Our attention is immediately drawn to this opening phrase, "And in the days of those kings." What kings? There have not been any kings mentioned in this passage at all. Kingdoms, yes; kings, no. "In the days of those kings" -- what a cryptic reference this is. But as you compare this passage with other passages in the seventh chapter of Daniel, and also with the book of Revelation, it becomes clear that the final form of the Western confederacy of nations will be the emergence of a confederation of ten nations, here symbolized by the ten toes of this image. The only possible antecedent for the reference to "those kings" is the ten toes of the image. In the days when the ten-kingdomed empire emerges as the final form of the fourth kingdom (essentially Roman in its emphasis and characteristic), then God, in those days, shall set up a kingdom which shall not be destroyed.

Daniel saw in the dream that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and struck the entire image crumbled, suddenly, dramatically. Then the stone grew until it became a mountain that filled the entire earth. It is not difficult to interpret this imagery. The stone is identified for us clearly in Scripture. The Apostle Peter gathers up several passages out of the Old Testament and identifies the stone for us. In First Peter, Chapter 2, Verse 6, he says:

For it stands in scripture:

"Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and he who believes in him will not be put to shame." {1 Pet 2:6 RSV}

To you therefore who believe, he is precious, but for those who do not believe, "The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner," and "A stone that will make men stumble, a rock that will make them fall;" for they stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

What a remarkable revelation of the authority, power, and right of Jesus Christ to rule among the kingdoms of men! He is the stone that comes striking suddenly into the affairs of mankind -- God once again intervening dramatically in history to destroy all that man has built through the centuries. The entire structure of civilization collapses and crumbles at the impact of this mighty stone, and the stone in turn grows to fill the entire earth. This clearly introduces the millennial kingdom which has been prophesied by the prophets.

What is our part in all this? If we stand, as I believe this passage clearly suggests, at the termination of civilization as we know it; if we are approaching the end of man's day and God's program which the prophets have long predicted is at last to be established, then Peter suggests that it is our privilege now to rejoice in that "chosen and precious stone." The question that impinges upon us in this hour is, What is our relationship to that stone? Is he the foundation for our life, or is he coming to destroy all that we have built? Is the coming of the Lord to us a thrill, or is it a threat? Is he coming as a friend, or as a foe?

The purpose of prophecy is to help us keep our lives balanced, now. What are you going to do tomorrow? You say. "Well, I've got to go back and make a living." Yes, God is interested in you making a living. Prophecy does not remove us from the need to make a living. But it does face us up to the question: What else am I doing tomorrow, and Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and throughout the whole week? Even those who are not Christian will be engaged in making a living. But, if I belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, what else is involved? Am I doing nothing more than simply trying to get ahead, like the rest of the world? Or am I also investing in eternal issues that will last beyond this time? That is the question which is important. It is a tragic possibility that one may know the Lord, and know the Scriptures, and yet arrive at the end of life and, looking back, find that much of it has been wasted because it was invested only in that which was to crumble and be dispersed to the winds at the coming of Christ.

I find the great hunger of every heart is to do something permanent, something worthwhile, something enduring. These great prophetic Scriptures are designed to face us up with the question: Am I now being an available instrument for the working of God to do his purpose, in terms of my work, my school, my play, or whatever? Am I walking in harmony to the eternal program God is working out through the forces of history? Or am I related only to that which ultimately shall crumble and be scattered to the four winds?

That is the great question before us as we come to the Lord's table. Has he become to us a rock, a stone chosen and precious upon which all life must be built and from which all values come? If so, then we can fellowship together in his Spirit and enjoy the fellowship of faith in the oneness of the body of Christ.

Prayer:

Our Father, as we come to the Lord's table, we pray that we may grasp the swiftness of passing time, and the certainty of the fulfillment of prophecy. Help us to understand ourselves, Lord, in the light of your word. Help us to see our lives as revealed by the light that streams from that word. May we at this time, Lord, renew that marvelous relationship of love, truth, and faith in the Son of God who has called us out of the kingdoms of this world to be part of the kingdom of his love. We ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.

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THE WORLD MENAGERIE

by Ray C. Stedman

Scripture is given to us that we might understand what is happening in our world and what God is doing in the course of history. There is nothing more helpful in this respect than to give attention to the great outlines of future events foretold in various prophetic passages of the Bible. So far in this series we have been looking at the second chapter of Daniel, but today we turn to the next prophetic section, Chapter 7.

There are certain introductory matters that are given to us in the beginning of the chapter that help us to understand the background of it. They are gathered up in the first verse.

In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head as he lay in his bed. Then he wrote down the dream, and told the sum of the matter. {Dan 7:1 RSV}

This places the time of the vision as occurring toward the end of the Babylonian empire. It was in the first year of Belshazzar, who was the last king of Babylon. This ties in closely with the account in the fifth chapter, where Belshazzar made a great feast and handwriting appeared on the wall and that night the kingdom was taken by the Medes and the Persians. This vision then occurs perhaps thirty or thirty-five years after the great dream image that was recorded in Chapter 2. This time it is Daniel that has a dream and with the dream come certain visions.

There are three separate visions recounted. One runs from Verse 2 through Verse 6, the vision of the three beasts that arise out of the sea. From Verse 7 through Verse 12 is a second vision which involves a fourth beast and also the Ancient of Days. Verses 13-14 involve still a third vision. Daniel sees a most remarkable person who is presented to the Ancient of Days. This is one of the clear instances in the Old Testament where we have a pre-incarnate view of Jesus Christ.

Then, beginning with Verse 15, there is a general interpretation of these visions. From Verse 19 through to the end of the chapter the angel concentrates upon the remarkable fourth beast, as of great significance to us. The structure of the chapter seems to follow the same general division of Chapter 2, the great dream image which Nebuchadnezzar saw: There are four divisions of history, finally ending at the invasion of earth by God and establishment of his kingdom. In Chapter 2 there came a stone cut out of the mountain without hands that smote the image on its feet and destroyed all the kingdoms of men. In this chapter, it is the Ancient of Days who sends the Son of Man to establish his everlasting dominion upon earth.

Because these two chapters seem to follow the same general pattern, most of the interpreters of Chapter 7 view the four beasts that open the chapter as picturing the same nations as the four divisions of the dream in Chapter 2, i.e., Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and a fourth empire beginning with Rome but extending clear down to the second coming of Jesus Christ. This is what is called the "historical" interpretation of Chapter 7, which says that most of it lies in the past and only the fourth beast concerns us in the present. There are great Bible teachers who support that view, and though I am less than the least of the prophets, I, too, for many years held the same view. But let us turn to this vision of the beasts in Daniel 7 and see why I rather think it pictures conditions among the nations which exist just before the return of Jesus Christ. In doing so we shall not view this as a telescope, looking down the long course of history from Daniel's day till now (you get that in Chapter 2), but this is more like a zoom camera which comes right in upon the events of the last days. If we are drawing near to these last days, these events will intensely concern us.

Notice, first, that a certain locale is marked out for us in which these events are to occur:

Daniel said, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea." {Dan 7:2 RSV}

The great sea is always, in Scripture, the Mediterranean Sea. You will find many verses which establish that clearly, from many parts of the Scripture. It is the great sea that forms the western boundary of Israel. Daniel saw the four winds of heaven blowing upon and stirring up or creating a tumult, in this great sea. Thus, the locale of these visions centers upon the Mediterranean and involves an apparent struggle for the mastery of the

Mediterranean area.

Daniel goes on to say,

"And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another." {Dan 7:3 RSV}

It is apparent from what Daniel has said that the four beasts stand for nations which in some way relate to the great struggle which shall occur in the Mediterranean area. The nations involved are seen as beasts, not as parts of a man, as was true in Chapter 2. This is because this dream presents God's view of the nations. In Chapter 2 it is Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and he saw the nations as man sees them, in their outward glory, pomp, and circumstance. But here we have God's view. Interestingly enough, wherever God views the nations they are almost always described as beasts.

Surely it is an apt description. You can hear them growling, snarling and snapping at one another even today. Read the accounts in the newspapers, or listen to a session of the United Nations and you will hear them reacting to one another very much as beasts.

The first beast is described.

"The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings. Then as I looked its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand upon two feet like a man; and the mind of a man was given to it." {Dan 7:4 RSV}

What shall we make of this first beast? According to the historical view, this is Babylon, the very nation in which Daniel was living at the time of his dream. But there are several things that indicate that this is not a proper explanation of this first beast:

First, the date of the vision is against this interpretation. It occurred in the first year of Belshazzar who was the last king of Babylon. Yet Daniel sees the beast as coming up out of the sea, indicating a future event. Historically, Babylon had already long since been established and it seems hardly likely that Daniel would see a vision of the future which would include that which had already taken place.

Also, the language of the chapter suggests that this is not merely a repetition of Chapter 2. One of the remarkable things about the book of Daniel is that the section from Chapter 2 through Chapter 7 is written in a different language than the rest of the book. The remainder is in Hebrew, as is the rest of the Old Testament. But this section appears in Aramaic, which is a closely related language to Hebrew. It was the language Jesus spoke when he was here on earth. It is about as different from Hebrew as Norwegian is from Swedish. Apparently the section is written in Aramaic because it pertains to the Gentile nations and not to the Jews.

Chapter 7 is the close of that Aramaic section, as Chapter 2 was its beginning, and it seems hardly likely that we would find in Chapter 7 a repetition of the meaning of the dream in Chapter 2, when the whole section is addressed to the same people and written in the same language. Thus the language rather confirms the idea that Chapter 7 is a different interpretation.

Third, there is nothing in the history of Babylon that corresponds to what is said here about the first beast. The usual interpretation is that the reference to wings being plucked off and the beast made to stand on its two feet, with the mind of a man being given to it, is usually explained as a reference to Nebuchadnezzar's insanity. Previously in Daniel we are told that Nebuchadnezzar became mad and for seven years lived out in the field as an animal. His kingdom was taken away from him for that period of time because of the pride of his heart. But at the end of the seven-year period his sanity returned and he was restored to his throne. But the interesting thing is that all of that happened at least twenty years before this vision was given to Daniel. Again it seems most unlikely that this would refer to a past event.

It rather seems to symbolize a strange decline of power on the part of a nation to be involved in a struggle for the mastery of the Mediterranean, at a time, as we learn from the rest of the vision, in the days immediately

preceding the coming of Jesus Christ again to earth. The decline of power is represented by the wings being plucked off the beast and then a switch is made to intellectual or moral achievement rather than military might.

When I read this, and thought of it as something that might be contemporary, I could not help but be struck by the remarkable parallelism to the course of the British Empire since World War II. I do not claim that this is the interpretation of this symbolism because prophecy is not given to us that we might prophesy, it is rather given to indicate major trends. But if we are living in the last days we may possibly expect to recognize the fulfillment of this. Certainly the British Empire has long been symbolized by a lion, and the wings, of course, indicate speed and power. But in the vision the wings are plucked off, and thus a change occurs in the course of the history of this nation. It turns from being a military power to an intellectual power. This is remarkably close to what we are seeing happening to the British Empire in our day. We have all witnessed one of the unusual events of history in that quite gradually, but before our eyes, British military prestige has declined all over the world. Britain is now changing to a nation that is stressing intellectual achievements.

You can imagine my surprise and astonishment in reading the writings of Sir Robert Anderson, who was for many years head of Scotland Yard during the reign of Queen Victoria. He was also a noted prophetic student who brought all his marvelous investigating ability to bear upon the solving of prophetic problems. I discovered that in his book, *The Coming Prince*, written on the book of Daniel, there was a most amazing statement. Commenting on this first beast of Daniel 7, he says:

May not the opening portion of this vision refer to the gigantic struggle which must come some day for supremacy in the Mediterranean which will doubtless carry with it the sovereignty of the world? The lion may possibly typify England, whose vast naval power may be symbolized by the eagles' wings. The plucking of the wings may represent the loss of her position as mistress of the seas.

That amazing statement was made in the days when England was at the zenith of her power as a maritime nation. In the days of Queen Victoria the British fleet was in control of the oceans of the world. Her present decline and change of character certainly suggests a possible explanation of the first beast.

Let us go on and see if any of the rest fits this theory. We have next brought before us the second beast,

"And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. It was raised up on one side; it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, 'Arise, devour much flesh.'" {Dan 7:5 RSV}

The historical view has generally taken this to mean the Medo-Persian empire, which followed Babylon upon the scene of history. But there are several striking things that are against that:

First, in the eighth chapter we find that the Medo-Persian empire is specifically named and appears in the form of a beast, but the beast is not a bear, but a great ram. It seems to me unlikely that the Scripture would employ two symbolisms of animals for the same empire, one time a bear, and in the next chapter, a ram.

Second, we are told here that the bear was raised up on one side. This has usually been taken to indicate the division between the Medes and the Persians, with the Persians being dominant. But several Hebrew scholars indicate that what is really said here is not, "raised up on one side," but what is really said about this bear is that "it made for itself one dominion." That is a closer, more literal translation of the Aramaic.

If this power is recognizable today it is much more likely that this pictures for us the Soviet Union, which is made up of many republics joined together, The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the U.S.S.R. It has had as its symbol from the earliest times a bear, and is engaged as we see today in a struggle for Mediterranean supremacy.

Further, it has fulfilled what is reported here about it. The beast was told, "Arise, devour much flesh." Nothing is more striking than the way the Soviet Union has reached out around the world and encompassed many peoples by conquest and propaganda and thus has literally devoured much flesh.

Now if you ask about the three ribs, I confess to you that I cannot identify them. Perhaps a more careful study of the U.S.S.R. might divulge what this symbolism represents. Some have suggested it might refer to the three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, which, unlike satellite nations, are now an integral part of the Soviet Union. I do not at all suggest this in a dogmatic fashion, but I do think it is worth considering.

The third beast appears in Verse 6:

"After this I looked, and lo, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back; and the beast had four heads; and dominion was given to it." {Dan 7:6 RSV}

Historically this is taken to be the kingdom of Alexander the Great, the Grecian empire. But again, we have the Grecian empire clearly named in Chapter 8 and depicted as a beast, but not as a leopard; it is there a he-goat with a notable horn between his eyes, as we will see when we come to Chapter 8. The historical view draws great significance from the four heads of the beast which, it is said, refer to the fact that when Alexander died his kingdom was divided among his four generals. This is historically true, but the interesting thing is that this beast is seen to have four heads from its very beginning. In Chapter 8 it is clearly indicated that the four divisions of Alexander's kingdom occur after his death, but here the four heads appear on the beast from its very beginning in the struggle for Mediterranean mastery.

I am tempted to view this as possibly depicting Israel, especially because of the four wings which speak of rapidity in striking, the ability to move quickly in military power. After the Six-day War who can deny that Israel has this kind of power? But at present I cannot explain the four heads. It does suggest a junta, or perhaps a coalition government. It might possibly be modern Greece, which does operate under a junta. Or it may be a nation yet to appear as a Mediterranean power which is not visible to us as yet: perhaps it is there now but not identifiable.

At any rate we have clearly here three great nations, national powers, which struggle for Mediterranean mastery. They are not successive, although the prophet describes them successively; they seem to appear contemporaneously, and they struggle for the mastery of the great sea.

In Verses 7-8 we have a second vision: The fourth beast is brought before us, and the rest of the chapter centers on this.

"After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrible and dreadful and exceedingly strong; and it had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped the residue, with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots; and behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things." {Dan 7:7-8 RSV}

This is now the central theme of the chapter. The remainder of the chapter focuses upon this fourth beast. There are several noteworthy things about it immediately visible:

First, the mention of iron ties it to the iron kingdom of Chapter 2, which is the fourth empire to occupy leadership in the affairs of the world. It began with the Roman Empire, which was clearly marked by an iron quality. Also, it is described as breaking in pieces and crushing all opposition and stamping it underfoot. This is markedly similar to what was said about the iron kingdom in Chapter 2. Perhaps what is said about stamping the residue with its feet, would indicate that this beast in some way subdues the other three beasts and takes over their power. That may well be what is meant when a little horn, the eleventh one that comes up, plucks up three of the other horns before it. We might possibly identify those as the first three beasts.

Nevertheless it is clear that this fourth beast has one remarkable feature about it -- it has ten horns. These ten horns correspond to the ten toes of the image in Chapter 2. We are told there that in the days of those [ten] kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed. Now we have a beast with its ten horns, and it is clearly a coalition of ten nations which unite together to give their power to one. An

eleventh one, joining them later, overpowers three of the original ten horns (and as I have suggested, these may possibly be the first three beasts) and becomes the dominant power of earth. It makes its appearance by joining the struggle for Mediterranean mastery.

There are further details on this in the book of Revelation. One of the remarkable things about the Bible is the way it ties together. Though the book of Revelation was written some six hundred years after the book of Daniel, there are most remarkable parallels which tie these two books together. We have seen this before but it may be helpful to note some further details. In Revelation, John the apostle says:

And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems upon its horns, and a blasphemous name upon its heads. And the beast that I saw was like a leopard, its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. {Rev 13:1-2a RSV}

Do you see the similarity? He gathers up the characteristics of the first three beasts in Daniel 7, the lion, the bear, and the leopard, and they appear as features of this great beast which John sees in Revelation 13. This suggests again that in some way the fourth beast seems to amalgamate (conquer, perhaps) the other three beasts.

Notice also, in Chapter 17 of Revelation, certain other interpretation given to us about the beast John sees:

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, 'Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who is seated upon many waters, with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and with the wine of whose fornication the dwellers on earth have become drunk.' And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns. {Rev 17:1-3 RSV}

This is clearly the same beast we saw in Revelation but notice something else. The symbolism here is remarkable. This great harlot, standing for the false church (not of any one denomination but false religion -- false Christianity as it exists among all denominations today) is seen to be seated first upon many waters, and then, when John gets a closer view he sees her seated upon a beast with seven heads and ten horns. The waters, therefore, represent the same thing that the beast does.

In this same chapter we have the waters interpreted for us. In Verse 15, we are told:

And he said to me, "The waters that you saw, where the harlot is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues." {Rev 17:15 RSV}

Many peoples, multitudes of them, nations joining together, and also various languages represented among them; all of which agrees with what we have seen before in Daniel, that this fourth kingdom, the fourth beast of Chapter 7, is made up of many nations, a Western empire of nations, joining together in a great confederacy to move as a unit in its final form. It is made up of peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues and yet, in its final form, it is headed up by ten kings or kingdoms which, as we are told in Verses 12-14, unite together.

"And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast. These are of one mind and give over their power and authority to the beast; they will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful." {Rev 17:12-14}

That gives us a clear indication of the time in which this is to occur. It is immediately preceding the appearance again of Jesus Christ, who is the Lamb who conquers the nations of earth.

Now we return to Daniel 7, where we shall look very quickly and briefly at the second part of Daniel's vision, the vision of the Ancient of Days.

**"As I looked,
thrones were placed
and one that was ancient of days took his seat;
his raiment was white as snow,
and the hair of his head like pure wool;
his throne was fiery flames,
its wheels were burning fire.
A stream of fire issued
and came forth from before him;
a thousand thousands served him,
and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him;
the court sat in judgment,
and the books were opened.**

"I looked then because of the sound of the great words which the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time." {Dan 7:9-12 RSV}

What a remarkable vision! It is very similar. you will notice, to the vision recorded in Revelation 4 and 5, where John looked into heaven and saw a judgment scene with God seated upon a throne, and twenty-four elders on thrones around him. They, too, were passing judgment upon the affairs of earth, just as Daniel sees it here, with great uncouthed hosts of angels waiting upon God's word. God is in the midst of his council, and as the council debates the matters of earth, sentence is passed upon this blasphemous horn, the last ruler of the fourth kingdom, this horn which had "eyes like a man, and a mouth speaking great things." We will see more of him in our next study together.

Then Daniel is shown the One who is chosen to execute the judgment.

**"I saw in the night visions,
and behold, with the clouds of heaven
there came one like the son of man,
and he came to the Ancient of Days
and was presented before him.
And to him was given dominion
and glory and kingdom,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him;
his dominion is an everlasting dominion,
which shall not pass away,
and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed." {Dan 7:13-14 RSV}**

Who is this "Son of Man"? Who else could it be than the Lord Jesus, the One who is seen also in the opening chapters of Revelation as possessing all power in heaven and on earth and who takes the seven-sealed book from the hands of the One seated upon the throne? He is acknowledged there as the only one in the history of mankind who is worthy to open the book and to unfold the seals. Now here he comes with the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of Days.

Perhaps this is the passage the Lord Jesus had in mind when he addressed the chief priests at the time he was brought before them and was charged with blasphemy. He told them that the days would come when they would see "The Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven," {Matt 26:64, Mark 14:62}. He was referring to this passage in which Daniel had predicted that great event.

What can we make of all this?

Surely there is hardly any comment needed. It is obvious that God's intent is to allow sinful humanity to run its course until all that is hidden underneath, the evil pretensions of the human heart, are brought out and revealed in the conduct of men toward one another. When history reaches its lowest ebb, when the sin of man

breaks forth in its most vulgar and most evil forms, then God intends to intervene once again. Now this is absolutely sure. We must settle on this. This is not a mere vagary of Scripture; it is the central teaching of the Word of God. We have as authority to teach this, not only the prophets who spoke of old, but also the apostles of the New Testaments and, even more importantly, the direct testimony of Jesus Christ himself. He quotes the book of Daniel and enlarges upon these things. He gives the same picture as Daniel concerning his return. He says, "The Son of Man shall come in his glory with all his angels with him," {cf, Matt 25:31}. Then his throne will be established and all nations shall gather before him. He gives us that same picture in Matthew 24 and 25.

In other words, if this is not the outline which history will follow, the mold into which it is poured, then Christianity is a fraud. If events are finally going to take another shape, then we have been following a delusion and we would be much better off if it were done away with. But the basis of our faith is the veracity of these passages. We believe God intends to fulfill them exactly as described.

What does that mean to you as an individual?

What does it mean, that God is not going to permit man to work out his problems, ultimately, and find the solutions he desires? Instead he will demonstrate that man has no capacity to do so. Man cannot work these problems out on his own. There is no way that it can be done. It is only as he relates to the God who made him, and who understands him, and welcomes again the intervention of God into his life, that any kind of human problem can be worked out.

Is that not the teaching of prophecy? What other conclusion can we draw from this, than that God himself intends to demonstrate it in the course of history?

In our day we are seeing a remarkable struggle for supremacy developing in the Mediterranean. Every knowledgeable eye is upon that struggle. It is admitted everywhere today that the Mideast crisis is the most serious crisis our world faces, far greater in its possible impact than the Vietnamese struggle.

Is this crisis laying the groundwork for the appearance of these great nations Daniel saw? Who can say? I do not say it is the fulfillment of it, but I say that events are clearly heading in that direction and that the movements we see today are producing the final form pictured here. We can be confident that, as history unfolds, it will follow the pattern that Daniel, Isaiah, Hosea, Joel, and the prophets and apostles have outlined for us.

All of this should give us confidence in the Word of God. It should make us aware that God is in control of history. It should make us realize that we have to rethink the value of our lives in terms of these events, that we must ask ourselves continually the question, "Where is my influence being put, where is the impact of my life?" Is it all wrapped up with things that shall be blown away with the wind? Or is it involved in that which God intends to establish with men? Am I an instrument of his working, or am I in direct opposition to what God is doing in the world today? All these things are given to us in order that we might evaluate life, ourselves, and the world around us.

May God help us, as we face these great revelations, to understand ourselves more thoroughly.

Title: The World Menagerie
By: Ray C. Stedman
Series: The Outline of the Future
Scripture: Daniel 7:1-14
Message No: 3
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THE COMING CAESAR

by Ray C. Stedman

We are considering together the remarkable predictions of the prophet Daniel dealing with the events on earth just before the return of Jesus Christ to establish his kingdom. I must emphasize that in these studies our part is not to prophesy but to interpret. We can make no certain timetable of events. Although there are many signs of our day which make us feel that the events of Daniel 7 may occur within the lifetime of any of us here, nevertheless we have to recognize also that these events may be delayed for several centuries. No one can predict with exactness as to time.

As the title of our series suggests, this is an outline of the future. All the prophets do is touch upon the highlights of history, but it is impossible to tell how much time elapses between the events that are predicted. This is clearly evident in the Scriptures. Although there are certain time schedules given, they concern themselves with very limited areas and begin only after certain precise events have occurred. We shall see one of these time schedules in this seventh chapter of Daniel, but in general there is no tight chronology on these matters.

Let us turn now to the prediction of one of the great figures of all time, foretold in many places in the Scripture, and even by Jesus himself. All that we have seen in Daniel so far, in some sense, has been leading to the revelation of this strange and sinister being, who is called in the Scriptures, the Antichrist. We shall cover the last half of the seventh chapter of Daniel which falls into three natural divisions. There are, first, in Verses 15-18, a general interpretation of the strange beasts which Daniel saw in his vision; Verses 19-22 recapitulate what we have already seen concerning the fourth beast of the series; then from Verse 23 through the rest of the chapter there is a specialized interpretation of the fourth beast.

Let us look now at the first division:

"As for me, Daniel, my spirit within me was anxious and the vision of my head alarmed me. I approached One of those who stood there and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me, and made known to me the interpretation of the things. 'These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth. But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, for ever and ever.'"
{Dan 7:15-18 RSV}

For the first time in this chapter we learn the personal reaction of the prophet to this strange series of night visions. He is understandably alarmed and puzzled by them. He sees them as portending certain tremendous events to come though he does not know how soon, and he is puzzled as to what their meaning may be. We learn here of the presence of an interpreting angel to whom Daniel comes to ask about these events. In Chapter 9 we are told whom this angel is. There Daniel tells us that he is Gabriel, the very same angel who was later sent by God to announce the birth of Jesus to both Joseph and Mary, as recorded in the opening chapters of Matthew and Luke. Gabriel seems to have some special responsibility as interpreter and announcer of events, and he appears here in that capacity to Daniel.

There are two things that Gabriel highlights in this strange vision of the four beasts arising out of the sea. One is that the four beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth. Now the phrase, "shall arise," makes clear that the historical interpretation of this passage -- which links it to the rise of Babylon, followed by Medo-Persia, then by Greece, and then Rome -- is in error, for all four of these are yet to arise after Daniel saw the vision. We know from the first verse of this chapter that Daniel saw the vision almost at the close of the Babylonian empire. Rather than just arising, it had already been world ruler for a great many years. That helps to confirm what we saw last time, that this is a vision of four great nations, all contemporaneous, occupying the Mediterranean area just before the return of Jesus Christ. The vision concerns, therefore, the last days of Gentile rule.

The second thing the angel highlighted is that the ultimate end is the establishment of the promised kingdom of God. History does not end in destruction; it goes on to reconstruction. This final kingdom was decreed by the

Ancient of Days (another name for God himself), and, in this strange vision in Verses 13-14, to whom world dominion is granted. Unquestionably, this is one of the places where we have in the Old Testament a clear presentation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Linked with him is a group of people called "the saints of the Most High." This is a new element. The angel adds in the interpretation that which was not mentioned in the vision itself. These saints of the Most High are to receive the kingdom. Notice they do not take it themselves. It is the Son of man who comes and takes the kingdom, but then he gives it to the saints of the Most High who join him in ruling over the earth.

With this as an introduction, we come to the fourth beast. Interest centers now on this strange ten-horned beast that is the fourth of the series which Daniel saw arising out of the sea, and especially the eleventh horn which arises after the first ten. Daniel asks particularly concerning this beast:

"Then I desired to know the truth concerning the fourth beast, which was different from all the rest, exceedingly terrible, with its teeth of iron and claws of bronze; and which devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet; and concerning the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn which came up and before which three of them fell, the horn which had eyes and a mouth that spoke great things, and which seemed greater than its fellows. As I looked, this horn made war with the saints, and prevailed over them, until the Ancient of Days came, and the judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints received the kingdom." {Dan 7:19-22 RSV}

All of this we have seen before, except for one new element which is added by Daniel. He says that the horn which grew up "made war with the saints and prevailed against them." This had not been included in the vision. From it we learn that the time of these four nations arising together will be a time of great and intense religious persecution, a time when war will be made against the saints, and quite successfully. The beast will prevail against them. Doubtless this links closely with what Jesus himself says, as recorded in Matthew 24, speaking to his disciples on the Mount of Olives just before his crucifixion:

"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation, and put you to death; and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then many will fall away, and betray one another, and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because wickedness is multiplied, most men's love will grow cold. But he who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come." {Matt 24:9-14 RSV}

I tie these passages together in order that you may see that this is not merely an obscure prediction from an Old Testament prophet, but has been confirmed to us and re-emphasized by the Lord Jesus himself.

Moving on with the interpretation, in the closing section of this chapter, Verses 23-27, we have the angel's answer to Daniel's inquiry about the fourth beast. It is a detailed explanation of what the strange symbolism means and especially as regards the little horn which comes up last. Each verse of this section covers a stage of interpretation, so I shall take it verse by verse.

First, verse 23:

**"Then he said,
'As for the fourth beast,
there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth,
which shall be different from all the kingdoms,
and it shall devour the whole earth,
and trample it down, and break it to pieces.'" {Dan 7:23 RSV}**

This builds upon what we have already learned. We have summarized here the strange course of Roman sovereignty over the earth. The fourth kingdom began with the Roman empire, but, as the angel said to Daniel, it would be different from all other kingdoms. It is different because it is not a single nation dominating a great

section of earth but it is a collection of nations. That is what marks the fourth kingdom as distinct. Remember that in Revelation 17 we were told also that the beast which appears there is made up of a multitude of nations and tongues and kingdoms. It is a collection of nations and languages, dominating the world by the power of certain ideals and principles characteristic of it.

Now it is time to ask ourselves some rather revealing questions: Why is it that in the course of history since our Lord's day, all of the world's trade languages have been Western? Beginning with Latin (the language of Rome itself) which superseded Greek as the trade language of the world, we then have the rise of the Spanish empire when Spanish was the trade language. It was replaced by French up to modern times, but now it is English, which is spoken all over the world as the language of commerce, trade, and diplomacy.

Why is it that these universally spoken languages have always been Roman and Western? Why is it that Western dress has become the standard all over the world in our own day! Instead of the dress and cultures of the East, it has been the West which has conquered in this area. Western dress is now standard even throughout the Orient.

Why is it also that Western technology has spread everywhere throughout the world? And why has the spread of Western civilization always resulted in the breaking up of indigenous cultures and has produced internal struggles among nations by industrializing them with all its inevitable accompaniment of congestion, pollution, and the ravaging of natural resources?

Is it not at least possible that this is what is meant by the phrase, "it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces? Surely this is very remarkable in the light of this strange prophecy. It seems quite clear that this fourth kingdom is indeed different from all the others that preceded it and has a strange and impressive effect upon the whole world.

In Verse 24 we learn something further:

**"As for the ten horns,
out of this kingdom
ten kings shall arise,
and another shall arise after them;
he shall be different from the former ones,
and shall put down three kings." {Dan 7:24 RSV}**

Here we have the final form of the fourth kingdom. The two great political changes which Scripture has long anticipated must occur before the return of Jesus Christ in glory, have been:

1. The restoration of the Jews to Palestine which has been predicted for centuries and has now been fulfilled, and
2. The ten-fold division of the Roman earth. It is emphasized in several Scriptures that this is to occur before the return of Jesus Christ.

There is a gradual development of this ten-fold division after it first appears. There are first ten kings who share power together in a confederation of sorts. Then an eleventh comes up, who is rather obscure and unpretentious at the first, but, by this eleventh, three of the first ten are overthrown or amalgamated, and finally all ten unite in giving their power and authority to the eleventh, the "little horn" mentioned here.

Now you cannot read this account without seeing that this "little horn" is an individual. He has, as Daniel said, "the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things." He is the final Caesar of the fourth kingdom. The Roman empire began with a series of Caesars who established a norm for dictatorship throughout all history. They symbolize supreme power vested in one individual. The "little horn" mentioned here will be the coming Caesar of the world.

Let us read on. In verse 25 we learn more.

**"He shall speak words against the Most High,
and shall wear out the saints of the Most High,
and shall think to change the times and the law;
and they shall be given into his hand
for a time, two times, and half a time." {Dan 7:25 RSV}**

Here is new information that we have not had before. There are four distinct, recognizable, factors that are brought out by the angel about this strange being:

First, he blasphemes and opposes God, he "speaks words against the Most High." Other Scriptures elsewhere suggest that he does not begin his career that way but after he comes into world power he begins to blaspheme God.

Second, he persecutes the saints and makes war against them, as Daniel has already been told. He is said here to "wear out the saints of the Most High." The Hebrew word that is used for "wear out" is a most remarkable word. It means literally "to afflict," and always with a mental application. It means, therefore, to afflict mentally, and it very strongly suggests the brain-washing techniques which are now being widely developed, using serums and drugs by which the mind, the thinking, is actually changed. Attempts are thus made to alter the entire character of an individual, through mental exhaustion and the use of mind-changing drugs to literally "afflict mentally" and thus "wear out" the saints.

Third, we read that he shall "think to change the times and the law." Now it is a little difficult to know exactly what it means, to change the times, because this is about the only reference to this activity that is given to us. But it at least suggests the possibility of a calendar revision, an attempt to change the dating of human events. Since this individual is clearly against God and opposed to the things of God, it is quite likely that what he will try to do is to eliminate the designation of human events by the present use of A.D., "in the year of our Lord," thus dating them from the time of Christ. It is apparently an attempt to change history and date it from some other event, thus eliminating the days of Christ as the hinge of history.

We read that he also attempts to change the law. This is not, laws, plural; it is singular, *the law*, which either implies the constitutions by which nations are basically governed, or, much more likely, an attempt to disregard natural law, to ignore the fundamental law of life, e.g., laws of sex, laws of society, laws of economics, etc. All this highlights the brashness of a man who dares to think of himself as the incarnation of all that men believe about God, and is thus able to change fundamental and basic law.

The last thing given to us here is that his time of power is limited. "They shall be given into his hand for a time, two times, and half a time." Elsewhere in Daniel we see what is meant by "a time." Nebuchadnezzar, in Chapter 4, was afflicted with insanity for "seven times." By that is meant seven years, so a "time" is a year. If we take a time, two times, and half a time, and add them together we have three and a half years. This is in exact agreement with predictions elsewhere in Scripture which limit the time of Antichrist's power to twelve hundred and sixty days, in one case, and in another, forty-two months, each of which is exactly the same period as three and a half years. These other passages were given at a widely differing period of time. thus confirming this limitation of power. It would be helpful at this point to see the parallelism which exists between Daniel and Revelation. In Revelation 13 we can see that the strange beast that John saw rising up out of the sea is closely parallel to what Daniel describes.

"And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems upon its horns and a blasphemous name upon its heads. And the beast that I saw as like a leopard, its feet like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth." {Rev 13:1-2a RSV}

John's beast gathers together all the characteristics of the first three beasts of Daniel's vision. Now let us go on in Revelation 13:

"And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words..." {Rev 13:5a RSV}

See how clearly that accords with what Daniel says about the horn that had eyes like a man, and a mouth speaking great things. In Revelation we learn that those great things were "haughty and blasphemous words,"

"and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months [which is three and a half years]; it opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God; blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven." Also it was allowed "to make war on the saints and to conquer them. [No question here as to identity, is there?] And authority was given it over every tribe and people and tongue and nation, and all who dwell on earth will worship it, every one whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain." {Rev 13:5b-8 RSV}

Clearly we have an exact identification here with the little horn of Daniel 7.

Back in Daniel, we find in the last two verses of the chapter the doom of this beast recorded:

**"But the court shall sit in judgment,
and his dominion shall be taken away,
to be consumed and destroyed to the end.
And the kingdom and the dominion
and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven
shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High;
their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom,
and all dominions shall serve and obey them." {Dan 7:26-27 RSV}**

Daniel is told precisely "the court shall sit in judgment," i.e., the heavenly council will pass sentence upon this blasphemous, God-defying man. It is encouraging to see that man's evil is everywhere limited, he can only go so far. Paul gives us further detail on this in Second Thessalonians 2:7:

For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, and the Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath of his mouth and destroy him by his appearing and his coming. The coming of the lawless one by the activity of Satan will be with all power and with pretended signs and wonders [that is an important word to notice -- miraculous signs are no proof of God-given authentication; they can be satanic], and with all wicked deception for those who are to perish, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. {2 Th 2:7 RSV}

Thus we learn how the beast's dominion shall be taken away and eventually be given to the saints of the Most High.

With one voice Scripture points to the collapse of civilization as we know it before the return of Jesus Christ. The evil of man will be permitted to have such complete manifestation that it results in the rise of a single individual to whom all authority in the world is committed. As we look at our own day we are tempted to ask. Where are we in this scene? How close are we to these events? As I have already suggested, we can only be relative in our estimation of that. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to believe that these events are only around the corner. As you know today, even secular writers are predicting the rise of just such an individual. I was interested some time ago in a statement which appears in U.S. News and World Report:

The once optimistic hope of Americans for a well-ordered and a stable world is fading. Expenditures close to a trillion dollars have failed to provide stability. Rather, conditions have worsened. This appraisal indicates that among officials the prevailing view is gaining acceptance that frictions and world problems are becoming too deep seated to be solved, except by a strong hand from someplace.

Sir Winston Churchill, while still Prime Minister of Great Britain, speaking in Copenhagen, said this:

The creation of an authoritative, all-powerful world order is the ultimate aim toward which we must strive. Unless some effective world super-government can be brought quickly into action, the proposals for peace and human progress are dark and doubtful.

Everywhere today there are increasing signs, in many dimensions, that we are facing (and soon) an unprecedented world crisis, a crisis which we cannot avoid no matter how hard we try. It will involve not only politics but even the supply of food, the pollution of the atmosphere, and other ecological matters. Many of you have read the reports of Dr. Paul Ehrlich here at Stanford who is working on the problem of population explosion. He was asked recently a question, "In your book you also outlined other ways the planet is deteriorating: pollution of the oceans, pollution of the rivers and lakes (the death of Lake Erie, for example), pollution of the atmosphere, ruination of the land. It seems the world is deteriorating at a rapid rate. Do you agree?" Dr. Ehrlich replied, "That's exactly right. We are now at the stage where, if we have any hope of saving mankind and the world, we have to take immediate and drastic action on all kinds of fronts. We have got to start doing all the right things at this moment, just to give ourselves a decent fighting chance. But even this won't insure salvation."

With some misgivings, I want to share with you a remarkable prediction by the famous prophetess of our day, Jeane Dixon. I want to make it clear that I do not endorse Jeane Dixon. I believe that the source of her knowledge is demonic and therefore cannot be trusted, although it has an amazing record of accuracy. That is part of what constitutes it so deceptive. We must remember that the Scriptures make clear that the powers of darkness have a vested interest in the appearance and the ultimate acceptance of a world ruler, therefore they will be active to prepare the way for the coming and acceptance of such a one. One of Jeane Dixon's most startling predictions is this:

A child born somewhere in the Middle East shortly after 7:00 A.M. on February 5, 1962, will revolutionize the world. Before the close of the century he will bring together all mankind in one all-embracing faith. This will be the foundation of a new Christianity, with every sect and creed united through this man, who will walk among the people to spread the wisdom of the almighty power. Mankind will begin to feel the great force of this man in the early 1980's, and during the subsequent years the world as we know it will be reshaped and revamped into one without wars or suffering. His power will grow greatly until 1999, at which time the peoples of this earth will probably discover the full meaning of the vision.

Her interpretation of this man is to see him as the one great hope of the world and the answer to the prayers of men. The fact that she sees this individual as a blessing to mankind helps to confirm our suspicion that the source of her information is demonic. For in the light of Scripture, this coming world ruler is no blessing at all, although he will first appear in that light. But he is not really a blessing; he is the greatest the world has ever known though he will appear to offer a way out of world chaos. Distrust the dates that are given in Miss Dixon's predictions because we are no more authorized to set dates for the appearance of Antichrist than we are for the appearance of Jesus Christ.

But one thing is clear, and I do not think this can be questioned. We do not today (and probably never shall) live in what we could call normal times. The world is fast approaching a crisis. All voices agree together, secular and sacred alike, that we are coming to an unprecedented time of trouble in the world, and we shall never again see anything that could be regarded as normal times. Dr. Ehrlich tells us that in the 1970's the world will begin to experience great famines, which are absolutely inescapable. He sees no solution, no way to avoid the great famines that will decimate whole nations in the 1970's. This, along with the increasing pollution of atmosphere, the congestion of our cities, the rise and spread of violence, all points to the soon appearing of some remarkable individual who will seem to offer a way out.

My question to us is this: What should we Christians do in view of all this? Or better, perhaps, the question should be: What should we Christians be?

You remember that is the very thing Peter asks after he describes the culmination of human events. He says, "What manner of persons ought you to be in the light of these things?" {cf, 2 Pet 3:11}. The Scripture tells us that we are not children of darkness. That is, these things are not to come upon us unexpectedly, nor are we to act like others with regard to them. We are children of light, therefore we ought to act in the light of what is revealed about these events.

It seems to me this forces us to ask ourselves some questions. I would like to suggest a few which I think we ought to take very seriously in view of the trends of our day, and in the light of our turbulent times and the

power of these prophetic Scriptures.

Surely it is fair to ask ourselves, Should we seek to continue constantly raising our standard of living in the light of these coming events? Is it really fair, in the face of a world which is soon to be knowing widespread famine and starvation, to continue to add to our standard of living?

I am not trying to be negative. I am not one of those who believe that poverty is necessarily a mark of righteousness. But surely that is a fair question to ask in the face of the pressing needs of the world around us.

Is it right for us to try to own a third car, a cabin in the mountains, an expensive boat, or other luxuries? I hasten to add that no one has any authority whatsoever to sit in judgment over another in these matters. These are issues which must be settled for each individual only before God. But I do think we ought to settle them in the light of a conscience that, as the Apostle Paul said, seeks to be void of all offense before men. Is it right that we should spend the additional money that is available to most of us today solely on ourselves while the cause of God is languishing in so many ways for lack of funds? Should we not deliberately and voluntarily forego certain leisure and recreation, recognizing that it is perfectly proper to have normal recreation and leisure, but to use some of the time thus available for just being friends to each other, and showing love and concern for one another?

Recently at a church board meeting we were discussing the perennial problem that some of the visitors here regard this as a cold church, where you could come for years and learn a lot of truth, but you won't make many friends. Something is wrong if that is the case. We are not properly demonstrating the warmth of Christian love, which must be preeminent above everything else if we belong to Jesus Christ. I know how easily it happens: we are all engulfed in our own programs and schedules. Well, then, let's forget some of the schedules! We need to take more time for friendship and not rush away to things. Let us get to know one another, and be more aggressive in breaking through the natural barriers that keep us from meeting people we haven't met before. Let us manifest the love, concern, and friendship that many of us desire to express toward one another but for one reason or another have not done so.

These are fair questions, are they not?

"What manner of persons ought we to be," in the light of these events?

We know where we are heading. We see beyond the darkness to the glory of the light that shall dawn. We do not need to be depressed; we do not need to be discouraged; we do not need to be downcast or pessimistic. Nor, on the other hand, should we give way to glowing but unfounded optimism, which so many try to display without reason. Let us rather be realistic. Let us obey the Lord and lift up our heads and rejoice, for God is working out his program. But surely it ought to lay some demand upon us to live, not for ourselves, but for the advance of God's cause in these days.

Is that unreasonable? Is it not what these events should devolve upon us? Should we not re-evaluate our lives and our daily activities in the light of these portentous events which are soon to come upon the earth? I leave it to you and your conscience before God.

Prayer:

Our Father, for many years some of us have been reading these prophetic Scriptures and treating them as designed merely to satisfy our curiosity. We confess that we have never really taken them seriously until we see world events shaping themselves into this very mold. Lord, help us to take these things seriously and act in the light of these events, not giving way to the current foibles and fashions that men and women of the world around us, who live in ignorance of these things, reflect. But make us, Lord, to walk in the light that streams from your word, and to be men and women of love, grace, concern, warmth, truth, and honesty in these days. We ask in Jesus' name, Amen.

Title: The Coming Caesar

By: Ray C. Stedman
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THE GREAT PROPAGANDIST

by Ray C. Stedman

The eighth chapter of Daniel contains a different kind of little prophecy than any we have seen before. In the other prophetic sections of the book we have had a more or less direct view of future events brought before us. Chapter 2 was a long-range telescopic view, looking down the whole range of time beginning with Daniel's own day and running on down to the end beyond our own day. Part of it is now fulfilled and part of it is yet unfulfilled. In Chapter 7 we had what we might liken to a zoom camera approach, which moved in to the events of the last days before our Lord's return, wherein we saw the condition of the earth politically, and especially centering around the Mediterranean Sea. We were stirred to note that events of our own day were perhaps beginning to produce the final shape of things.

But now, in Chapter 8, we see events which were future as far as Daniel was concerned but have since been fulfilled in history. Some three hundred years after the prophet Daniel uttered these words, they were, for the most part, fulfilled. Yet that historic fulfillment of the past becomes in turn a prophecy of a further and greater fulfillment yet to come. This kind of double fulfillment is not unique to the book of Daniel. There are several other places in Scripture where we have it. Perhaps the most familiar to us is in the New Testament, when Jesus, addressing his disciples, predicted the fall of Jerusalem which occurred only forty years later when the Roman armies came in 70 A.D. and took the city. He had predicted that capture most clearly. But, in turn, that historical fulfillment was a picture of a far larger and more savage attack upon Jerusalem which is yet to come, when the nations will again ring the city and Jerusalem will once again fall. At that time its deliverance will be by the return of Jesus Christ again to the Mount of Olives. Thus we have an historic fulfillment which in turn becomes a prediction of another event. That is exactly what we find in the eighth chapter of Daniel.

The chapter falls very easily into two parts. First, there is the vision which the prophet had, and its historic fulfillment. It will help us to see how history records the accurate fulfillment of this vision for it will give us added confidence in the word of God. Second we shall look at the future application of this which may well prove to be immediately before us in time.

In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared to me, Daniel, after that which appeared to me at the first. And I saw in the vision; and when I saw, I was in Susa the capital, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in the vision, and I was at the river Ulai. {Dan 8:1-2 RSV}

This gives us the time and locale of the vision. It was two years after the vision recorded in Chapter 7. This new vision came in the third year of Belshazzar while Babylon was yet in power, before the Medes and Persians had come in. Daniel is, either in vision or in person, in the capital of Persia, Susa, and standing by the river Ulai. This seems to indicate that he is about to witness the flow of power from Persia toward the West, which had been predicted clearly in Daniel's previous visions.

Now we come to the first part of the visions:

I raised my eyes and saw, and behold, a ram standing on the bank of the river. It had two horns; and both horns were high, but one was higher than the other, and the higher one came up last. I saw the ram charging westward and northward and southward; no beast could stand before him, and there was no one who could rescue from his power; he did as

he pleased and magnified himself. {Dan 8:3-4 RSV}

We do not need to wonder what this means. In this case we have it clearly interpreted for us by the angel Gabriel, as Daniel indicates a further on.

When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it; and behold, there stood before me one having the appearance of a man. And I heard a man's voice between the banks of the Ulai and it called, "Gabriel, make this man understand the vision." So he came near where I stood; and when he came, I was frightened and fell upon my face But he said to me, "Understand, O son of man, that the vision is for the time of the end."

As he was speaking to me, I fell into a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me and set me on my feet He said, "Behold, I will make known to you what shall be at the latter end of the indignation; for it pertains to the appointed time of the end. As for the ram which you saw with the two horns, these are the kings of Media and Persia." {Dan 8:15-20 RSV}

That is very clear and definite is it not? The interpreting angel has identified this great ram as the Medio-Persian empire which was to follow Babylon upon the scene of world power. And yet, though he does definitely identify it historically, he also uses certain suggestive phrases which indicate that there is also to be a far distant fulfillment. For instance, he says that it will apply to "the time of the end," and that phrase is consistently used in Scripture as referring to the end immediately preceding the return of Christ. Also the angel calls it "the latter time of the indignation." The indignation, as used in Scripture, refers to God's indignation over his people Israel. It links with another phrase that appears in the prophets, which designates that period of time which Jesus called "the great tribulation," as "the time of Jacob 's trouble," the time when Israel will again undergo the indignation of God. Finally, one other phrase in Verse 19 speaks of "the appointed time of the end," and this too suggests some further future fulfillment beyond the time of the Medio-Persian empire.

Let us now return to the rest of the vision.

As I was considering, behold, a he-goat came from the west across the face of the whole earth, without touching the ground; and the goat had a conspicuous horn between his eyes. He came to the ram with the two horns, which I had seen standing on the bank of the river, and he ran at him in his mighty wrath. I saw him come close to the ram, and he was enraged against him and struck the ram and broke his two horns; and the ram had no power to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled upon him; and there was no one who could rescue the ram from his power. Then the he-goat magnified himself exceedingly; but when he was strong, the great horn was broken, and instead of it there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven. {Dan 8:5-8 RSV}

Again the interpreting angel makes this symbolism clear. In Verses 21-22 it is explained:

"And the he-goat is the king of Greece; and the great horn between his eyes is the first king. As for the horn that was broken, in place of which four others arose, four kingdoms shall arise from his nation, but not with his power." {Dan 8:21-22 RSV}

We know from history that this is a description of the rise of the Grecian empire under Alexander the Great, which to us is ancient history. The brilliant son of Philip of Macedon in his late teens became the leader of his father's armies. He swept through Greece and conquered that area and then challenged the power of Persia. In several great battles he overcame the Persian armies. They were quite unable to stand before him, as this vision depicts. Alexander conquered the lands of Persia and Babylon, then swept south toward Egypt.

There is an interesting footnote to history which comes in here. Josephus, the Jewish historian, tells us that as Alexander the Great moved toward Egypt with his armies he came near the city of Jerusalem. He threatened to take the city, but when the high priests in Jerusalem knew that Alexander was near they took copies of the book of Daniel and went out to meet him. Josephus tells us that they showed Alexander this very prophecy. When Alexander saw that it had been clearly predicted that he would overcome the Persian armies and become

the ruler of the world, he decided to spare the city of Jerusalem and instead enriched it. There is no confirmation of this incident from other historians, but it is true that Alexander did not capture Jerusalem but did enrich the city. This may well be one of the earliest and most interesting applications of prophecy to specific events.

Historians know that Alexander the Great went on to Babylon after subduing Egypt and at the age of 33, indulged himself in a great drunken feast with his generals and died of a combination of malaria and acute alcoholism. Though conqueror of the world, he was unable to conquer his own passions. So, at the age of 33 he died, and as this passage indicates, the great horn was broken and four horns rose in its place. These are a picture of the four generals among whom Alexander's kingdom was divided. This is all fulfilled in history.

We have still more history:

Out of one of them came forth a little horn, which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the glorious land. It grew great, even to the host of heaven; and some of the host of the stars it cast down to the ground, and trampled upon them. It magnified itself, even up to the Prince of the host; and the continual burnt offering was taken a way from him, and the place of his sanctuary was overthrown. And the host was given over to it together with the continual burnt offering through transgression; and truth was cast down to the ground, and the horn acted and prospered. Then I heard a holy one speaking; and another holy one said to the one that spoke, "For how long is the vision concerning the continual burnt offering, the transgression that makes desolate, and the giving over of the sanctuary and the host to be trampled underfoot?" And he said to him, "For two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state." {Dan 8:9-14 RSV}

This too has already been fulfilled. We know that one of the four generals of Alexander who shared the division of the kingdom was named Seleucus. He took as his portion the kingdom of Syria including much of Asia Minor, or Turkey, as it is known today. Another of the generals, Ptolemy, took Egypt. These two generals soon had become bitter enemies. History records a longstanding controversy between the two dynasties, Syria to the north of Palestine, and Egypt on the south. They fought back and forth using Palestine as the battlefield for a long period of time.

The eighth king in the dynasty of the Seleucids was a man named Antiochus Epiphanes, who reigned from about 170 B.C. His capital city was Antioch and was named for him. (Antioch appears in the New Testament as the place where believers were first called Christians, {Acts 11:26}.) This man, Antiochus Epiphanes (Epiphanes means "great"), was such a wicked and vicious individual that the Jews nicknamed him "Antiochus Epimanes," a play on his name. Epimanes means "Madman," and it was thus they identified him. He struggled with Egypt as did his predecessors before him and, in the course of his warfare, he conquered Jerusalem. Because he was angered at the Jews for some insult they had given him, he defied the high priests and entered into the sacred temple. That is described here by the phrase, "It [the little horn] magnified itself, even to the Prince of the host [the high priest]." He actually erected a pagan altar in the temple at Jerusalem and offered upon it a sow in sacrifice, an unclean animal. He took the broth of the sow and sprinkled it throughout the sanctuary, thus defiling the whole sanctuary. Then, as a final insult, he erected a statue of Jupiter in the holy place.

This, of course, brought to an end the twice-daily sacrifice called "the continual burnt offering," which Daniel here predicted was to be taken away for a definite period of time. The text says that it shall be taken away for "two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings." Many have misread that to mean twenty-three hundred days; but it does not mean days, and it does not say days. What it refers to is not days, but sacrifices. The continual burnt offering was offered once each evening and once each morning every day, so twenty-three hundred evenings and mornings is eleven-hundred and fifty days, just a little over three years.

Anyone who has read the apocryphal Book of the Maccabees knows, Jewish history records that the offering was taken away for a period of a little over three years. Finally, Judas Maccabaeus and his sons rose in revolt and led the people of Israel to retake Jerusalem, cleansed the sanctuary and restored the offerings at the end of eleven-hundred and fifty days, exactly as predicted. It is all history, but I do not want to dwell on it longer for

I want to come to that which has application to us. We might think that this ancient fulfillment ended the matter, were it not for these suggestive phrases of the angel we noted before, and for the fact that the Lord Jesus himself, in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, refers to this very prophecy. In Verse 13 of Daniel 8 we read an unusual phrase, "For how long is the vision concerning the continual burnt offering, the transgression that makes desolate..." or, more literally, "the abomination of desolation."

In the twenty-fourth of Matthew the Lord Jesus, speaking of a yet coming time, said to the disciples "when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place" {Matt 24:15}, then, he said, they would know it is time to get out of the city. Do not waste any time, he urges, do not even go back for your coat, just go, because then shall be great tribulation such as has not been since the world began. Now that was spoken more than one hundred and sixty-five years after Antiochus Epiphanes had desecrated the temple, so it clearly establishes a yet future fulfillment of this historic event.

With that in mind, let us turn to what the angel says about this future fulfillment:

"And at the latter end of their rule, when the transgressors have reached their full measure, a king of bold countenance, one who understands riddles, shall arise. His power shall be great, and he shall cause fearful destruction, and shall succeed in what he does, and destroy mighty men and the people of the saints. By his cunning he shall make deceit prosper under his hand, and in his own mind he shall magnify himself. Without warning he shall destroy many; and he shall even rise up against the Prince of princes; but, by no human hand, he shall be broken. The vision of the evenings and the mornings which has been told is true; but seal up the vision, for it pertains to many days hence."
{Dan 8:23-26 RSV}

There are two factors here that mark the time of this fulfillment.

Notice, the angel says that it shall be "at the latter end of their rule," i.e., the rulers that would control the area of the country once dominated by Antiochus Epiphanes. It will be in the latter end of their rule. This suggests strongly the reappearance of the nation Syria in history. It is very striking that a nation of Syria did not exist for centuries until 1944 when the French mandate over this area was dissolved and Syria once again appeared as a nation in the midst of the world. Its history as a modern nation dates only from 1944.

Second, we are told here that it would be a time "when the transgressors had reached their full measure." This suggests the final crisis of history when transgression, or, as it is described in other places, corruption and violence, lawlessness, is so widespread and so intense that, as Jesus said in the Olivetti Discourse, it would be once again like the days of Noah. This was the characteristic mark of the days of Noah, widespread corruption and violence over the earth.

At that time a very singular individual appears. According to the description here he has two outstanding personal characteristics.

First, he is bold in appearance; "fierce" is the way it is translated in some versions. He has a commanding presence, a very intense personality, with a strong, magnetic appeal to people, thus, bold in his countenance.

Second, he is highly knowledgeable; he has the ability to understand riddles. This does not mean he enjoys conundrums or that he is good at riddle games. This is really a word describing the enigmas of life, the mysteries of life. He is a skilled psychologist, if you like. He understands what makes people tick, why they behave the way they do, and how society is structured. Using this knowledge he is able to influence people powerfully.

There are two methods of his operation revealed to us here. We are told that "his power shall be great." In the RSV there is reference to a footnote here which gives the literal Hebrew. For some reason the revisers left this Hebrew passage out of the text, but in the Hebrew it adds these words, "but not with his power." His power shall be great, but not with his own power. We learn from this that he will exercise derived power, power not his own. He borrows it from another source. But it will be great power, and will result, we are told, in fearful

and widespread destruction. Especially will it be aimed against "the people of the saints," those who honor and love God in that day.

Just as we found that the little horn of Chapter 7 (the Roman political ruler who heads the Western confederacy of nations in the last day) was to be identified in Chapter 13 of the book of Revelation as the first beast, so we will find that this little horn of Chapter 8 is also identified in Revelation 13. In Verse 11 of Chapter 13 in Revelation, John says,

Then I saw another beast which rose out of the earth; it had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence [i.e., it has derived power; it derives it from another being], and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed. {Rev 13:11-12 RSV}

Here is another individual who exercises power in conjunction with the great political ruler of the last day. Now come back to Daniel, and let us recall the second characteristic of the little horn in Chapter 8.

"By his cunning he shall make deceit prosper under his hand, and in his own mind he shall magnify himself. Without warning he shall destroy many; and he shall even rise up against the Prince of princes; but, by no human hand, he shall be broken." {Dan 8:25 RSV}

Plainly this man is marked by his ability to control others by deceitful propaganda. He makes deceit to prosper, which is a clear description of propaganda. He is the great propagandist. We are not told exactly how he does it (perhaps by mimeographing his messages and distributing them around!) but he influences many in various ways.

If we turn again to Revelation 13 we will find how this accords exactly with the second beast:

It works great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in the sight of men [in these days of space stations and nuclear power, this is certainly believable]; and by the signs which it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast, it deceives those who dwell on earth, bidding them make an image for the beast which was wounded by the sword and yet lived; and it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast so that the image should even speak, and to cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain. Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. {Rev 13:13-17 RSV}

What a remarkable propaganda accomplishment, by which men are deceived and made to believe something that is not true. The "image" is very significant here. Remember that Antiochus Epiphanes, back in history, defiled the sanctuary by erecting an image of Jupiter. Put these passages together and it appears to me that we have a clear description of what occurs in the last days. There has always been a question among Bible scholars as to which of these two beasts in Revelation 13 is actually the Antichrist. In my judgment, the answer is: The first one.

It is his image, made to be alive, i.e., given a form of life (perhaps this suggests something of what scientists will be able to accomplish in their efforts to produce life), which will be erected by the second beast in the temple to be built in Jerusalem and thus will be the "abomination which makes desolate," which, Jesus said, will be the mark to indicate the beginning of the terrible judgment of God. If that is the case, we can see how these two personages work closely together, the one a great political power whose image appears in the temple to be worshipped as God though he does not personally appear there, but all is done by the agency of the second beast who is the fulfillment of the little horn of Daniel 8.

Now, according to Daniel, "he shall even rise up against the Prince of princes." This can be none other than Jesus Christ himself. He is given the title, King of kings and Lord of lords, and Prince of the kings of the

earth, in the New Testament. This second beast, the little horn of Daniel 8, faces, therefore, the same doom as the first beast of Revelation 13. Their mutual fate is described in Revelation 19:

And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who sits upon the horse [that is Jesus Christ] and against his army. And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had worked the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with brimstone. {Rev 19:19-20 RSV}

Thus "by no human hand he is broken." Daniel and John, writing six hundred years apart, both detail for us these two powerful figures who will deceive and amaze the whole world at the time of the end.

Returning to Daniel now, attention is called to the effect this vision had upon Daniel himself.

And I, Daniel, was overcome and lay sick for some days; then I rose and went about the king's business; but I was appalled by the vision and did not understand it. {Dan 8:27 RSV}

There is something highly suggestive here. This great prophet was sickened by what he saw was to happen on earth, but he did not let that stop him; he rose and went about the king's business.

When I read that I could not help but think of the words of the Lord Jesus to his disciples when he outlined what would happen in the future. He said to them, "Occupy till I come" {Luke 19:13b KJV}, i.e., go about the king's business until the king returns.

Someone said to me the other day, "If I knew for sure that these were the last days, I would live a lot differently than I am."

Would you?

Well, it should not make any real difference. These events have been possible in any generation since the Lord's first appearance on earth. God could have touched the spring that released the forces that would bring about these events in any generation -- that is why every generation has expected it in its time -- but since the Word of God reveals to us our responsibility in the light of these events, then every single Christian who has ever lived for these two thousand years will be judged as to whether he has taken them seriously or not. Whether it was the actual time of the last days or not does not really make any difference: the forces that ultimately produce these events have been at work in every generation, and the word has been given to us to make clear what our reaction to these should be.

It does not make any difference then whether we live in the actual last days or not; ***our reaction to this revelation*** will be what reveals how much we believe God and are faithful.

That highlights to me the great question which confronts us as we come to the Lord's table, the question I am facing anew in my own life these days: How available am I to God? How much have I yielded myself to the rights of the Lord Jesus in my life? Have I presented my body as a living sacrifice unto him?

Paul said in Second Corinthians 5, "we are not to live any longer to ourselves but unto him who for us died and was raised again," {cf, 2 Cor 5:15 KJV}. "We are bought with a price," {cf, 1 Cor 6:20}. We no longer belong to ourselves, we no longer have the right to run our lives as we please.

This is the great announcement of the Word of God. We have been bought with a price, we are no longer our own. Therefore, the only reasonable thing we can do is to present ourselves to him to use in his work. That is what gives life real meaning. That is what gives it worthwhileness and value in the light of eternity. So the question I leave with you as we come to this hour is this:

Have you presented your body to him to teach, to help, to love, to learn, to pray, to play, for his name's sake?

Prayer:

Our Father, help us to take these words very seriously. We know how many times throughout the Scriptures the disciples were rebuked, and quite justly so, because they did not take seriously what you said. The Lord Jesus had to rebuke the cities in which he preached because they would not change their attitudes in view of what he had said to them. Lord, keep us from being stubborn, rebellious people. Rather, help us to yield ourselves anew to you, knowing that there can be no greater glory, no greater joy, no greater privilege than being your instrument in these days. Grant that we may right now, each one of us, beginning with the youngest to the oldest, re-present ourselves to you, Lord Jesus, to be your instrument, knowing that as we make ourselves available to you, you will make yourself available to us. Then the glory of your great Person and Being will be manifest in us. We ask this in your name, Amen.

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GOD'S COUNTDOWN

by Ray C. Stedman

The ninth chapter of Daniel centers clearly upon the person of Jesus Christ and is one of the few places in Scripture where God ties himself to a definite timetable of events. This passage is therefore one of the strongest evidences to prove the divine inspiration of the Bible.

Many of you are frequently asked why you believe the Bible to be the Word of God, and it is helpful to know certain passages which clearly set forth predictive elements that are unmistakable and which do indicate the ability of the Bible to predict events far in the distant future. This could only be by divine power.

The passage we are looking at is that kind of passage. It pinpoints the exact moment in history when the Jewish Messiah would present himself to the Jewish people, and it does so over five hundred years before the event took place. It is so plain and detailed that it has always been an acute embarrassment to Jewish commentators.

In the seventeenth century a very learned Jew published a book in which he set forth the claims of Jesus Christ to be the Jewish Messiah. In the preface to the book he told how he himself had been converted by listening to a debate between a knowledgeable Jew and a Christian convert from Judaism over the meaning of this passage in Daniel 9. The moderator of the debate was a learned rabbi, and as the Christian pressed the claims of this passage home it became so clear that the passage was pointing to Jesus Christ that the rabbi closed the debate with these words: "Let us shut up our books, for if we go on examining the prophecy we shall all become Christians."

This prophecy is not a vision nor a dream. It was not given to Daniel through means that we have seen already in the book, but it is a direct message to the prophet from the angel Gabriel. This is the same angel that appeared to Joseph and to Mary, as recorded in the opening chapters of the New Testament. The angel Gabriel was sent to the prophet Daniel to give him a clear and undisguised look into the future in answer to a prayer of

the prophet. The first part of the chapter is taken up with that prayer, which we shall not repeat here, for we want to focus on the prophetic elements of the chapter, but do read the prayer through.

It occurred, Daniel tells us, "in the first year of Darius the king, the son of Ahasuerus, by birth a Mede." Therefore, at this time the Medes and the Persians had taken over the former empire of Babylon.

Daniel was himself an old man, almost ninety years of age. He had been reading, as he tells us, the prophet Jeremiah. It is interesting to note that Daniel also studied the Scriptures. Though he was a prophet and God spoke to him directly, yet he learned many things from the Scriptures. Where God has spoken in writing, he does not add a vision. From his study of Jeremiah, Daniel realized that he was nearing the time of the end for the predicted seventy years of Babylonian captivity. Daniel himself had lived through this whole period for he was but a teenager when he was captured and taken to Babylon. Now, almost seventy years later, he realizes that the time of predicted deliverance was near, and so he begins to pray on the basis of the promise of God.

That is very revealing, and it tells us an awful lot about prayer. Prayer is not merely an exercise in asking God for things; prayer is primarily a means by which we get involved in God's program. When Daniel learned what God's program was he prayed that he might be involved in it, that he might have a part in it and thus to cooperate with what God was doing. This desire is reflected throughout this beautiful prayer. He did not simply say, "Well, it is all going to happen anyway so there's no use in worrying about it or praying about it." Had he said that the predicted events would have happened, but Daniel would have had no part in them. Thus this is a means by which the prophet gets involved in God's work.

This prayer is one of the most impressive in the Bible. It is a model prayer for any who are concerned over national decay. If you are concerned about the state of our country today, I suggest that you read Daniel's prayer through and see how beautifully and wonderfully he gathers up the whole situation, realistically appraises it, and lays it before God. He did not pray, as some of us do, "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep." This is a searching, penetrating prayer of confession, of praise, and of earnest petition to God. To read it is a moving and powerful experience.

But Daniel was interrupted as he prayed and never finished. His report of that interruption is in Verses 20-23:

While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy hill of my God; while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice. He came and he said to me, "O Daniel, I have now come out to give you wisdom and understanding. At the beginning of your supplications a word went forth, and I have come to tell it to you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the word and understand the vision." {Dan 9:20-23 RSV}

Notice especially the exhortation of the angel to understand the vision. "Consider he," he says, "think it through and understand it." This is especially significant in view of the reference Jesus himself makes in his famous prophetic message delivered on the Mount of Olives just before his crucifixion and recorded in Matthew 24. There he refers to this prophecy of Daniel and says, "So when you see the desolating sacrifice spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place" {Matt 24:15a RSV}, thus indicating how they would know that the time of the end had arrived. Matthew adds in parenthesis these words "(let the reader understand)" {Matt 24:15b RSV}. There is thus a clear exhortation on the part of both the angel Gabriel and the Lord Jesus Christ that readers should carefully consider and understand this passage. Someone has properly called it "the backbone of prophecy." Everything else must fit into the outline of this great prophetic revelation in Chapter 9.

There are two general parts to the prophecy. It occupies but a few verses (24 to 27), and is divided into two sections. There is first a listing of the objectives that are to be accomplished during the course of the prophecy; and, second, there is a three-fold division of the time set forth. We have the first section in verse 24:

"Seventy weeks of years are decreed concerning your people and your holy city, to finish

the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place." {Dan 9:24 RSV}

There are three wonderful things to note about that first section:

First, there is a specific time period decreed. "Seventy weeks of years," says the angel Gabriel. As we know, a week of days is seven days, and a week of years would be seven years, thus there would be seventy periods of seven years. If we multiply seventy times seven we have a total period of four hundred and ninety years which are decreed (literally, cut off or apportioned), unto a certain specified people; "your people," said the angel to the prophet. Daniel's people would clearly be the nation Israel. Furthermore, the prophecy would concern Daniel's holy city. There is only one holy city that Daniel was interested in and that was the city of Jerusalem.

So, as the second point of interest, we have a clear limitation of this prophecy to a time period involving only the people of Israel and the city of Jerusalem. In other words, this timetable has no effect if the Jews are not in Jerusalem. It is operative only when the Jewish people are in Jerusalem.

Third, there are six goals which are detailed to be accomplished during this stretch of four hundred and ninety years. They divide into two halves. The first three deal with the work of redemption: "to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity." Notice that they all have to do with solving the problem of sin. The next three deal with the final realization of the hopes and dreams of men. They are, specifically, "to bring in everlasting righteousness," i.e., to establish the kingdom of God, the kingdom for which we pray in the Lord's prayer, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done..." {cf, Matt 5:10}. That is what it means to bring in everlasting righteousness. Then, "to seal both vision and prophet." Now the Hebrew phrase, "to seal" means to complete, to bring to an end. It means that all predictions are to be completed, fulfilled, and there is no longer any need to predict a future event. Finally, "to anoint a most holy place" can only refer to the temple in Jerusalem. It is clear from this that there must be a temple in Jerusalem in order for these four hundred and ninety years to be fulfilled.

That gives us an overall view of the prophecy. The full course of it would cover four hundred and ninety years, and at the end of that period the problem of human sin would be solved, and the problem of human suffering would have ended. All this is to take place within the predicted time period.

The second section marks out for us a three-fold division of the four hundred and ninety years. The first two divisions are described in Verse 25:

"Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the coming of an anointed one, a prince, there shall be seven weeks. Then for sixty-two weeks..." {Dan 9:25a RSV}

The RSV is in error here. The King James version is right in that it does not make a period after "seven weeks." It should go right on to read:

"... there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. It shall be built again with squares and moat, but in a troubled time." {Dan 9:25b RSV Modified}

What is Gabriel talking about here? He says there is a definite starting point when the four hundred and ninety years would begin. It is a clear-cut, precise act, recorded in history. It is the time when a decree should go forth to build the city and walls of Jerusalem.

In the books of Ezra and Nehemiah are recorded several decrees by Persian kings concerning Israel, but two of them clearly relate to the building of the temple. The temple was built before the city walls were restored. There is only one decree (recorded in Nehemiah, Chapter 2), that gave permission to the Jews to rebuild the walls and city of Jerusalem, and that decree is precisely dated. It reveals one of those remarkable "coincidences" which are really not coincidences at all, to learn that the historian Herodotus (who is called the father of

history), was a contemporary of the king, Artaxerxes, who issued that decree. Both Herodotus and the other famous historian of those ancient days, Thucydides, record the career and dates of this king, thus he is one ancient king whose dates are clearly and unmistakably recorded for us.

According to Nehemiah 2, the decree was issued in the twentieth year of the reign of Artaxerxes. We can pinpoint that precisely as occurring in the year 445 B.C. If you read some of the commentators you will find that they pick a different starting point. They recognize the same event, the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, but they date it at 454 B.C. That is because they are following Bishop Ussher, the seventeenth-century Irish bishop who took it upon himself to insert dates into our Bible. But, like a young teenager, he had a great deal of trouble with his dates. It was he who dated creation at 4004 B.C. Bishop Ussher has been proved wrong in a number of cases, and the interesting thing is that no secular historian has ever accepted the date 454 B.C. for Artaxerxes' 20th year. The secular historians all give the date 445 B.C. That is the correct starting point of the four hundred and ninety year period. Those who use 454 B.C. as the starting point find the termination for the first 69 weeks at 29 or 30 A. D., which is sometimes regarded as the date of the crucifixion.

The angel also indicated that this 490 year period would be divided, first into two divisions, one of seven weeks, and then sixty-two weeks. Seven weeks of seven years each is forty-nine years. During that forty-nine year period the city was to be built again, "with squares and moat, but in a troubled time." History has clearly fulfilled that. The city of Jerusalem was built again. The walls were repaired and the entire city was restored once more. That carries us down to the close of the Old Testament period. Then would follow sixty-two weeks of years, which would be a period of four hundred and thirty-four years. Add this to the forty-nine years and there is a total of four hundred and eighty-three years unto the coming of one here called "an anointed one, a Prince." Now *anointed one* is the Hebrew word for *Messiah*. There are no articles in the Hebrew at all. It is not "an anointed one, a Prince," but it is simply, "Messiah, prince." So what the angel says is, from the going forth of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem unto the coming of Messiah Prince would be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks, or a total of four hundred and eighty-three years.

Now that is very precise, is it not? You do not find a more precise timetable of events anywhere in the Bible. If it began in 445 B.C., and you add to that four hundred and eighty-three years, to the exact month (because we know that the month in which the edict to rebuild Jerusalem was issued was the Hebrew month Nisan, which corresponds about to our April), then it brings us down to April, 32 A.D. It is necessary to allow for a four-year error in dating the birth of Christ (4 B.C. rather than 1 A.D.), and to use, as the ancients did, a year of 360 days rather than 365. If we work this out carefully, as certain chronologers have done, we find that the four hundred and eighty-three years (seven years short of the full four hundred and ninety), was fulfilled on the very day the Lord Jesus entered into Jerusalem riding on a donkey, with the multitude of disciples bearing palm branches in their hands going before him crying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!" Thus he fulfilled Zechariah's prophecy,

"Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on an ass, on a colt the foal of an ass." {Zech 9:9b RSV}

Luke tells us that on that occasion the Lord said a most significant thing. Luke says,

And when he drew near and saw the city he wept over it, saying, "Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace!" {Luke 19:41a RSV}

What kind of a triumphal entry is this? "He wept over it!" And what does it mean, "Would that even today..."? Why "today"? Because that very day was the fulfillment of the four hundred and eighty-three years. Jesus went on to say,

"But now they are hid from your eyes. For the days shall come upon you, when your enemies will cast up a bank about you and surround you, and hem you in on every side, and dash you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave one stone upon another in you." Luke 19:41b-44a RSV}

Here is our Lord's prediction of the destruction of the city, fulfilled by Titus, the Roman general, forty years

later. Then he said these very significant words. All this will happen, he said,

"... because you did not know the time of your visitation." {Luke 19:44b RSV}

They should have known. Daniel had indicated very plainly, exactly to the day, when Messiah would come, but they "did not know the time of their visitation." They prided themselves on being students of Scripture. Jesus had said to them, "You search the Scriptures and think in them to find eternal life, but you don't seem to understand that they testify of me," {cf, John 5:39}. Thus they missed the time of their visitation.

That brings us then to the remarkable events that follow, for, in the next section of Daniel 9, we read of what occurs *after* the four hundred and eighty-three years, but *before* the seven-year period begins. It is a very strange interlude.

"And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one [the Messiah] shall be cut off, and shall have nothing; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war; desolations are decreed." {Dan 9: 26 RSV}

"After the sixty-two weeks (i.e.. after the four hundred and eighty-three years), Messiah shall be cut off, and shall have nothing." The gospel accounts record that it was one literal week of seven days after the triumphal entry that the Lord Jesus was crucified on the little hill that stands outside the Damascus gate, north of the city of Jerusalem, and literally "had nothing." As John tells us in the opening words of his gospel, "He came unto his own, but his own received him not," {John 1:11 KJV}. He came to offer himself as king to the nation that had learned of his coming for many centuries from the prophets, but instead of a crown he received a wreath of thorns; instead of a scepter, a broken reed was put into his hands; instead of a throne, he hung upon a bloody cross. He "had nothing" for which he came. But in that crucifixion the redemption of the nation Israel and of the whole world was accomplished. There he made an end of sin, he finished transgression and atoned for iniquity. That first part of the predicted accomplishments was fulfilled when our Lord was "cut off" on the cross, after the sixty-two weeks.

Then, Daniel was told, "the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city." That occurred in 70 A.D., forty years after our Lord's crucifixion. If the seventieth week, the final period of seven years, had followed the sixty-ninth week without a break then the whole period of four hundred and ninety years would have ended sometime in the period of the book of Acts. But there is no account in Acts to indicate when this period ended. It is very clear that there is some kind of gap between the sixty-ninth week and the seventieth week, a gap of indeterminate length. There is a long period during which the city of Jerusalem would be destroyed by the Roman people. As we shall see, "the prince to come" is a reference to the Antichrist who, as we saw in Chapter 7, is a Roman, the last Caesar of the Roman world. But the city was not to be destroyed by him, but by "the people of the prince who is to come." That the Romans would destroy the city, but not the final Roman head, is very clear from this prophecy.

This, of course, is exactly what happened. Roman armies under Titus came in and surrounded the city and its end came with a flood. One of the most horrible sieges of all history is recorded for us by Josephus, the historian who was present and saw it as an eyewitness. He describes the terrible days in which Jerusalem was under siege by the Roman armies, and how starvation and famine stalked the streets of the city; people died by the hundreds and bodies were stacked up in the streets like cord wood. Mothers ate their own children in order to survive. But finally the city was overthrown. The walls were breached and the Romans entering in were so angered by the stubborn resistance of the Jews that they disobeyed the orders of their general and burned the temple, melting the gold and silver so that it ran down between the cracks of the stones. In order to get at the metal they pried the stones apart with bars and thus fulfilled our Lord's prediction that not one stone would be left standing upon another.

All this is history and it all happened during a time gap in the seventy weeks. The seventieth week has not even yet come. The gap has covered over 1900 years.

This is not new teaching. There are some who would say that Dr. Scofield originated this and put it in his

reference Bible and all of us have been following him ever since. But Dr. Scofield did not originate this teaching. It was held by some of the earliest church fathers. For instance, at about the beginning of the third century Hippolytus, speaking of this very prophecy said. "By 'one week' he meant the last week which is to be at the end of the whole world." So it is very clear that there is to be a gap in time of indeterminate length.

That brings us to the last week.

**"And he shall make a strong covenant with many for one week; and for half of the week he shall cause sacrifice and offering to cease; and upon the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate, until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator."
{Dan 9:27 RSV}**

Who is this strange individual referred to as he? "He shall make a strong covenant with many for one week." He must have already been referred to in this prophecy or the angel would not have simply used a pronoun to identify him. The nearest antecedent and the only one which matches grammatically, is the reference to "the prince that shall come." "He shall make a strong covenant with many [this refers to the nation Israel, the mass of the Jews] for one week", i.e., for seven years. In the midst of that seven-year period, after three and a half years have run its course, "he shall cause sacrifice and offering to cease", and set up what is called here "the abomination which makes desolate." That is what Jesus meant when he said, "When you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place...[then don't wait; get out of Jerusalem as fast as you can] for there will be a time of trouble such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never shall be." {cf, Matt 24:15-21}

This clearly indicates that this last week of Daniel's prophecy lies yet unfulfilled. We can expect to see the rise of a Western confederacy of nations, which may even be taking shape today, and which will ultimately be dominated by this strange individual who has appeared in these prophetic sections. He will make an agreement with the Jews as a nation, possibly to allow the construction of a temple once again. This is why the whole Christian world is watching Israel constantly and hanging on every rumor concerning the building of a temple again on the ancient site. There must be a temple in the days when these final events occur.

"He shall make a covenant with many," evidently refers to an agreement to allow the restoration of Jewish worship in Jerusalem. In the midst of the week, after three and a half years, "he shall cause sacrifice and offering to cease," and, as we have learned from previous prophecies, shall set up an image in the temple, an image of himself, the Roman ruler, to be worshipped as God. This is what Jesus called "the abomination of desolation." This shall go on "until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator." We know what that end is. Both John, in Revelation, and Paul, in Second Thessalonians, have told us his end will be at the appearance again of Jesus Christ. Zechariah says, "On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives" {Zech 14:4 RSV}, the very Mount from which He left the earth. He will wreak vengeance upon the nations assembled against Jerusalem and especially against this blasphemous individual who has come into control of the world.

This all fits in very closely with other prophetic portions. We do not have any doubts about its general thrust. The passage is so tremendously significant because it already has been partly fulfilled in precise accuracy concerning the first coming of the Lord Jesus. Therefore, we can rest assured that the rest of it will be as fully and accurately fulfilled as the first part was. This is a helpful passage to use with those who deny the supernatural element in the Scriptures.

But, someone may ask, how do you explain this long gap? Why does this great parenthesis of time come between the sixty-ninth week and the seventieth week? The only explanation seems to be that there is a note of contingency about God's predicted events. God says that something is going to happen, and the ultimate fulfillment of it is sure, but the time of its fulfillment relates to the behavior of those concerned and their reaction to the prophecy.

You have this clearly set forth in the book of Jonah. Jonah went to Nineveh and prophesied, "Yet forty days and the city will be overthrown," {cf, Jonah 3:4}. But the people of Nineveh repented. They stopped dead in their tracks, and from the king down to the humblest citizen they put on sackcloth and ashes, stopped all the business of the city, and repented before God of their wickedness. The result was, forty days went by and

nothing happened. God delayed, postponed, the fulfillment. As you know, Jonah was unhappy about that. He did not like God's postponement, but God showed him that his own heart was hard and callous.

All this confirms what we have here. There is a strange element of contingency in prophecy. Perhaps a word of Peter's from the third chapter of Acts will help us here. Remember that after the day of Pentecost, Peter was preaching to the people in connection with the healing of a lame man at the temple gate. He said a very unusual and strange thing to them, as recorded in Acts 3:17:

"And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ should suffer, he thus fulfilled. Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and then he may send the Christ [Messiah] appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old." {Acts 3:17-21 RSV}

This is the reason why the gospel historically was preached to the Jew first and then to the Greek, as recorded in several places in the epistles of Paul. It had to go to the Jew first, after the day of Pentecost, in order that these people be given an opportunity to repent. Had they done so, this whole prophetic scheme of the full seventy weeks would have been fulfilled in that day, and long, long ago earth would have moved into the millennium. We would be beyond it now for a thousand years would have been over by now. But God's program in time hangs upon human reaction.

This is very important to see, for once again we are facing the likely fulfillment of these things. What will happen? Is it all going to be fulfilled in our day? Who can say for sure? We can never say, "Yes, this is the final fulfillment; these events are moving surely and unmistakably to the end." Perhaps not. Enough people may take this seriously and change their lives to set themselves in tune with God's program and stop living for themselves to such a degree that God will change his schedule, hold off the end for awhile, and let us go on. Sometime, of course, the end will come. It will be marked, as Jesus indicated, by a failure of people to take warnings seriously. He said once to his disciples, "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" {Luke 18:8 RSV}. Will he find people who believe God, and act accordingly? Who can say what these days are going to bring. It may be that the present turning away, the present refusal to take these warning events seriously is of sufficient intensity to precipitate the final end. Who knows? Only God!

When Israel turned away from God and refused the offer of the Savior, God's countdown stopped. It is like the launching of rockets today, with which we are so familiar. There is a final countdown, but at any moment something can go wrong and delay the countdown and it is not resumed till the trouble is corrected. God has been counting ever since the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, counting away year after year. Four hundred and eighty-three years ran their course, and then the Savior came. It was almost the end. Seven more years were to follow, but something happened and the countdown has been delayed. It will be resumed again when there is a temple in Jerusalem and an agreement between Israel and the Western ruler.

What does this do to you?

It says to me that it is time to take seriously the days in which we live. It does not make any difference whether we are in the last days or not, we are responsible to act according to the Word of God, and to understand that God's program is going to run its course exactly as predicted. Our relationship to it will be determined by how seriously we identify ourselves with what God is doing in our day and give ourselves to the advancement of his work, not ours.

Prayer:

Our Father, it is sobering to look at this ancient prophecy and see how clearly and unmistakably it has been confirmed to us by the onrush of human events. What fools we are to dabble and to hope that perhaps something will change, even to ignore these words of Scripture and pretend they are not even in the Bible. Lord, you who love us so earnestly and

tenderly, help us to see that we cannot play, we cannot dabble. We are called to face serious events, to live serious lives, yet lives filled with the joy and peace which you make so abundantly available to us. But our lives must not be frittered away and wasted in living only for our own interests. Lord, grant that we may present ourselves anew to you as people who are privileged above many others, to live in last days. We thank you and ask you for grace in Jesus' name, Amen.

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By: Ray C. Stedman
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THE OTHER SIDE OF PRAYER

by Ray C. Stedman

In the tenth chapter of the book of Daniel we turn from prophecy to a study on prayer. Some may feel a bit let down by that, for prophecy is very exciting. There are many today who are furiously reading Jeane Dixon and Edgar Cayce and other modern "prophets" to see if California is really going to slide off into the ocean this month. Some of you are hoping it happens before the fifteenth, when you have to pay your income tax! But in many people's minds, compared with prophecy, prayer is rather dull and prosaic -- unless, of course, California does begin to slide! Then we will find great interest in prayer meetings.

In the tenth chapter of Daniel, Daniel calls a prayer meeting. And he calls it for the same reason that we call prayer meetings -- because he is in trouble. This what he says:

In those days I, Daniel, was mourning for three weeks. I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, for the full three weeks. {Dan 10:2-3 RSV}

That sounds almost like he was observing Lent. He had given up all delicacies, all special desserts, low caloric, as well as any other kind. He had not eaten any meat for three weeks, or had drunk no wine. He had not even taken a bath for three weeks, as is suggested by the words, "nor did I anoint myself at all." Why did he do this? It was because he was troubled. We give up things because we want to win favor with God (we think). We celebrate Lent because we think it gives us additional stature in God's sight. Even then we tend to give up things we are not doing anyhow, such as wearing overshoes in bed, or eating catsup on ice cream. Many years ago I gave up giving things for Lent and so have had no trouble with it since. But the prophet Daniel gave up things because he was deeply troubled and wanted to show to others the depth of his concern. He stopped eating the foods that he would normally eat in order to give himself to prayer and partial fasting through a three weeks' period.

He tells us what he was troubled about in the opening verse of the chapter.

In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia word was revealed to Daniel, who was named Belteshazzar. And the word was true, and it was a great conflict. And he understood the word and had understanding of the vision. {Dan 10:1 RSV}

The date in this first verse is very significant. This word or vision came to Daniel in the third year of Cyrus king of Persia. That meant it came right at the time the prophet Jeremiah had predicted when the seventy years during which the people of Israel would be held captive was up. The seventy years had been concluded at this time, and yet nothing was happening. The people of Israel were showing no signs of leaving Babylon. When

they were in Palestine they had been an agricultural people; they kept herds of cattle and flocks of sheep. But when they were captured and taken to Babylon, they could no longer do that so they turned from a nation of sheepkeepers to a nation of shopkeepers. They had founded Macy's, Gimbel's, and the Emporium of Babylon and they were making so much money that many of them did not have any intention of going back to Palestine. But Daniel knew that it was God's program for his people to return and that they could never find any blessing or fulfillment of the great promises God had made this nation unless they returned to Palestine.

So Daniel was greatly concerned about this. He gathered some of his friends together, as we will see later on in the chapter, and called a prayer meeting in order to lay hold of God to stir up his people to return to the land of Palestine. Doubtless they came together with long faces and deep concern to pray together. But as they were praying an amazing thing happened. Daniel says,

On the twenty-fourth day of the first month as I was standing on the bank of the great river, that is, the Tigris, I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, a man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with gold of Uphaz. His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the noise of a multitude. {Dan 10:4-6 RSV}

What do you think would happen at your prayer meeting if something like that happened? It would really turn the place on, wouldn't it? That must have happened also to Daniel and his friends. Here they were praying together in a rather dull prayer meeting by the river, but suddenly there stood in their midst this amazing figure whose appearance was as Daniel describes it here. Who can this be?

It immediately makes one think of the experience John the Apostle had on the isle of Patmos which he tells us of in the opening words of the book of Revelation. Let me read them to you and you can see how similar his experience was. John says,

Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like the son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden girdle round his breast; his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters; in his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth issued a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength. {Rev 1:12-16 RSV}

To Daniel, alongside the Tigris river and to John on the island of Patmos, many centuries later, as they were praying, the curtain dropped that separated them from the invisible spiritual kingdom and they were able to see the very One to whom they had been speaking in prayer. Now that Person was there all the time -- it was not that he suddenly appeared -- but Daniel and his friends could not see him until the curtain suddenly dropped and their eyes were opened. They then saw the invisible world of spiritual beings around them and especially this great figure whose eyes were like flaming torches and whose face shone like the sun in its strength. Actually, if we can equate this figure as one whom Daniel and John both saw, it was the Lord Jesus Christ revealed to them in this marvelous way, unveiling the glory and majesty of his being.

There is a similar story in Second Kings, Chapter 6, concerning Elisha the prophet. Elisha and his servant were in the little city of Dothan in Palestine, and the king of Syria was angry with Elisha. He sent down a great army by night, when Elisha was asleep, and surrounded the city. In the morning when the servant of Elisha woke and saw the armies of the Syrians all around the city, he came running in to his master and cried, "Elisha! Elisha! Look out there!" Elisha saw the armies of the Syrians surrounding the city. The servant cried, "What will we do? What will we do?" Elisha said, "Don't worry. Those who are with us are far more than those who are with them." The servant said, "What do you mean? There's no one here with us. We're all alone in the city." Then Elisha prayed, "Lord, open this young man's eyes." And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man and he saw that the mountains were full of horses and chariots of fire. Then he realized what Elisha meant when he said, "They who are with us are more than they who are with them," {cf, 2 Ki 6:15-17}. This is what the New Testament means when it says, "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world," {1 Jn 4:4 RSV}. There are greater forces on behalf of those who know God and are servants of his, than

there are against us. What had happened to Daniel was simply that the curtain had dropped and he saw the One to whom prayer was being addressed.

In the next two verses there is recorded something very similar to the experience of the Apostle Paul. Daniel says,

And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision, but a great trembling fell upon them, and they fled to hide themselves. So I was left alone and saw this great vision, and no strength was left in me; my radiant appearance was fearfully changed, and I retained no strength. {Dan 10:7-8 RSV}

Remember that Saul of Tarsus, before he became the Apostle Paul, was a violent persecutor of the church. He was on his way to Damascus to bring the Christians of that city to Jerusalem to stand trial for their faith in Jesus. Suddenly there was a light brighter than the sun that shone around him and he saw the Lord Jesus. He fell to the ground just as Daniel did. The men who were with him did not see the Person of Jesus but heard only the sound of his voice speaking to the apostle Paul. Paul reacted the same way as Daniel. He was overwhelmed, he fell to the ground, and had no strength left in him. Of course, there are some who try to explain what Paul experienced as nothing but an epileptic fit. When that was reported to the great English preacher, Charles Spurgeon, he said, "O, blessed epilepsy! Would that every man in London could have epilepsy like that!"

So it was also with Daniel. He was overwhelmed by what he saw and by the greatness of the One whom he saw. He couldn't believe that suddenly he was in touch with the mighty One who was behind the ministry of prayer. Verse 9 adds another note:

Then I heard the sound of his words; and when I heard the sound of his words, I fell on my face in a deep sleep with my face to the ground. {Dan 10:9 RSV}

Does that sound like a church service? Many seem to say, "When I heard the sound of his words I promptly went to sleep." But this is not a church service; it is a prelude to revelation. The prophet Daniel is being prepared to learn something remarkable from this majestic being. He has already seen the majesty of Jesus Christ; now he is to be taught something of the mystery of prayer.

And behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on hands and knees. And he said to me, "O Daniel, man greatly beloved. give heed to the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for now I have been sent to you." While he was speaking this word to me, I stood trembling. Then he said to me, "Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your mind to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words. The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, so I left him there with the prince of the kingdom of Persia and came to make you understand what is to befall your people in the latter days. For the vision is for days yet to come." {Dan 10:10-14 RSV}

A second being now appears, an angel sent to help Daniel. It does not seem likely that it is the same person he first saw, the man clothed in linen with eyes like flaming torches. The rest of the vision indicates that this is an angel sent from this great Person to help Daniel. He touches Daniel and helps him to his feet. Daniel stood up, trembling and shaking, and then the angel begins to reveal to him certain things about prayer. Surely all this is given to us in order that we might learn what takes place behind the scenes when we pray. The same great Being is there, and the helping angels are there too. The New Testament tells us that angels are "ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those who shall be the heirs of salvation," {Heb 1:14}. They are at God's beck and call, to run his errands, do his work and to carry out his will on earth.

We heard today about a young soldier whose life was saved when a bullet was stopped by the New Testament in his pocket, the bullet stopping right at the 91st Psalm. What made that happen? Surely it was not an accident; it was an angel. The ministry of angels is continually occurring, though we are not aware of what is happening. What we think are ordinary coincidences are oftentimes the result of the ministry of angels. Daniel

now has his eyes opened so that he can see what lies behind prayer. This angel comes to help him and to show him two great things.

The first thing is revealed in the words, "Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your mind to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard." When Daniel began to pray the answer was sent immediately. This is the first thing Daniel is taught about prayer. Answers are absolutely sure when we pray. The angel said, in effect, "Daniel, the very moment that you people began to pray, three weeks ago, God heard you. The answer was on its way the minute you began to ask." Of course, Daniel was asking on the basis of the will of God. Prayer is not a way by which we get God to do what we want; prayer is a way by which we get involved in what God wants. Prayer is a way by which we become caught up in the exciting activity of God, doing what he plans to do in this world. As we pray about it we become involved in the whole exciting program. God works through us to ask for what he wants.

That is what Jesus taught us in the Sermon on the Mount. He says we do not need to persuade God, to set up a picket line around him to force him to give in to us. Prayer is not a protest demonstration before God. We do not need to harass him, harangue him, or twist his arm and besiege him with a flood of words until he gives in. No, Jesus says that is the way the pagans pray, using vain repetition. But your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Therefore prayer is not to tell God what he ought to do. We need to understand that. Prayer, rather, is to involve us with what God wants to do. He desires to have us involved. He wants us to ask him to do what he says he will do and he oftentimes will not do it at all unless we ask him. That is why James says, "You have not because you ask not," {cf, Jas 4:2}. If you would ask, God would do what he promises to do.

But now Daniel is told that answers are immediate and sure when you pray on that basis. Jesus said this also. He said, "Ask -- seek -- knock." These are three forms of prayer.

- Ask: simply ask him.
- Seek: that involves some investigation, a little study, some trying to understand what God is doing.
- Knock: that involves repetition, coming back again and again.

So there are three kinds of circumstances which require different types of prayer. We are to ask for some things, such as the things we need for personal strength: wisdom, love, power, grace -- all these things. James said, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all men liberally and upbraids not, and it shall be given him," {cf, Jas 1:5}. But ask, seek, and knock -- all have the same guarantee: "ask...and it shall be given; seek...and you shall find; knock...and it will be opened unto you." "For," says Jesus, "to every one that asks shall be given. And every one who seeks shall find. And to every one who knocks, it shall be opened," {cf, Matt 7:7-8, Luke 11:9-10}. The answers are absolutely sure when prayer is made on the basis of what God has said he will do. This is what the angel made clear to Daniel. "The minute you began to pray," he said, "the answer was given."

But he goes on to show that delays are possible. Although the answer from God was sent immediately, it did not arrive for three weeks. Why not? What held it back? The angel says, "The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days." He is revealing that there are not only great and good angels of God ready to help us, but there are also evil angels, fallen angels, demons, that are ready to oppose what God is doing. In some remarkable way they relate to the nations of earth. Surely this is one of the most amazing passages of the Bible, for it helps us understand what is going on as reported in our daily newspapers.

Why are we going through such a worldwide outbreak of riot, violence, demonstration and unrest? It is not simply because students are not taught certain things in school, or that they are different from those in previous generations. Such explanations that are being offered today are most superficial. They do not get at the heart of the matter. The explanation is right here: Men are not the final issue; their actions are not the final explanation of what goes on. Behind men are invisible powers at work, controlling the minds and thoughts of men. That is why things happen in the world the way they do. Remember that Paul warns us in Ephesians 6 that we are not wrestling against flesh and blood, i.e., people are not our problem. We think they are. We always seek certain people that we can blame. The students blame the faculty; the faculty blame the students. The administration blames both. The government blames the people; the people blame the government. Capitalists blame labor;

labor blames capitalists. Parents blame their children; children blame their parents. Everyone blames everyone else, and no one ever says, "It's me; I'm the one that's wrong." That is the problem in the world.

Paul says we are quite wrong when we say it is people who are the trouble: "We do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers, wicked spirits in high places, the rulers of the darkness of this world," {cf, Eph 6:12}. That is what the angel is telling Daniel. He says that behind the affairs of earth is an invisible hierarchy of evil. They are assigned various countries to be under their control. Thus the evil angel who had authority over the kingdom of Persia came and withstood the angel who had been sent to Daniel, and held him back for twenty-one days. We do not know how he did it, but the angel said that Michael, the chief prince (the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff of heaven), came to help him and with his added power the answer was brought through to Daniel who knew nothing of what was going on behind the scenes.

Undoubtedly there is today an evil angel assigned to the United States to stir up all kinds of trouble. Doubtless he's been promoted lately! There is one also assigned to Soviet Russia, and to Red China, and to all the other countries of the world. These evil angels somehow relate to the countries of earth. That is the revelation Daniel was shown. There are also angels who are ministers of good, of justice and truth, and they are in conflict, the one with the other.

Thus, delays can occur in prayer. The next time you have a prayer which is not answered as quickly as you think it ought to be, remember that you are engaged in a conflict. There can come delays, but no delay can ever throw God's schedule off. God is never too late. Never! He can always muster whatever force it takes to break through, and he will do so as long as faith remains. That is why prayer is so vitally important. It is for this reason that the New Testament tells us to pray for those in authority and power, in order, it says, that we might lead peaceable and godly lives, {cf, 1 Pet 2:1-2}. If you really believe in prayer, and believe what the Bible tells us about the other side of prayer, then you will express it by praying a great deal more. This is the philosophy behind our church prayer meetings.

We will look at the third lesson Daniel was taught by this angel, in Verses 15-17:

When he had spoken to me according to these words, I turned my face toward the ground and was dumb. And behold, one in the likeness of the sons of men touched my lips; then I opened my mouth and spoke. I said to him who stood before me, "O my Lord, by reason of the vision pains have come upon me, and I retain no strength. How can my lord's servant talk with my lord? For now no strength remains in me, and no breath is left in me." {Dan 10:15-17 RSV}

This vision had a terrible physical effect upon Daniel. The prayer, the mourning, the fasting, the waiting for three weeks, all this had taken its toll of him. This tremendous vision, so emotionally gripping and overpowering, had simply drained away all his physical strength. It reminds us that prayer can often be a very costly thing. It is hard work at times, spiritually costly. It is not always easy. Sometimes it is agony to pray.

There is a verse in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians that has always encouraged me. He writes, "Death is at work in us, but life in you," {cf, 2 Cor 4:12}. That is another commentary on prayer. It declares that it is possible for you to go through agony on my behalf. I don't feel the agony but you do, yet I get the blessing of it. You parents can do that for your children. When you see them getting into trouble, and there is no way, seemingly, to stop them; when they are blind or deaf to what you say, and you see something they do not see, you can strive for them in prayer; you can agonize on their behalf. Death can be at work in you, but God will work life in them. Is that not encouraging? And you children can do the same thing for your parents. When they get stubborn and hardhearted, not understanding the situation and fouling up the whole matter (as they can at times) and you cannot say anything to them, you can pray for them. Death can be at work in you, but life in them. That is what the word declares. What a tremendous thing this is, to enter into spiritual combat, this really vital fight of faith, in order to accomplish what would never be done otherwise!

But prayer is not all weakness and mystery. There is a ministry to us in it as well. The last scene of this chapter sets it before us:

Again one having the appearance of a man touched me and strengthened me. And he said, "O man greatly beloved, fear not, peace be with you; be strong and of good courage." And when he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, "Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me." {Dan 10:18 RSV}

After the angel's second touch Daniel was greatly strengthened. And we are told exactly how. The angel said to him, "Fear not," i.e., all reason for fear has been removed. Then he gave three factors in that, "peace be with you: be strong and of good courage." That is what prayer does for us. Every time we come to the Lord in prayer it brings peace to the soul, strength to the body, and courage to the spirit. The whole man is ministered to.

Paul says that to the Philippians, "Be anxious about nothing [don't be afraid], but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in Jesus Christ," {cf, Phil 4:6-7}. Peace! That wonderful sense that everything is all right, even though nothing has changed. You have peace in your heart, as Daniel had. That also means strength to the body. When the heart is at peace the body is strengthened. And that, in turn, gives courage to the will, to the spirit. You are ready to take up the battle again. That is what prayer does.

There is also another purpose, says the angel to Daniel. "Then he (the angel) said. 'Do you know why I have come to you?'" That is encouragement to Daniel to think a bit. Then the angel goes on to answer his own question.

"But now I will return to fight against the prince of Persia; and when I am through with him, lo, the prince of Greece will come." {Dan 10:20 RSV}

The implication is, "I've got a lot more fighting to do, Daniel, and I have come to strengthen you that you might fight with me. I'm going back and fight with the prince of Persia, the invisible angel behind the scenes of Persian affairs. And when I am through with him, then the prince of Greece will come. But I have strengthened you, Daniel, that you might stand with me in all this."

The second thing that prayer did for Daniel is found in Verse 21:

"But I will tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth:" {Dan 10:21a RSV}

That is the introduction to chapters eleven and twelve of this book, the greatest vision Daniel was ever given. It is a marvelous unfolding of many of the events that are to come in history, from Daniel's day to the first appearance of the Lord Jesus, and then there is a great leap to the time of the end -- when, in a very vivid passage, Daniel is told what will happen at the end of this age, just before Jesus Christ returns again. We have not even yet come to those days. Daniel's eyes were opened and he was helped to see what is written in the book of truth and to understand it.

What a wonderful promise it is to be told what is inscribed in the book of truth! Jesus said, "When the Holy Spirit is come, he will guide you into all the truth. He will take of the things of mine and reveal them unto you," {cf, John 16:13-14}. That is the only way we can know what is going to happen. It is to take:

- The book that God has given to us,
- The book that understands us,
- The book that knows how we think and how we act and what is going on in our thoughts, and
- Ask the Spirit to show us what is in it.

We need to learn from it, how to control and govern the passions that spring up within, how to lay hold of the mighty power that God has made available to us, so that we can know where to get strength to handle these passions, to cope with them and live honestly, openly, powerfully, sweetly and joyfully in the midst of a decaying age.

That is all made available to us as we understand the program of God and the power of prayer.

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THE TIME OF THE END

by Ray C. Stedman

Though the title of this study is the *Time of The End*, I want to assure you this has no relationship to the present state of the earthquake situation in California. There are predictions of great earthquakes in the Bible and some of them will be tremendous, but none of them, to my knowledge, specify California. Some of you are breathing much easier that we have made it through April. There are a great many people still holding their breath waiting for the great earthquake, but of course those who hold their breath long enough will not have to worry about it anyhow.

Setting aside earthquake predictions let us turn to the great prophecy given to Daniel by the angel Gabriel, contained in the eleventh chapter of the book of Daniel. This is a long chapter, and you will have to roll up your sleeves and pitch in with me as we look at it together. We shall not read it all, but will try to grasp the full import of this amazing section. It is a remarkable passage. As I pointed out before, Chapters 10, 11, and 12 are all one great vision. Up to that point in Daniel the chapter divisions represent separate prophetic foresights, but the last three chapters are one great vision. It would be ideal if we could take them all at once, for the chapter divisions only confuse the issue. But to take them at once is impossible for it would be attempting one chapter of seventy-nine verses! So we shall observe the chapter divisions if you will understand that it is one great vision we are considering.

The background of this vision is Chapter 10, where we are told that Daniel was allowed to see behind the scenes in the ministry of prayer. The curtain was dropped and he suddenly saw a most shattering, dazzling sight, the Lord Jesus in the fullness of his majesty and glory, the very same One whom John describes in the opening verses of Revelation. It is the same one who arrested Paul on the road to Damascus and who appeared in light that was brighter than the sun. You can imagine the effect of all this upon the prophet Daniel. He is drained of energy and falls on his face to the ground. But an angel is sent to help him and to give him the most detailed vision of the events of human history before they occur that is contained in the Bible.

The angel begins to unfold, in Chapter 11, the history of the future from Daniel's day on. The chapter falls into four rather unequal parts. The first part includes Verses 2-4. In these verses we have the immediate future from Daniel's day on, covering approximately ninety-five years. The angel said to Daniel,

"And now I will show you the truth. Behold three more kings shall arise in Persia; and a fourth shall be far richer than all of them; and when he has become strong through his riches he shall stir up all against the kingdom of Greece. Then a mighty king shall arise who shall rule with great dominion and do according to his will. And when he has arisen his kingdom shall be broken and divided toward the four winds of heaven but not to his posterity not according to the dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be plucked up and go to others besides these." {Dan 11:2-4 RSV}

Did you recognize any of the historic personalities that are predicted there? Daniel is told that there will be three more kings following Cyrus, the king of Media-Persia at the time the prophet writes. These three are known to history. The first one was Cambyses, the son of Cyrus. He was overthrown by a usurper who took the name

of Cambyses' son, Smerdis, and is called in history Pseudo-Smerdis (false-Smerdis). Then the third king was Darius Hystaspes. Any of you who have studied ancient Persian history will recognize this name immediately. Then a fourth king was to follow. That did not mean that he would be the last of the kings of Persia but it meant he was to be the fourth one from Daniel's day, and he would be an especially notable one.

This was Xerxes the Great, king of Persia, who was indeed fabulously rich as the prophet was told, and became strong through his riches, stirring up the kingdom of Greece. It was the raids which the Persians made against the Greeks under Xerxes which inflamed Greece and created an immediate response to the call of Alexander the Great for war against the Persians. The "mighty king" which was to arise is clearly identifiable as Alexander the Great, the young man who became first king of Macedon and then king of Greece, and finally led the Grecian armies against the Persian empire, overthrew the might of Persia, and swept on to conquer the then known civilized world. According to the prophecy here he was to be "broken." Alexander died when he was only thirty-three years old, and his kingdom was divided but not to his posterity. He had an unborn son at the time of his death who, when he was born, did briefly inherit the kingdom of Alexander. Ultimately the empire was divided among his four generals, according to what is said here, it would be "divided towards the four winds of heaven." It is also stated that "it would be plucked up and go to others besides these." This is the first hint we have of the coming in of the Romans from the West. They are the "others" who got a part of Alexander's empire when it was divided.

The next division of the vision encompasses Verses 5-20. We shall not read these, though if you are interested in this part of history it would be fascinating to trace these events through. In this section beginning with Verse 5, the angel traces the course of two empires, one to the south and one to the north of Israel. The king of the south is Egypt under Ptolemy, who was one of the generals of Alexander, and his successors. The king of the north is Syria. That domain was under the rule of the Seleucids (Seleucus was another of the generals under Alexander). These two kingdoms, Egypt and Syria, fought back and forth over the course of about 130 years. Poor Israel was caught in between the two, and became the battlefield of these armies as they moved back and forth. Jerusalem was captured by both sides from time to time through the conflict and was sacked and ravaged a number of times -- ground like wheat between two millstones.

The account of these kingdoms is given to us because of Israel's involvement. God's primary concern is for Israel and for her sake he gives us this marvelously detailed account which history has confirmed in every detail. It would be really fascinating, if we had the time, to see how remarkably history records the fulfillment of every single prediction here, but we must move on.

Coming to the third section, from {Verses} 21-35 we find the career of a single king the king of the north, whose name was Antiochus Epiphanes. We have met him before in the book of Daniel. He is the "little horn" of Chapter 8, who persecuted Israel and ultimately set up the first "abomination of desolation" in the temple at Jerusalem. He is called "the Antichrist of the Old Testament," a most despicable character, and yet a remarkable man in many ways. He reigned from 175 to 164 B.C. There are certain highlights of this section to which I will call your attention because they have real bearing on our own day. The opening verses, 21 through 28, are the story of how this treacherous man came to power, gaining influence through flattery. He launched a campaign against Egypt, which he won and thus established his power more thoroughly. Then, in Verses 29-30, a very interesting thing is recorded:

"At the time appointed he shall return and come into the south [i.e., Egypt]; but it shall not be this time as it as it was before." {Dan 11:29 RSV}

Antiochus made a second invasion of Egypt but this time he met with difficulty.

"For ships of Kittim shall come against him, and he shall be afraid and withdraw, and shall turn back and be enraged and take action against the holy covenant." {Dan 11:30a RSV}

We know from history how this occurred, Antiochus Epiphanes (he called himself Epiphanes which means "The Illustrious One, The Magnificent One" -- it was his own appraisal of himself -- but his courtiers called him Antiochus Epimanes, the Madman). He led his army into Egypt, but this time the Egyptians had sent for

help from the Romans. The Roman Senate sent a general named Popilius, who led a legion against Antiochus. They arrived in Roman galleys which are referred to here as "ships of Kittim." Popilius insisted that Antiochus return to his own land, keep the peace, and acknowledge the authority of Rome. Antiochus asked for time to consider these terms, but Popilius drew a circle around him with his sword and told him to decide before he stepped out of that circle. So Antiochus gave in and agreed to keep the peace, but returned to Jerusalem to take out his spite on the Jews. Instead of keeping peace, he did what is recorded in verse 31.

"Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the continual burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate." {Dan 11:31 RSV}

Antiochus went up to Jerusalem, entered the temple, and, as we have learned before, erected there a pagan altar. He offered a pig, an unclean animal to the Jews, upon the altar, taking the broth of the pig and sprinkled it around the sanctuary, thus defiling it. Then he set up a statue of Jupiter and insisted that the temple be dedicated to that pagan god. This is what is called "the abomination that makes desolate." All this is extremely important because it was a preview of another abomination of desolation that is yet to come.

In Verses 32-35 we have the career of a very remarkable people described, a people known to history as the Maccabees. They were the sons of an old man named Mattathias, who rebelled against the desecrations of Antiochus and led a revolt against the authority of the king. His sons were successful in this revolt and finally recaptured the temple, cleansed the sanctuary, and restored the Jewish offerings. If any of you are at all acquainted with the history of the Jews you know that this is an important event in their calendar. They celebrate it at the same time that we celebrate Christmas, because the temple was cleansed on December 25, 164 B.C. Here is the description of the Maccabees in the prophecy.

"He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant; but the people who know their God shall stand and take action. And those among the people who are wise shall make many understand, though they shall fall by sword and name, by captivity and plunder, for some days. When they fall, they shall receive a little help. And many shall join themselves to them with flattery; and some of those who are wise shall fall, to refine and to cleanse them and to make them white, until the time of the end, for it is yet for the time appointed." {Dan 11:32-35 RSV}

This remarkable section of the prophecy predicts the rise of a people who would know their God, would do exploits, and who are strong. Though they receive a little help they are ultimately overcome. The Maccabees had to appeal to the Romans for help and it was this appeal which was ultimately responsible for the fact that the Roman government was in control of Palestine at the time our Lord was born. But they did great things, were a godly people, and did succeed in cleansing the sanctuary and restoring the offerings of the Jews. As predicted they did mighty things in the name of God against tremendous persecution, "falling by sword and flame, by captivity and plunder, for some days."

Now notice the last words of Verse 35. They seem to suggest a leap of time that will carry us from these days in the past, to the "last days," to the time in the future when this shall again be fulfilled in a greater way. It shall be "until the time of the end, for it is yet for the time appointed," we are told. Then, beginning with Verse 36, we have the last section of this chapter. There we have a clear picture of the false prophet, the false Messiah, who is accepted by the Jews as a Messiah and who erects the abomination of desolation for the last and final time in a temple that is yet to be rebuilt in the city of Jerusalem.

But before we leave this section on Antiochus Epiphanes, let me point out that many Bible scholars (and I feel there is great justification for this) regard this whole section, from Verse 21 on, as a preview to be repeated in the last days. These same events would be fulfilled in a larger and greater way than in the past. This is very significant, for if it is true then it indicates that the present relationship between Egypt and Syria in the Middle East must be broken and these two countries shall become enemies again instead of allies as they are now. If you have been watching the events of the Middle East of the last few years you know that these two nations are drawing apart from each other. They once were one nation, the United Arab Republic. But that did not last long, and they have since been drawing further apart. They are united only by their antipathy toward Israel, but they disagree in their views as to how warfare against Israel should be carried forward. According to this

prediction, it will ultimately result in these two nations becoming enemies once again. We shall watch that scene with great interest.

Let us look at Verses 36-45. The first section of it gives us the character of the last king of the north, the final one who appears as the false prophet and who erects in the temple, as we have seen before, an image of the Western political leader, the first beast of Revelation 13, which will be the ultimate abomination of desolation. To confirm the fact that the passage is dealing with the last days, look at the first verse of Chapter 12, remembering that this is all one great vision. The prophet there is told,

"At that time [the time of the events of the closing part of Chapter 11] shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time." {Dan 12:1a RSV}

That "time of trouble" is clearly the great tribulation which our Lord mentions in Matthew 24. So there is no question about the fact that we are dealing with the last days. Also in Chapter 12, notice Verse 11, which says,

"And from the time that the continual burnt offering is taken away, and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days." {Dan 12:11 RSV}

That is referring to the last desecration of the temple that is to occur, but the only reference to it in this vision is clear back in Chapter 11, Verse 31, which describes the desecration under Antiochus Epiphanes,

"Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the continual burnt offering. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate." {Dan 11:31 RSV}

That is why many scholars feel that this whole section, from Verse 21 on, is to be repeated in the last days.

Now let us look at this last great personality.

"And the king shall do according to his will; he shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods. He shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished; for what is determined shall be done. He shall give no heed to the gods of his fathers, or to the one beloved by women; he shall not give heed to any other god, for he shall magnify himself above all. He shall honor the god of fortresses instead of these; a god whom his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts. He shall deal with the strongest fortresses by the help of a foreign god; those who acknowledge him he shall magnify with honor. He shall make them rulers over many and shall divide the land for a price." {Dan 11:36-39 RSV}

There are several very important things to note:

First, this king blasphemes God. That is always the mark of the Antichrist. Also he magnifies himself. In Chapter 8 we learned that he does this "in his own mind," he does not do it openly, and we will see the reason for that in a moment.

Then we are told "he shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished." The "indignation" is another term for the great tribulation. It indicates this man is going to have power over the whole Middle East and perhaps over much of the world in conjunction with the great Western ruler during the whole time of Daniel's seventieth week, and especially through the last half of it, the time of the great tribulation. "He shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished."

Then we learn he shall rule by military power. That is what is meant by, "He shall honor the god fortresses" and, though he himself is primarily a religious leader, he shall have a great military power backing him.

Revelation 13 shows us that this military power is the leader of the Western world, the Roman Empire restored, which will be dominant in these last days. The Syrian king shall be in league with a foreign god and this foreign god is the Western leader, the first beast of Revelation 13, whom he will cause the whole world to worship. The dominant religion of the world in that day will be the worship of man, exemplified in one man, who will be the great Antichrist of the last days. But this man, this king of Daniel 11:36, is the one who will lead the world in the worship of that Western leader.

"He shall be in league with a foreign god, and shall divide the land for a price." That latter phrase suggests the possibility that here is the one who will finally settle the quarrel of Jew and Arab over ownership of the land of Israel. Someone must come ultimately to settle this great difficulty, because it is now dividing the Middle East, and much of the world. Until the problem is settled there can be no hope for any kind of peace in the Middle East. But there is coming a man who will succeed for awhile in bringing peace to this area, and this is the man who is before us now.

The action of the last days is recorded in the closing section.

"At the time of the end [that places it at the beginning of the great tribulation, the middle of Daniel's seventieth week] the king of the south shall attack him [Egypt shall come against him]; but the king of the north [the king we have just been considering] shall rush upon him like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall come into countries and shall overflow and pass through. He shall come into the glorious land [Israel]. And tens of thousands shall fall, but these shall be delivered out of his hand: Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites [the present territory, largely, of Jordan]. He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. He shall become ruler of the treasures of gold and of silver, and all the precious things of Egypt; and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall follow in his train [he is in North Africa, now]. But tidings from the east and the north shall alarm him, and he shall go forth with great fury to exterminate and utterly destroy many. And he shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end with none to help him." {Dan 11:40-45 RSV}

What a remarkable account! Here we have traced the final conflict, which is called, in the book of Revelation, the campaign of Armageddon. You have heard about Armageddon, and here is the record of a great part of it. We learn that it begins with an attack against Syria from Egypt, the king of the south attacking the king of the north. Their ancient enmity is restored and Israel once again becomes a convenient battlefield for them. Undoubtedly this attack occurs because Syria has made a covenant with the Jews, and this angers the Egyptians. Because Syria has made a covenant with the Jews to allow the restoration of Jewish worship in the temple at Jerusalem, the Egyptians attack. But the king of the north shall strike back, and shall "rush upon like a whirlwind, with chariots and horseman, and with many ships." Many Bible scholars feel that this suggests strongly that he has at his disposal far greater forces than would be possible for the small country of Syria. They link with Syria the power of Soviet Russia. As you know, Russia has a very strong hand in that area at this present time and is backing Syria in rearming against the Jews.

We are next told that he conquers Egypt and North Africa. The king of the north comes down through Palestine, perhaps at this time erects the abomination of desolation in the temple, and then moves down into Egypt, conquering Egypt and North Africa. But while he is in North Africa he hears troubling tidings from the east and the north (this would be from the direction of Israel, and Syria).

Here we can find possible place for a cryptic word found in the book of Revelation, which speaks of a great Eastern army (the kings of the sunrising, literally), who come as a tremendous force, of two hundred million men against Israel in the last days.

If you were the king of the north and you were down in Egypt with an extended supply line and heard of a force of two hundred million men coming to cut that line of supply, you would be troubled too, would you not?

Because of this threat, he quickly arouses his forces and goes forth "with great fury to exterminate and utterly destroy many." He comes back into the land of Israel, pitches his tent between the sea (the Mediterranean sea), and the glorious holy mountain (Jerusalem), and "there he shall come to his end with none to help him." We have that end described for us in the book of Revelation. It will be by the sudden appearing of Jesus Christ with the armies of heaven, to take the beast and the false prophet here, overcome them, and cast them into the lake of fire.

This is a difficult passage in Daniel 11 and one that many Bible scholars have wrestled with and struggled over. In some ways it is difficult to relate to its context, but in other ways it is very simple, very plain. But it does indicate certain definite things. It does confirm what the New Testament tells us, that the lawless one and his cohorts shall be brought to an end by the appearing of Jesus Christ again in power and great glory. As we have seen all through Daniel, the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever.

I want to say a few things in closing:

These predictive passages are not given to us to frighten us. They are not given to move us to go out and dig bomb shelters and hide in the ground, or sell our property and get white robes and go up on the mountain top.

They are given to guide us, primarily, in order that we may not be part of the international delusion of the last days, or that which leads up to the last days. That delusion is the worship of man. That is the final ultimate delusion. Humanism, the philosophy that man is able to be his own god and does not need another, is the final, terrible lie of the devil that will sweep through the world. Increasingly we find men moving in that direction. Increasingly the propaganda mills are turning out more and more powerful propaganda to suggest to people that there is no God, that God is dead, that God is of no use to men -- has no interest in them even if he does exist -- and that man does not need him anyhow for he is his own god: Man can do anything he wants. We are getting this in increasing degree today.

These prophetic passages are given for five practical reasons:

- First, they are given in order that we might have a realistic view of man and of the panaceas man attempts to solve his problems. We need to understand from Scripture that nothing is going to work, ultimately. Though this does not mean that we are to give up efforts to find good programs to help alleviate some of the misery of human beings, yet we are to understand that these will never really solve the problem. They are at best temporary alleviations and will not finally solve anything. That means we ought not to get so wrapped up and involved with political movements of the day that we feel they will be the final answer, and that the world will never survive unless it gets on the bandwagon of such-and-such a proposition.
- Second, we ought to learn from these passages to employ spiritual weapons rather than pressure tactics in the solution of human problems. I am amazed at how long it seems to take many Christians to learn that real, earnest, concerted believing prayer is a million times more effective in changing a situation than moving into a building, sitting in protest or demonstrating in the streets. The fact that we do not employ spiritual weapons indicates that we do not believe what our Lord has told us. If we really believed in the spiritual weapons (love, righteousness, truth, faith, etc.), we would employ these far more than other types of tactics and political maneuvers.
- Third, these passages ought to teach us to view persons as more important than programs. God is not interested in programs, ultimately. Certainly you cannot live life without programs, but it is not the program that is the important thing. It is the people interested in them. The whole testimony of the scriptures is to this end. God is interested in people. Programs come and go, movements in history appear and disappear, rise and fall. God seems to care little about those things. But he is very, very concerned about the people involved in them. Therefore, as we see the events of our own day we ought to view persons as far more important than programs, and the establishing of warm relationships as being of far greater value to us than making money. This is a great area of failure in many Christian homes. Time spent in learning to know your children. and letting your children know you, is of far greater value than earning enough money to buy a color TV set, or a higher priced car, or a cabin in the mountains. Let us get our value systems straight. That is what these passages are

given to us for, that we might realize that what is happening in our home circle, between parents and children, and with our neighbors and friends around, is of far more importance and requires much more of the investment of time than advancing a material standard of life.

- Fourth, these passages ought to teach us to manifest a spirit of trust and confidence in God, and to display that in spite of the worsening conditions in which we live. Jesus said this specifically: "When you see these things begin to pass ..." Then what? Go grovel in the earth, and look sad and forlorn? Act as though the world is coming to an end with no hope left? No. "Lift up your heads and rejoice" {cf, Luke 21:28} for it is working out exactly as God said it would. It ought to confirm your faith, not destroy it. It is coming to pass exactly as he said.
- Fifth, these passages ought to help us build deep ties of love and consideration with other Christians. "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, and so much more as you see the day approaching," {cf, Heb 10:25}. Do not separate yourself from other Christians. Do not go off on your own but get with them, get to know them, spend enough time together that you can know one another. Love one another and pray for one another. I am not simply talking about coming to church on Sunday. That is a very important factor because that is where we are taught the truth. but that is not where we are to live our Christian life. We do that in the home and in the neighborhood.

There are five suggestions that occur to me as we draw to a close in this study of Daniel. I hope that they will move us to practice and not mere profession. Prophecy is not given to us to satisfy our curiosity, but to move us in right and proper ways.

Prayer:

Our Father, we give thanks for this word of truth which the angel gave to the prophet Daniel, so long ago. It is absolutely amazing to us that after all these hundreds of years since then these events are now being fulfilled, and not one word or one syllable needs to be changed in these ancient prophecies. Surely this ought to make us realize that we have to do with the God of history, the God who is utterly faithful, with whom is no shadow of turning. So, Lord, we pray that you will strengthen our faith. Increase our love and devotion, our openness and fairness and honesty, as we ought to live in these days. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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By: Ray C. Stedman
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THE LAST WORD

by Ray C. Stedman

We have come to the tag end of Daniel's great last vision, which occupies Chapters 10, 11, and 12.

In Chapter 10, Daniel was shown an awe-inspiring vision of the great Being to whom he was praying. We can identify this Being from New Testament references as the Lord Jesus Christ, revealed through an Old Testament theophany -- or appearance of God -- before he became incarnate. In answer to Daniel's request for understanding about the fate of his people he was then given a vision of the centuries. He was shown that Persia was soon to fall under an attack led by Alexander the Great. This was fulfilled in history. Alexander died in 323 B.C., some two hundred years after Daniel's vision. Daniel was then shown the rise of Egypt and Syria, the two warring powers on either side of Palestine, and the battles that would wage back and forth across the Holy Land. He also saw the coming of a "contemptible person" who would be one of the kings of

the north, a king of Syria who would defile the temple in Jerusalem and would stop the Jewish offerings. As we have seen, this was fulfilled in history in the person of Antiochus Epiphanes, the mad king of Syria who did defile the temple and aroused the revolt of the people led by the Maccabees.

Then there followed a long leap of time. From the predictions fulfilled around 165 B.C., the angel leaps over the intervening centuries, including the time of the first coming of Christ (Daniel had seen this in other visions), and comes to the great double fulfillment of the vision concerning the defilement of the temple, when another willful king would arise (again from the area of Syria) who, in league with the Western powers, would repeat the blasphemies of Antiochus Epiphanes in the temple. Ultimately he would be destroyed by divine power.

We come now to the opening words of the twelfth chapter, which is still part of the same vision. The vision goes on for three more verses, and then occurs a kind of postlude to the book.

We shall observe the close of the vision verse by verse:

"At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time; but at that time your people shall be delivered, every one whose name shall be found written in the book." {Dan 12:1 RSV}

"At that time" indicates the same time as the events covered in the latter part of chapter eleven, concerning the willful king, the contemptible person who arises to defile the temple for the last time. When those events begin, Michael (the great prince who stands for Daniel's people, Israel) shall arise. Here Michael is called "the great prince." In the New Testament he is called an archangel. There are only three references to Michael in the New Testament. One is found in the book of Jude, where we are told that he disputed with the devil over the body of Moses. What that involves no one quite knows, but evidently some problem arose over the resurrection of Moses. Michael was involved because Moses was the leader of God's people, Israel.

Michael is mentioned again in the twelfth chapter of Revelation, where he fights against the devil and his angels when they are cast out of heaven and are confined to earth. This expulsion is what produces the terrible time which Jesus calls "the great tribulation." Satan comes down to earth, knowing that he has but a short time, and his wrath is terrible. Michael is also mentioned in First Thessalonians, Chapter 4, where the Apostle Paul tells us that the Lord Jesus is coming for the church:

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, {1 Th 4:16a KJV}

Since the only archangel mentioned in Scripture is Michael, this helps us to know the order of the events of the last times. When the Lord comes for his church, Michael will also stand up to act on behalf of his assigned people, Israel. Many Bible scholars thus understand that when the church is removed from the earth, then Israel will come into the forefront again as a nation under God. God begins then his renewed program of activity through his people, the Jews.

This is also what Daniel saw in his vision. When Michael "stands up" sometime before the great tribulation begins there follows "a time of trouble such as never has been since there was a nation." You can see how fully this agrees with what Jesus said in Matthew 24: "Then shall be great tribulation such as has never been since the beginning of the world until now, no, and never shall be," {Matt 24:21 KJV}. It will be an unprecedented time of trouble on the earth. It will be both the worst and the last of Israel's times of trouble. Anyone who visits Israel these days cannot help but be impressed with the industriousness of the Jewish nation, the amazing way they have replanted the land, and the hopes of the Jewish people for peace and an opportunity to live their own lives in their own nation. Yet anyone who knows the Bible knows that the greatest time of trouble they have ever faced is still ahead, worse even than their trials under Hitler.

Jeremiah also describes this for us in Chapter 30, Verses 4-7:

These are the words which the Lord spoke concerning Israel and Judah:

**"Thus says the Lord:
We have heard a cry of panic,
of terror, and no peace.
Ask now, and see,
can a man bear a child?
Why then do I see every man
with his hands on his loins like a woman in labor? Why has every face turned
pale?"
Alas! that day is so great
there is none like it;
it is a time of distress for Jacob (Israel);
yet he shall be saved out of it." {Jer 30:4-7 RSV}**

That agrees exactly with what Daniel is told. When Michael stands up there shall be a time of trouble, and yet, "your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name is found written in the book." Throughout this time of distress there will be a remnant of Israel, a persecuted minority (we are used to hearing about such these days) who will be kept safely through the time of peril.

That brings us to Verse 2 of Chapter 12:

"And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." {Dan 12:2 RSV}

The Old Testament does not say much about the resurrection of the dead. Though it is a very rare occurrence, the idea is there, and this is one of the few places where it clearly speaks of resurrection. At the time when Michael stands up and the people of Israel and the whole earth go through the time of great tribulation, there will also be a resurrection of the dead.

The New Testament gives us further details. There is a resurrection that will occur when the Lord Jesus comes for his church. "The dead in Christ rise first," Paul tells us {in 1 Th 4:16b}. This is possibly the same resurrection as that in Daniel 12. Or Daniel 12 may refer to another resurrection which will occur at the end of the tribulation. But in either event, it is clearly a selective resurrection.

Not everyone is raised from the dead at this time. The angel tells Daniel, "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake." Evidently it is a resurrection only of those who are righteous, who know the Lord. We must read this very carefully. The Hebrew words that are translated here, "some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt," ought to be read: "These (who are risen) shall be to everlasting life, and those (the ones who do not arise), shall be to shame and everlasting contempt."

Before the last group is raised there will come a thousand years, as the book of Revelation makes clear. We shall not spend time on these details but simply point this out before we go along. Then, Verse 3:

"And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever." {Dan 12:3 RSV}

These are the last words of the vision. They point out the glory and honor that God has reserved for those who are faithful during this time of trial and tribulation. There will be two kinds: those who are wise (literally, "the teachers," those who teach others), and those who witness, who turn many to righteousness. Because of their faithfulness God will honor them in this way. They shall shine out like the brightness of the firmament, and like the stars forever and ever. That is the end of the vision.

The next words are an admonition to Daniel. The angel tells him:

"But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase." {Dan 12:4 RSV}

This verse has puzzled many people. They ask, "What does it mean that Daniel was told to seal up the book?" Many have taken this to mean that in some way the book of Daniel is rendered incapable of being understood; that the prophecies given Daniel are couched in such strange forms and weird language that no one can really understand them; the riddle can never be unveiled until we arrive at the actual end of days.

But that is not what it means. As a matter of fact, Daniel is not a difficult book to understand. Much of it is as simple and easy to understand as a child's reading book. It is made up of simple stories.

What this verse means is that these words to Daniel are concerning the book from which he was reading, not the one which he was writing. Now what book is that? We must get back to the start of the vision to understand that. In Chapter 10, Verse 21, the angel appeared to Daniel and said,

"But I will tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth:" {Dan 10:21 RSV}

Then in Chapter 11, Verse 2, he says,

"And now I will show you the truth." {Dan 11:2a RSV}

It would appear that the angel had a book in front of him from which he reads the great events contained in the vision; a book which is the symbol of God's foreknowledge of all human events. All that occurs in history is known to God long before it ever takes place, and it is symbolized by the book from which the angel reads to Daniel. He has read to a certain place and now he says, "Daniel, this is all I'm going to read to you. Shut up the words, and seal the book for this is all I will show to you now." He means, "We have come to the end, your work is finished; this is all that will be revealed to you now." So this has nothing to do with the understanding of the book of Daniel. In fact, the words which Daniel had seen in the book were given in order that they might be understood. The angel simply means, "We have come now to the end of the period of revelation to you about these matters."

But the latter part of this verse has also intrigued many.

"Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase." {Dan 12:4b RSV}

Unquestionably the angel is here describing that which will happen until the time of the end is reached. What will occur before then? The angel says, "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase." That can be taken in two ways:

Some have taken it as a prediction of the present revolution in transportation and knowledge which is so characteristic of our own day. It anticipates this sudden amazing explosion of knowledge that has come in the last century or so. As you know, for thousands of years, methods of transportation were scarcely improved. Then man invented the steam engine and marvel followed upon marvel. The speed of transportation increased until now men are traveling eighteen thousand miles an hour and that is just the beginning. Along with this has come a fantastic increase in general knowledge that has produced our modern technological civilization. Many feel this is what the verse refers to.

Perhaps it does mean that. But I rather think it is much more likely that it refers to an increase in the knowledge of the book of Daniel. Many take it this way because it is in connection with the sealing up of the book that this is said. It would then mean "Many shall run to and fro throughout this vision." It would refer to an exhaustive investigation of the vision. Men shall investigate and carefully scrutinize the prophecies of Daniel, and the knowledge of the book shall increase as people study it through.

But perhaps something further should be said. Oftentimes what appears to be two different interpretations is not a case of either/or, but a case of both/and -- they both are true. It seems likely that that is the case here. There will be many studying the book of Daniel and prophecy in general, and the knowledge of prophecy will increase through the years as we approach the end. But because of that increase of knowledge in prophetic matters, there shall also break out an increase of knowledge in other matters, including transportation and general scientific knowledge.

That conclusion is not as foolish as it may seem. It can be demonstrated that the knowledge of men in secular matters is directly related to an understanding of the revelation of God. Any student of history knows that after the fifth century of this era, Europe drifted into a period of somnolence, ignorance, darkness, and mental torpor that even secular writers refer to as the "Dark Ages." Strangely enough, that period coincided with the removal of the Scriptures from the understanding of the common people. When the Scriptures were no longer available, men did not know much about life. But about the time of the dawn of the Reformation, even before Luther, but also including him, there came a reawakening that is called "the Renaissance," the rebirth of knowledge. It followed immediately upon the restoration of the Scriptures to the people and the restored knowledge of the Word of God.

Then about the middle of the nineteenth century -- and not until then -- there came a reawakened interest in prophecy. This can be traced very clearly in history. The Reformers did not deal much with prophetic passages; they were concerned about other issues. But about the middle of the nineteenth century, in England and other places, prophetic truth came to light again. Christians began to study predictive passages earnestly, and great conventions were held to propagate prophetic truths. It was also at that time that knowledge began to increase. The vast explosion of modern knowledge broke upon men as a result. I do not know how to prove that, but it is most interesting to note the connection of these things. There are hidden secrets of life that we have not yet begun to understand. One of them is the strange connection within the spirit of man between his knowledge of God and the rest of his life. Here is, perhaps, one very remarkable instance of how that connection has been demonstrated in a most practical way.

In Verses 5-7 we have a question-and-answer period that follows the vision. That is a common procedure in these days. We think we have discovered something new when we follow a lecture with a time for questions and answers. We call it "dialogue," but here it is in the book of Daniel.

Then I Daniel looked, and behold, two others stood, one on this bank of the stream and one on that bank of the stream. And I said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream, "How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?" The man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream, raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven; and I heard him swear by him who lives for ever that it would be for a time, two times, and half a time; and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be accomplished. {Dan 12:5-7 RSV}

Do you remember how the vision began? Daniel saw a man clothed in linen, with a bright countenance, standing by the river. Now at the end he sees two angels with him. He asks the man clothed in linen. "How long will it be until these things are over?" If you have carefully followed the character of the vision, you can understand Daniel's question. It is a time of trouble for Daniel's people such as they have never passed through before. Daniel is troubled by this and he identifies with them, and asks, "How long will it be? How long till the end of these amazing things?" The man clothed in linen (who is the Lord Jesus), raises his right hand to indicate the solemnity of his words as a guarantee. It is much as it was in the days of his flesh when he used to add the words, "Truly, truly I say to you." Here he guarantees it with an upraised hand. "When these things begin," he says, they will run for "a time, two times, and half a time."

We have understood already from Daniel that this means three and a half years. A "time" is a year. When they are finished, the power of the holy people, the Jews, will be shattered. That is very significant. That means that Israel is going to have increased power in world affairs. They will have remarkable power, a power so impressive that the Western nations, the confederacy of the West, shall make a covenant with them. It will be power that will permit them to dominate Middle East affairs. But at the end of this three and a half year period their power will be shattered. They will be broken, defeated, crushed as they have never been before. The end of the week accomplishes the breakup of the power of Israel, and they will be cast back utterly upon the God who loves them.

At this point Daniel interrupts the man clothed in linen, in Verses 8-10:

I heard, but I did not understand. Then I said, "O my lord, what shall be the issue of

these things?" He said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. Many shall purify themselves, and make themselves white, and be refined; but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand; but those who are wise shall understand." {Dan 12:8-10 RSV}

Daniel wants more information. He says, "Lord, I don't understand what you mean about 'the shattering of the power of the holy people.'" But the man clothed in linen says, "That's all right, Daniel. Remember, there is to be no more revelation to you out of the book. The book is closed; I can't tell you any more." Then he suggests that it will be necessary to study what is already given, and from that there will be a most fascinating result: "Many shall purify themselves, and make themselves white and be refined; but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand."

This is all with reference to the book of Daniel, in which he had written what was revealed. Many shall read it, study it, and search it through, and it will have a very interesting three-fold effect upon them:

First, they will interact with the book. They will purify themselves by reading the cleansing word of God. God's word is always a cleansing agent. Read it and be purified within.

Second, they will act upon the word they read and thus make themselves white, i.e., their outer life will become cleansed, whitened. And the result of that will be, they will be refined. They will become better people. This is always true with the word of God, if men act upon it.

But, he says, there is also another class of persons who shall read and study the book but they will not understand, and they shall do wickedly. The wicked shall do wickedly. Read that very carefully. It does not say that such people are wicked because they do wickedly. That is what we think wicked people are: people who do nasty, wicked things. Because they do nasty things, we say they are wicked people. But that is not what the Bible says. It says the wicked are not wicked because they do wicked things; but they do wicked things because they are already wicked.

What is it, then, to be wicked? It refers to someone who will not listen to God, someone who does not pay attention to him but who thinks he knows it all himself. Someone who, in pigheaded self-sufficiency says, "I don't need you, God." That is a wicked person. The wicked person is one who says, "I can get along without you, God." They are wicked in thought first, and because of that they do wicked things. Their deeds become wicked because their thoughts are already wicked. This is the result, Daniel is told, of studying the book.

Then the last word comes. The man clothed in linen resumes what he is saying to Daniel before his interruption.

"And from the time that the continual burnt offering is taken away, and the abomination that makes desolate is set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he who waits and comes to the thousand three hundred and thirty-five days. But go your way till the end; and you shall rest, and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days." {Dan 12:11-13 RSV}

From the time when the last desecration of the temple takes place, in the middle of the seven year period which constitutes the seventieth week of Daniel, from that time, says the man in linen, there shall be twelve hundred and ninety days. Three and a half years is twelve hundred and sixty days, so this is an additional thirty days beyond that. We are not told what it points to. Perhaps it is something involved in the cleansing of the land after the return of the Lord. Then he says, "Blessed is he who waits and comes to the three hundred and thirty-five days," which would be an additional forty-five days, or seventy-five days altogether, beyond the twelve hundred and sixty days of the great tribulation. All we can do is surmise that this additional period introduces the day of the millennium, the golden age of earth, when God sets up his final kingdom and righteousness shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. That will be a blessed time indeed.

But Daniel is told now, "Go your way. You shall rest (that means he will die), but then you shall rise again and stand in your allotted place at the end of the days." The "end of the days" is evidently a description of the

whole period we call the millennium, a thousand years, the last great period of time upon the earth. Daniel will be there. He is promised that. He will have a part in it as a resurrected being. He will not be forgotten of God, but will stand in his place at the end of the days. As we look back across the intervening centuries, Daniel is but a dim figure in the history of the past. Yet, so sure is God's word, so certain is his promise, that we can confidently look forward to meeting Daniel some day and finding out the work God gives him to do in the days to come. Just as Peter, James, and John saw Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration with the Lord Jesus, so we are given a glimpse here of the work that God has for those who will appear again upon the earth.

Well, that is the close of the book.

There is but one question that comes before us at this point. We must ask ourselves, "What has been my reaction to this book? Has it bored me, or has it purified me? Have I reacted to it as it was intended I should do, or has it frightened me, and turned me away? Has it judged me, or have I been judging it? Have I been saying, "You know, you can't trust these old prophecies. They don't amount to anything. No one knows whether they are true or not." Have I been sitting in judgment on the book of Daniel, or has the book of Daniel been sitting in judgment over me, searching out the mistaken convictions of my heart and encouraging me to grasp the great things that God is preparing for those he loves? Has it opened my eyes, or has it closed my heart?

It has done one or the other to each of us. What has it done to you? I must leave that question with you.

May the words of this book, the greatness of its contents, the revelation of its life to come, strengthen us and help us as it was intended to do, that we might understand the days in which we live. That's my prayer.

Prayer:

Our Father, open our eyes to understand what Daniel has written. Thank you for the record of history which has confirmed so much of it to us that we need have no fear or reason to doubt that the rest shall be fulfilled exactly as it is written. We ask you to drive these words home to us and make us act upon them. In Christ's name, Amen.

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