

# EXPLANATION OF 27<sup>TH</sup> BIBLEBOOK

## DANIEL (chapters 1-2,7-12) (6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.)

### INTRODUCTION

This study is a summary for educational purposes of a part of the very excellent book by John Goldingay. Daniel, Word Biblical Commentary, 1989. Its message must be passed on!

#### **1. Daniel.**

The historical person, Daniel, lived during the Babylonian exile in the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. in the Babylonian kingdom (1:1-7) and Medo-Persian kingdom (6:1-2).

However, the writer of especially chapters 7 to 12 of the book of Daniel lived during the persecution under king Antiochus IV Epiphanes in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. probably in Judea.

#### **2. The book of Daniel.**

The book of Daniel is a peculiar *prophecy* (proclamation) of God, because the book of Daniel is not a forward looking prophecy, but a backward looking prophecy. It does not reveal the future, but rather reveals the real and deepest significance of historical events in the past and in the present (just as Revelation chapter 12). Both forward looking prophecy and backward looking prophecy are inspired by the Spirit of God<sup>1</sup>.

The purpose of the book of Daniel is to present 'a theology of the history of the kingdom of the world'. It reveals God's perspective on the kingdoms (governments) of the world within world history.

Daniel's dreams are in part his reflection on events that happened in a particular segment of history in the great empires (kingdoms of the world), namely from the time of the exile (597 B.C.) (1:1) to the time the writer lives (about 160<sup>ties</sup> B.C.). History becomes a means of revelation cast in the form of prophecy. The writer views history in the light of what God has said and done in the past and in the light of the word God is speaking now.

#### **3. The theme of the book of Daniel.**

##### **Theme. The triumph of the Kingdom of God over the kingdoms of the world.**

#### **4. Overview of the book of Daniel.**

**Daniel chapter 1.** In the history of the world God himself is the sovereign King. It is not king Nebuchadnezzar *who plays the most significant role in international affairs*, but the God of the Bible who delivered the exiles from Judea to him (1:2a) and who equipped Daniel and his three friends with knowledge and understanding without losing holiness in order to serve in a foreign kingdom in the world (1:17).

**Daniel chapter 2.** In the history of the world it is *God who sets up kings (governments), but also deposes them* (2:21)! When God's time has come to act, then the kingship or kingdom of God demands the destruction of the regimes or kingdoms of the world rather than acting through them.

**Daniel chapter 3.** In the history of the world believers are persecuted when they refuse to make compromises with the kingdom of the world (3:17-18)<sup>2</sup>.

**Daniel chapter 4.** In the history of the world it is God who humbles proud kings (4:33,37).

**Daniel chapter 5.** In the history of the world it is God who deposes arrogant kings that are hardened with pride and strips them of their glory (5:20).

**Daniel chapter 6.** In the history of the world it is *God who promotes dedicated believers* (6:25-28).

**Daniel chapter 7.** In every segment of the history of the world 'the four-empire scheme' represents 'the kingdom of the world'. God eventually dooms the anti-Christian tyrants of the kingdom of the world and gives the Kingdom to one like a son of man (7:14,17-18,26-27).

**Daniel chapter 8.** In the history of the world the events have a definite end. Every human power is ultimately destroyed (8:23-25).

**Daniel chapter 9.** In the history of the world *the symbols in the book of Daniel have repeated application*. However, the definite end of all history has not yet dawned (9:26-27)!

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19-21

<sup>2</sup> 2 Timothy 3:12

**Daniel chapter 10-11.** In the history of the world the people of God suffer due to the political and military successes and set-backs of ambitious rulers. But regardless the power of these rulers “they will stumble and fall, to be seen no more” (11:31-32,19b)!

**Daniel chapter 12.** The backward looking prophecy of Daniel remains “closed up and sealed (hidden) until the time of the end” (12:9-10). “The time of the end” will come at the appointed time (11:35).

## DANIEL 1

### **Theme. The God of the Bible is the sovereign King in all human affairs.**

#### **1. Believers may take part in the government of a country.**

Joseph served as a government official in the Egyptian kingdom. Daniel served as a government official in the Babylonian kingdom. And Nehemiah served as a government official in the Persian kingdom.

#### **2. Believers who refuse to make compromises may be persecuted.**

In chapters 2 and 3 the religious astrologers and in chapter 6 the jealous politicians caused many problems for Daniel and his friends. The commitment of Daniel and his three friends to their convictions set them apart from all other government officials (6:4-5), but it also brought upon them the hatred and jealousy of their enemies.

#### **3. God is completely sovereign in all human affairs.**

The Babylonians and even the Jews in that time believed that the gods of the Babylonians were stronger than the gods of the conquered nations. But Daniel chapter 1 to 6 emphasises that *the God who reveals himself in the Bible* is absolute sovereign in all human affairs.

For example, it was not king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon who played the decisive role in international affairs, because it was not he, but God who had delivered the exiles from Judah into his hand (1:2). It was God who gave his faithful subjects a favourable reception in Babylon (1:9). It was God who equipped them “with knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning and gave Daniel the ability to understand visions and dreams of all kinds” (1:17). And it is God who “changes times and seasons” and who “sets up kings and deposes them” (2:21)!

## DANIEL 2

### **Theme. The final triumph of the Kingdom of God over the kingdoms of the world.**

The book of Daniel is *an apocalypse*,<sup>3</sup> that is, a book that reveals *God’s perspective on the events of God’s history of salvation within the history of the world*. The writer of the book Daniel explains how God looks at events in the history of the world.

Nebuchadnezzar, the king of the mighty Babylonian Empire, had a dream. He saw an impressive large statue. Its head was of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron and its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay (2:31-33). Then Nebuchadnezzar saw how a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. The rock struck the statue on its feet and smashed it. The statue was struck on its weakest part! The clay, iron, bronze, silver and gold *were not smashed one after the other, but together* and became like chaff on a threshing floor, swept away by the wind without leaving a trace! Not a trace of the empire’s former power and glory remained! But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth (2:34-35). Daniel explains the dream as follows (2:36-45):

#### **1. The identity of the four regimes in the kingdom of the world.**

##### **The materials used in the statue.**

In the political and religious context ‘gold’ and ‘silver’ are standard symbols of what is precious and majestic; while ‘bronze’ and ‘iron’ are symbols of what is strong and hard. Daniel does not say that the materials deteriorate from the top to the bottom. *The statue represents a kingdom in the world (an empire)* with impressive beauty and strength. But *the ‘clay’ points to weakness, instability and transitoriness*. It represents the opposite of the political power that is expressed in the four metals.

The political and military might of kings and the kingdoms in the world is like this huge statue, but it has feet of clay – it always has a weak spot – ‘feet of clay’ - that threatens the stability and durability of the kings and their kingdoms. Only one rock needs to strike the statue on its weak spot and it collapses!

##### **The word ‘regime’ (system of government).**

The word ‘malku’ in Aramaic means ‘a regime or the reign’ of a king (6:28), his ‘royal power (authority or sovereignty)’(5:18), his ‘royal dominion or kingdom’ (territory)(4:22) or it refers to ‘a kingdom (an empire in the world consisting of various royal dynasties)’(7:23).

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<sup>3</sup> Literally: a revelation or an unveiling (a disclosure)

### **The four traditional empires.**

*Traditionally* these four ‘malku’ have been interpreted as the Babylonian Empire, the Medo-Persian Empire, the Greek Empire and the Roman Empire.

### **The first regime.**

Because Nebuchadnezzar himself is the head of the whole statue, *the four ‘malku’ rather refer to the reign of four kings over a single empire!* The statue represents the Babylonian Empire that passes from king Nebuchadnezzar to other Babylonian kings. Nebuchadnezzar is ‘the king of kings’, but Daniel puts the emphasis on the fact that Nebuchadnezzar only rules because the God of heaven had given him this dominion, power, might and glory (2:37)! The real ‘Lord of kings’ is God Himself (2:47)<sup>4</sup>!

### **The three other regimes.**

They are not identified, remain indirect references and must not be interpreted<sup>5</sup>. Jeremiah prophesies about *the history* of Babylon: “These nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years”<sup>6</sup>. “All nations will serve him (Nebuchadnezzar) and his son and his grandson until (70 years later) *the time for his land comes*; then many nations and great kings will subjugate him”<sup>7</sup>. *Daniel adapts Jeremiah’s words about ‘the history of the world’ to ‘the theological form of four regimes’.*

The four regimes show no logical order of degeneration. Just as ‘the four corners of the earth’<sup>8</sup> represent the whole earth, so *‘the four regimes’ represent ‘the kingdom of the world’ (all the governments in the world with their political, economic, military and religious systems) within the history of the world.* They do not point to historical demonstrable regimes, but point to completeness of earthly regimes in one kingdom of the world within the history of this world.

Daniel refers in passing to the second and third regime and then concentrates on the fourth regime. The fourth regime is an oppressing power that smashes everything as iron (2:41), yet is unexpectedly brittle as clay (2:41-42). It tries to overcome this weakness and division, possibly by a marriage to another regime, but fails (2:43).

The four regimes do not refer to Nebuchadnezzar and three of his Babylonian successors, because then ‘the rock’ would have to represent Cyrus<sup>9</sup>. Daniel does not describe the coming of Cyrus the Persian as ‘the end of the Babylonian Empire’ or ‘the end of the Babylonian exile’ of Judah in Babylon. The coming of Cyrus makes no difference for the Babylonian Empire or for the exiles. But Daniel does refer to four specific regimes.

### **The four regimes in Daniel chapter 2.**

- **Nebuchadnezzar.** The regime of Nebuchadnezzar over the whole earth (605–562 BCE = B.C.)(2:36-38; 5:18-19).
- **Belshazzar.** The weak and divided regime of Belshazzar (550–539 BCE), the son of Nabonidus (556–539 BCE) He was “the second highest ruler” in the kingdom after Nabonidus (2:39a; 5:25-30).
- **Darius the Mede.** The regime of Darius the Mede over the whole earth (539–538 BCE)(2:39b; 5:31; 6:1,26-28). *The regime of Darius the Mede was simultaneous with the regime of Cyrus the Persian.* Darius the Mede took over the Babylonian kingdom at the age of 62 (5:31) after the taking of Babel in 539 BCE. Daniel speaks of “the *first* year of Darius the Mede” (9:1; 11:1) and thereafter the Hebrew text speaks of “the *third* year of Cyrus, king of Persia” (10:1), while the Greek text (Septuagint) speaks of “the *first* year of Cyrus”. This means that the Hebrew text allotted the two years of Darius the Mede to the reign of Cyrus over Babylon. Apparently Darius the Mede only ruled over Babylon for two years by the grace of Cyrus and simultaneously with Cyrus (6:28).
- **Cyrus the Persian.** The regime of Cyrus the Persian (559–530 BCE)(6:28; 10:1). Cyrus reigned from 539 B.C. over the Babylonian Empire. He was known for his victories in military campaigns and his irresistible power<sup>10</sup>. The fourth regime is said to be *divided (iron and clay) and will not remain united.* Apparently Cyrus was half Mede and half Persian. He was married to a Persian.

All the above facts show that the Medes and Persians did not establish a new empire in the world, but only brought a new dynasty to the history of the empire of the world which already existed. The Medes and Persians terminated the regime of Belshazzar within the Babylonian Empire, but *did not terminate the Babylonian Empire, because it was continued as the Medo-Persian Empire.*

The four regimes in Daniel 2 span the period from Nebuchadnezzar to Cyrus. *The coming of the Medes and Persians during this period did not terminate the dominion of ‘the kingdom of the world’ over the people of God,* as the prophet Jeremiah<sup>11</sup> and the prophet Isaiah<sup>12</sup> had promised. The kingdom of the world is here represented by the Babylonian Empire that continued as the Medo-Persian Empire and the people of God are here represented by the Jewish exiles in that Empire.

<sup>4</sup> cf. Revelation 1:5; Revelation 19:16

<sup>5</sup> cf. 1 Corinthians 4:6

<sup>6</sup> Jeremiah 25:11

<sup>7</sup> Jeremiah 27:7

<sup>8</sup> Revelation 20:8

<sup>9</sup> cf. Isaiah 41:2; Isaiah 45:1-2

<sup>10</sup> Isaiah 41:2-3,25; Isaiah 44:28; Isaiah 45:1-4,13

<sup>11</sup> Jeremiah 25:11-14

<sup>12</sup> Isaiah 13:19-22; Isaiah 43:14; Isaiah 44:27 – 45:4

The implied readers of the book of Daniel during the Medo-Persian period in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE were probably disillusioned and depressed like those whom the prophets Haggai<sup>13</sup> and Zechariah<sup>14</sup> addressed (520 BCE). Daniel urged them to hold on to the conviction that this colossus of the kingdom of the world would not stand forever! It has feet of clay! This is the message of Daniel chapter 2 however the parts of the statue are identified.

## **2. The identity of the rock.**

The rock, which was cut out of a mountain without any human assistance (2:45), smashed the regimes or dynasties of the kingdom of the world and grew until it became a huge mountain that filled the whole earth (2:35). 'The rock' symbolises God's power and sovereignty in establishing his everlasting Kingdom, just as 'the mountain' in Isaiah 2:2-3<sup>15</sup>! The explanation clearly says that the new regime or Kingdom is of divine origin (2:44)!

The message of 'the Rock' was that the God of the Bible has sovereign power to establish his Kingdom. This was also the message of 'Mount Zion'<sup>16</sup>.

The prophet Isaiah, in referring to Tiglathpileser, the king of Assyria (745-726 BCE), had a similar message. The God of the Bible is himself on the one hand 'the Sanctuary' (i.e. place of protection) for his own people (the believers), but on the other hand 'the Stone' that causes his enemies to stumble and 'the Rock' that makes people (the unbelievers) in both houses of Israel fall<sup>17</sup>. The God of the Bible is himself the Great Threat of kings, governments and kingdoms that build their own empires and fortresses. He is the Rock that will cause their stumbling, fall and destruction. All nations that trust in the kings or governments of this world will certainly stumble, fall and be destroyed!

Compare the message of the Old Testament with the message of the New Testament. Jesus Christ is the chosen and precious Cornerstone (the most important foundation stone of a building). The one who trusts in him will never be put to shame. He is also the Capstone (the final large stone at the top of an arch) which the political and religious leaders of the world have rejected. Their disobedience to him will cause them to stumble and fall<sup>18</sup>, be broken to pieces and crushed<sup>19</sup>.

## **3. The scheme of four regimes.**

**In Daniel chapter 2 the fourth regime is represented by king Cyrus in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE.**

The scheme of four regimes' represents 'the kingdom of the world' (and every government within it) in every period of history of the world. The four regimes of the colossus stand model for what will happen to the kingdom of the world within the history of the world. The kingdom of the world will ultimately be replaced by the Kingdom (sovereign reign, kingship) of the God who reveals himself in the Bible (2:44)!

**In Daniel chapter 7 and 8 the fourth regime is represented by king Antiochus in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE.**

This king of the kingdom of the world waged war against 'the saints' (God's people, the people who believe in the God of the Bible) and defeated them for a period of time, until 'the Ancient of Days' (the God of the Bible) came and pronounced judgement in favour of the saints of the Most High and the time came when they possessed the Kingdom (7:21-22)!

The readers of the book of Daniel lived during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE under the terrible oppression of a king other than Cyrus of the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. (559–530 BCE), namely, king Antiochus IV of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE (175–164 BCE). The book of Daniel was God's message of encouragement for his people (the believers in the God of the Bible) who lived in that crisis in 167 BCE. King Antiochus had forbidden the worship of the God of the Bible, had desecrated the temple of Jerusalem and had burned the books of the Law (the Old Testament)! *Read* this history in the apocryphal books of 1 Maccabees 1:1-64 and 2 Maccabees 5:11-26 (at the end of this study).

**The history of the kingdom of the world from the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.**

The book of Daniel describes in one sweep the history of the kingdom of the world from the reign of king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia in the sixth century BCE to the reign of king Antiochus of Syria in the second century BCE. The direct rule or reign of the kingdom of the world over the people of God began with king Nebuchadnezzar in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE (when Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judea in 605 BCE, 597 BCE and 586 BCE). This suppression of the people of God by the kingdom of the world did not stop with king Nebuchadnezzar (605–562 BCE), but was continued until king Antiochus (175-164 BCE).

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<sup>13</sup> Haggai 2:3

<sup>14</sup> Zechariah 1:12

<sup>15</sup> Ezekiel 17:23; Psalm 2:6; Psalm 48:2-3; cf. Hebrews 12:22-24; Revelation 14:1

<sup>16</sup> Isaiah 2:2-3; Ezekiel 17:23-24; Psalm 2:6; Psalm 48:2-3; cf. Hebrews 12:22-24; Revelation 14:1

<sup>17</sup> Isaiah 8:6-15

<sup>18</sup> 1 Peter 2:6-8

<sup>19</sup> Luke 20:18

At the beginning the reign or kingdom of the world is still described in positive terms. The power and glory that God gives to the regime or kingdom of the world is impressive and deserves admiration (2:37-38)<sup>20</sup>. But in its final appearance the power of this kingdom of the world is depicted as hard iron<sup>21</sup> with brittle baked clay sticking to it (2:40-43)! The governments of this world are as hard as iron, but simultaneously as brittle and vulnerable as baked clay. *The governments of the world always have a weak spot, which they desperately try to prop up by worldly means (e.g. political, economic and military power or religious terrorism within home affairs and in foreign affairs)*. These worldly means are doomed to fail! Every kingdom of the world (i.e. government of the world) is ultimately and finally smashed by this 'rock' (the power and Kingdom of God).

This happens:

- by the rock that smashes the image (2:44)
- by the judgement of the Ancient of Day (7:21-22,26)
- and by God's hand (8:25)!

*While the prophecy of Jeremiah did not look further than the destruction of the Babylonian Empire as 'the kingdom of the world'<sup>22</sup>, the message of Daniel proclaims the establishment of a completely different Kingdom, namely, 'the Kingdom of God' (2:44). 'The rock' symbolises God's power and sovereignty in establishing his everlasting Kingdom, namely, the Kingdom of God<sup>23</sup>.*

*Within the history of the world, the Kingdom of God ultimately and finally smashes all the governments (regimes or kingdoms) of the world and grows to become a huge mountain (rock) that fills the earth!*

#### **The application of the book of Daniel by Christians.**

Christians miss the message of the book of Daniel when they waste their time in arguing about *the identity* of the four regimes in Daniel chapter 2. What was important for the readers of the book of Daniel was:

- that they lived during 'the fourth regime of the kingdom of the world' (represented by Antiochus IV)
- and that 'this kingdom of the world' would be followed by 'the Kingdom of God'!

*When later generations of the people of God (e.g. Christians today) apply 'this scheme of four regimes' in the book of Daniel to the history of the world in which they live, they respond to the message of Daniel in the way God desires!*

#### **4. Daniel presents a theology of the history of the world.**

##### **The history of God's people becomes a part of the history of all the nations of the world.**

*The vision of Daniel does not concentrate on the history of Israel as the other Old Testament prophets do, but focuses on the history of the world! It does not limit itself to the history of salvation of God's people in the world, but presents a theology of the history of the kingdoms of the world within world history!*

*The history of the nations in the world in Genesis chapters 1 to 11 is from Genesis chapter 12 onwards narrowed down to the history of one nation, God's people (Israel) in the world. The history of 'God's people' in the world spans from Abraham (2092 BCE)<sup>24</sup> to the exile of 'God's people' to Babylonia during the three invasions of Nebuchadnezzar in 605 BCE<sup>25</sup>, in 597 BCE<sup>26</sup> and in 587 BCE<sup>27</sup>.*

Nebuchadnezzar made an end to the reign of the Davidic kings in Jerusalem and began to reign as king over the first Gentile kingdom that determined the destiny of the people of God. *From the exile of Israel to Babylonia onwards the confined history of God's people (from Abraham to the exile) is broadened again to the history of the nations in the world. Israel and the Jews became a part of the history of the nations on the earth.* (The Church and Christians today are still a part of the history of the nations and non-Christians on the earth!) *From Daniel's perspective the history of the nations with their worldly kingdoms became from now on the history of the reign (or kingship, Kingdom) of the God of the Bible, even when the kingdoms in the world do not realise or acknowledge that<sup>28</sup>!*

During the Old Testament period this reign (or kingship) of the God of the Bible is most visible in what happens to 'the kingdom of the world' (represented by the great world empires):

- the Old Babylonian Empire (about 2500 - 1100 BCE)<sup>29</sup>
- the Assyrian Empire (883 - 610 BCE)<sup>30</sup>
- the New Babylonian Empire (626 - 539 BCE)<sup>31</sup>

<sup>20</sup> cf. Romans 13:1-7

<sup>21</sup> cf. Revelation 13:1-2

<sup>22</sup> Jeremiah 25:12-14

<sup>23</sup> cf. Matthew 21:42-44

<sup>24</sup> Genesis 12:1-5

<sup>25</sup> 2 Kings 24:1-4

<sup>26</sup> 2 Kings 24:8-17

<sup>27</sup> 2 Kings 25:1-12

<sup>28</sup> cf. Psalm 24:1; Psalm 145:13; Psalm 146:10; Jeremiah 10:10

<sup>29</sup> cf. Genesis 10:8-12; Genesis 11:1-9,31

<sup>30</sup> cf. 2 Kings 15:19-20,29

<sup>31</sup> cf. 2 Kings 24:1-2,10-17; 2 Kings 25:1-21

- the Medo-Persian Empire (539 - 331 BCE)<sup>32</sup>
- the Greek-Seleucid Empire (312 - 56 BCE) with its great forerunner of the final antichrist, Antiochus IV (175 - 164 BCE)<sup>33</sup>.

God sets up kings and deposes them<sup>34</sup>. The history of all the nations in the world is now on the way to become the history of the rule or reign of the God of the Bible or the history of the Kingdom of the God of the Bible! *The establishment and development of the Kingdom of God is revealed completely in the New Testament*<sup>35</sup>.

Compare the message of the book of Daniel (2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE in the Old Testament period) with the message of the book of Revelation (1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. in the New Testament period). Read Revelation 17:8-11. In the time of the apostle John in the New Testament period *'the beast' in the form of the five former mighty world empires: e.g. the Old Babylonian Empire, the Assyrian Empire, the New Babylonian Empire, the Medo-Persian Empire and the Greek-Seleucid Empire*<sup>36</sup>, *was no more!* These empires were represented by "the beast that was and is not"<sup>37</sup>! All these kingdoms in which 'the beast' had earlier been embodied perished! However, in the days of the apostle John *the sixth mighty world empire that 'is'*<sup>38</sup> (existed)<sup>39</sup>, *was the Roman Empire* of the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE (CE = A.D.)(31 - 98 CE) with its many Caesars<sup>40</sup>. This Roman Empire lasted in the west till 476 CE (the fall of Rome) and in the east till 1453 CE (the fall of Constantinople/Istanbul).

But during the New Testament period this reign (or kingship) of the God of the Bible is established in the hearts of Christians. Jesus said, "The Kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is!' or 'There it is!'", because the Kingdom of God is within you!"<sup>41</sup>. The Kingdom of God is most visible in the lives of Christians (cf. the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapters 5-7 and the parables of Jesus Christ).

The book of Daniel does not say that the kingdoms in the world oppose God or his purpose for his people. But it does say that the regimes or kingdoms of the world, including those under which the people of God must live, stand under the power and sovereignty of the God of the Bible in the same (though indirect) way as the kings of Judah stood under the power and sovereignty of the God of the Bible before the exile. God says, "Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will stand. ... This is the plan determined for the whole world; this is the hand stretched out over all nations. For the LORD Almighty has purposed and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?"<sup>42</sup> *God sets the reign of the governments (regimes or kingdoms) of the world in motion, but also terminates them. The LORD "changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them" (2:21)*<sup>43</sup>.

Compare this message in the Old Testament with the message in the New Testament. "The Lamb that breaks the seven seals of the scroll in heaven" and thereby reveals and sets in motion the history of the world and the history of the Church within this world<sup>44</sup>. At the end of the history of the world Jesus Christ permanently terminates the reign of the final antichrist and his allies (the kings of the earth and their non-Christian subjects that follow that antichrist)<sup>45</sup>!

#### **The history of the world is not explicitly condemned as being evil.**

The vision of Daniel does not suggest a cosmic duality of four evil kingdoms of the world against one good Kingdom of God. His vision does not condemn the fourth regime or kingdom more than the other three. The readers of the book of Daniel knew that they lived under an earthly power (the worldly kingdom of Antiochus) that was capable of terrible violence and destruction. Nevertheless, *the worldly kingdom's ability to oppress and to smash is not 'bad' in itself, because the reign of the God of the Bible has that same ability, namely, to smash and completely obliterate the kingdom of the world (2:44)!*

The fourth regime or kingdom of the world ultimately falls because it was inherent brittle – it had feet of clay. The kingdoms of the world were, are and will remain the work of merely man. Note 'a man's number', '6', which can never reach the number of God's perfection, '7', even when it tries to attain this repeatedly (e.g. three times: 666)<sup>46</sup>!

#### **The history of the world is not predetermined by God, but God is sovereign within the history of the world.**

The revelation in the book of Daniel hints that the history of the world is known by God before it happens. *It is not true that God has determined every event in the history of the world before the foundation of the world.*

<sup>32</sup> cf. Esther 1:1-2; Esther 3:6,8,9,13

<sup>33</sup> cf. Daniel chapter 7-12; and the apocrypha 1 and 2 Maccabees

<sup>34</sup> Daniel 2:21

<sup>35</sup> cf. Matthew 12:28-29; John 18:36-37 and all the parables of Jesus Christ about the Kingdom of God.

An explanation of these parables may be found in [www.dota.net](http://www.dota.net), manual 9 to 12.

<sup>36</sup> Revelation 17:10b

<sup>37</sup> Revelation 17:8ab,10-11

<sup>38</sup> Greek: ho eis estin (present continuous time)

<sup>39</sup> Revelation 17:10c

<sup>40</sup> cf. Matthew 2:1-17; Matthew 27:11-26

<sup>41</sup> Luke 17:20-21

<sup>42</sup> Isaiah 14:24-27

<sup>43</sup> cf. Romans 13:1-2 and Revelation 17:12-14

<sup>44</sup> Revelation chapters 5 and 6

<sup>45</sup> Revelation 19:19-20

<sup>46</sup> Revelation 13:18

The book of Daniel does not speak about 'the final events in the history of the world' (e.g. the final antichrist, the final battle, the final coming of Jesus Christ). It speaks about 'ultimate events within the history of the world' (e.g. the end of the terror of king Antiochus and the false invaders in his temple).

The revelation in the book of Daniel does not speak of a division of the history of the world into several 'dispensations'<sup>47</sup>, which have been predetermined by God.

The revelation in the book of Daniel does not speak of a dualism: about a world that lies in the power of the evil one and is waiting for the coming new world in which only righteousness will dwell.

The revelation of Daniel assumes that people (kings) make real decisions and choices that form the history of this world, but these human decisions and choices do not necessarily have the final word. Daniel chapter 2 affirms the absolute sovereignty of the God of the Bible within the history of the kingdoms in the world, which sometimes works via the human decision-making process and sometimes in spite of it.

### **The history of the world does not come to an end in Daniel chapter 2.**

The vision of Daniel does not suggest that 'the end of the world' is imminent. There is no indication that the history of the world has reached such a low point that God must take final action. The book of Daniel hints that with God's permission the history of the world progresses according to its own laws, sometimes forward and sometimes backwards; that with God's permission the history of the world takes its ever-changing course.

### **When God acts within the history of the world, then the coming of God's kingdom is accompanied by catastrophes.**

But there comes a time when God will act! God acts at a point of time that is known only to him! It is impossible to predict that point of time, because God can always and at any moment intervene in the history of the world.

Gods acting in the history of the kingdoms in the world proceeds from his complete free and sovereign will and for reasons which he alone knows and has not revealed to us. God says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways"<sup>48</sup>!

*When God's time has come to act, then the kingship or Kingdom of God demands the destruction of the regimes or kingdoms of the world rather than acting through them.* For the time being the human kingdoms are in accordance with God's will. However, not for always! When God's moment to act has arrived, then the coming of the Kingdom of God is accompanied by catastrophes rather than development, and by destruction rather than building up<sup>49</sup>!

Compare this Old Testament message with the New Testament message. There comes a time within history when Jesus Christ will act<sup>50</sup>. And there is also a final coming of Jesus Christ<sup>51</sup>.

## **5. The coming Kingdom of God in the book of Daniel.**

### **The coming Kingdom of God is a Kingdom on earth.**

Daniel 2:41-43 does not say that the fourth regime consists of a dynasty of several kings (e.g. traditionally interpreted as the Roman Empire) instead of one king (e.g. Cyrus). That is why the words: "In the time (days) of those kings" (2:44) refers to the three successors of king Nebuchadnezzar mentioned in the book of Daniel: Belshazzar, Darius and Cyrus.

Daniel also does not say that the fourth regime is followed by a fifth regime. The four regimes of the kingdom of the world are followed by something completely different, namely, 'the Kingdom of God'. Daniel does not predict the prolonging of the current time and events, but promises a completely new future. *His notion about 'the Kingdom of God' approaches that of 'the Day of the Lord' in the other prophets when God terminates earthly kingdoms.* The Kingdom of God has a supernatural, divine origin. Nevertheless it is localized on earth and not in heaven. Daniel does not envision the disintegration of the universe and also not the creation of a new universe.

The problems accompanying 'the kingdom of the world' (the kingdoms/governments in the world together with their worldly politics and history) can only be solved by a supernatural intervention of God when he establishes a new Kingship or Kingdom, namely, "the Kingdom of God"!

This does not require the dissolution of this world, but rather *changing the reign over this world!* The new Kingdom is the Kingdom of God and it fills the whole earth. The history of the world is not destroyed, but the political, military and false religious powers of the kingdoms of the world are destroyed!

<sup>47</sup> According to the teaching of dispensationalism, a 'dispensation' is a period of time in which God deals with people according to a divinely ordained arrangement. It is a religious system regarded as divinely ordained for a person, community, nation or period. Study supplement 6 of commentary on the book of Revelation (last-biblebook) in [www.betacursus.nl](http://www.betacursus.nl) in order to understand the view of dispensationalism on the book of Revelation.

<sup>48</sup> Isaiah 55:8-9; cf. Deuteronomy 29:29; Romans 9:17

<sup>49</sup> cf. Jeremiah 18:5-10; Matthew 13:40-42; Revelation 19:21-23

<sup>50</sup> Revelation 2:5,16; Revelation 3:3,20

<sup>51</sup> Matthew 24:36; Acts 1:7

**The coming Kingdom of God is not an Israelite kingdom.**

Daniel views 'the rock' not as representing the kingdom of Israel. Daniel chapter 2 contains no reference to Israel as the people of God and also no reference that the land of Israel, the city of Jerusalem or the temple in Jerusalem has any special significance! Daniel does not speak about 'the remnant' of the people of God as the prophet Isaiah does<sup>52</sup>. He does not speak about the coming Messiah and also not about the eternal destiny of humanity.

The whole focus of Daniel is directed on the Kingdom of God (his sovereign reign or kingship) within the history of the world! Daniel emphasises that wisdom and power belong to the God of the Bible and as a result it is he who sets up kings and deposes them again (2:20-22).

**The coming Kingdom of God is also not changed into a different kind of kingdom (a national kingdom or individual kingdom or heavenly kingdom).**

- **The Kingdom of God is not a national kingdom (limited to one nation).** Some expositors think that Isaiah chapters 40 to 55 are a promise to realise the Kingdom of God in the nation-state of Israel after the return from exile. But after the termination of the exile this kingdom in Israel never materialised! The history of the world simply continued. The reaction of Daniel was not to change the kingship or Kingdom of God into a national kingdom, as if the Kingdom of God had to be limited to Israel.
- **The Kingdom of God is not an individual kingdom (limited to one individual).** Daniel does not change the kingship or Kingdom of God into something individual, as if the kingship of God had to be realised only in the life of an individual believer.
- **The Kingdom of God is not a super mundane kingdom (limited to heaven).** Daniel also does not change the kingship or Kingdom of God into something above and beyond this world, as if the Kingdom of God does not exist on earth, but can only be realised in heaven<sup>53</sup>.
- **The Kingdom of God is realised within the created world and within human history.** Daniel proclaims that the kingship or Kingdom of God concerns human beings living here and now on earth, just as the prophecies of Isaiah chapter 40 to 55 also proclaim.

**The coming Kingdom of God is more a matter of expectation than fact. The reality is not yet revealed.**

- **The kingdoms of the world (their governments and power) are not yet really what they seem to be at the present time.** *What the events and realities in the history of the kingdoms in world in essence already are (e.g. their true character as viewed from God's perspective in heaven) instead of what they seem to be (from man's point of view and as reported by the mass media on the earth) has not yet been fully unveiled.*

The kingdoms of the world may seem attractive, strong and sometimes even invincible, but in reality they are evil and weak. In the kingdom of the world the kings do what they like, magnify themselves above God and say unheard of things against God (11:36). But they "will certainly stumble and fall, to be seen no more" (11:19)!

- **Also the Kingdom of God is not yet visibly on earth - what she in fact is destined to be!** What the kingdom of the world in reality already is (namely 'completely evil'), has not yet been fully exposed. And what the kingdom of God in reality already is (namely 'completely righteous'), has also not yet been fully revealed. Things still remain hidden and sealed until 'the time of the end' (12:9). The kingship or Kingdom of God has not yet made a definite end to all these other kingdoms in the world (2:44) and has not yet filled the whole earth (2:35). When the kingdom of the world will be fully exposed and the Kingdom of God will be fully revealed, the wicked people will only be wicked and the righteous people will only be righteous (enlightened, purified, spotless and refined)(12:10)<sup>54</sup>!

Compare the message of the Old Testament with the message of the New Testament. Only 'at the end of the age', that is, at the second coming of Jesus Christ, he will send out his angels, and they will *weed out of his kingdom* everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then "the righteous will shine like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father"<sup>55</sup>.

- **The book of Daniel is an apocalypse.** The book of Daniel is not a prophecy in the sense of a prediction about future events, because the events in the kingdom of the world were already taking place in Daniel's time and are already taking place in our time.

The book of Daniel is an apocalypse that unveils or reveals the true character of the history of the world! But while the book of Daniel was a sealed apocalypse (12:9-10), the book of Revelation is an unlocked apocalypse<sup>56</sup>!

Compare this message in the Old Testament with the message in the New Testament. In the book of Revelation, at the enthronement of Jesus Christ when the seals of the scroll in heaven are broken, these realities about the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world are revealed and are set in motion (Revelation chapter 5 and 6). Then what already exists in principle becomes reality.

<sup>52</sup> Isaiah 1:9; Isaiah 10:20-23

<sup>53</sup> When Matthew speaks about "the Kingdom of heaven" (e.g. Matthew 13:31-33) the other Gospels speak of "the Kingdom of God" (who dwells in heaven)(Luke 13:18-20). Matthew wrote to Jews who were afraid to mention the name of God. So they rather used the place where God dwells.

<sup>54</sup> cf. Revelation 22:10-11

<sup>55</sup> Matthew 13:41-43

<sup>56</sup> Revelation 22:10-11

One can no longer view the history of the world by itself (secularly, without taking God into account)<sup>57</sup>, but must view the history of the world against the background of what God in heaven is doing in heaven and on earth.<sup>58</sup>

Thus, in the New Testament the Kingdom of God has *already begun* at the first coming of Jesus Christ<sup>59</sup>, but it has not yet come in all its completeness and perfection. The Kingdom (kingship) of God will *continue to grow*<sup>60</sup> until the second coming of Christ.

Also *in our present time the Kingdom (kingship) of God has not yet been fully or perfectly manifested*. That is why Christians continue to pray: “Let your Kingdom (kingship over everyone and everything) come”<sup>61</sup>! The Kingdom of God will come with all its completeness and perfection only at the second coming of Jesus Christ<sup>62</sup>.

#### **The coming Kingdom of God is an everlasting Kingdom.**

The characteristics and qualities of the coming kingdom are not described. Daniel only says that the coming Kingdom will be the Kingdom of the God of the Bible and that it will endure forever! It is not a kingdom of any god of any other religion. It is also not a kingdom of any political-, economic- or military system, because all these kingdoms on earth are very limited and very temporary!

The characteristics of the Kingdom of God form a contrast with those of the foregoing kingdoms of the world. For a short period of time dominion, power, might and glory were given to the kingdom of the world, to king Nebuchadnezzar (2:37). But now these characteristics are manifested in another place and not forever. The Kingdom, power and glory is forever only God’s<sup>63</sup>.

This dominant thought with respect to ‘the time’ appears again and again. The kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar cannot endure forever (2:39; cf. 2:21a), but the Kingdom of the God of the Bible will certainly endure forever (2:44; 4:34-35)<sup>64</sup>!

#### **The coming Kingdom of God was not established in the time of Daniel.**

*The vision of Daniel was not fulfilled in the historical period to which the book of Daniel refers (i.e. the second century B.C.).* Just as in the prophetic books, ‘the Day of the Lord’ seems to be near; but then the years move along and people ask: “Where is the coming he promised?”<sup>65</sup>

Likewise in Daniel’s vision. The kingdoms or empires of the world, which the writer of the book of Daniel and his readers during the second century BCE knew from history (the Babylonian Empire, the Medo-Persian Empire and the Greek Empire), had already passed away. The reign of God in Jerusalem had been restored, partly when the temple was rebuilt in 516 BCE (after the return from exile)<sup>66</sup> and partly when the temple was cleansed in 164 BCE (after Antiochus had defiled it) (8:14)<sup>67</sup>. Thus, *the readers of the book of Daniel were aware that they had witnessed the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies only in part, namely:*

- *the return from exile*
- *the restoration of the land*
- *and the rebuilding of the temple.*

They were convinced that the words of the prophets would be fulfilled fully in God’s perfect time.

#### **The coming Kingdom of God began to be fulfilled at the first coming of Christ.**

At the beginning of the New Testament period ‘the rock’ in Daniel 2:44 was associated with the other ‘rock’ passages in the Bible. Jesus Christ, ‘the stone’ which the builders (i.e. the leaders) of Israel rejected<sup>68</sup>, has become the capstone<sup>69</sup>.

- **The view of Daniel about ‘the rock’ during the Old Testament period.** Although Isaiah, Christ and Christians regarded Jesus Christ as this ‘rock’, there is nevertheless no indication in the book of Daniel that Daniel understood ‘the rock’ to represent *the kingship and Kingdom of the Messiah himself*.

*The rock symbolises God’s power and sovereignty in establishing his everlasting kingdom!* The explanation clearly says that the new regime is of divine origin (2:44)! The message of ‘the Rock’ was that the God of the Bible has sovereign power to establish his Kingdom. *The God of the Bible is himself the Great Threat of kings, governments and kingdoms that build their own empires and fortresses.* God himself is the Rock that will cause their stumbling, fall and destruction. All nations that trust in the kings or governments of this world will certainly stumble, fall and be destroyed!

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<sup>57</sup> As all secular history books do.

<sup>58</sup> As the Bible does.

<sup>59</sup> Mark 1:15; Matthew 12:28; Ephesians 1:20-22

<sup>60</sup> Matthew 13:31-33

<sup>61</sup> Matthew 6:10

<sup>62</sup> Matthew 25:34; Revelation 11:15

<sup>63</sup> Matthew 6:13; cf. 1 Chronicles 29:11-12

<sup>64</sup> cf. Isaiah 9:7

<sup>65</sup> 2 Peter 3:4; Ezekiel 12:22; Matthew 24:48

<sup>66</sup> Ezra 6:13-15

<sup>67</sup> 1 Maccabees 4:36-60

<sup>68</sup> Psalm 118:22

<sup>69</sup> Matthew 21:42

- **The view of Isaiah about ‘the rock’ during the Old Testament period.** The LORD Almighty will be ‘a stone’ that causes men to stumble and ‘a rock’ that makes them fall. The people who stumble and fall are those who formally belong to Israel, but fear the king of Assyria (the kingdom of the world) more than they fear the LORD<sup>70</sup>.

The LORD said, “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed”<sup>71</sup>. God has laid a foundation stone on Mount Zion and this can only refer to the royal house of David, who carries the promise of God<sup>72</sup>. In its deepest sense, this word speaks of Jesus Christ in whom this promise is fulfilled<sup>73</sup>. Christ is the ‘sure foundation’ for salvation by way of the rule: “the one who trusts (believes) will never be dismayed”. The building that will be erected on this foundation stone is ‘the Kingdom of God’, the Community of the Messiah, which will be characterised by justice and righteousness<sup>74</sup>.

- **The view of Jesus Christ about ‘the rock’ during the New Testament period.** In the New Testament Jesus Christ came to fulfil the Old Testament revelation<sup>75</sup>. He sees himself as this ‘Cornerstone’ over which some people stumble and are broken to pieces and as this ‘Capstone’ which falls on others (and their human kingdoms) and they are crushed<sup>76</sup>. Jesus Christ sees himself as ‘the Rock’, the real embodiment of the kingship (sovereign reign) or Kingdom of God!

- **The view of Christians about ‘the rock’ after the New Testament period.** According to the conviction of Christians after the first coming of Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ appeared to be the One who caused the ultimate fall of the kingdom of the world and set the establishment of the Kingdom of God in motion. Jesus proclaimed the good news of God. “The time has come,” he said. “The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”<sup>77</sup>. The kings of the kingdom of the world “will make war against the Lamb (i.e. Christ), but the Lamb will overcome them because he is the Lord of lords and King of kings – and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers (i.e. Christians)”<sup>78</sup>.

## DANIEL 7

**Theme: The scheme of four kingdoms is a recurring pattern in revealing the destiny of the world within history.**

### **7:1. History is cast in the form of quasi-prophecy.**

**(History becomes the means of revelation that the unfolding events have been within the control and purview of God!)**

*Daniel 7 is quasi-prophecy. It is history that has become the means of revelation. It is narrating history as if it were prophecy. It is history cast in the form of prophecy.*

*Daniel 2 gives ‘a forward-looking view of the history’ of the Babylonian Empire during the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. (four regimes from Nebuchadnezzar to Cyrus).*

*Daniel 7, however, gives ‘a backward-looking view of the history’ from the exile to Babylon in the 6<sup>th</sup> century to the present crises under Antiochus IV in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE. In chapter 3 to 6 the writer of the book of Daniel relates the history of the Babylonian kingdom that continued as the Medo-Persian kingdom in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Then he sets his vision or perspective of that segment of history in chapter 7 in the reign of Belshazzar (about 550 BCE). The prospect of the book of Ezekiel (593-571 BCE) is from earlier in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE to the restoration of the Jewish exiles in Babylon to their land<sup>79</sup>. But the prospect of the book of Daniel is from a little later in the 6<sup>th</sup> century to crises beyond the restoration of the Jews to their land.*

Daniel’s *imaginary audience* continues to be Jews living in the early Persian Empire of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE. For Daniel’s *implied audience* (the readers of the book Daniel) in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE the message in Daniel 2 came to them from the distant past. But *the message in Daniel 7 comes to them from a distant past (the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE) that anticipated their present history (the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE crisis) and from their own actual future (the revealed ‘end’ of that crisis)*. Daniel 7 speaks not only of survival under pressure, but of deliverance from pressure. It speaks not only of life in history, but of life in the end of history. It speaks not only of God’s past interventions, but of God’s final intervention. It speaks not only of past rebukes of human power, but of a final numbering of that human power’s days!

<sup>70</sup> cf. Isaiah 8:6-8

<sup>71</sup> Isaiah 28:16

<sup>72</sup> 1 Chronicles 17:11-14

<sup>73</sup> Romans 9:33; 1 Peter 2:6-8

<sup>74</sup> Isaiah 28:17

<sup>75</sup> Matthew 5:17)

<sup>76</sup> Matthew 21:42-44; Luke 20:17-18; cf. Luke 2:34; Isaiah 8:13-15

<sup>77</sup> Mark 1:15

<sup>78</sup> Revelation 17:14

<sup>79</sup> Ezekiel 38-39

Daniel's insight in the significance of nations and the relationship of international politics to the rule of God is received by revelation from Jesus Christ<sup>80</sup>! His dream is God-given. *His dream in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century context is in part the result of reflection on historical events between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE. This history has become a means of revelation cast in the form of prophecy.* History becomes revelatory when it is viewed in the light of the tradition of what God has said and done in the past and in the light of the word God is speaking now. Daniel looks in the face of the dark realities of history since the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE and especially at the even darker realities of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, but insists on *also gazing steadily at how the future must be, given who God is!* In this sense, the vision's perspective is the gift of revelation received by faith. This faith accepts the risk of being accused that his vision is the result of fantasy received in wishful thinking.

The outrages of the present (2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE crisis) make it morally necessary for there to be judgement and reversal in the future. Otherwise all that people have believed about God and people's relationship to him is shattered. Every crisis deepens faith in the power of God rather than destroying faith.

Earlier Old Testament prophecies were put into writing as God's proclamations about future events. They were evidence that they had been given before the events of which they spoke. Thus they were indeed words of God<sup>81</sup>. But *the visions in the book of Daniel are written down as God's revelation for a people yet unborn and about a crisis event still centuries in the future. In the literary form of a quasi-prophecy, writing it down is the necessary link between the 'prophet' (Daniel in 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE) and his actual audience (in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE). Speaking theologically, narrating history as if it were prophecy affirms that the events that unfold have been within the control and purview of God!*

Daniel's use of symbolism makes possible a way of speaking that communicates without removing all allusiveness. *Daniel 7 is the most allusive chapter in the book and its explanation must preserve that feature rather than resolving it by reference to the other chapters.*

## **7:2. The creation, the exodus and the exile.**

"In my vision during the night I looked, and there before me were the four winds of heaven churning up the great sea" (7:2).

### **The wind.**

'The winds' symbolise *the power of God effecting God's will*. In Genesis 1:1-2, history begins with God's creative activity, followed by vast emptiness, formlessness and darkness and then a supernatural wind (the Spirit) sweeping over the waters (of the deep) preparing the uttering of God's life-giving Word that created light (energy), atmosphere (space), plants, trees, birds, fish, animals and man (materials) in all kinds of forms. In Exodus God's wind saves his people<sup>82</sup> and destroys his enemies<sup>83</sup> in the Red Sea.

In Daniel 7 the vision combines the cosmic perspective of Genesis 1 and the Israelite perspective of Exodus 14-15, showing that the totality of the winds of heaven ('the four winds') generates the totality of events of history within which Israel's history unfolds ('the four empires').

### **The sea.**

In Isaiah and Jeremiah 'the sea' symbolises *the dense concentration of power (chaos) that threatens to disrupt and overwhelm order*. "The raging of many nations – they rage like the raging sea. The uproar of the people – they roar like the roaring of great waters"<sup>84</sup>. The crashing waters symbolise the forces of disorder that are embodied in the nations on earth<sup>85</sup>. In Job chapter 40-41 God says that he controls the heaving and thrashing of those huge creatures (the behemoth/hippopotamus and leviathan/crocodile). They symbolise forces of chaos asserting themselves against order and meaning. In the vision in Daniel 7 the powers of chaos are not *natural forces* as in Genesis 1, but *historical forces* (tyrants and their kingdoms) that have not yet been tamed.

## **7:3. The scheme of four kingdoms.**

"Four huge animals, each different from the others, came up out of the sea" (7:3).

### **The number 'four'.**

The number '4' (e.g. the four points of the compass) is the symbol for 'totality', the whole earth or the whole world. 'The four winds' and 'the four animals' suggest that on the one hand *divine* power and on the other hand *disorderly non-divine* powers encompass the whole world.

But Daniel is not concerned with the world as a whole or history as a whole. *He is concerned with a particular segment of the world (the Middle East) and a particular segment of history (from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE)!*

<sup>80</sup> 1 Peter 1:10-12. "The prophets .... searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which **the Spirit of Christ** in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow."

<sup>81</sup> cf. Isaiah 8:1,16; Isaiah 30:8; Jeremiah 36:1-4; Habakkuk 2:2-3

<sup>82</sup> Exodus 14:21-21

<sup>83</sup> Exodus 15:10

<sup>84</sup> Isaiah 17:12

<sup>85</sup> Isaiah 8:6-8; Jeremiah 46:7-8; Jeremiah 47:2; cf. Revelation 17:18

### **The four animals.**

In the Old Testament, *nations have been symbolised by specific animals*: lion, donkey, doe, wolf, bull and ox<sup>86</sup> without implying there is anything ‘bestial’ about the nation’s character or behaviour. Also modern nations have utilized symbolic animals to depict particular kingdoms<sup>87</sup>. *In Hellenistic Palestine hybrid creatures on charms and amulets symbolized demonic forces.*

‘The animals’ in Daniel 7 indicate supernatural forces and symbolise the embodiment of that threatening power in particular entities<sup>88</sup>. They symbolise the totality of the nations on earth and in history. The fact that they have been created by God and emerge from the deep sea shows something of their ambiguity:

- Every nation stands under the sign of Romans 13:1-7.  
Every nation is *an authority established by God and called to serve God.*
- And at the same time every nation stands under the sign of Revelation 13:1-10.  
Every nation is *an authority inspired by the dragon, uncontrolled and with no desire to serve God.*

Like the Old Testament prophets, Daniel believes that *the God of the Bible is the Lord of historical events and that he can achieve his own ends through them.* The prophets and Daniel recognise that the process of history is unsavoury and unreassuringly, despite God being the Lord of history, and in a sense, the more so because he is the Lord of history. God rules in heaven and on earth. *This implies that even the upheavals in history on earth are derived from God.* This is not in the sense that the clash between the will of the good power and the will of the evil power in heaven is reflected in the clash between the good power and the evil power on earth is mirrored in the clash of wills on earth (cf. Zoroastrianism). God’s creative work on the formless deep does not mean that he has exorcised from it all potential forces of disorder. *Daniel assumes that God has a sovereign reason why he calls forth these forces of disorder. Behind the fourfold wind in creation is the divine wind of the Holy Spirit acting to bring forth those different forms of rule which he then will make use of.*

The animals are only partially explained, because according to Daniel’s explanation, the four animals represent ‘four kings’ (7:17) or ‘four kingdoms’ (7:23) that would emerge out of the nations on earth<sup>89</sup>. The ‘four’ animals could not be the four powers that divided the Greek Empire of Alexander the Great (8:8; 11:4), because in Daniel 7 they arise consecutively and not concurrently.

If Daniel 7 is taken out of its context in the book of Daniel, the fourth animal could represent the Roman Empire. But within context the fourth animal does not represent the Roman Empire!

‘The four empire scheme’ in Daniel 7 need not be identical with ‘the four regime scheme’ in Daniel 2, but does link with it, because both ‘the head’ in chapter 2 and ‘the first animal’ in chapter 7 are described in terms of the first empire of Nebuchadnezzar. Also Daniel 8-12 give a perspective on history from the Babylonian or early Medo-Persian period in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE to the period of Antiochus IV in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE. The interpreter speaks as if the four empires (from the Babylonian empire to the Seleucid empire) are still future. It gives a complete survey of the history of ‘the kingdoms of the earth’ in that section of world history.

## **7:8. The oppression and seduction by the tyrant of the kingdom of the world.**

### **The ten horns.**

The number ‘ten’ does not signify an actual number, but there is less ground for taking the number ‘three’ not literal. The passive voice suggests that God removed these three horns to make way for the little horn.

### **The little horn.**

The description: “In this horn were eyes like a man’s and a mouth making great statements” signifies that the little horn was more than a mere animal. It possessed human features which point towards authority and responsibility to rule over God’s creation<sup>90</sup>.

But eyes can express pride and arrogance<sup>91</sup> and is often accompanied by a mouth that flatters and makes boastful statements<sup>92</sup>. The arrogance of the little horn only becomes evident later (7:25; 8:23; 11:36)<sup>93</sup>.

The portrayal of ‘the little horn’ in Daniel 7:8 matches the description of Antiochus IV (175-164 BCE) during the Seleucid kingdom in Daniel 8:9-14,23-25.

In chapter 7 (7:8,20-27) this king is connected with a group of four kings and overthrows three other kings in the Seleucid royal line. He makes war on holy beings and prevails over them, makes hostile statements against God and plans to change times set by decree, which are given into his control for a time limited to ‘3½’ periods until his authority is taken away by God’s judgement.

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<sup>86</sup> Genesis 49; Deuteronomy 33

<sup>87</sup> e.g. lion (Great Britten), bear (Russia), springbuck (South Africa), eagle (USA), kiwi (New Zealand). etc.

<sup>88</sup> cf. Revelation 13:1-7; Revelation 17:8

<sup>89</sup> cf. Revelation 17:15

<sup>90</sup> Genesis 1:28

<sup>91</sup> Psalm 18:27; Proverbs 21:4; Isaiah 2:11

<sup>92</sup> Psalm 12:2-4; Psalm 31:18

<sup>93</sup> 1 Maccabees 1:24; Revelation 13:5-6

In Daniel 8 (8:9-14,23-25) this king is also connected with a group of four post-Alexandrian kingdoms from which it grows. He grows southward, eastward and toward the fairest (the land of Palestine), attacks the celestial army and overthrows some of it, grows within reach of the leader of the army, attacks the sanctuary and controls the daily offerings in the temple for a time limited to '2300 evenings and mornings', until he is broken by supernatural power.

Thus, the features of the two portrayals of the little horn in Daniel 7 and chapter 8 are similar.

### **7:9-12. The judgement of the kingdoms of the world.**

"I watched as thrones were set in place and one advanced in years took his seat" (7:9a).

While the little horn was still busy uprooting others and speaking boastfully, a court is being calmly set up and a judge is serenely taking his seat.

#### **When God judges, the scene is normally on earth.**

When God is reigning, descriptions of God on his flaming throne surrounded by numerous attendants locate the scene in heaven<sup>94</sup>. But when God judges, the scene is normally on earth<sup>95</sup>. The word 'thrones' is in the plural and may refer to those associated with the king's judgement<sup>96</sup> or may be a plural of emphasis. But when the court sits it is only the one advanced in years who occupies the throne (7:9-10).

#### **The one advanced in years represents God.**

The creatures were visually 'animals', but they represent kings and their kingdoms (7:17). Likewise, the one advanced in years is visually 'a human being', but he represents God.

God is depicted as an old man. This suggests that he is majestic, venerable and respected, judicious and wise. Perhaps there is an allusion to the notion of God existing from eternity and reigning forever<sup>97</sup>.

His white clothing and hair could suggest purity<sup>98</sup>, but in the context of a flaming throne it more likely signifies transcendent brightness and awesome splendour as a symbol of judgement<sup>99</sup>. The sensation of dazzling light or fire is one of the most frequent aspects of visionary experience<sup>100</sup>. And the uncountable number of attendants are God's heavenly army<sup>101</sup>.

#### **The books were consulted.**

"The court was seated and the books were opened" (7:10).

This is a picture of the royal court in session. Archives kept a record of events and decisions<sup>102</sup>. And God's (sealed) books sometimes record God's purposes regarding the final issues of history or a segment of history (cf. 8:26; 9:24; 10:21 12:4,9). Or they contain a record of human conduct<sup>103</sup>. *The books symbolically contain God's purposes with regard to final issues of history, including the punishment of evil and the implementing of his rule on earth, his plans with regard to specific segments of history such as permitting but limiting particular periods of oppression (persecution), how people ought to behave and how he will judge people.*

#### **The arrogant kingdom that asserted itself against God is punished.**

"Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire" (7:11).

The little horn was condemned, slain and his body was burned in fire. Execution by burning was a common way of speaking of divine punishment<sup>104</sup>, but one cannot infer a doctrine of hell from it.

#### **The history of the world does not stop with the judgement of the little horn.**

"The rest of the animals had their authority taken away, but they were given an extension to their lives for a set period of time"<sup>105</sup> (7:12).

The four animals *lose their authority* together (cf. the statue in Daniel chapter 2 being destroyed at once). The data have been interpreted *historically* as if the four empires *maintain their identity* down to the Greek period. But the vision rather makes a *theological* point, namely that the kingdoms in the world submit to God and God's people either in giving honour<sup>106</sup> or in receiving judgement<sup>107</sup>.

<sup>94</sup> 1 Kings 22:19-23; Isaiah 6:1-8; Revelation chapter 4 and 5

<sup>95</sup> Jeremiah 49:38; Joel 3:1-2

<sup>96</sup> cf. 1 Corinthians 6:2

<sup>97</sup> Psalm 90:2; Psalm 93:2; Psalm 146:10

<sup>98</sup> Psalm 51:7; Isaiah 1:18; ; cf. 11:35; 12:10

<sup>99</sup> cf. 10:5-6; Psalm 104:1-2; Ezekiel 1:4; Mark 9:3; Matthew 28:3; Revelation 1:14-15

<sup>100</sup> Deuteronomy 4:24; Psalm 18:8-15; Psalm 21:

<sup>101</sup> Deuteronomy 33:2; 1 Kings 22:19

<sup>102</sup> Ezra 4:15

<sup>103</sup> Revelation 20:12

<sup>104</sup> Isaiah 30:33; Ezekiel 28:18; Ezekiel 38:22; Psalm 11:

<sup>105</sup> Hebrew: >ad zeman we->idan

<sup>106</sup> cf. Revelation 3:9. "I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you."

<sup>107</sup> cf. 1 Corinthians 6:2. "The saints will judge the world."

## **7:13-14. The kingdoms of the world are replaced by the Kingdom of God.**

### **One like a human being (7:13-14).**

“As I watched in the vision by night, there before me among<sup>108</sup> the clouds of the heavens one in human likeness<sup>109</sup> was coming. He went to the one advanced in years and was presented before him. To him was given glorious kingly authority so that people of all races, nations and languages would honour him; his authority would last for ever and not pass away, and his kingship would not be destroyed” (7:13-14).

The vision is located on earth. The one in human likeness comes ‘in’<sup>110</sup> or ‘on’<sup>111</sup> the clouds. He moves from heaven to the court on earth. The description compares with the coming of God to the earth<sup>112</sup>.

The word ‘like’ is appropriate in describing visions. The term ‘ki-bar enash’ is a literalistic Semitism: ‘like a human being’. Compare this term with ‘like a lion’ (7:4), meaning *resembling* a lion. The animals were not identical with these creatures (lion, bear, leopard), but resembled them. “The one like a human being” entirely resembles a human being and is not partly animal as the cherubs in Ezekiel chapter. *The motif of ‘being human’ over against ‘being animal’ denoted being in a position of authority under God<sup>113</sup>*. Such authority was granted to the first animal, such authority was grasped for by the little horn (7:8) and such authority is finally given to one like a human being (7:13-14).

The humanlike figure comes from heaven to earth in order to be invested as king (7:14)<sup>114</sup>. The visionary portrayal of his coming with the clouds of the heavens may simply signify that he comes by God’s initiative or as God’s gift, without suggesting that he is in himself other than human<sup>115</sup>. The sovereign authority he receives is like God’s own sovereign authority (2:44-45; 4:3; 6:26). Thus, in serving this humanlike figure, people indirectly serve God.<sup>116</sup>

However, *the symbolic vision does not make clear to whom ‘the humanlike being’ is referring!* While the animals clearly portray the rise and fall of the kingdoms of the world, what would replace them, namely, ‘one like a human being’, is not clear. The judgement scene (7:9-14) shows that the kingdoms of the world will be replaced by the Kingdom of God. But it does not show how they will be replaced. When Daniel requests an interpretation, he receives more an interpretation of what would happen in history than a theological answer and the humanlike figure is not explained.

### **Theories about the identity of the humanlike being:**

- **Moses.** The humanlike figure has been interpreted as being Moses returning to redeem Israel.
- **Judas.** He has been interpreted as the Maccabee leader, Judas, on the way to the throne of David.  
However, the book of Daniel sympathises more with the conservative believers who look to God to act than with the violent resistance of the Maccabees.
- **The conservative Jews.** Daniel 7:18 and 27 identifies this ‘humanlike figure’ with ‘the holy ones on high (or: the holy ones of the Highest God)’. Just as an animal can refer to ‘a king’ and ‘a kingdom’, this humanlike figure can refer to an individual (7:13-14) and a community (7:18,27). Likewise a body may be represented by its head. These holy ones are attacked and defeated by the little horn (7:21) and this is somehow (in the context of chapter 8-12) associated with the oppression of the conservative Jews by Antiochus IV.  
But while the New Testament<sup>117</sup> associated the Son of Man with the Suffering Servant<sup>118</sup>, Daniel 7 does not make this inference. In Daniel 7 the four animals do not attack the humanlike figure. *The picture in Daniel 7 is not one of affliction and suffering, but of conflict and victory.* It describes the appearance, presentation and investiture of someone notable and imposing, not the exaltation of a previously lowly figure.
- **Celestial beings.** In Daniel 8:15-16, Daniel 9:21; Daniel 10:5,16,18 and Daniel 12:6-7 the humanlike figures are celestial beings, possibly identified with Gabriel or Michael. At three historical occasions a humanlike figure appears and intervenes on behalf of God’s people:
  - (1) When Israel was wedged between Babylon and Persia. During this earlier historical event of key importance for Israel (possibly the fall of Babylon in the first year of Darius) ‘the man dressed in white’ (10:5) appeared and supported Michael (11:1).
  - (2) When Israel was wedged between Persia (in the east) and Greece (in the west). During this later historical event of key importance for Israel another evil power overreached itself and God’s final intervention came in the form of Michael. Michael, ‘one of the supreme leaders’ (among the celestial beings) and ‘the leader of Daniel’s people’, appeared and supported ‘the man dressed in white’ against ‘the leader of the Persian kingdom’ and ‘the leader of the Greek kingdom’ (10:13,21).

<sup>108</sup> Hebrew >m could mean ‘with’ or ‘in’

<sup>109</sup> Aramaic: ke-bar <enash, (Hebrew: ke-ben <adam)

<sup>110</sup> Mark 13:26

<sup>111</sup> Mark 14:62

<sup>112</sup> Isaiah 19:1; Psalm 18:9-15. Compare this with ‘the coming’ of Jesus Christ in the book of Revelation (Revelation 2:5,16; Revelation 3:3,11,20).

<sup>113</sup> Genesis 1:27-28

<sup>114</sup> Compare this with ‘the enthronement’ of Jesus Christ in the book of Revelation (Revelation 5:1-14).

<sup>115</sup> cf. Psalm 2

<sup>116</sup> Compare the foreigners that are pictured as serving Israel (Isaiah 60:10; Isaiah 61:5).

<sup>117</sup> Matthew 8:17

<sup>118</sup> Isaiah 53:4

Thus, Michael is a celestial being especially committed to fight on behalf of Israel in order to ensure that Persia and Greece are restrained from adversely affecting God's purpose (his history of salvation with believers). It is not implied that these nations oppose Israel in particular. Israel just happens to be in their way. 'The man dressed in linen' (10:5) is the heavenly messenger sent in response to Daniel's prayer in chapter 10. He opposes the heavenly correspondents (demons) of these earthly powers (Persia and Greece) and is supported only by Michael (10:21). Both celestial beings (the man dressed in white and Michael) focus on the purpose of God. The man dressed in white is prepared to delay the battles in order to deliver the revelation to Daniel in chapter 11.

(3) When Israel was wedged between Syria (in the north) and Egypt (in the south). During this last historical event of key importance for Israel another evil power (the little horn) overreaches itself and God's final intervention comes once more in the form of Michael (12:1) who "stands by those who belong to your people" (i.e. Daniel's people, the believers)(11:32-34). Thus, Michael is again identified with Daniel's people who are wedged between the warring kings of the south (Egypt) and kings of the north (Syria) in Daniel 11.

- **God.** In isolation from the context, Daniel 7:13 would naturally denote God himself, because the humanlike figure has sovereign authority (2:44-45; 4:3; 6:26). The humanlike figure in Daniel takes up the portrayal of God as manlike in Ezekiel chapter 1, which portrays God's lordship. But since in Daniel 7:13 'the one advanced in years' stands for God, the humanlike figure cannot stand for God.
- **The Messiah.** Both Jewish and Christian traditions have commonly understood the humanlike figure to represent the expected Davidic king or the expected Messiah<sup>119</sup>. However, the 'anointed leader' in Daniel 9:25 does not seem to refer to the Messiah (the Anointed), but rather to a (anointed) high priest. Daniel 7 is more concerned with God's reign in the world than with God's temple in Jerusalem as Daniel 8 and 9 are.

*Although nothing in the text or context points to the Anointed One (the Messiah), nevertheless, the humanlike figure whom God commissions to exercise his kingly authority fulfils the role of the Anointed One, whether or not he actually is the Messiah.*

#### **The identity of the humanlike being:**

- **The humanlike being is God's intervention when the kingdom of the world overreaches itself.** Daniel 7:8-14 seems to allude to this last historical event of key importance for Israel when the little horn overreached itself and God intervened, but then in terms of 'the scheme of four kingdoms' and not in terms of specific identifiable kingdoms in history. Also 'the humanlike being' is not intended to represent any specific identifiable historic person.

The message of Daniel 7:13-14 is that at any historical period of time when one or another kingdom of the world overreaches itself, God's final intervention comes in the form of 'a humanlike being', whom God commissions to exercise his kingly authority. This humanlike being fulfils the role of the Anointed One, whether or not he actually is an earthly descendant of David.

- **The humanlike being must not be identified with Gabriel or Michael.** He is not to be identified with Gabriel, because in Daniel 7:16-23 and Daniel 9:21-27 Gabriel is supremely the heavenly interpreter (also interpreting the humanlike figure in Daniel 7:13-14). He is also not to be identified with Michael, because the battles of Michael takes place in heaven, while the scene in Daniel chapter 7 takes place on earth. Moreover, the humanlike figure in Daniel 7:13-14 is not a combatant as Michael is in Daniel 10-11. If 'the humanlike being' is represented by Gabriel or Michael (or any other specific individual), then it is odd that he does not reappear in Daniel 7:18,22 and 27.
- **The humanlike being stands for the holy ones on high.** *In the vision* the kingship (Kingdom) is given to "one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven" (7:13-14), but *in the explanation* of this vision the kingship (Kingdom) is given to 'the holy ones on high' (7:18,22,27). "The holy ones on high" are identified with "one like a son of man"!<sup>120</sup>

The humanlike being is not called 'a son of Israel', but 'a son of man'. This indicates that:

- he is the king, not only of Israel, but of all the nations on earth
- he represents the believers, not only in Israel, but in every nation on earth
- he embraces, not a particular group, but all people who acknowledge his authority (all chosen believers).

They receive the kingship and authority. If they are Israelites (or Christians) then the vision promises the great reversal in which the proud are scattered, leaders of empires are dethroned and the humble (discerning)(11:32-35) are exalted.

- **The humanlike being remains unidentified.** 'The humanlike being' (7:13) and its interpreter (7:16) remain unidentified. *Daniel 8-12 must not be read back into Daniel 7!* Daniel 7 wants the readers to focus on 'the humanlike being' and not on his identity!

<sup>119</sup> Cf. Psalm 80:17; Psalm 110:1

<sup>120</sup> Compare this with the message in the New Testament. 'The Son of Man' is Jesus Christ (Matthew 8:20; Revelation 14:14). Jesus Christ is the Representative of all Christians (Romans 5:17-19). He is the King of all the nations on earth and in history (Revelation 1:5; Revelation 19:16). He is also the Head of his Body, the Church (Ephesians 1:22; Ephesians 2:20-22). And he says, "The kingdom of God is given to a people that produce its fruit" (Matthew 21:43).

- **The humanlike being in contrast to the other animals.** The humanlike being is given the authority taken from the animals, but his authority is still greater and more lasting. The animals appeared as a result of a heavenly initiative and within heaven's control (the four winds), but they emerged from the sea on the earth. This suggests their disorderly and threatening nature. But the humanlike being comes from heaven. As a human figure he is implicitly destined to exercise authority over animals (2:38)<sup>121</sup>. In contrast to the lion-eagle that has become human, the humanlike being is inherently humanlike. In contrast to the leopard that was given authority to rule for some time, the authority of the humanlike being is everlasting and indestructible. In contrast to the little horn who has eyes and a mouth like a human, the human likeness of the humanlike being is genuine, not contrived (not invented) and its heavenly glory is given, not seized.

- **The humanlike being fulfils the responsibility given to man at the creation and to the kings of Israel.** About the humanlike being's identity, besides his origin from heaven, nothing is said. *The fact that he comes with the clouds means that the period of oppression on earth will not continue without end and that his coming will bring the exercise of heavenly authority on earth.* The pretence to heavenly authority by the little horn yields to the reality of heavenly authority by the humanlike being. The grasping of earthly authority is replaced by the endowment of heavenly authority. By ruling God's world on God's behalf, the humanlike being fulfils the responsibility that was once given to humanity as a whole at the creation<sup>122</sup> and later bestowed on the kings of Israel in particular<sup>123</sup>.

However, *the realization of God's creation ideal does not come through the world becoming more human, but through God's gift of the humanlike being.* Governments are inclined to see themselves as the embodiments of order, but the best they can really do is to restrain disorder. They act like lawgivers and policemen, but easily end up running a police-state. The real order does not come from the earthly kingdoms, but from heaven. Peoples and nations and men of every language acknowledged the authority of Nebuchadnezzar (5:19), but Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged the absolute authority of God (4:3, 34-35).

Also Darius acknowledged the absolute authority of God (6:26-27). Now in Daniel 7:13-14 people from all races, nations and languages acknowledge that this absolute authority has been given to the humanlike being who takes the place of Nebuchadnezzar and all succeeding empires<sup>124</sup>.

- **The humanlike being comes from God and is perceived as sharing God's priorities.** But history has shown that Israelites (and Christians) do not make less oppressive rulers than the Babylonians or Greeks. Therefore *Daniel's picture of the fourth animal can be re-applied to the history of post-Constantine Rome, or to the histories of modern democracies in the West, the East and the Middle East.* If the humanlike being is regarded as an individual or a nation fighting, he can merely become another animal like the four animals. The vision in Daniel chapter 7 contains no exhortation to faithfulness, no exhortation to any form of resistance to Antiochus IV and no hint that human acts on earth would bring about the kingdom.

*The vision in Daniel 7 is not concerned with the conflict between the faithful believers and the state, but with the development of the kingdoms of the world and their appointed time and the promise that the tyrant (or antichrist) does not have the last word!* Even the humanlike being takes no active role in the drama. He does not fight like the Messiah, but is simply invested with authority. He receives the kingdom without acting or striving. Also the holy ones on high do not fight – at least, not successfully. It is precisely the defeat of the holy ones (i.e. the believers) that brings their attacker's downfall<sup>125</sup>. *The one who fulfils this vision will be those who come from God and who can be perceived as sharing God's priorities.*

The little horn "wages war against the saints (holy beings) and defeats (overcomes) them" (7:21). "He will cause astounding devastation, ... he will destroy the mighty men and the holy people. ... He will take his stand against the Prince of princes (a leader supreme)" (8:24-25).

But not all nations and kings actively oppose the glory of God and the concerns of heaven. The realm of heaven has been despised and attacked, but it will have the final word! It is not the holy ones who destroy the fourth animal, but their suffering is the cause of its destruction. The vision of Daniel looks at the possibility of human power and arrogance toppling the rule of heaven over the world.

*It concludes affirmatively that the powers of heaven and the people of God may be assailed and hurt<sup>126</sup>, but that God would still have the last word!<sup>127</sup>*

<sup>121</sup> cf. Genesis 1:28; Jeremiah 27:6

<sup>122</sup> Genesis 1-2

<sup>123</sup> e.g. Psalm 2

<sup>124</sup> Compare this to the acknowledgment that Jesus Christ is 'Lord' (Matthew 28:18; 1 Corinthians 12:3; Revelation 19:17).

<sup>125</sup> Compare this with God "disarming the powers and authorities" through Jesus Christ being crucified (Colossians 2:15).

<sup>126</sup> Compare this with John 16:33, "In the world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

<sup>127</sup> Note Romans 8:35-39. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

- **The humanlike being considered in the light of the coming of Jesus Christ.** *The 'prophet', 'priest', 'king' and 'the son of man' are types and role models of Jesus Christ.* Jesus Christ fulfils a place analogous to each of these types. Thus, *the Christ event initiates the reign of God on earth that Daniel 7 promised.* The proclamation of Jesus that the Kingdom has come<sup>128</sup> reflects Daniel's description of the holy ones receiving the Kingdom. Jesus' birth, ministry, and death were not what people expected of God's Redeemer. *Daniel himself does not seem to know what the giving of kingship to a holy people on high would look like.*

The title 'the Son of Man' is a literalistic rendering of the phrase in Daniel 7:13, though the link is more formal than substantial. In the light of the New Testament revelation, Jesus Christ is indeed the One who was to come in human likeness from heaven and the One still to come on the clouds of heaven to receive a kingdom and to accept the honour of all the nations. *The rule of God on earth is implemented through the One who is himself from heaven.*

## **7:15-27. The interpretation of the vision.**

### **The interpretations of visions in the Old Testament (7:15-16).**

Daniel 7 resumes the pattern of symbolic visions elsewhere in the Old Testament where the interpretation was given within the vision.

- In the pre-exilic prophets, God himself was the Interpreter<sup>129</sup>.
- In the post-exilic prophets, God again appears, but angels had the major interpretative function<sup>130</sup>.
- In Daniel 7 Daniel instinctively turns to one of the celestial attendants within his symbolic vision (possibly identified with Gabriel in Daniel 8:16). In Daniel 8-12 the interpretations are given on heavenly initiative, so that the readers may understand that the interpretation does not come from human insight, but from God.

### **7:17. The identity of the four kingdoms.**

*"The four huge animals are four kings that will rise from the world"* (7:17).

#### **The first animal represents 'the lion kingdoms' (7:4).**

The features of a lion, the king of animals, are ferocity and strength<sup>131</sup>. It suggests kingship. The features of an eagle, the king of birds, are speed and rapacity<sup>132</sup>. Both are characteristic features of the unnamed northern enemy<sup>133</sup> and of Nebuchadnezzar<sup>134</sup>. The description of the torn off wings, standing on two feet like a man (instead of four legs like an animal) and given a heart or mind of a human being does not allude to Nebuchadnezzar's judgement where he lost his sanity for a period of time (4:28-33), but rather alludes to his blessing where God appointed him to a humanlike position of honour, authority and responsibility to care for the world (2:38; 4:20-22)<sup>135</sup>.

And although winged lions in relief decorated the Processional Way in Babylon, neither the lion nor the eagle has a distinct association with the Babylonian Empire or with Nebuchadnezzar.

*The lion kingdoms symbolise especially those political powers that show besides a human side a monstrous side that sets itself above all other nations.* The first animal represents a large, powerful and expansionist nation, a mortal threat to smaller nations. This reminds us of the regime of Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2.

#### **The second animal represents 'the bear kingdoms' (7:5).**

The features of a bear are: a source of fear<sup>136</sup> and dangerous<sup>137</sup>. While a bear would be a fit simile for any king or empire, nothing specific associates it with any particular king or empire.

The description of the bear is not clear. The bear raised up on one of its sides could refer to it sitting on its hind legs with one paw raised to strike. But the one-sidedness could also be a reference to Darius, the only Mede in the Medo-Persian Empire. The three ribs in its mouth between its teeth could be his fangs or rows of teeth.

Also the bear has no distinct association with the Median Empire of Darius or the Persian Empire of Cyrus.

*The bear kingdoms symbolise especially those economic powers that voraciously eat up countries with its material possessions:* "Get up and eat your fill of flesh" (7:5).

<sup>128</sup> Mark 1:15

<sup>129</sup> Amos 7-8; Jeremiah 1

<sup>130</sup> Ezekiel 40-48; Zechariah 1-6

<sup>131</sup> Ezekiel 19:3; Ezekiel 22:25

<sup>132</sup> Lamentations 4:19; Habakkuk 1:8

<sup>133</sup> Jeremiah 4:7,13

<sup>134</sup> Jeremiah 49:19,22

<sup>135</sup> Genesis 1:27-28; Psalm 8:4-8

<sup>136</sup> 1 Samuel 17:34-37; Proverbs 28:15; Hosea 13:8

<sup>137</sup> 2 Kings 2:24

### **The third animal represents ‘the leopard kingdoms’ (7:6).**

The features of a leopard are: a fearsome predator<sup>138</sup> and speed<sup>139</sup>. Both the Persians and Greeks had speedy armies<sup>140</sup>, but the text does not specify such an allusion.

The description of four wings on its back and four heads that were given authority to rule may denote the four Persian kings (11:2) or the fourfold Greek Empire (8:8; 11:4), but generally the number ‘four’ indicates “totality or universal activity and extension”<sup>141</sup>. The point may simply be that the leopard can see and move quickly in any direction.

*The leopard kingdoms are especially those military powers that establish their empires in all directions with the speed of lightning.*

### **The fourth animal represents ‘the unnamed wild kingdoms’ (7:7).**

The features of the fourth animal do not resemble that of the dragon or snake. If this animal represents Greece, circumstantial factors suggest it is an elephant. The Greeks introduced the battle elephant in their army and it became the particular symbol of Alexander the Great and Antiochus the Great. Also Antiochus IV made use of battle elephants<sup>142</sup>. Even Hosea 13:7-8, after naming the lion, the bear and the leopard, does not name the fourth wild animal.

The description of the fourth animal differs from the first three animals. The first three animals are described with passive verbs, so that the emphasis is on what God does, says or gives. But the fourth animal is described with active verbs, so that the emphasis is on what the animal itself does. This wild animal had ten horns. ‘Horns’ are a symbol for a king who employs force to defend and to attack.

The number ‘ten’ may have been suggested by the toes of the statue in Daniel chapter 2, but more likely has a connection with ten kings mentioned in other apocalypses in connection with four empires.

*The fourth, wild animal kingdoms devour, trample and crush their victims (7:23), but they are internally divided and destroy one another (7:24).* This wild animal is likened to no species and retains a touch of mystery over its identity. It seems to be an elephant, which is a fit symbol for the Greek Empire as a whole or for the Seleucid kingdom in particular.

**The line of four animals.** *The line of animals as a whole represents the empires of the Middle East from Nebuchadnezzar in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. to the Seleucids in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, the totality (the symbol ‘four’) of powers that dominated the history of the Jews from the end of the Jewish monarchy in 587 BCE to its revival in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE.* The animals are summoned from the sea of nations to reveal God’s view of responsible and destructive governments within this segment of history. Daniel 11 reflects the experience of Palestine of being fought over by rival Greek empires (Syria and Egypt) during two centuries.

### **7:18. The identity of the holy ones on high<sup>143</sup>.**

“But holy ones on high will acquire the kingship for ever and ever, until the very end” (7:18).

‘The holy ones’ in the Old Testament generally refer to heavenly beings<sup>144</sup>, but in Psalm 34:9 clearly refers to believers on earth, ‘saints’.

‘The holy ones on high’ in the book of Daniel is allusive and it cannot be determined whether it refers to heavenly beings, to heavenly beings mingling with earthly beings, to earthly beings that have died and are now glorified or to earthly beings that still live, viewed as possessing supernatural significance in God’s eyes<sup>145</sup>.

*The vision does not promise that the earthly Israel, to which Daniel and the audience belong, is to rule the world.* The attacks of Antiochus IV have as their object more than a merely earthly people. God’s people, God’s purpose and God’s authority are involved and God will see to it that a more-than-earthly victory is achieved in a situation where there can be no earthly hope. Nevertheless, the identity of ‘the holy ones on high’ remains allusive.

### **7:19,23. The identity of the fourth animal.**

“Then I wanted to know the true meaning of the fourth animal which differed from all the others, being extraordinary fearful, with its iron teeth and bronze claws, eating, crushing and trampling underfoot what was left” (7:19).

The vision describes the fourth animal as having iron teeth and bronze claws like the Babylonian sirussu creature. It trampled and crushed its victims. The fourth empire must be very strong.

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<sup>138</sup> Jeremiah 5:6

<sup>139</sup> Habakkuk 1:8

<sup>140</sup> Isaiah 41:3; Daniel 8:5

<sup>141</sup> cf. Ezekiel 1:5-6

<sup>142</sup> 1 Maccabees 1:17

<sup>143</sup> Hebrew: qadishe >eljonin, the supreme holy ones or the Most (Highest) Holy One

<sup>144</sup> Deuteronomy 33:2-3; Psalm 8:5; Psalm 89:6; Zechariah 14:5

<sup>145</sup> cf. Hebrews 12:22-24. Thousands of angels, the Church of born-again believers on earth whose names have been registered in heaven, the spirits of the righteous men that have died and Jesus the Mediator dwells in the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of God.

### **The fourth kingdom is not the Roman Empire.**

Although the Roman Empire is an emerging power mentioned in the book of Daniel (11:30), Daniel gives Rome no place in 'the four empire scheme'. *It is only from New Testament times onwards that the Roman Empire is incorporated into 'the four empire scheme' with Rome as 'the fourth empire'*. The little horn is then regarded as Vespasian or Titus. However, this is a novel view completely foreign to the book of Daniel, because in about 90 A.D. another interpretation is given in the book 2 Esdras 12:10-12. There God explains the vision Ezra had seen as follows, "The eagle you saw rising from the sea represents *the fourth kingdom* in the vision seen by your brother Daniel. But *he was not given the interpretation* which I am now giving you or have given you ...." Then God goes on to describe the Roman Empire. Thus, *the view that Rome is the fourth empire only arose after the beginning of the New Testament period!*

### **The fourth kingdom can be the Greek Empire of Alexander the Great.**

The earlier chapters of the book of Daniel portrayed the Babylonian Empire giving way to the rule by the Mede Darius (5:31; cf. 9:1) and then to the rule of the Persian Cyrus (6:29; cf. 10:1). Historically, the Median Empire of Darius did not possess an authority that the Persian Empire of Cyrus possessed. Thus:

- the first empire was the Babylonian empire (Nebuchadnezzar)
- the second empire could be regarded as the Median Empire (Darius)
- the third empire was then the Persian Empire (Cyrus)
- and the fourth empire was then the Greek Empire (Alexander the Great)

### **The fourth empire can be the Greek-Seleucid Empire.**

Because the fourth empire was more powerful and terrifying than the second and the third empires (7:7) and the Seleucid kingdom "did not have the same power" as Alexander the Great (8:22), it may seem that another fourth empire (e.g. Rome) must follow the Greek Empire. However, in the book of Daniel the identity of the second and third empire is uncertain.

*Daniel regarded the weaker Seleucid kingdom as a part of the Greek Empire (8:23; 11:3-4).* He also regarded the rise of the Seleucid kingdom of Antiochus IV as a new phase in 'the four empire scheme'. He says, "In the latter part" of this Greek-Seleucid Empire, "when rebels reach full measure" (i.e. when God's dealings with the Gentile nations have reached its full measure) "a fierce looking king will arise" (i.e. the fourth empire of Antiochus IV).

Daniel 8:17 says that the vision about the little horn relates to 'the time of the end'. Also Daniel 10-12 views the reign of Antiochus IV as 'the time of the end' (11:40,45). Thus, while the Babylonian Empire is clearly 'the first empire', the Greek-Seleucid Empire is clearly viewed as 'the fourth empire'. Daniel does not regard the second and the third empire as important and has no opinion about their identity. But Daniel does regard 'the four empire scheme' as important. In Daniel 7 he applies this well-known scheme to a period in history that has to begin with the exile to Babylon and end with the crises around Antiochus IV.

Porphyry (3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D.) regarded the second empire as the Medo-Persian Empire, the third empire as the Greek Empire and the fourth empire as the Seleucid kingdom of Antiochus IV.

### **7:20,24. The identity of the horns of the fourth animal.**

"and of the ten horns on its head and the other one which came up and three fell before it" (7:20a).

"The ten horns: from that kingship (the fourth empire) ten horns will arise, but another will arise after them. He will differ from the ones before him. He will lay low three kings" (7:24).

The fourth animal possessed ten horns, which suggests a comprehensive totality of royal strength. 'The ten horns' symbolises the predecessors of the little horn. The three kings must be among these ten horns, not additional to them. These ten kings and the three displaced kings cannot be identified with certainty. The vision remains allusive.

#### **Ten kings.**

There were more than ten kings within the fragmented kingdom of Alexander the Great: Daniel 11 mentions 13 of the 16 rulers of the Ptolemaic and Seleucid dynasties. Only Seleucus IV and Ptolemy VI could be described as getting overthrown by Antiochus IV. Five Ptolemies ruled Palestine before 200 B.C. and two Seleucids ruled Palestine after 200 B.C. The other three to make up ten could be: Alexander, Demetrius, young Antiochus or Demetrius, young Antiochus, Ptolemy VI.

The Jewish Sibylline Oracles (3-5<sup>th</sup> century CE) assumed the ten kings to be Seleucids, the most continuing embodiment of a Greek Empire in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE. The ten kings are the seven earlier Seleucid kings, Antiochus IV, Demetrius and young Antiochus.

#### **Three displaced kings.**

The three kings (out of the ten) that were overthrown by the little horn cannot be identified with certainty. Among the predecessors of Antiochus IV the following have been suggested: The most likely are marked with an \*.

- Antiochus III (his father) met a violent death in 187 BCE. Antiochus IV may have been seen as responsible for his death.
- \*Seleucus IV (his elder brother) was murdered by Heliodorus in 175 BCE. There is no evidence that Antiochus IV was responsible.

- \*Demetrius (eldest son of Seleucus IV), was displaced by Antiochus IV in 175 BCE.
- \*Antiochus (younger son of Seleucus IV) was co-regent for 5 years with Antiochus IV before he was killed.
- Heliodorus (who aspired to the kingship and hoped to rule with young Antiochus as puppet king) was displaced by Antiochus IV.
- Ptolemy VI (uncle of Antiochus IV) had some claim to the Seleucid throne. Antiochus IV defeated and captured him in 169 BCE.

### **7:20b,21,25a,b. The description of the little horn of the fourth animal.**

“That horn which had eyes and a mouth making great statements and which looked bigger than its companions” (7:20b). “I watched while that horn was making war on holy beings and overcoming them” (7:21). “He will make statements hostile to the Most High” (7:25a). “and oppress holy ones on high .... and they will be given into his control ....” (7:25b).

#### **The little horn symbolises the final tyrant within any section of history.**

The eyes of the little horn suggest his greed to possess other territories and his arrogance in politics. He forces his way to the throne and attacks the holy ones on high. The great statements from his mouth symbolise his enmity against the God who revealed himself in the Bible (cf. 8:10-12; 11:30-39)<sup>146</sup>.

He symbolises the final tyrant within that section of history - here the Old Testament history from Nebuchadnezzar to Antiochus IV. The opponents speak blasphemously against God and wage war against God’s people and even defeating them (7:20-21)<sup>147</sup>. He can be identified as Antiochus IV, the Seleucid king who precipitated the greatest crisis in the history of the Jews between the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BCE and the events of the first century CE.

Antiochus IV sought to bring order to Palestine, but it met resistance as an unreal order. *Because it was the only order Antiochus IV was prepared to envisage, it had to be imposed by force. Soon this pretentious order was exposed as a masked embodiment of chaos instead of a bulwark against chaos. In theory human governments protect life, but in reality they easily threaten life.* Antiochus IV sees himself as having the power of a heavenly being and speaks accordingly. But God did not give him such a position. Antiochus IV constitutes a challenge to heaven itself.

The first three animals were clearly under control, but the fourth animal made independent decisions. The fourth animal was brought into being by God, but came to overreaching itself (its purpose and power). Instead of doing what God’s purpose had designed for him (e.g. stick to ‘the times set by God’s decree’)(7:25), he takes charge of the process of history. History goes on for a time and a double time, etc. and the little horn thinks that he controls history and can do this for ever. But God set a limit to this process and the reign of Antiochus IV is suddenly and unexpectedly terminated!

#### **The symbol of the little horn encourages reapplication to later embodiments of the same dark force.**

*The very use of symbolism in the vision encourages its reapplication to later embodiments of the same dark force as Antiochus IV (e.g. later antichrists)<sup>148</sup>. Even in his interpretation of the vision Daniel does not name the identity of the symbols. Thus Daniel permits the reapplication of the symbols to subsequent situations where there is a reappearance of the pattern seen in the crisis around Antiochus IV. The process of such reapplication of Daniel’s animal images to later empires reflects the fact that world history continues to be a process in which one kingdom or ethnic group and then another becomes a monstrous oppressive and persecuting power.*

**The little horn is the symbol for the antichrist.** Another tradition of interpretation identifies the little horn with the final antichrist. But the little horn is not a mere anticipation of a future antichrist still to come. *‘The antichrist’ is the unpleasant reality in the life of the people of God in every segment of history!* “Even now many antichrists have come”<sup>149</sup>.

### **7:25b. The times set by (Gods) decree: a period, periods and half a period.**

“He will try to change times set by decree<sup>150</sup> (and they will be given into his control) for a period, periods and half a period”<sup>151</sup> (7:25b).

<sup>146</sup> cf. Isaiah 14:12-15

<sup>147</sup> cf. Revelation 13:7. “He was given power (aorist passive) to make war against the saints and to conquer (aorist active) them.

<sup>148</sup> 1 John 2:18

<sup>149</sup> Compare this with the New Testament message. “The beast coming out of the sea” symbolises the antichrist who will “utter proud words and blasphemies and exercise his authority for forty-two months (another symbol for 3½)(Revelation 13:5). He will make war against the New Testament believers and was given authority (i.e. permission by God) to overpower and kill them (to conquer them)” (Revelation 11:7; Revelation 13:7). “The beast out of the sea” is a symbol for Satan’s antichristian political power in every segment of history. *The use of symbolism in the book of Revelation also encourages its reapplication to later embodiments of dark forces.* “The beast (animal) that you saw was, and is not, and will come out of the Abyss and go to his destruction” (Revelation 17:8).

<sup>150</sup> Hebrew: zimnim we-dat. “dat” = decree or edict.

<sup>151</sup> Hebrew: >ad->idan we->idanin u-pelag>idan

**The number 3½ in the Old Testament history could be a literal or a symbolic number.**

In the Old Testament history there was a few years of terrible drought that ended suddenly and unexpectedly with God answering the prayer of the prophet Elijah by sending rain<sup>152</sup>. James<sup>153</sup> uses the figure '3½' which could be literal or symbolic<sup>154</sup>.

In later history this period of '3½ years' of drought became a symbol for a period of time that threatens to extend itself longer: 'one period, then a double period, then a quadruple period' ... until '7 periods' has been reached ('7' is the symbol of divine completion and perfection). However, the anticipated sequence is suddenly broken off, so that the seven periods (in effect a symbol for 'eternity') that were threatened, are suddenly and unexpectedly halved.

**The number 3½ in the book of Daniel was certainly not a literal number!**

Antiochus IV did not attempt to change the 364 day calendar to a 360 day calendar, but he did interfere with Jewish religious affairs which did not include a change in the calendar (8:11-14; 11:31-38)<sup>155</sup>.

The phrase 'changing the times' in Daniel 7:25 has the same significance as Daniel 2:21, "He (God) changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them." It denotes the taking of decisions regarding how human history unfolds and in particular how one regime, kingdom or empire follows another. These changes are fixed, not by any man's decision, but only by God's decree (cf. 2:13,15). In forcing his way to the throne and bulldozing his way through history, Antiochus IV has defied the shaping of history otherwise laid out by God.

The question people ask, is: "How long will this be allowed to go on?" The answer is that Antiochus IV will be allowed to control events within his kingdom only for "a period, periods and half a period." This is not a cryptic way of saying '3½' (literal) years. The time from the desecration of the temple on 15 Kislev 167 BCE<sup>156</sup> to its rededication on 25 Kislev 164 BCE<sup>157</sup> was *not literally 3½ years*, but literally three years and ten days. The time of oppression was closer to 3½ years if it is reckoned to begin with earlier events<sup>158</sup> or if its end is reckoned to involve the death of Antiochus IV<sup>159</sup>

Nevertheless, the symbol 'period, periods and half a period' is not a cryptic way of saying 3½ literal years, whatever the significance of later time references:

- in Daniel 8:14 (2300 evenings and mornings)
- in Daniel 9:27 (the middle of the seven)
- in Daniel 12:7 (a set period, two set periods, and a half)
- in Daniel 12:11 (1290 days)
- in Daniel 12:12 (1335 days).

The word 'period' (Hebrew: >idan; Greek: kairos) is not simply a substitute for 'year' (Hebrew: shinah; Greek: etos). A 'period' could be a year long, but need not be (4:14; 7:12). And the expression 'period, periods and half a period' is not a complex way of saying '3½ years'.

In the book of Daniel the number 3½ is a symbol for 'a time of tribulation and oppression that is suddenly and unexpectedly ended'. It symbolised the period of tribulation from 171 BCE to 164 BCE under the tyrant king Antiochus IV, who in the middle (at symbolic 3½) of this symbolic 7 year period (i.e. in 167 BCE) set up the desolate abomination in the temple of Jerusalem (9:27)! Another symbolic 3½ years later (in 164 BCE) this tyrant is suddenly and unexpectedly destroyed

The time for the king symbolised by the little horn has been allotted - it is not without end! He himself is under God's control. *The period of time he rules may be a long one, but it is brought to a sudden and unexpected end. In a sovereign way the sovereign God of the Bible will suddenly, unexpectedly and decisively cut off his evil plan right in the middle (at 3½) so that he will never be able to complete his evil plan!* God will not and does not allow this evil tyrant to carry out his plan to its very end. This way of speaking carries no implication whatsoever for the chronological length of time that corresponds to this period.

The *beginning* of the period of time referred to here is *as likely* Antiochus IV's grasping the throne (175 BCE), his encouragements of the Hellenistic reforms of the high priest Jason, his appointment of Menelaus as high priest and his first desecration of the temple (169 BCE)<sup>160</sup>.

The *end* of the period referred to here is *as likely* the rededication of the temple and the death of Antiochus IV a few months later (164 B.C.), events that would be seen as partial fulfilments of what is promised at the end of this period of time.

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<sup>152</sup> 1 Kings 17:1

<sup>153</sup> James 5:17

<sup>154</sup> The figure '7000 (7x10x10x10)' is possibly a figurative number, symbolising "the full number of the elect of God's people" in that section of history. "I reserve 7000 in Israel – all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him" (1 Kings 19:18; Romans 11:4-5.). Therefore, the figure '3½' may also be a figurative number (1 Kings 17:1; James 5:17).

<sup>155</sup> 1 Maccabees 1-4; 2 Maccabees 4-6

<sup>156</sup> 1 Maccabees 1:54

<sup>157</sup> 1 Maccabees 4:52

<sup>158</sup> e.g. 1 Maccabees 1:20,29-53

<sup>159</sup> 1 Maccabees 6:16

<sup>160</sup> 1 Maccabees 1:10-28

Compare this with the number '3½' in the book of Revelation<sup>161</sup>.

### **7:12. All kingdoms / empires are subject to restraint and are temporary.**

"The rest of the animals had their authority taken away, but they were given an extension to their lives for a set period of time" (i.e. these kingdoms and their kings continued to live)(7:12).

#### **All kingdom / empires are limited.**

The vision about the 'four animals' looks at the history of empires as a whole: they receive authority; they rule successfully for a time; they surrender their authority; and finally live on in retirement, honouring the new ruling authority. Thus, not all empires in history are condemned. There is an exercise of power that is relatively responsible<sup>162</sup>.

Nevertheless, all authorities (empires, kingdoms, governments) are limited, are subject to restraint and are temporary. When authorities submit to God and his purpose in the way they govern their affairs and relate to their people, they acknowledge God's kingship or Kingdom. But when authorities assert themselves against God and his purpose in the way they govern their affairs and relate to their people, they will experience God asserting himself over them in judgement!

#### **The history of the world does not stop with the judgement of the little horn.**

The history of the world is *not yet* terminated in Daniel 7. The years and history on earth continue as before: kingdoms arise and kingdoms fall. The scheme of four regimes, kingdoms or empires in Daniel 7 represents the political, economic, military and corrupt religious kingdoms on earth in every period of human history. Every time when such a kingdom with its tyrant (or antichrist) becomes too arrogant against God and God's people, God will slay the tyrant and strip his kingdom of its authority (power)!<sup>163</sup> An example of this oppression and persecution may be read in 1 Maccabees 1:20-61.

This is a tremendous encouragement for Christians in every country of the world!

### **7:22,26-27. The kingship is given to the holy people on high.**

"as the one advanced in years came and judgement was given for holy ones on high, when the time came for holy ones to take hold of the kingdom" (7:22).

"But the court will sit and his authority will be taken away, to be completely and permanently destroyed. The mighty kingly authority of the kingships under the whole heavens will have been given to a holy people on high. Its kingship will be one that stands for ever; every authority will honour and show obedience to it" (7:26-27).

The kingdoms of the earth will be succeeded by the Kingdom of heaven and it will be given to 'holy people on high'. The varied expressions in verse 18,22,25,26,27 have the same significance. Nothing in Daniel 7:17-27 suggests an individual messianic figure. The Old Testament also contains non-messianic eschatology and Daniel 7 is non-messianic eschatology.

'The holy people on high' are in some way celestial, yet very closely associated with God's people on earth. These 'holy people' (12:7) are Daniel's people (12:1). If Michael, a celestial being, can be described as 'the leader of Israel' (10:21), then Israel can be described as 'the people of this celestial being' (7:27). They are 'the mighty ones' and (or: that is) 'the holy ones' (8:24). In God's eyes the believers on earth are identified with the humanlike being. They are vigorous men and saints<sup>164</sup>. And they are associated with everyone within the heavenly Jerusalem<sup>165</sup>. Compare this Old Testament message with the New Testament message<sup>166</sup>.

### **7:28. The effect on Daniel.**

"That is the end of the account. I, Daniel, was very alarmed in my thinking and my face turned pale, but I kept this matter in my own mind" (7:28).

Also Christians, who try to understand this vision, may experience the same perplexity.

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<sup>161</sup> In the book of Revelation the number '3½' is again used as a symbol of 'a time of tribulation and oppression that is suddenly and unexpectedly ended', but the number '3½' does not refer to the same time of tribulation and oppression as in the book of Daniel! The beginning of the symbolic period of 3½ in the book of Revelation is at the first coming of Jesus Christ when the Church began as a witnessing institute (Revelation 12:5,10,11,17). The end of the symbolic period of 3½ is just before the second coming of Jesus Christ when the Church as a witnessing institute will be destroyed (Revelation 11:1-3,7-18). Thus, in the light of the New Testament revelation, the number 3½ symbolises the whole New Testament period from the first coming to the second coming of Jesus Christ, which is also called the period of "the great tribulation" (Revelation 7:14; cf. John 16:33).

<sup>162</sup> cf. Romans 13:1-7

<sup>163</sup> Think what happened with the kingdom in the world under Napoleon, under Stalin, under Hitler and under many other tyrants (antichrists) in history in the West, the East and the Middle East.

<sup>164</sup> Matthew 11:12

<sup>165</sup> Hebrews 12:22-24

<sup>166</sup> The people of God (the Old Testament believers and later the New Testament Christians) who pass through such a period of tribulation and oppression will finally triumph. The Kingdom of God will be taken away from you (e.g. the quasi religious people) and given to a people who will produce its fruit" (Matthew 21:43).

## DANIEL 8

### **Theme. The kingdoms of the world in the light of the Kingdom of God. Every attack against God's people is an attack against God himself.**

#### **1. The history of the Jews in Babylon<sup>167</sup> before Daniel 8 (605-538 BCE).**

King Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 BCE) had destroyed the first temple in Jerusalem in 586 BCE and deported many Jews as exiles to Babylon (1:1-7). The exile of Judah to Babylon lasted from 605 to 538 BCE.

King Nabonidus (556-539 BCE) together with his son, Belshazzar ('the second highest ruler' in the kingdom) (5:29) was the last king of the Babylonian Empire. "The third year of King Belshazzar's reign" (8:1) was 550/549 BCE.

At the time of this vision, there was yet no hope of returning from exile or the restoration of the temple.

#### **The rival temple in Egypt (6<sup>th</sup> century BCE).**

There were Jewish communities in many parts of the Persian Empire. One group of Jews settled in Upper Egypt. Psamtek II (594-588 BCE) employed a force of Jewish mercenaries in a war against his southern neighbours, the Ethiopians (Nubians) and at the end of the war settled them on his southern frontier at the first cataract of the Nile. The Jews built a temple of the LORD (JAHWEH) at Elephantine and carried on a sacrificial ritual there (of course, in contravention of the Law) similar to the one carried on at the Jerusalem temple, which at this time lay in ruins. Isaiah speaks about this temple in Isaiah 19:19, "In that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the heart of Egypt, and a monument (pillar) to the Lord at its border". The names of Canaanite gods and goddesses were freely combined with the name of the Lord. This temple at Elephantine was destroyed in 410 BCE by an anti-Jewish group led by the priest of Khnub, the ram-headed potter-god. The Jewish settlers in their Elephantine Letters applied the title 'the God of heaven' to the Lord.

#### **The influence of Zoroastrianism (6<sup>th</sup> century BCE).**

The Jews lived for just over two hundred years under Persian sovereignty (539-331 BCE). During the Persian Empire the Jews were exposed to the religious thought of Persia. The official religion of Persia from Darius (521-486 BCE) onwards was Zoroastrianism. This was a dualistic religion: the good spirit (Ahura Mazda, the wise lord) together with his six Amesha Spentas (immortal holy ones) who supported him in the cause of truth and light were ranged against his rival Angra Mainyu (the hostile spirit) together with his Daevas (attendant evil spirits). Judaism did not become *dualistic*, but the *angels became attendants of the Supreme God and distinct provinces of activity were assigned to them*. There was also a hierarchy of evil powers (10:12-13,20) and their origin was wrongly traced back to Genesis 6:4. Persian religion influenced the apocryphal book of Enoch (1<sup>st</sup> century BCE to 1<sup>st</sup> century CE) and the apocryphal book of Tobit (ca. 200 BCE)<sup>168</sup>.

#### **The origin of the Samaritan religion (5<sup>th</sup> century BCE).**

Sanballat the Horonite (in Samaria) opposed the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem<sup>169</sup>. He gave his daughter in marriage to Manasseh, the younger son of the high priest Joiada. Then the governor Nehemiah (445-423 BCE) expelled him<sup>170</sup>. Manasseh sought the help of Sanballat. With permission from the Great King, Sanballat built a temple on the sacred Samaritan hill of Gerezim<sup>171</sup> near the ancient sanctuary of Shechem and installed Manasseh as high priest. It is he who established *the rival Samaritan cult based on only the Pentateuch*.

#### **Later exile to Persia (4<sup>th</sup> century BCE).**

Artaxerxes III (359-338 BCE) removed a considerable number of Jews from Palestine and settled them in the district called Hyrcania, south-east of the Caspian Sea (NE Iran).

#### **Early Judaism, synagogue worship, Aramaic language and authority of the high priest.**

The institution of 'the synagogue' probably started during the Babylonian Exile (586-538 BCE) where Jewish communities were isolated from the temple worship of Jerusalem. Instead of building another temple, these communities established Jewish community centres ('synagogues') where the Law could be read and expounded and where a service of worship could be carried out in non-sacrificial forms following the worship of the Jerusalem temple as close as possible.

*From the Persian period onwards, Aramaic gradually displaced the sister Hebrew language as the common language of the people. When the Scriptures were read in Hebrew, it became necessary to give an interpretation in the spoken language, Aramaic. This interpretation was called 'a Targum'. "They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear, giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read"<sup>172</sup>.*

Civil governorship was in the hands of the representative of the Great King. When the governor was a Jew (Zerubbabel, Nehemiah), the prestige of the high priest in Judah tended to increase.

<sup>167</sup> F. F. Bruce, *Israel and the Nations*, 1975

<sup>168</sup> Tobit 3:8; Tobit 12:15

<sup>169</sup> Nehemiah 2:10,19; Nehemiah 4:1,8-10; Nehemiah 6:1

<sup>170</sup> Nehemiah 13:28

<sup>171</sup> Deuteronomy 11:29; John 4:20

<sup>172</sup> Nehemiah 8:8

*The high priest was not only the head of the temple ritual, but in practice also became the head of the Jewish temple-state in which the highest position of the high priest continued throughout the second temple era (cf. Annas and Caiaphas). The religion in Judea became more and more a religion of Law combined with a policy of religious and racial exclusiveness in direct opposition to its biblical mission<sup>173</sup>!*

## **2. Explanation of Daniel 8.**

### **8:1-2. Daniel's vision in Elam.**

Daniel's second vision (550/549 BCE) came two years after the first vision. Like the first vision, it was a vision about animals that symbolised powerful and aggressive nations. Such nations come into existence by violence and intrigue and stay in power by the same means. The vision relates their destiny, which is their fall.

#### **The theme of Daniel chapter 8.**

The theme of Daniel chapter 8 is: *The history of the kingdoms of the world in the light of the sovereign Kingdom of God.*

#### **The emphases in Daniel chapter 8.**

A kingdom in the world which overthrows another kingdom in the world with violence makes a big mistake, because it will itself be destroyed<sup>174</sup>.

A kingdom (government) in the world which uses violence (oppression and persecution) against God, God's people (the believers during the Old Testament period and the Christians during the New Testament period) and their worship of God makes an even greater mistake, because God will shatter that kingdom completely! That kingdom will be smashed without human hands (8:25)! *Every attack against God's people is an attack against God himself!*

Every human institute of authority or power is subject to limitations. The transgressions (of these limitations) (i.e. sins) of the political, economic, military and corrupt religious authorities will cause the fall of these authorities. What the kingdom of the world sows, it will reap<sup>175</sup>. This fact should encourage God's people (the believers during the Old Testament period and the Christians during the New Testament period)!

#### **The second temple was rebuilt in 516 BCE.**

The first temple of Jerusalem was built by king Solomon from 967-960 BCE<sup>176</sup> and destroyed by king Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BCE<sup>177</sup>.

The second temple of Jerusalem was rebuilt after the exile during the reign of king Darius I (521-486 BCE) from 539-516 B.C.<sup>178</sup>.

Elam is situated between Babylon (Iraq) and Persia (Iran) and was a province of the Persian Empire. In the Jewish mind, Susa was the capital of the Medo-Persian government in the time of king Xerxes I (486-465 BCE)<sup>179</sup> and king Artaxerxes I (465-423 BCE)<sup>180</sup>. Ulai is the name of a water canal in the proximity of Susa.

#### **The second temple was desecrated in 167 BCE.**

Centuries later, in 167 BCE this second temple was desecrated by 'the kingdom of the world' at that time (represented by king Antiochus IV) (175-164 BCE) and 'the religion of the world' at that time (represented by the reformist Jews who had made a covenant with the heathen Greek religion and culture).

*The writer of the book of Daniel 7 to 12 lived in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE during this later desecration of the temple of Jerusalem in 167 BCE. The book of Daniel 7 to 12 is a backward looking prophecy about this later desecration of the temple of Jerusalem.* That is why from the perspective of the historical Daniel in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE (8:1), the recorded vision of the writer of Daniel 8:6-14 had remained 'sealed' (i.e. hidden, unknown). From the viewpoint of the historic Daniel the vision concerned 'a distant future' (8:26). This vision had no application in the earlier 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE. But In the later 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE it had an application!

### **8:3-4. The ram represents the Medo-Persian Empire.**

#### **The ram.**

In his vision Daniel sees a ram with two unequal horns that came rushing from the east, pushing towards the east, north and south. According to the interpretation (8:20) the ram was a symbol of the Medo-Persian Empire in which Cyrus II played the most significant role.

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<sup>173</sup> Isaiah 2:2-4; Isaiah 11:10; Isaiah 19:24-25; Isaiah 56:6-8 and Isaiah 60:3

<sup>174</sup> Compare this with what Jesus Christ says, "All who draw the sword will die by the sword" (Matthew 26:52)!

<sup>175</sup> cf. Galatians 6:7-8

<sup>176</sup> 1 Kings 6:37-38

<sup>177</sup> 2 Kings 25:8-9

<sup>178</sup> Ezra 6:11-15

<sup>179</sup> Esther 1:2

<sup>180</sup> Nehemiah 1:1

'The zodiac' is the drawn figures in the belt of stars, about 8 degrees on each side of the sun's apparent path among the stars during each year. The figure of 'the ram' in the zodiac is identified with Persia, because in the zodiac Persia falls under Aries (the figure of a ram, the first of the 12 figures of the zodiac). The two horns of the ram refer to Media (the shorter horn) and to Persia (the longer horn). Together they form the Medo-Persian Empire. In the Bible 'a horn' symbolises the ability to conquer<sup>181</sup>.

#### **Cyrus II (559-530 BCE).**

King Cyrus II was the first king of the Medo-Persian Empire. He overthrew Croesus of Lydia in 546 BCE and added a number of Greek settlements in western Asia Minor under his control. Verse 4 refers to the earlier victories of the Medo-Persian Empire under king Cyrus in the east (Medo-Persia), the west (Asia Minor), the north (Babylonia) and the south (Egypt). "He became great" is a prelude to the later king (Antiochus IV) who had 'a mouth that spoke boastfully' (7:8).

Cambyses and pseudo-Smerdis reigned from 530-521 BCE. They were succeeded by Darius I.

#### **Darius I (521-486 BCE).**

King Darius I failed to conquer mainland Greece when he was routed in the battle of Marathon (490 BCE). The Persians also lost the naval battle of Salamis (480 BCE) and the land battle of Plataea (479 BCE) against the Greeks.

### **8:5-8. The goat represents the Greek Empire.**

#### **Philip II (350-336 BCE).**

In 338 BCE king Philip of Macedonia by force and diplomacy ended the endless feuding of the Greek city-states. He united all Thrace, Macedonia and Greece under his rule. He had planned to lead a combined Greco-Macedonian army against the Persian Empire, but was assassinated.

#### **The goat.**

In his vision Daniel saw a goat with a prominent horn between his eyes. The goat charged from the west with great speed (flying without touching the ground) against the ram. He was filled with rage, attacked the ram furiously and shattered his two horns. The fact that both horns broke symbolise the weakness and fragility of the political and military power of these empires! No one could rescue the ram from the power of the goat. The goat became very great (his empire became very large). But at the height of his power his large horn was broken off. According to the interpretation (8:21) the goat was a symbol of the Greek Empire and the large horn represented its greatest king, Alexander the Great.

#### **Alexander the Great (336-323 BCE).**

The figure of 'the goat' in the zodiac is identified with Syria (the Seleucid Empire, which was the continuation of the Greek Empire of Alexander the Great), because in the zodiac Syria falls under Capricorn (the figure of a goat, the tenth of the 12 figures of the zodiac). The prominent horn between his eyes, which looks like one horn when it is seen from the side, refers to the greatest king of the Greek Empire, Alexander the Great, the son of Philip II. "He came from the west (Greece) crossing the whole earth without touching the ground" (8:5) refers to his blitzkrieg<sup>182</sup>. He became the undisputed master of his father's empire in 334 BCE. He defeated the Persian army in Asia Minor at Granicus (334 BCE), Syria at Issus (333 BCE), Tyre (332 BCE), then Gaza and Egypt. He founded the city of Alexandria in Egypt in 331 B.C. He finally defeated the Persian army at Gaugamela (east of Tigris) in October 331 B.C. He marched east and captured the Persian capitals of Susa, Ecbatana and Persepolis, marched through Afghanistan and occupied West India (Pakistan).

In just four years (334-331 BCE) Alexander conquered this vast area and established the Greek Empire from Europe in the west to India in the east. *The common Greek language<sup>183</sup> of his soldiers and his conquests imposed a cultural unity for a thousand years on the Near East, Middle East and Europe.* Everywhere new cities<sup>184</sup> arose on the Greek model.

It is significant that the greatest king of them all, Alexander the Great, after having conquered most of the known world, suddenly died of fever in Babylon in 323 BCE at the height of his power (8:8). After his death the Greek Empire was divided into four parts.

#### **The division of the Greek Empire into four kingdoms.**

"At the height of his power his large horn was broken off, and in its place four prominent horns grew up toward the four winds of heaven" (8:8).

After the sudden death of Alexander, the Greek Empire was divided into four kingdoms and the real heirs of Alexander were not his descendants, but his provincial governors (satraps) (11:4).

- **In the north:** Antigonus administered the satrapy of Thrace (part of eastern Europe and western Turkey)
- **In the south:** Ptolemy I (Soter)(323-305 BCE) administered the satrapy of Egypt
- **In the east:** Seleucus I (Nicator)(312-281 BCE) administered the satrapy of Babylonia and later Syria.
- **In the west:** Macedonia and Greece.

<sup>181</sup> cf. 7:21; Zechariah 1:21; Revelation 5:6

<sup>182</sup> cf. Cyrus in Isaiah 41:3

<sup>183</sup> Greek: koine dialektos (common language)

<sup>184</sup> Greek: polis

Soon civil war reduced the Macedonian dynasties to three.

- **The Antigonids** in Macedonia
- **The Ptolemies** in Egypt. The Ptolemaic dynasty reigned from 323 - 31 BCE. Alexandria became the capital. Because Ptolemy I controlled the coast of Syria and Phoenicia, he became master of Judea, deported Jews to Alexandria where they adopted the Greek language. Many other Jews settled in Alexandria and received special privileges from the Ptolemies.
- **The Seleucids** in Asia. The Seleucid dynasty reigned from 312 - 65 BCE. Babylon was the capital, but was soon eclipsed by Antioch in northern Syria and Seleucia on the Tigris north of Babylon. Jewish merchants settled in these cities and received special privileges from the Seleucids.

### **8:9-12. The small horn represents Antiochus IV (175-164 BCE).**

#### **Antiochus IV attacks the priesthood (175-169 BCE).**

- **Antiochus IV is represented by the symbol of ‘the small horn’.** “Out of one of them a small horn came up. It grew abundantly southward and eastward and toward the fairest (the Beautiful Land)” (8:9).

Daniel saw in the latter part of the reign of these previous two dynasties (8:23) ‘a small horn’ growing out of one of these four kingdoms that grew in power to the south and to the east and toward ‘the Beautiful Land’ (Palestine). This small horn grew upwards until it reached ‘the host of the heavens’ and it threw some of the starry host down on the earth and trampled on them. The little horn set itself up to be as great as ‘the Leader of the host’; it took away the daily sacrifice from him, and the place of the sanctuary was brought low.

In the Bible ‘a horn’ symbolises the ability to conquer<sup>185</sup>. ‘The little horn’ represented the tyrant Antiochus IV (Epiphanes)(175-164 BCE). He grew out of the Seleucid Empire. He was called ‘small’, because he was the youngest of his brothers and had no right to the throne and because his pretensions (words) were bigger than his accomplishments (deeds). In comparison to Alexander the Great he was insignificant.

Antiochus IV was held hostage in Rome for 12 years to guarantee that his father would pay the war reparations to Rome made at the peace of Apamea (188 BCE). In 175 BCE he wrongfully seized the throne of the Seleucid kingdom. He fought successful wars against the east, against Egypt in the south and against Judea. Judea was called ‘the Beautiful Land’ (11:16,41)<sup>186</sup>. It had a ‘beautiful mountain’ (Zion) (11:45) and was ‘a land flowing with milk and honey, most beautiful of all lands’<sup>187</sup>.

- **Onias III.** Onias III was the rightful high priest from the house of Zadok from 198-174 BCE.
- **Jason.** But in 174 BCE Jason (a Hellenized form of Joshua), the brother of Onias, was appointed by Antiochus IV as high priest in the place of Onias. Jason had promised Antiochus IV to promote Hellenism (Greek culture) in Jerusalem and paid a large bribe into the royal treasury!

Under the influence of Greek cities and Greek culture Jason instituted a gymnasium at Jerusalem and enrolled several young men of noble families in an order of ‘epheboi’, an athletic corporation as was common in Greek cities. These athletes wore a broad-rimmed hat (the petasos), were completely naked when they wrestled and threw the discus and some of them even tried to obscure the fact that they had been circumcised. Even the priestly families hurried through their religious duties as quickly as possible in order to attend the sports in the gymnasium. Jason also bought another right from Antiochus IV, namely, that citizens of Jerusalem could be enrolled as citizens of Antioch, the first step towards granting Jerusalem full status as ‘a Greek city’.

- **Menelaus.** However, in 172 BCE Menelaus, who was not a member of the priestly house of Zadok, outbid Jason and bribed Antiochus IV to appoint him (against Jewish Law) as high priest in the place of Jason. The former high priest, Jason, fled to Ammon<sup>188</sup>.
- **Andronicus.** In 171 BCE Antiochus IV left to campaign against rioters and left Andronicus as his deputy. Menelaus bribed Andronicus with some temple treasures to assassinate the previous high priest, Onias III. This happened within the sacred precincts of Daphne outside Antioch. However, on his return Antiochus IV executed Andronicus<sup>189</sup>.
- **Lysimachus.** In 169 BCE Menelaus had left his brother Lysimachus as his deputy (high priest) in Jerusalem. With permission of Menelaus, Lysimachus committed acts of sacrilege by making some sacred vessels disappear. This provoked serious riots in Jerusalem. While *robbing temples* was part of royal policy and an absolute necessity in order to pay taxes to their rulers, it was a dreadful sacrilege for pious Jews. While from the point of view of Antiochus IV, Judea was only a minor province, from the point of view of Judea, Antiochus IV was the very incarnation of the devil. Three members of the Sanhedrin were sent to complain to Antiochus IV when he was in Tyre. But at the trial against Menelaus, Menelaus once more bribed Antiochus IV to acquit him. Instead, the three members of the Sanhedrin were judged responsible for the rioting in Jerusalem and executed<sup>190</sup>.

#### **Antiochus IV invades Egypt, but is expelled by the Romans (169-168 BCE).**

<sup>185</sup> cf. 7:21; Zechariah 1:21; Revelation 5:6

<sup>186</sup> Jeremiah 3:19a

<sup>187</sup> Ezekiel 20:15

<sup>188</sup> 2 Maccabees 4:23-29

<sup>189</sup> 2 Maccabees 4:30-38

<sup>190</sup> 2 Maccabees 4:39-50

This 'king of the north' invaded 'the king of the south' twice.

- **The first invasion of Antiochus IV into Egypt.** In 169 BCE Antiochus IV led his first invasion into Egypt (11:25-27)<sup>191</sup>. In 168 BCE he routed the Egyptian army at Pelusium and made his nephew, Ptolemy VI (181-145 BCE), the titular-king of Egypt. However, the Alexandrians repudiated Ptolemy VI and repulsed an attack of Antiochus IV. In order to support his very large army, Antiochus IV plundered Egyptian treasures and on his return journey *also plundered the temple treasures in Jerusalem*<sup>192</sup>. The high priest, Menelaus, even assisted him in this plundering.
- **The second invasion of Antiochus IV into Egypt.** In 168 BCE Antiochus IV led his second invasion into Egypt (11:19f)<sup>193</sup>. He had himself crowned in Memphis as king-protector of Egypt according to the traditional rites of Ptah, besieged Alexandria and looted the Egyptian temples. But just then the Roman Empire had finally defeated the Greek Empire of Macedonia in the battle of Pydna. The Roman senate sent Laenas to Alexandria with a decree demanding Antiochus IV leave Egypt at once.
- **Antiochus IV is subjected to the Roman Empire since 168 BCE.** Within one week, the Roman Empire had conquered Macedonia, taken Egypt under her protection and forced the Seleucid king to submit to her orders. Thus, from 168 BCE the three chief heirs of the Greek Empire (the Macedonians, the Ptolemies and the Seleucids) had to acknowledge a new and superior power, the Roman Empire!

#### **Antiochus IV squelches the riot in Jerusalem (168 BCE).**

- **Fake news.** The news of the rebuff which Antiochus IV received from the Romans preceded his return to Antioch. In places like Jerusalem this was exaggerated into news of his death.
- **Jason.** In 168 BCE Jason left his refuge in Transjordan and led an army of one thousand men against Menelaus and the Tobiad ruling party, *captured Jerusalem and the temple*<sup>194</sup>.
- **Apollonius.** Antiochus IV, angered by his rebuff from the Romans, assumed that Jerusalem revolted against his authority (doubtless against the Seleucids and in favour of the Ptolemies). In 167 BCE Antiochus IV placed Jerusalem under martial law and *replaced Judea's former constitution as a temple-state by the establishment of a Greek city-state*. The Hellenists (Greeks and Jews who adopted the Greek culture) in the city were enrolled as 'Antiochenes of Jerusalem'. He appointed a foreigner, Philip, as governor to *torture the people*. He reinstated Menelaus, who became more unpopular than ever before. He sent Apollonius, the commander of his mercenary army from Mysia in Asia Minor with an army of 22000 soldiers to *kill all the men in Jerusalem and sell all the women and children into slavery. The walls of the city of Jerusalem were demolished. A new citadel was built dominating the temple area. A garrison was stationed in the citadel*. In this way Antiochus IV put down the revolt and punished the rebels. The soldiers *slaughtered 40000 military defenders and civilians and sold 40000 into slavery*. Antiochus IV entered the temple under guidance of the traitor Menelaus and *stole sacred utensils and 1800 talents from the temple*<sup>195</sup>.
- **Judas and the Maccabees.** At that time Judas and his men (the Maccabees) fled into the desert<sup>196</sup>.

#### **Antiochus IV attacks God's anointed high priest, God's temple and God's people (167 B.C.).**

"It (the small horn) grew within reach of the heavenly army (believers) and threw to earth some of that army (some of the stars) and trampled on them. He grew within reach of the leader of the army (God); ..... It will succeed in whatever it does" (8:10-12).

This is not a reference to the greatness of Antiochus IV, but rather to his arrogance: he dared to attack God's people, God's temple and even God himself! 'The heavenly army' is a reference to the army of believers among the Jews, in particular the high priests and priests who many years before brought the Israelites out of Egypt by their (army) divisions<sup>197</sup>.

But because 'the heavenly army' ('the stars of God') also refer to God's army of angels<sup>198</sup>, the attack of Antiochus against the army of believers was from God's perspective also an attack against God and his heavenly army of angels! *This tyrant thought that he only attacked and trampled on people and religion, but he did not realise that his attack on God's people, God's servants and God's Word was in reality an attack on God himself!*

#### **Antiochus IV enforces the Greek religion (167 BCE).**

- **The enforced revision of religion.** In 167 BCE Antiochus IV (probably with the co-operation of Menelaus, the Hellenising high priest) *radically revised the religion of the Jews. The temple ritual (the daily sacrifices) was suspended, the sacred Scriptures were burned, the sabbath and other religious festivals were abolished, circumcision was discontinued and the army of God's servants (the priesthood) was overthrown*.

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<sup>191</sup> 1 Maccabees 1:16-19

<sup>192</sup> 1 Maccabees 1:20-24

<sup>193</sup> 2 Maccabees 5:1,11-16

<sup>194</sup> 2 Maccabees 5:5-7

<sup>195</sup> 1 Maccabees 1:20-28; 2 Maccabees 5:11-21

<sup>196</sup> 1 Maccabees 1:29-40; 2 Maccabees 5:22-27

<sup>197</sup> Exodus 6:26; Numbers 33:1

<sup>198</sup> Isaiah 14:13

‘The leader of the army’ (8:11) may have referred to the high priest assisted by his priests who had authority in religious matters in Jerusalem. But because the interpretation refers to ‘the Leader of leaders’ (NIV the Prince of princes) (8:25), he rather refers to God himself, the highest leader in heaven and on earth! The attack of Antiochus IV was thus an attack against God himself!

- **The erection of a pagan idolatrous altar in the temple.** In December 167 BCE a small altar was erected upon the altar of burnt offering in the temple court and solemnly dedicated to the worship of Olympian Zeus, the deity of whom Antiochus IV claimed to be a manifestation. Unclean animals were slaughtered on this altar and immoral festivals were organised in the temple. ‘The desolate abomination’ of Daniel 9:27<sup>199</sup> refers to this.

The Syrians worshipped Zeus under the name ‘Baal Shamem’ (the lord of heaven) and in Jerusalem he was worshipped under the name ‘Baal Shamajim’ (the lord of heaven). He was worshipped according to pagan forms with sacrifice of unclean animals. The pious Jews called Baal ‘an abomination’ (Hebrew: shiqqus) and transformed Baal Shamajim (the lord of heaven) into ‘the desolate abomination of heaven’ (Hebrew: shiqqus shomem). About the same time, the worship of the Lord in the Samaritan temple on the mountain of Gerezim was transformed into the cult of Zeus Xenios (Zeus the protector of strangers)<sup>200</sup>.

- **The erection of altars and shrines everywhere.** The centralised worship of God at the temple was replaced by decentralised worship: *altars in honour of ‘the lord of heaven’ (Zeus) were erected in every marketplace in Jerusalem and in every town and village in Judea. The inhabitants were required to sacrifice at these local altars and severe penalties were imposed on people who refused. The death sentence was imposed on people who circumcised their children, who were found in possession of a roll of the Sacred Scriptures, who refused to eat pork or meat sacrificed on these pagan altars or who refused to adopt the pagan Greek culture*<sup>201</sup>!
- **The attack was not anti-Semitic, but anti-God.** Antiochus’s attack was not against the people of Israel, because many Jews were his collaborators. *His attack was against the God of the Bible and those who believed in him. His attack was not anti-Semitic, because from God’s perspective the attack from Antiochus IV was against God himself (God is ‘the Leader of leaders’)(8:11; 8:25; 11:36). Antiochus took arrogantly control of the temple in Jerusalem and of the people worshipping there. However, the function of controlling the temple and the people worshipping there does not belong to any earthly ruler, but only to the God of the Bible!*<sup>202</sup>

The temple at Jerusalem was not literally destroyed as it was during the Babylonian invasion (586 BCE) and again during the Roman invasion (70 CE). *All the gold and jewels of the temple were stripped and looted, all the worshippers in the temple were driven away and the temple was defiled by heathen sacrifices.* The sanctuary could no longer function as a place of worship of the One True and Living God!

- **The attack was against worshipping the God of the Bible.** “..... by him the daily offering was removed and his sacred place and an army were overthrown. It will be set over the daily offering in an act of rebellion” (8:11b-12a).

Antiochus raised an army of soldiers against the believers who worshipped the God of the Bible (cf. 11:31-32a). If the ‘army’ (host) in Daniel 8:10-11 refers to God’s earthly army of servants as well as God’s heavenly army of angels, then Antiochus’s ‘army’ in Daniel 8:13 also refers to his earthly army of soldiers allied to its dark equivalent, the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (cf. 10:13,20)<sup>203</sup>. An attack against God’s people and their worship of God is an attack against God himself!

- **The attack was against God’s Word.** “It prospered in everything it did, and truth (recorded in the book of the Law) was thrown to the ground” (8:12b).

This is a reference to the Torah, the Old Testament Scriptures (the Bible). “And they cut in pieces, and burnt with fire the books of the law of God”<sup>204</sup>.

Antiochus thought that “he could pluck the stars from the sky”<sup>205</sup>. Already in 174 BCE Antiochus IV usurped God’s prerogative in the appointment of the high priest.

Since 169 BCE Antiochus IV made coins with his imprint and the words ‘King Antiochus, God Manifest’<sup>206</sup>, proclaiming himself to be an exceptional manifestation of God (i.e. Zeus). Now in 167 BCE he robbed the treasures of God’s temple and killed God’s people. God regarded his arrogance as an attack on God himself (8:11,25; cf. 11:36-37). The king of ‘the kingdom of the world’ is depicted as an animal (the goat, now with ‘the small horn’ representing Antiochus IV) that charged in attack against God, his servants, his place of worship, his Book and his people!<sup>207</sup>

<sup>199</sup> cf. Matthew 24:36

<sup>200</sup> 2 Maccabees 6:2

<sup>201</sup> 1 Maccabees 1:41-61; 2 Maccabees 6:1-11

<sup>202</sup> Compare this with the message in the New Testament. God’s sanctuary and the believers who worship in the sanctuary will be protected (measured) against anti-Christian attacks, while the outer court of the sanctuary and the holy city will be trampled on for a period of 42 months until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled (cf. Revelation 11:1-2; Luke 21:24). The function of ruling the Christian Church and Christians does not belong to any political government or any religious organisation in the world, but only to the God of the Bible (Acts 4:19; Acts 5:29). The tyrant’s attack was ‘anti-Christian’.

<sup>203</sup> Isaiah 24:21; Ephesians 6:12

<sup>204</sup> 1 Maccabees 1:56

<sup>205</sup> 2 Maccabees 9:10

<sup>206</sup> Greek: Basileus Antiochos Theos Epifanés

<sup>207</sup> This attack of the little horn (Antiochus IV is just one example) is still happening in our time. Political governments and religious leaders in several

### **The resistance of the Maccabees (167- 164 BCE).**

- **The resistance movement of the Maccabees.** Many believers during the Old Testament period refused to submit to this tyranny. The enforced religion, the desecration of the sanctuary and the apostasy of many reformists (Hellenists, liberal Jews) was bitter for the conservatives (the ‘Chasidim’) and thousands fled into the mountains and wilderness. The army of Antiochus IV sought them out and slaughtered many of them.

A priest, Mattathiah and his sons lived in Modin in western Judea. Mattathiah was commanded to sacrifice first on the altar of Zeus in his town. He refused, killed another Jew who sacrificed to Baal, pulled the altar of Baal down and uttered the war-cry, “Let every one who is zealous for the Law and supports the covenant come out with me!” With his five sons and others they fled into the hill country and started a resistance movement. They operated like a guerrilla force, suddenly appearing in a town, demolishing the heathen altars, killing the Jewish Hellenists, circumcising children and then disappearing again. When Mattathiah died, he made Judas their commander-in-chief and bade them to look to the eldest son Simon for wisdom. They were Hasmonaeans (Hasmon was their ancestor), but Judas bore the surname ‘Maccabaeus’, which means ‘the hammer’ and so they were called ‘Maccabees’<sup>208</sup>.

In 165 BCE Antiochus IV sent a great force under the command of Lysias to suppress the revolt, *deport the Jewish population and divide the land among settlers from other parts of the kingdom*<sup>209</sup>. The Maccabees fasted and prayed, solemnly renewed the ancient ritual of ‘the holy war’<sup>210</sup> and defeated the army of Lysias at Emmaus and later north of Hebron<sup>211</sup>.

Lysias negotiated with the Maccabees and Judas sent ambassadors to Antioch demanding a complete removal of the ban on Jewish worship. A Roman embassy investigating rumours of anti-Roman activity on the part of the Seleucids in violation of the peace of Apamea caused Antiochus to agree on the terms.

The ban on the Jewish religion was lifted. The persecution was stopped. The Jews were once more free to practise their religion. However, Menelaus was confirmed as high priest and he was in charge of the temple. Antiochus IV kept a small military force in the citadel to protect the minority reformist Jews.

- **The cleansing and rededication of the temple.** In 164 BCE the Maccabees took control of the temple, *cleansed the temple, replaced the altar of burnt offering with uncut stones*, renewed the sacred furniture and resumed the daily sacrifices. This happened on the 25<sup>th</sup> day of Kislev, three years and ten days after the desecration of the temple. The Maccabees continued to rescue minority groups of Jews in other areas (Transjordan, Idumaea, Philistia).

From that time onwards, Jews celebrate the Festival of Lights (‘Chanukkah’) to commemorate the cleansing and rededication of the temple<sup>212</sup>.

In 164 BCE Antiochus IV died during a campaign in Gabea (Isfahan in Persia). That same year the Maccabees were defeated by the royal army making use of elephants. In 163-162 BCE Lysias ordered the execution of the despised high priest Menelaus. He was replaced by Alcimus from the house of Aaron.

The greatest achievement of the Maccabees, however, was gaining freedom of religious worship and cleansing of the temple of Jerusalem. They founded the Hasmonean dynasty, which ruled from 167 to 37 BCE, being a fully independent kingdom from about 110 to 63 BCE. They reasserted the Jewish religion, partly by forced conversion, expanded the boundaries of Judea by conquest and reduced the influence of Hellenism and Hellenistic Judaism.

### **8:13-14. The worship of the God of the Bible will triumph.**

Then I heard one holy one speaking, and another holy one saying to the individual who had spoken, “How long will the vision last – the daily offering and the desolating rebellion, the surrendering of both a sacred place and an army to be trampled down?” He said to me, “For 2300 evenings and mornings. Then a sacred place will emerge in the right” (8:13-14).

#### **The oppression that began in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE had not yet ended in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE.**

The seer overhears heavenly figures speaking to one another<sup>213</sup>. ‘The holy ones’ are members of God’s heavenly army and they discussed the meaning of the vision.

The words “How long?” originate from *before the exile*<sup>214</sup>. Compare the words: “How long?” in the Psalms that were written *during the exile*<sup>215</sup>. The words: “How long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled?” in Daniel 8:13 refer to Zechariah 1:12 where the Angel of the LORD asks on behalf of God’s people how long it would take to rebuild Jerusalem *after the exile* (in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE).

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countries in the world attack Christians, destroy their places of worship, confiscate Bibles and spread lies about Jesus Christ, the Bible and Christians!

<sup>208</sup> 1 Maccabees 2:1-70

<sup>209</sup> 1 Maccabees 4:27-37

<sup>210</sup> Deuteronomy 20:1-20. The ancient ritual of ‘the holy war’.

<sup>211</sup> 1 Maccabees 3:42 – 4:35

<sup>212</sup> 1 Maccabees 4:36-61; 2 Maccabees 10:1-9; cf. John 10:22

<sup>213</sup> cf. Zechariah 1:7-17

<sup>214</sup> Isaiah 6:11; Jeremiah 12:4

<sup>215</sup> Psalm 74:10-11; Psalm 80:5

In Daniel 8:13 the question is how long it would take to end the period of oppression after the defilement of the temple (in December 167 BCE). This later oppression under Antiochus IV in the second century BCE (171-164 BCE) was regarded as a continuation of the oppression during the exile in the sixth century BCE (605-538 BCE).

‘The desolating rebellion’ is a reference to the god Zeus<sup>216</sup> which Antiochus erected in the sanctuary (temple)<sup>217</sup> on top of the altar of burnt offerings in the temple<sup>218</sup>.

While no one could save the ram from the power of the goat (8:7), the God of the Bible would save and re-consecrate the temple and the genuine worship in the temple (8:14): “The sacred place will emerge in the right” (8:14)! *The worship of the One True and Living God who revealed himself in the prophets of the Old Testament would finally triumph!*

#### **The duration of the period of defilement of the temple.**

Verse 14 speaks of a period of ‘2300 evenings and mornings’ (1150 days) during which no daily sacrifices were offered in the temple. The heathen altar was erected on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the 9<sup>th</sup> month (Kislev) in the year 167 BCE<sup>219</sup> and God’s altar was re-consecrated after 3 years and 10 days (1090 days) on the 25<sup>th</sup> of the 9<sup>th</sup> month in the year 164 BCE<sup>220</sup>. The orthodox ceremonies accompanying the sacrifices were probably terminated before the erection of the pagan altar. They were again resumed at the re-consecration of the temple. The Jews calculated the period during which the temple was defiled to be ‘1150 days’.

In the Bible *the number ‘3½ years’ is a symbolic indication of a period of affliction*<sup>221</sup> and in Daniel 7:25 it indicates *the period of oppression* between the defilement of the temple (in 167 BCE) and the reconsecration of the temple (in 164 BCE)<sup>222</sup>.

### **8:15-18. The angel Gabriel.**

“As I, Daniel, was watching the vision and seeking some understanding of it, there standing in front of me was someone of man-like appearance, and I heard a human voice amidst Ulai which called out, “Gabriel, explain the revelation to this man.” He came near the place where I stood. When he came I was overwhelmed and fell down on my face. He said to me, “You must understand, mortal man, that the vision relates to the time of the end.” While he was speaking to me, I fell into a trance as I lay face down on the ground, but he touched me and stood me up in my place” (8:15-18).

In Daniel 7:9-10 it was God who appeared. And in Daniel 8:16 it was God who spoke. Compare this with the appearance of God in Ezekiel 1:27-28a. But in Daniel 8:15 “one who looked like a man” was the angel Gabriel.

Daniel’s reaction was that he fell prostrate with his face bowed to the ground<sup>223</sup> – an acknowledgement that God’s messenger was standing in front of him. Daniel lost consciousness or rather he fell into a deep sleep – a condition in which a person received a vision: Adam<sup>224</sup>, Abraham<sup>225</sup>; Saul and his soldiers<sup>226</sup>; and Job<sup>227</sup>. The touch of the angel woke him up<sup>228</sup>. The intention was to make him stand up<sup>229</sup>. Compare this with the vision the apostle John received in Revelation 1:10,17.

### **8:19-27. The explanation of the vision.**

#### **The time of the end is the end of God’s wrath (8:17,19).**

He said, “I am here to tell you what is going to happen as wrath draws to a close, because at a set moment an end will come” (8:19).

The vision pointed to ‘the time (Hebrew: et) of the end’<sup>230</sup> (8:17) or ‘the appointed time (Hebrew: mo>ed) of the end’<sup>231</sup> (8:19; cf. 11:35<sup>232</sup>). *These words do NOT refer to the end-time (the absolute end of the history of the world)! They refer to the end of a particular period of oppression and the context speaks about the end of the period in which the temple in Jerusalem was defiled (167-164 BCE).* Then “God’s wrath would draw to a close” (8:19).

In Zechariah 1:12 the period of the exile in Babylon was called “the seventy years in which God had been angry with Jerusalem and the towns of Judah” (i.e. the period of God’s wrath in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE). The context in Zechariah shows that although Israel’s sin was the cause of God’s indignation, God’s wrath did not punish Israel any further.

<sup>216</sup> The Greek god Zeus Olympus was called ‘Lord of heaven’ (Hebrew: ba’al shamem), but Daniel gave him the nickname: ‘the rebellion that destroys and makes desolate’ (Hebrew: pesha shamem).

<sup>217</sup> 2 Maccabees 6:2

<sup>218</sup> 1 Maccabees 1:47

<sup>219</sup> 1 Maccabees 1:54

<sup>220</sup> 1 Maccabees 4:52-54

<sup>221</sup> cf. 1 Kings 17:1; Luke 4:25

<sup>222</sup> 1 Maccabees 6:16

<sup>223</sup> cf. Joshua 5:14; Ezekiel 1:28b

<sup>224</sup> Genesis 2:21

<sup>225</sup> Genesis 15:12

<sup>226</sup> 1 Samuel 26:12

<sup>227</sup> Job 4:12-13

<sup>228</sup> cf. Elijah in 1 Kings 19:5-7

<sup>229</sup> cf. Ezekiel in Ezekiel 1:28-2:2

<sup>230</sup> Hebrew. ki la-et (time) qets

<sup>231</sup> Hebrew. ki le-mo>ed (appointed time) qets

<sup>232</sup> Hebrew: >ad >et qetsi >od (adverb. still) la-mo>ed. “Until the time of the end, because it will still come at the appointed time”.

Likewise, in 1 Maccabees 1:67 God's wrath is the period in which Antiochus oppresses and mistreats the believers in Israel (i.e. the period of God's wrath in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE).

Daniel 9:24 reveals that the 70 years of exile (605-538 BCE) would be extended seven times<sup>233</sup> until the oppression during the time of Antiochus IV (175-163 BCE). Because this vision began with the Persian Empire in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE we must consider 'the period of God's wrath' as the whole period from the beginning of the exile in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE to the end of the crises around Antiochus IV in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE.

The end of this period of oppression under Antiochus IV falls at the same time as the end of the four kingdoms that originated from the Greek Empire (8:22-23). Thus, 'the end' spoken of in Daniel 8:17 and 19 comes with the fall of Antiochus IV and the re-consecration of the temple in Jerusalem. The end of the period of oppression (persecution) under Antiochus IV will be 'the end of God's wrath (indignation)'.

**God waits until the measure of the rebels is full (8:23a).**

"The ram you saw, which had two horns, is the king of Media and Persia" (8:20). This is a reference to Cyrus II (559-530 BCE).

"The buck (he-goat) is the king of Greece, and the big horn between its eyes is the first king. The one which broke" (8:21-22a). This is a reference to Alexander the Great (336-323 BCE).

"and the four which arose in its place: four kingdoms will arise from its midst, but without its strength (8:22b) (these last words are repeated in verse 24). This is a reference to the real heirs of Alexander, his provincial governors (satraps) (11:4).

- **In the north:** Antigonus administered the satrapy of Thrace (part of eastern Europe and western Turkey)
- **In the south:** Ptolemy I (Soter)(323-305 BCE) administered the satrapy of Egypt
- **In the east:** Seleucus I (Nicator)(312-281 BCE) administered the satrapy of Babylonia and later Syria.
- **In the west:** Macedonia and Greece.

"As their kingship draws to a close, when the rebels (better: rebellion) reach the full measure" (8:23a).

During the latter part of the reign of Antiochus IV the rebels (or rebellion) reached the full measure. This does not refer to the Jewish Maccabee rebels, because Daniel chapter 7-12 makes little if any mention of them. 'The rebels' here are not the Jews, but the Gentiles of the nations. 2 Maccabees 6:12-16 says, "Now I urge those who read this book (the Jewish believers) not to be depressed by such calamities, but to recognize that these punishments were designed not to destroy but to discipline our people. In fact, not to let the impious alone for long, but to punish them immediately, is a sign of great kindness.

For in the case of the other nations (i.e. the Gentile nations as a symbol of unbelievers) the Lord waits patiently to punish them until they have reached the full measure of their sins; but he does not deal in this way with us (i.e. the conservative Jewish believers), in order that he may not take vengeance on us afterward when our sins have reached their height. Therefore he never withdraws his mercy from us. Though he disciplines us with calamities, he does not forsake his own people."

God disciplines his people (Israel) without waiting for Israel's sin to reach its full measure, so that Israel would return to God and not be deserted for ever.<sup>234</sup>

In contrast, God is patient with the sins of the unbelieving or non-Christian nations (symbolised by 'the four kingdoms') until their sins have reached its full measure. God desires to give the unbelieving or non-Christian nations a chance to repent<sup>235</sup>!

**The initial successes of the ruthless king Antiochus (8:23b-25a).**

"a fierce-looking king will arise, a person who understands riddles (puzzles) (cf. king Solomon)<sup>236</sup>. His strength will be mighty (but without its, i.e. Alexander's, strength)<sup>237</sup>. He will cause astounding devastation, and succeed in whatever he does. He will devastate mighty ones, a people of holy ones, with his skill. He will succeed in deceit by his power; by his courage he will do great things. With ease he will devastate many." (8:23b-25a).

This is a reference to Antiochus IV (175-164 BCE). He is characterised with the two standard elements in the portrayal of tyrants: He was ruthlessly bold and artfully clever. He robbed and killed. And he plotted and lied to his allies. He manipulated the high priesthood in Jerusalem (*read* 2 Maccabees 4:7-29). He caused astounding devastation of people and possessions. He could not be compared to Alexander the Great, but was strong enough to do whatever he wished with Judea. He succeeded in whatever he did with Judea (8:24; cf. 11:21-23,24,27,32).

<sup>233</sup> cf. Leviticus 26:21

<sup>234</sup> Compare this with the message in the New Testament. "When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined, so that we will not be condemned with the world" (1 Corinthians 11:32; cf. Hebrews 12:5-7,10-11).

<sup>235</sup> The sins of the Amorites (who lived in Palestine) only reached its full measure 400 years after the time of Abraham (Genesis 15:13-16; cf. Romans 9:22-24).

<sup>236</sup> Hebrew: u-me-bin chidot

<sup>237</sup> This is a repetition from verse 22. Thus either an accidental gloss (explanation) from verse 22, or a deliberate repetition to say something negative about Antiochus IV.

The targets of his violence and trickery were ‘the mighty ones’ and (or: that is:) ‘the holy ones’. In God’s eyes the believers are vigorous men and saints.<sup>238</sup> That is a bad sign for Antiochus IV.

**Antiochus who set himself up against God, is suddenly, unexpectedly and permanently terminated (8:25b).**

“He will stand against a leader supreme; then he will break without being touched” (8:25b).

‘The Leader of leaders’ (the Supreme Leader) must be a reference for God. When Antiochus IV sets himself up against God, he brings his rebellion to its ultimate point, that is, *the point where God intervenes!*

The large horn, representing Alexander the Great, broke suddenly and unexpectedly. Likewise the little horn, representing Antiochus IV, will break suddenly and unexpectedly! He will be broken by no human hand! The book of Daniel does not say that Antiochus IV is broken by means of the Maccabees. The issue in the book of Daniel is not the means of Antiochus’s demise, but the fact that he is defeated and terminated!

*By whatever means, God will intervene in human history, terminate the kingship of the tyrant king (2:21) and bring his period of oppression and persecution to an end!*

The apocrypha: 1 and 2 Maccabees relate how Antiochus IV died during a military campaign against the Persians in November/December 164 BCE. But the book of Daniel says that Antiochus IV is not destroyed by any human power (8:25; cf. 2:34,45; 11:45)!

**8:26. Seal up the vision.**

“The revelation of evening and morning which has been related is reliable. But you are to close up the vision, for it relates to distant days” (8:26).

The words ‘to close up’ (8:26) and ‘to seal up’ (12:4,9) both mean ‘keep secret’, ‘do not reveal’. According to this *backward looking prophecy*, the historical Daniel received this vision during the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE (i.e. during the Medo-Persian Empire). But the vision points to events in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE (the time in which the writer Daniel lives). The writer in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century probably received this vision in the 160<sup>s</sup> BCE. The vision concerns events that are present and imminent and not distant. *‘This vision’ was sealed and remained unknown between the 6<sup>th</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE.* That is why the readers of the book Daniel in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE had previously not heard about this vision. ‘The distant future’ about which the vision speaks commences with the crises around Antiochus IV.

**8:27. The effect of the vision of Daniel.**

Daniel was exhausted and lay sick for several days.

**3. Application of the symbols in the vision.**

**The symbols in the vision supersede the events which the seer describes (8:20-26).**

In the first vision (chapter 7) the symbols were indirect references to events in the history of the world. But in the second vision (chapter 8) the symbols are clear references to historical persons and events: the Medo-Persian Empire of Darius and Cyrus, the Greek Empire of Alexander the Great and the Seleucid Kingdom of Antiochus IV.

Nevertheless, in the explanation (8:20-26) these symbols remain indirect allusions (references) to ultimate events in the history of the world. *‘The ultimate events’ in the history of the world are not ‘the end-time event’, but are events in which God intervenes! In application these symbols supersede the events of the period of the seer.*

The message of the book of Daniel was first of all intended for the believers living in the time of the writer of the book of Daniel in the second century BCE. But thereafter *the message of the book of Daniel is intended for believers who live in any segment of the history of the world.*

*The backward-looking (quasi-) prophecies in Daniel thus become forward-looking prophecies for believers living in the New Testament period! The book of Daniel is thus also a message for Christians living today!*

Attacks against the God of the Bible, his people, against the temple and against his Book, (i.e. against Jesus Christ, Christians, the Church and the Bible throughout the history of the world are ‘ultimate events’ (i.e. events in which God intervenes)! Christians who live today in such ultimate events (of oppression, persecution, discrimination and abuse) may believe and expect that God is going to intervene, i.e. they may expect ‘the time of the end’ of such difficult events!

**The symbols in the vision have transcendental significance.**

The events on earth have transcendental significance. Every time when evil people fill their measure of wickedness against God and his people (8:23) and every time when the king of this world (the government) stands up against God and his people (e.g. the Christians) (8:24-25a), they too will be destroyed without human hands (8:25b)! The fall of the king of the world is not simply the result of political, economic, military and religious factors on earth, but the result of the intervention and action of the God of the Bible in human history!

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<sup>238</sup> Compare this Old Testament description of God’s people with the New Testament description: “The kingdom of God is pressing forward vigorously and vigorous men are eagerly taking possession of it (the kingdom)” (Matthew 11:12). Christians are saints, that is, they are sanctified in Christ and called to live holy lives (1 Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 1:1).

God's holy temple, his anointed high priest, his believing people and his Holy Scriptures have great significance for God. However, the king of the kingdom of the world (Antiochus IV) denied this. He had no eyes to see the spiritual reality! The kings (representing the governments) of the world and the nations (representing the non-Christians) of the world do not realise that when the believers in the God of the Bible suffer, God himself also suffers<sup>239</sup>. *The heaven of God and the earth of man are not two unrelated worlds which are completely disconnected from each other. The God of the Bible is involved in what happens in the world and intervenes when it becomes necessary to intervene!* The kings (governments) of the kingdoms of the world must reckon with this reality.

**The symbols in the vision may be applied again and again.**

Such ultimate events (as the oppression and persecution of Christians, which cause God to intervene) occur again and again in the history of this world. *The Christians who live in that segment of history may apply the message of the symbols in their own time. Thus, the symbols in the book of Daniel may be applied again and again!*

'To fill the measure' (8:23) is also a New Testament application with respect to the Jews and their religious leaders who kept on rejecting Jesus Christ<sup>240</sup>. "Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers"<sup>241</sup>. It can also be applied with respect to the Church and Christians who turn their backs on Jesus Christ. "Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches (Jewish unbelievers), he will not spare you (non-Jewish unbelievers) either"<sup>242</sup>.

The vision of Daniel was not a call to arms against an enemy, but a call for believers that are oppressed and persecuted to exercise faithfulness within their difficult situation and simultaneously a call to the oppressors and persecutors to repent and turn to the God of the Bible.

*The description of the tyrant, Antiochus IV, is applicable to several political leaders in the history of the world. Antiochus is the symbol of the many antichrists in the history of the world<sup>243</sup>. The attacks of these worldly kings and their governments against the Christian Church or individual Christians<sup>244</sup> is regarded as an attack on God himself! Ultimately God will see to it that these tyrants are broken and destroyed without human hands or human plots!*

#### **4. The messages of Daniel chapter 8.**

**The history of the world teaches that every human government ultimately falls (8:1-8).**

Daniel's vision in chapter 8 is about the Medo-Persian Empire and the Greek Empire that are at conflict with one another. Neither is described as exclusively 'good' or 'bad', neither are 'God's ally' or 'God's enemy'. *Events in history carry on as if God does not exist. The 'horns' symbolise human power that is at the same time strong and brittle. These human powers look as if they are invincible, but in reality they are vulnerable. They break one another's power, sometimes at the height of their power.*

God views the struggle of nations in the world from heaven<sup>245</sup> and laughs at their plots against him and his Anointed<sup>246</sup>. The history of the world has its own pattern, namely 'the four kingdoms' pattern. This pattern has not been enforced onto history, but rather comes logically from what is inherent to the nature of the kings of the kingdoms of the world and of God himself. *The arrogance of one (political, economic, military or religious) power leads to self-glorification and that evokes the jealousy of another power. The conflict that ensues leads to mutual destruction of one another.*

"What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something, but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. And when you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives that you may spend what you get on your pleasures"<sup>247</sup>.

**In the light of the God of the Bible the history of the world is never out of God's control.**

Daniel is confronted with the fact that his people are threatened by a crisis that may destroy them. He desires to encourage them and build up their faith in God by *helping them to better understand their present difficult condition from God's point of view*. He shows God's people the following:

- that the difficult events in the present (the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE) have already been observed in the past (the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE).
- that the historical events in the present time are bound to the historical events in the past.
- that the historical events in the present (the crisis around Antiochus IV) have been shaped by the historical events in the past (the Babylonian, Medo-Persian and Greek Empires).
- that *'the animal' ('the beast') in the present had already appeared in the past (and will again appear in the future)*<sup>248</sup>!

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<sup>239</sup> cf. Colossians 1:24; 1 Peter 4:13

<sup>240</sup> Matthew 23:31-32; 1 Thessalonians 2:16

<sup>241</sup> Matthew 23:32

<sup>242</sup> Romans 11:20-22

<sup>243</sup> "Even now many antichrists have come" (1 John 2:18)! Think of tyrants in modern times like, Stalin, Hitler, Putin, etc.

<sup>244</sup> Ephesians 2:19-22

<sup>245</sup> Psalm 33:10-17

<sup>246</sup> Psalm 2:1-12

<sup>247</sup> cf. James 4:1-3

<sup>248</sup> cf. Revelation 13:1-10

*In this way Daniel shows how the present history of the world is less out of control and less terrifying than what it might seem at first sight. He wants to create the expectation with God's people that if God in the past has seen to it that an event 'x' ends in an event 'y', he will also in the present time see to it that an event 'X' will end in an event 'Y'!*

**The history of the world in the light of supernatural realities has meaning (8:9-14).**

The kingdoms in the past that have defeated others have themselves been defeated. An arrogant and violent kingdom of the world will certainly fall. The Bible speaks about 'the day of the LORD', "The LORD Almighty has a day in store for all the proud and lofty, for all that is exalted and they will be humbled. ... The arrogance of man will be brought low and the pride of men humbled; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day, and the idols (i.e. gods devised by man) will totally disappear"<sup>249</sup>.

A kingdom of the world that extends its violence and arrogance against God, against God's people and against the place where God's people worship (i.e. the temple or a church building) commit an even greater transgression and will fall without any possibility to escape! An attack on natural realities as the temple on earth and the conservative believers still living on earth is at the same time an attack on supernatural realities: it is an attack on God himself who is worshipped there, an attack on God's people and an attack on God's purpose and command that his people be his witnesses in the world. It is a reminder that *every human power is subjected to limitations!* The attack on God, his people and his temple is not the same as an attack on other nations. The arrogant sin of the kingdom of the world and their political, economic, military and religious rulers is and will be the cause of their fall! *Every earthly power that draws the sword against the God of the Bible (and against the Church, against Christians, against the Bible) will die by the sword*<sup>250</sup>!

This fact is very encouraging for God's people. But it will not be an encouragement for the victims of the kingdom of the world unless they begin to see the events from God's perspective, i.e. from the perspective of the book of Daniel! *Not only nations, but also individuals need to see events from God's point of view before they can submit themselves to the difficult events they need to pass through.* "When I tried to understand this, it was oppressive to me till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny"<sup>251</sup>!

**The events in the history of the world have an appointed end (8:15-19).**

The vision God gave to Daniel is God's perspective on the events that take place in the history of the world. In the beginning the history of the world was without God, 'godless': the people of the kingdom of the world made decisions and carried them out without reference to God.

But in the end the history of the world became 'anti-God': the people of the kingdom of the world attacked God, attacked God's people, attacked God's temple and attacked God's Book (the Bible). This attack on God, his people, his place of worship and his Holy Book is not a passing event, but an event that stirs God to intervene. This attack must and will lead 'to the end' (8:17,19,26), not the end of the world or the end of history, but the end of this manifestation of the kingdom of the world. Daniel speaks about the end of ultimate events. Because the sin of this king and his kingdom went to the utmost extreme (against God and his Kingdom), the punishment (of God) will also go to the utmost extreme!

In the past history God punished his people for their sins by means of Assyria, 'the rod of God's anger'<sup>252</sup>. But here God's people are not suffering because of their own sins. They are suffering because of the sins of the king of the kingdom of the world. Antiochus IV was venting his fury against the people of God (11:30-32)! His attack on the high priest, Onias III, the temple of Jerusalem, the conservative believers who worship there and the biblical scrolls is regarded by God as an attack on God himself and on God's heavenly army of angels<sup>253</sup>.

**The events in the history of the world bring encouragement, but also bewilderment (8:27).**

*On the one hand, knowing that the events in the history of the world eventually lead to victory is encouraging. There is no need to fear or worry. God's almighty hand will break the power of the evil one and therefore we Christians are able to live with the risks that we have to live with.*

*On the other hand, knowing that the events in the history of the world inescapably involve oppression and persecution in order to lead to victory is bewildering. Only with God's perspective on the events of the history of this world can we carry on with life in this present world! The visions in the book of Daniel gives us this perspective!*

"The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet"<sup>254</sup>!

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<sup>249</sup> Isaiah 2:12,17

<sup>250</sup> Matthew 26:52

<sup>251</sup> Psalm 73:16-17

<sup>252</sup> Isaiah 10:5-6

<sup>253</sup> cf. Isaiah 14:13; 2 Maccabees 9:10

<sup>254</sup> Romans 16:20

## DANIEL 9

### **Theme. The symbols in the book of Daniel have several applications in other periods of time within the divine and secular history.**

In the first year of Darius the Mede (539 BCE)(who was crowned king of Babylon under Cyrus)(Daniel 9:1) Daniel understood from Jeremiah 25:8-11 that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. Daniel's big question is, "When is the Lord going to restore Jerusalem?"

#### **1. Guilt and shame (9:7-16).**

Daniel confesses the sins of God's people. He says that they (God's people) are covered with 'shame' in all the countries where God had scattered them. They are covered with 'shame' because they had sinned against God. People *feel 'guilt' towards God* because they have sinned, transgressed and committed iniquity *against God ('s sovereign will, sovereign truth, sovereign righteousness and sovereign holiness)*. But people *feel 'shame' towards people* because they have been caught out and have consequently lost face in other people's eyes. In a way *'shame' is misplaced 'guilt'*, because often people feel more wrong in relationship to people whom they can see than to God whom they cannot see!

So Daniel prays for God's mercy and forgiveness and pleads that God would not delay to intervene for the sake of his people, Jerusalem and the sanctuary (9:17-19).

Then the angel Gabriel appeared (in a vision) to Daniel to give him insight and understanding about the vision he had seen (9:20-23).

#### **2. Prayer and answer to prayer (9:20-23).**

While Daniel was still praying, the angel Gabriel appeared and conveyed God's answer. God acts in response to prayer, *God uses the prayers of people to put his will into effect!* He had already purposed the restoration of Jerusalem and the temple, but prayer of his people released that restoration which he had already purposed!

#### **3. Explanation of the number 'seven' (9:24).**

*The number '7' has symbolic and theological significance. The number 'seven' is the symbol for God's completion and perfection in creation, salvation, judgement and history.* There were 7 creation days, 7 lampstands around Christ, 7 bowls of God's wrath, and a cycle of 7 days in human history.

A very long time before the period of the kings in Israel, God already warned that he would punish the disobedience of his people seven fold. "If after all this you (the Israelites) will not listen to me, I will punish you for your sins seven times over"<sup>255</sup>.

#### **4. Explanation of the number 'seventy' (9:2)<sup>256</sup>.**

##### **Structuring history with the symbolic number '70'.**

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon invaded Judea three times: in 605 BCE<sup>257</sup>, in 597 BCE (1:1)<sup>258</sup> and in 587 BCE. Jerusalem and the temple of Jerusalem were *destroyed* in 586 BCE<sup>259</sup>. The temple was *rebuilt* in 516 BCE after the return from exile to Babylon<sup>260</sup>. *This period of destruction and reconstruction was symbolically '70' years long. It lay ahead of the historical Daniel in 539 BCE, but was already long past for the writer Daniel in the 160<sup>th</sup> BCE.*

According to Leviticus 26:31-35,43 the land of Israel would enjoy its sabbath years all the time that it lies desolate. "Then the land will enjoy its sabbath years all the time that it lies desolate and you are in the country of your enemies (Babylon)"<sup>261</sup>.

##### **However, the beginning and the end of the '70' cannot be determined with assurance.**

Babylon's rule over Israel might be reckoned to begin:

- with Judah's submission to Babylon in 605 BCE<sup>262</sup>
- or with the fall of Jerusalem and the deportation of officials and the leading men of the land in 597 BCE (1:1)<sup>263</sup>
- or with the destruction of the temple, the burning of Jerusalem and the exile of the people to Babylon in 586 BCE<sup>264</sup>.

<sup>255</sup> Leviticus 26:18; cf. verses 21,27-35,43

<sup>256</sup> Jeremiah 25:11-12; Jeremiah 29:10

<sup>257</sup> 2 Kings 24:1,7

<sup>258</sup> 2 Kings 24:8-17

<sup>259</sup> 2 Kings 25:8-21

<sup>260</sup> Ezra 6:15

<sup>261</sup> Leviticus 26:34

<sup>262</sup> 2 Kings 24:1,7

<sup>263</sup> 2 Kings 24:8-17

<sup>264</sup> 2 Kings 25:8-21

Babylon's rule over Israel might be reckoned to end:

- with the fall of Babylon in 539 BCE<sup>265</sup>
- with the return of a remnant of the exiles in 538 BCE<sup>266</sup>
- or with the completion of the second temple in 516 BCE<sup>267</sup>.

**The '70' years has no chronological, but chronographical significance.**

It is unlikely that Jeremiah intended the '70' years to have chronological significance. The number '70' rather has chronographical significance.

- 'Seventy years' suggests a human lifetime<sup>268</sup>.
- 'Seventy years' represents the period of God's wrath against Israel's sins<sup>269</sup>.

"The land enjoyed its sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfilment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah"<sup>270</sup>. God explains that he will punish the unfaithfulness and despicable idolatry of Israel by sending them into exile in the Babylonian Empire until the Persian Empire comes into power. The number was not literally chronological, because the real period of the exile was shorter than 70 years (605/587-538 BCE).

God always fulfils his plan or purpose for the whole world<sup>271</sup> and for his people. During the 70 years absence of the people of Israel, the land of Israel would remain fallow and enjoy her 'sabbath rests' for a period of time the people of Israel had failed to keep the sabbath years during the whole period of the kings, about 463 literal years (1050-587 BCE).

**The '70' years has symbolical or theological significance.**

The number '70' has primarily symbolical or theological significance. '7' is the number of God's perfection and is the number of completion on the earth. The number '70' represents God's fixed period (the full number of years) to execute his wrath against Israel's sin on the earth.

## **5. Explanation of the number '70 sevens' (9:24).**

**Also the '70 sevens' has no chronological, but chronographical significance.**

Ancient and modern interpreters have commonly taken Daniel 9:24-27 as designed to convey literal chronological information which can be confirmed by historical data.

One ancient interpreter<sup>272</sup> calculated the  $70 \times 7 = 490$  years as follows:

- 483 years between the commission of Artaxerxes in 445/444 BCE to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ in 32/33 CE.
- *The 70<sup>th</sup> seven is postponed to just before the second coming of Jesus Christ, thus creating a long 'gap' period.*

This is unlikely, because it is not obvious why the word about building a restored Jerusalem should be connected with the commission of Artaxerxes to rebuild *only the walls* of Jerusalem. It is also not obvious why we must accept a 360 day instead of a 365¼ day year, nor why the 70<sup>th</sup> seven should be *separated* by a long 'gap' from the 69 sevens, nor why we should date *Nehemiah's commission* in 444 BCE and *Christ's death* in 32 CE when the usually preferred dates are 445 BCE and 30 or 33 CE<sup>273</sup>.

A modern interpreter<sup>274</sup> calculated the  $70 \times 7 = 490$  years by adding the following three periods together:

- 49 years from Jeremiah's prophecy in 605 BCE to Cyrus' accession in 556 BCE.
- 434 years from Jeremiah's prophecy in 605 BCE to the murder of Onias III in 171 BCE.
- 7 years of persecution by Antiochus IV (171-164 BCE).

This is unlikely, because there is no explanation why two concurrent periods of time should be added together.

Interpreters should not try to vindicate or to fault Daniel's figures with exact historical data, because Daniel does not offer chronological information, but rather chronographical information.

Chronography is a stylized scheme of history used to interpret historical data rather than arising from them, comparable to cosmology<sup>275</sup>, genealogy<sup>276</sup> and numerology<sup>277</sup> that appears in the Old Testament Scriptures. The Book of Judges speaks of periods of 40 years of peace or oppression, which does not seem to give chronological information<sup>278</sup>.

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<sup>265</sup> Jeremiah 51:8-13,33,41-43

<sup>266</sup> Ezra 1:11 – 2:67

<sup>267</sup> Ezra 6:15

<sup>268</sup> Psalm 90:10; Isaiah 23:15

<sup>269</sup> Jeremiah 25:8-11; Jeremiah 29:10

<sup>270</sup> 2 Chronicles 36:21

<sup>271</sup> Isaiah 14:14-17

<sup>272</sup> Julius Africanus as reported by Eusebius.

<sup>273</sup> J.Finegan, Handbook of Biblical Chronology, 1964

<sup>274</sup> Behrmann

<sup>275</sup> the '2' in Genesis 1:16

<sup>276</sup> the '14x3' in Matthew 1:17. Also the three times '14 generations' in the genealogy in Matthew 1:1-17 is chronography, because between Jehoram and Uzziah the following four rulers are missing: Ahaziah, Athaliah, Joash and Amaziah (1 Chronicles 3:10-14).

<sup>277</sup> the '144000' in Revelation 14:1

<sup>278</sup> Judges 8:28; Judges 13:1

I Kings 6:1 says that the building of the first temple began 480 years or 12 generations of each 40 years after the exodus and this does not look like a chronological note. This way of structuring history appears elsewhere in the writings of the Persian and Greek periods. A document 11QMelch envisages a period of ten jubilees, thus 490 years, up to the final judgement.<sup>279</sup>

**Structuring history with the symbolic number ‘70 sevens’.**

In Daniel chapter 9 the section of history is symbolically ‘70 sevens of years’ long and its beginning lies ahead of the historical Daniel in 539 BCE, but had not yet ended for the writer Daniel in the 160<sup>s</sup> BCE.

- The period of ‘70 seventy sevens’ presumably denotes ‘70 times seven years, as the original ‘seventy’ of Jeremiah was explicitly a period of years (9:2).
- The period of ‘70 sevens begins from Jeremiah’s ‘70 years’, which was hardly a chronological calculation, but rather a term denoting a period such as a human lifetime that extended beyond the years that the hearers would see.
- The period of 70 sevens combines the ‘seventy years’ of Jeremiah<sup>280</sup> with the principle of ‘sevenfold punishment’ from Leviticus<sup>281</sup> as the sins of the Israelites deserve, because during the period of the kings (1032-586 BCE)<sup>282</sup> the Israelites had failed to keep the sabbatical years. According to Leviticus 25:1-7 and Leviticus 26:31-35,43 the land of Israel would have the rest it did not have during the sabbaths the Israelites lived in it.
- The period of 70 sevens ends when God’s purpose with that period has been attained: that is, it would end when once more (the city of Jerusalem and) the temple of Jerusalem would be destroyed and rebuilt (i.e. desecrated and consecrated)(164 BCE).

Thus, the number ‘70 sevens’ also has *symbolical or theological significance*. In Daniel 9:24 the angel Gabriel explains that the number ‘70 sevens’ represents God’s fixed period (the full number of years) to attain his purpose in this segment of divine and secular history.

The end of this symbolical period of “70 sevens” represents God’s forgiveness and acceptance. “Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD’s hand *double*<sup>283</sup> for all her sins”<sup>284</sup>.

**Daniel 9:24 defines the end of this period of ‘70 sevens’ by way of three negatives and three positives.**

“Seventy sevens have been determined for your people and your sacred city:

- **The three negative expressions** are (literally):
  - to end rebellion (transgression against God’s laws)
  - to seal up (shut up) sin (failure to attain God’s goal)
  - and to wipe away (atone for) iniquity (twisting God’s truth)”<sup>285</sup>

Viewed practically they are *synonyms referring to the end of the desecration* of the temple that occurred between 171 BCE and 167 BCE. Note the words: “O Lord, cause your face to shine upon your sanctuary that is desolate” (9:17).

There is no indication that the whole period after the exile was a period of wickedness. Only ‘the last seven’ is specifically characterised by rebellion, sin and iniquity.

**The three positive expressions** are (literally):

- “to bring (about) lasting vindication (eternal righteousness)
- to seal up a prophet’s vision (authenticating the prophet’s vision and message)
- to anoint a most sacred place (the holy of holies) (i.e. to again consecrate the temple of Jerusalem).”<sup>286</sup>

Viewed practically they are *synonyms referring to the consecration* of the temple and the restoration of the worship service that occurred in 164 BCE.

*Daniel is not speaking about the ‘justification’ of sinners in New Testament sense. Daniel is also not speaking of ‘sealing’ in the sense of keeping the message a secret (as in 8:26), but of sealing in the sense of authenticating the message (as in 1 Kings 21:8). There is no indication that Daniel is speaking of anointing ‘a most sacred people’ (Israel) or ‘a most sacred person’ (the Messiah), but he is speaking of the consecration of ‘a most sacred place’, namely, the temple of Jerusalem.*

These six things would be achieved for the Israelites and the city of Jerusalem by the end of the seventy sevens of years. Daniel 9:24 is concerned with the Israelites and the city of Jerusalem and does not have a world wide perspective!

<sup>279</sup> Goldingay p.232

<sup>280</sup> Jeremiah 25:11 or Jeremiah 29:10

<sup>281</sup> Leviticus 26:18,21,24,28

<sup>282</sup> 446 years

<sup>283</sup> ‘Double’ does not mean ‘twice as much’ punishment, but rather a punishment ‘equivalent’ to her sins (cf. Revelation 18:6).

<sup>284</sup> Isaiah 40:1-2

<sup>285</sup> NIV: to finish/restrain transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness”

<sup>286</sup> Hebrew: shabu>im shib>im nechtak (Niph. chatak)(to be decided/decreed) al->amka, we-al->ir qadsheka,

- le-kallee< (Pi. kala<)(to put an end to) ha-pesha>
- u-lechatem (Pi. chatam)(to seal up) chata<ot,
- u-lekapper (Pi. kapar)(to atone/propitiate) >awon,
- u-le-habi< (Hiph. bo<)(to cause to come) tsedeq >olamim,
- we-lachtom (Pi. chatam)(to seal up) chazon we-nabi<,
- we-limshoach (K. mashach)(to anoint) qodesh qedashim.

Daniel is not speaking of ‘the end of history’ or ‘the end of the world’, but ‘the end of a period of oppression by the kingdom of the world (during the second century BCE). Daniel 7-8 and 10-11 is dominated by *secular history* and Daniel 9 is dominated by *salvation history*. By moving between secular and salvation history, Daniel teaches that God is the God of all history (secular history and salvation history). He purposes to reign in all history!

**Daniel 9:24 looks to the consecration of the temple and not to the first or second coming of Jesus Christ.**

Daniel 9:24 restates God’s promise to end the deplorable desecration of the temple in Daniel 8:11-14. It repeats when ‘the time of wrath’ would be completed and when ‘what has been determined’ would have taken place (11:36). God would not fail to carry out his planned history of salvation and judgement within secular history<sup>287</sup>!

Like the vision in chapter 8, the vision in chapter 9 looks forward in one sweep from the time of *the historical person* of Daniel (6<sup>th</sup> century BCE) to the period of *the writer* Daniel and the crisis around Antiochus IV (2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE) and promises God’s deliverance. There is no reason to connect Daniel 9:24-27 exegetically to the first coming of Jesus Christ or to the second coming of Jesus Christ!

## **6. Explanation of the numbers ‘7 sevens’ and ‘62 sevens’ (9:25-26).**

**The Hebrew translation of Daniel 9:25-26.**

**25** “You must understand and perceive, from the coming forth of a word to restore and rebuild (i.e. build a restored) Jerusalem to *an anointed one*, a leader, *there will be seven sevens*. For *sixty and two sevens* (the numbers 7 sevens and 62 sevens are separated) it will be restored and rebuilt, square (a broad open place) and moat (associated with a rampart). \*But in the pressure (trouble) of the times **26** (and = *that is*) after the sixty-two sevens *an anointed one* will be cut off and will have neither the city nor the sanctuary. A leader to come will devastate a people, and its end will come with the flood. Until the end of battle, desolations are determined.”<sup>288</sup>

- In the Hebrew text *the punctuation shows that the numbers 7 sevens and 62 sevens are separated*.
- The Hebrew text suggests that the rebuilding of Jerusalem would take 62x7 years, which seems very unlikely.
- In the Hebrew text ‘the anointed one’ in verse 25 cannot be the same person as ‘the anointed one’ in verse 26.

**The Greek and Syrian text/translation<sup>289</sup> of Daniel 9:25-26.**

**25** “You must understand and perceive, from the coming forth of a word to restore and rebuild (i.e. build a restored) Jerusalem to *an anointed one*, a leader, *there will be seven sevens and sixty and two sevens* (the numbers 7 sevens and 62 sevens are added together). And it will be restored and rebuilt, square (a broad open place) and moat (associated with a rampart). \*But in the pressure of times<sup>290</sup> **26** (and = *that is*) after the sixty-two sevens *an anointed one* will be cut off and will have neither the city nor the sanctuary. A leader to come will devastate a people, and its end will come with the flood. Until the end of battle, desolations are determined.”

In the Greek and Syrian texts the punctuation is different and the numbers 7 sevens and 62 sevens are added together. The Greek and Syrian texts suggest that the anointed leader would come after 69x7 years, that is, to just before a leader would devastate a people! In the Greek and Syrian texts ‘the anointed one’ in verse 25 and verse 26 are one and the same person.

**However, the beginning and the end of the period of ‘70 sevens’ cannot be determined with assurance.**

The period of seventy sevens While the period of ‘seven sevens’ must be between the beginning of the period of time that stretches from the exile in Babylon to the devastation under Antiochus IV, the beginning and the end of this period of time can nevertheless not be determined with any assurance.

The beginning of the period of seventy sevens may be one of the following events:

- The prophecy of Jeremiah (9:2) in 605 BCE (Jeremiah 25:11), or in 597 BCE (Jeremiah 29:10), or in 587 BCE (Jeremiah 30:19-22; Jeremiah 31:38-40).
- The announcement of Gabriel in 539 BCE (9:21-23).
- The decree of Cyrus in 539 BCE (Isaiah 44:28; Ezra 1:1-4), viewed as a rebuilding of the city and the temple (Ezra 4:12-16).
- The decree of Darius in 520 BCE (Ezra 6:1-12), also viewed as a rebuilding of the city (Ezra 4:21).
- The decree of Artaxerxes to Ezra in 458 BCE (Ezra 7:12-26).
- The authority (not decree) of Artaxerxes given to Nehemiah in 445 BCE (Nehemiah 1:3; Nehemiah 2:4-9).

Most likely Daniel 9:25 is a reference to the decree of Cyrus in 539 BCE with respect to the rebuilding of the inner city of Jerusalem (including the temple) and her external fortifications (Ezra 1:1-2).

<sup>287</sup> Isaiah 14:24,27

<sup>288</sup> Hebrew: (25) we-teda> (K. jada>) we- tashkkel (K. shakal)(to be prudent) min-motsa< (jatsa>)(from the coming forth of) dabar le-hashib (shub)(to restore) we-libnot (banah)(to build) jerushalajim >ad-mashiach (to an anointed one) nagid (a leader) shabu>im (sevens/weeks) shib>ah (7) we shebu>im (and sevens/weeks) shishim (60) u-shenajim (and 2) tashub (restored) we-nibnetah (rebuild) rechub (open place/square/market) we-charuts (trench/moat). \*u-betsoq (distress/pressure)(‘But’: this looks like the beginning of a new sentence) ha->ittim (times) (26) we-<charej (that is, after) ha-shabu>im shishim u-shenajim jikkaret (Pu. karat)(to be cut down/off) mashiach (an anointed one) we-<en lo (and not for him) we-ha>ir (and city) we-ha-qodesh (and sanctuary), jashchit (Hiph. to ruin/destroy/corrupt/pervert) >am (a people=object) nagid ha-ba< (a coming leader=subject), we-qitsu (and its end) ba-shetef (with a flood), we->ad qets (and until the end of) milchamah (battle) necheretset (Niph. to be decided /to be determined) shomemot (desolations).

<sup>289</sup> These Greek and Syrian translations are based on another Hebrew text. Remember all manuscripts were handwritten at that time.

<sup>290</sup> Contrast “the stability of times” (Isaiah 33:6).

The end of the period of seventy sevens is also not clear.

- When the Hebrew text of Daniel 9:25 is followed, ‘the anointed leader’ in verse 25 would probably refer to the governor Zerubbabel or the high priest Joshua (Zechariah 4:14). But ‘the anointed one’ and ‘the leader’ in verse 26 would become open for speculation<sup>291</sup>.
- But when the Greek and Syrian translations of Daniel 9:25 are followed, ‘the anointed one’ in verse 25 and in verse 26 would probably refer to one and the same high priest, Onias III. His losing city and sanctuary seems to point to his displacement by Jason and his withdrawal for safety to Daphne near Antioch<sup>292</sup>. The high priest Menelaus ordered Andronicus to assassinate Onias III in 171 BCE. ‘The leader that destroys the city and sanctuary’ would refer to a second high priest, Jason, or a third high priest, Menelaus, who brought about the desecration of the temple and the destruction of Jerusalem by Antiochus IV from 171 BCE to 164 BCE.

There is no indication in the context that ‘the anointed one’ refers to the Messiah, Jesus Christ. There is no indication that ‘the leader’ that destroys the city and sanctuary refers to the antichrist during the great tribulation just before Christ’s second coming. There is also no indication that the ‘70<sup>th</sup> seven’ must be postponed (creating a very long ‘gap’) in order to make the theory of dispensationalism work.

#### **The number ‘7 sevens’.**

Leviticus 25:8-24 teaches that the fiftieth year after seven times seven years is called ‘the Year of Jubilee’. In the Year of Jubilee all prisoners had to be set free and every Israelite had to return to his portion of the Promised Land.

The number ‘7 sevens’ was God’s answer to Daniel’s prayer with respect to the return of Israel from exile in Babylon and the restoration of the land of Israel. Although the decree to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple had already been given in 539 BCE<sup>293</sup> and the temple was rebuilt by 516 BCE<sup>294</sup>, the rebuilding of Jerusalem as city ‘with a wall and a moat’ was only completed amidst much opposition in the time of Nehemiah (445 BCE)<sup>295</sup>.

#### **The number ‘7 sevens and 62 sevens.**

Daniel 9:26 says, “And (i.e. that is) after the sixty-two sevens *an anointed one* will be cut off and will have neither the city nor the sanctuary. A leader to come will devastate a people, and its end will come with the flood. Until the end of battle, desolations are determined.”

The period of ‘7 sevens and 62 sevens’ refers to the (not literal, but symbolical) very long period between the exile in Babylon and the devastation under Antiochus IV. The period begins with the decree of Cyrus in 539 BCE to rebuilt Jerusalem and the temple (9:25)<sup>296</sup> and ends with the murder of ‘an anointed one’, the high priest Onias III, in 171 BCE (9:26a).

## **7. Explanation of ‘the last seven’ (9:27).**

#### **The translation of Daniel 9:27.**

“A covenant will prevail for the multitude for one seven. In the middle (literally: half) of the seven sacrifice and offering will cease, and upon a wing (i.e. of the altar of burnt offerings) will be a desolating (or depopulating) abomination (idol): until a conclusion which has been decreed overwhelms a desolate one (until a completion/end/destruction that has been decided/determined will be poured out upon a desolate/depopulating one.”<sup>297</sup>

#### **The first half of the final seven refers to a covenant.**

At the beginning of the final seven, a covenant was made. The word ‘covenant’ could have positive meaning, but rather has a negative connotation here.

The subject is not defined to be ‘the leader’ of verse 26. Therefore we do not translate: “He will confirm a covenant” (as the NIV does), but: “a covenant will prevail”.

‘The covenant’ that would prevail could possibly be the covenant of God for the body of believing Jews. “Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands” (9:4, cf. 11:22,28,30,32). Also Psalm 12:6 speaks of the Lord’s covenant that would perfectly prevail, “The words of the LORD are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay; purified seven times (i.e. divinely perfected)”. The words may refer either to the faithfulness of God to his believing people or to the faithfulness of the believing people to God and his covenant.

<sup>291</sup> Some interpreters speculate that ‘the anointed one that is cut off’ refers to Christ crucified in 30 CE and ‘the leader that destroys the city and sanctuary’ refers to the Roman general Titus in 70 CE (events at the first coming of Christ). ‘The final seven’ would then also become open for speculation, as is done in the theory of dispensationalism, where it follows a very long ‘gap’ period between the 69<sup>th</sup> and the 70<sup>th</sup> week and this final week becomes the future period of the great tribulation (events at the second coming of Christ). The evidence in the book of Daniel argues against dispensationalism and therefore dispensationalism must be rejected.

<sup>292</sup> 2 Maccabees 4:33

<sup>293</sup> Ezra 1:1-2

<sup>294</sup> Ezra 6:15

<sup>295</sup> Nehemiah 2:1; Nehemiah 6:15

<sup>296</sup> Isaiah 44:28; Ezra 1:1-4

<sup>297</sup> Hebrew: we-higbir (Hiph. gabar)(to prevail) berit la-rabim shabua> echad, wa-chetsi (one half) ha shabua> jashbit (K. shabat)(to cease) zebach u-minchah, we-ad kenaf (on the wing – of the altar of burnt offerings) shiqtsim (abomination/idol) mi-shomem (of the desolation/depopulation), we-ad (until) kalah (a conclusion/completion) we-necherattsah (Niph charats)(that is decided/determined) tittak (Niph. natak)(to be poured out) al-shomem (upon a destroyer/depopulator – an appalling horror).

Nevertheless, 'the covenant' that would prevail (for a short time) has negative connotations, because the verse continues to describe aspects of the sacrilege of the crisis around Antiochus IV. Most likely the covenant refers to the covenant (agreement) between the reformist Jews and Greeks to enforce the godless Greek culture on the Jewish community, as reported in 1 Maccabees 1:11, "In those days lawless men came forth from Israel, and misled many, saying, 'Let us go and make a covenant with the Gentiles round about us, for since we separated from them many evils have come upon us.'"

The covenant made between the reformist Jews and the Greeks would last for seven symbolic years (i.e. the intention was that the agreement would last 'for ever') and to the hurt of the conservative Jews. 1 Maccabees 1:11 associates this covenant with the beginning of the reign of Antiochus IV in 175 B.C.

Several men brought corruption and destruction to Jerusalem and the temple worship. At the beginning the high priest Jason (175-172 BCE) introduced the heathen Greek culture in Jerusalem<sup>298</sup>. He was succeeded by the high priest Menelaus (172-161 BCE), a corrupt and cunning person, who ordered the murder of the high priest Onias III in 171 BCE<sup>299</sup>.

'The leader to come' was presumably another member of the line of high priests: after Onias III came Jason or Menelaus. Read 2 Maccabees 3:1 – 6:17 and 1 Maccabees 1:1-64. The quarrels between the high priests Jason and Menelaus brought king Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BCE) against Jerusalem, against the temple and against God's people. Antiochus first robbed the temple treasures in 169 BCE.

Antiochus IV ordered that all his subjects had to become 'one'. They had to give up their own religion and were forced to accept the idolatrous religion of the heathen. The temple in Jerusalem was dedicated to the idol, Olympian Zeus. The temple worship and sacrifices prescribed in the Book of the Law were terminated. The religious festivals were dishonoured. The temple and its servants were desecrated. Read 2 Maccabees 6:1-11. Everywhere temples, chapels and altars for idols were erected. People were forced to worship these and burn incense for the idols. The Jewish festivals, food laws and circumcision were prohibited. Everyone had to defile themselves by all kinds of polluted and unholy practices. And everyone who disobeyed these commands was to be executed. Read 1 Maccabees 1:41-53.

**The middle of the final seven refers to the erection of the desolating abomination.**

On 15<sup>th</sup> December 167 BCE Antiochus IV ordered the erection of 'the desolate abomination' in the temple, a heathen altar built on top of the altar of burned offerings. He ordered the sacrifice of pigs and other unclean animals on it. This obnoxious alternative was called 'the desolating rebellion' in Daniel 8:13 and 'a desolating abomination' in Daniel 9:27. It was built upon 'a wing' (i.e. the wing-like corners usually described as 'horns') of the altar of burnt offerings in the temple. Perhaps Gabriel spoke of the wing instead of the horn, because the idol Baal was called 'the winged one'. The 'desolating' refers to the depopulation of the temple and the flight of people away from Jerusalem. An army of soldiers came as 'floodwater' and fought battles in Jerusalem until the time determined by God.

The devastation would continue to overwhelm Jerusalem and the temple until 'the end' which God had already decreed had been poured out on the tyrant Antiochus IV.

God had already determined and decided to terminate the rebellion, transgression, iniquity and devastation of the kingdom of the world and to restore his Kingdom (or kingship) over his people. This means, that the kingdom of the world and its destructive corruption would continue until God had attained his goal of salvation history within this section of world history. Isaiah spoke about this decree of God, "Though your people, O Israel, be like the sand by the sea, only a remnant will return. Destruction has been decreed, overwhelming and righteous. The LORD, the Lord Almighty, will carry out the destruction decreed upon the whole land"<sup>300</sup>. Nevertheless, although the destruction is decreed and would certainly happen, it is not endless.

**The second half of the final seven does not refer to the final end of world history.**

Daniel gives no explanation about the second half of 'the final seven', except that it would end! Daniel does not say that this is the end of salvation history or the end of secular history in the world, but only the end of this section of world history.

The tyrant (Antiochus IV) had planned to enforce his unholy covenant with the reformist Jews (the Jews that adopted the heathen Greek culture) for a symbolic or theological period of 'seven' (i.e. he hoped this would last 'for ever'). He carried out his evil plan against God and God's people, but his arrogance led to a sudden and unexpected end! God would suddenly, unexpectedly and in a complete sovereign way cut this tyrant down and end his unholy plan and activities! God would not allow this tyrant to carry out his evil plan and activities to its full end, because God had determined and decided to pour his doom out over this tyrant! That would happen at the end of this section of history.

Daniel 9:24-27 does not refer to the end of world history, but to the end of a particular segment of history (the period of persecution under Antioch iv)<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> 2 Maccabees 4:7-20

<sup>299</sup> 2 Maccabees 4:23-50

<sup>300</sup> Isaiah 10:22-23

<sup>301</sup> Compare what Jesus Christ said about 'the end', "You will hear of wars, and rumours of wars, but see to it, that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come" (Matthew 24:6).

## **8. The message of Daniel chapter 9:24-27.**

The message of Daniel chapter 9 started with the prophecy of Jeremiah that the desolation of Jerusalem would last 70 years, but continued to point out that the desolation of Jerusalem actually lasted centuries longer – a symbolic ‘7 times’ longer! God has the sovereign freedom to exact whatever chastisement he chooses. Nevertheless, there is an end to this chastisement!

The number ‘490’ is not intended to convey mathematical or chronological information. It is a figure that combines two other figures: ‘70 years’ (a lifetime) of Jeremiah 25:11 or Jeremiah 29:10 and ‘sevenfold chastisement’ of Leviticus 26:18. This results in a double symbolic figure which extends from the beginning of the chastisement in the exile to whenever it is seen as ending.

The description of ‘the end’ is allusive. The climax to which Daniel chapter 8 and Daniel chapter 10-11 looks is the crisis around Antiochus IV in the second century BCE, when God delivered his people and his sanctuary from the combined threat of ‘the kingdom of the world’ (the government of Antiochus IV) and ‘the religion of the world’ (the reformist Judaism that had succumbed to the heathen culture of the Hellenists or Greek culture). That is why in the first place *the symbols* in Daniel chapter 9 look to the crisis around Antiochus IV.

The period between the first desolation of Jerusalem and its sanctuary by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BCE and the second desolation of Jerusalem and its sanctuary by Antiochus IV in 167 BCE may be divided into two periods:

- The ‘seventy’ (a human life long) years period of the exile which began with a promise of restoration<sup>302</sup> and ended with its fulfilment (the return from exile in 538 BCE and the rebuilding of the temple in 516 BCE).
- The ‘sevenfold’ chastisement during the long postexilic period from the late 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE to the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE which is called ‘the period of Jerusalem rebuilt’ (9:25).

The crisis around Antiochus IV begins with the death of one high priest (‘an anointed’)(Onias III) and the wickedness of another high priest (‘a leader to come’)(Jason or Menelaus) who brought about the devastation of Jerusalem and the sanctuary (by Antiochus IV)(9:26).

This brought a period of unholy alliance between ‘the kingdom of the world’ (Antiochus IV) and ‘the religion of the world’ (the reformist Jews)<sup>303</sup>, the disruption of the organised or instituted temple worship<sup>304</sup>, its replacement by an apostate alternative (the idolatrous desolate abomination) and a devastation that would continue to overwhelm God’s people and their worship of God (Jerusalem and the sanctuary) until what God had decreed has been fulfilled: the final doom of ‘the desolate one - who appals and causes horror’.

“A conclusion which has been decreed overwhelms a desolate one” (9:27) may refer to God’s decree to destroy the desolate abomination on the altar of burnt offerings.

But it may also refer to God’s decree to terminate the rule of the tyrannical desolator (Antiochus IV). Whatever, God’s decree overwhelms evil and brings a ray of light and hope to believers!<sup>305</sup>

God promised that by the end of the “70 sevens he will have purged both the Jewish and Greek people and the city of their evil, he will have again consecrated the sanctuary and restored the worship service and he will have vindicated the prophecy of Jeremiah.

## **9. The incorrect exegesis of Daniel 9:24-27.**

*The traditional explanation of Daniel 9:24-27 by many Christians and Jews is wrong.* They apply Daniel 9:24-27 to events that take place much later in history, for example at the death of Jesus Christ in 30 A.D., or at the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., or of events that happen much later in history and even of events that still have to take place in the future!

An ancient interpreter, Julius Africanus as reported by Eusebius, calculated the  $70 \times 7 = 490$  years as follows:

- The 69 sevens (= 483 years) stretch from the commission of Artaxerxes in 445/444 BCE to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ in 32/33 CE.
- The 70<sup>th</sup> seven (= 7 years) is postponed to just before the second coming of Jesus Christ, creating a ‘gap’ in history.

This interpretation is very unlikely, because:

- It is not obvious why the word about building a restored Jerusalem should be connected with the commission of Artaxerxes to rebuild *only the walls* of Jerusalem<sup>306</sup>.
- It is not obvious why we must accept a 360 day instead of a  $365\frac{1}{4}$  day year.

<sup>302</sup> Jeremiah 25:10-14; Jeremiah 29:11-14

<sup>303</sup> Compare this with the New Testament message. “The beast out of the sea” (a symbol of the antichrist)(Satan’s antichristian political power)(Revelation 13:1-10) works closely together with “the beast out of the earth” (a symbol of the false prophet)(Satan’s antichristian religion)(Revelation 13:11-18).

<sup>304</sup> Compare this with the New Testament message. “The beast that comes up from the Abyss” attacks “the two witnesses” (a symbol for the Christian Church as a witnessing institute) overpowers and kills them after a symbolic period of 1260 days (3½ years) of witnessing (Revelation 11:3-7).

<sup>305</sup> Compare this with the New Testament message. At Christ’s second coming he will throw ‘the beast’ and ‘the false prophet’ into ‘the fiery lake’ (Revelation 19:11-21). And at Christ’s second coming he will throw ‘the dragon’ (a symbol of Satan) into the fiery lake, where the dragon, the beast and the false prophet will be tormented for ever (Revelation 20:7-10).

<sup>306</sup> Nehemiah 2:7-8

- It is not obvious why we should date *Nehemiah's commission* in 444 BCE and *Christ's death* in 32 CE when the usually preferred dates are 445 BCE and 30 or 33 CE.
- It is not obvious why the 70<sup>th</sup> seven should be *separated* from the 69 sevens creating 'a historical gap'<sup>307</sup>!
- It is not obvious why the 70<sup>th</sup> seven needs to be *postponed* to a very distant future in order to make this calculation work for the teaching of dispensationalism.

Daniel himself refers to the crisis around Antiochus IV in the second century BCE! Also the other chapters in the book of Daniel refer to this same crisis. Daniel 9:24-27 does not refer to events that would happen centuries or even millennia after the events in the context (chapters 8-11). These events point to a consecration of the temple (an anointed place) and not to Christ (the Anointed One). Daniel chapter 9 was and remains in the first place a message to the contemporaries of the writer Daniel during the second century BCE!

### **10. The correct application of Daniel 9:24-27.**

Nevertheless, the allusiveness of Daniel 9:24-27 justifies the reapplication of this Bible passage, as is the case with Daniel chapter 2, but only in the following sense:

Daniel 9:24-27 does not make any reference to specific personalities or concrete events as the historical book of 1 Maccabees 4:41-61 does. Daniel refers *by means of symbols* to what these personalities and events in history embody: sin, vindication, an anointed leader, a flood and an abomination. Specific historical personalities and concrete events are understood in the light of these symbols, but the symbols rise above these specific personalities and concrete events!

The symbols are not limited to specific personalities and concrete events in one period (segment) of world history! The symbols have still other embodiments in other periods (segments) of divine and secular history, as Jesus Christ points out in Matthew 24:15-20 and Revelation 13:11-18! What these other embodiments are is a matter of theological judgement and not a matter of exegetical judgement. It is a matter of faith and not a matter of science!

When Christians on the basis of the New Testament revelation conclude and believe that Jesus Christ is God's Anointed Leader and his death on the cross is God's means to attain his eternal purpose in divine and secular history, then Jesus Christ, his life and death are the ultimate application of the symbols in the book of Daniel 9:24-27! This is the point which the traditional explanation of Daniel 9:24-27 makes.

Christians maintain that there is a typological relationship between the personalities and events in the period of the crisis around Antiochus IV and the personalities and events during the first coming of Christ on the one hand and the personalities and events during the second coming of Christ on the other hand<sup>308</sup>.

## **DANIEL 10 TO 12**

### **Theme. The kings and the kingdom of the world will stumble and fall and will not be found anymore**<sup>309</sup>.

The book of Daniel prepares God's people before the battle begins, so that their faith will not fail when the test (trial) comes.

### **1. The book of Daniel and other Bible books.**

Daniel chapter 10-12 is a reworking of the earlier visions in Daniel and are shaped by earlier Scriptures. The seer of visions seeks and receives what these earlier texts in the Old Testament mean and relates the meaning (the explanation, illumination) to his contemporaries.

- Daniel 10:1. The vision is set in the reign of *Cyrus*<sup>310</sup>
- Daniel 10:4-16. The appearance of God's messenger, Daniel's reaction, the messenger's response<sup>311</sup>.
- Daniel 10:13,20-21. *Heavenly beings* that are identified with particular nations are most likely a development of Deuteronomy 32:8, "When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind; he set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel". Compare Acts 17:26, "From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live."
- Daniel 10:16. *Touching Daniel's lips*<sup>312</sup>.
- Daniel 10:16. Addressing the messenger as *my Lord*<sup>313</sup>
- Daniel 11:10,22,26,40. Armies that sweep like an irresistible *flood*<sup>314</sup>

<sup>307</sup> J. Finegan, Handbook of Biblical Chronology, Princeton 1964, 285-301.

<sup>308</sup> John E. Goldingay, Daniel, 1989

<sup>309</sup> Daniel 11:19

<sup>310</sup> cf. Isaiah 45:1

<sup>311</sup> Ezekiel chapters 1 to 3 and 9 to 10

<sup>312</sup> cf. Isaiah 6:7; Jeremiah 1:9

<sup>313</sup> cf. Zechariah 1:9; Zechariah 4:4-5

<sup>314</sup> cf. Isaiah 8:7-8

- Daniel 11:16. *The Beautiful Land*<sup>315</sup>
- Daniel 11:22,28,30,32. *The covenant* referring to people<sup>316</sup>
- Daniel 11:31. The *desecration* of the temple<sup>317</sup>
- Daniel 11:36. The characterisation of the northern king (cf. 7:25)
- Daniel 11:36. The desolations that are determined<sup>318</sup>
- Daniel 11:36-37. The *pride* that magnifies himself<sup>319</sup>
- Daniel 12:2. Some *dead will awake* to everlasting life<sup>320</sup> and others to abhorrence<sup>321</sup>
- Daniel 12:4. The words of the scroll that are closed up and *sealed*<sup>322</sup>
- Daniel 12:7. The limit placed on *the time of trouble* (cf. 7:25).

*Daniel chapter 10-12 is an interpretation of past and present events making use of historical information and scriptural texts as a means of interpretation of what these events in the past and the present mean. When they speak of the future (11:40-45), they have only scriptural texts that provide an imaginary possible scenario about the future, but this future should not be pressed to provide historical data. It only provides scriptural interpretation of what the future events would mean.*

## Daniel 10.

### **The visible and invisible conflict.**

*The conflict between Persia or Greece and Israel is not religious, but political. But the conflict between the heavenly correspondents of these earthly powers (angels and demons) is religious, because it has to do with God's purpose expressed in God's message and God's people. Behind the visible conflict on earth between 'the kingdom of the world' and 'the people of God', there is an invisible universal conflict going on in the heavenly realm<sup>323</sup>.*

### **The power of demons has been curtailed.**

*Daniel chapter 10 reveals that the army of angels in heaven are engaged in battle against the demonic forces on earth.*

*During the Old Testament period the demon general of the Persian Empire and the demon general of the Greek Empire had power to hold back the proclamation of the heavenly message. But after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ their power has been curtailed<sup>324</sup> so that they are no longer able to resist the gospel message being proclaimed in their countries<sup>325</sup>!*

## Daniel 11.

### **1. Military victories are followed by military defeats.**

The political leaders of the kingdom of the world cannot agree among themselves and therefore they are constantly at war with one another<sup>326</sup>! Their political and military successes are followed by their defeats.

In Daniel chapter 11 this principle is illustrated by the frequent wars between 'the king of the south' (Egypt ruled by the Ptolemies) and "the king of the north" (Syria ruled by the Seleucids) during the third and second century BCE. In that segment of world history they had the monopoly on political and military power.

### **2. The people of God often suffer and are threatened with extinction.**

*The important message of Daniel chapter 11 is that 'the people of God' suffer as a consequence of these political, military and religious wars and the setbacks of these ambitious warlords in 'the kingdom of the world'. The people of God (e.g. in the New Testament period: the Christians) often suffer and are even threatened with extinction in their country.*

<sup>315</sup> cf. Ezekiel 20:6

<sup>316</sup> cf. Isaiah 42:6; Isaiah 49:8

<sup>317</sup> cf. Ezekiel 7:22

<sup>318</sup> cf. Isaiah 10:22-23,25

<sup>319</sup> cf. Isaiah 10:12,15

<sup>320</sup> cf. Isaiah 26:19

<sup>321</sup> Isaiah 66:24

<sup>322</sup> cf. Amos 8:12

<sup>323</sup> cf. Revelation 12:1-5. The conflict between Christ and Satan.

<sup>324</sup> Matthew 12:28-29; John 12:31-32; Colossians 1:13; Colossians 2:14; Revelation 12:5-12; Revelation 20:1-3

<sup>325</sup> cf. Matthew 24:14; Matthew 28:18-20

<sup>326</sup> cf. James 4:1-2

### **3. The crisis around Antiochus IV is a recapitulation of earlier crises.**

Daniel 11:2-39 sets the message in a framework of a considerable amount of historical information on the Persian and Greek periods, with interpretation by means of a considerable number of allusions to passages in the Old Testament, thus *portraying the period of history of the crisis around Antiochus IV in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE as a recapitulation of the period of history of the crises in earlier centuries*. In the beginning, ‘the enemy from the north’ was the Assyrian army<sup>327</sup>, or the Babylonian army<sup>328</sup> or the Persian army<sup>329</sup>. But in the present crisis, ‘the enemy from the north’ is the Syrian army.

#### **11:2b. The Persian Empire.**

“Three further kings will arise in Persia, and the fourth will be far wealthier than anyone. But by the power he obtains by means of his wealth, he will stir up everyone in relation to the Greek Empire” (11:2b).

The Persian kings were Cyrus II (559-530 BCE), Cambyses (530-522 BCE), Smerdis (522 BCE), Darius I (521-486 BCE), Xerxes I (486-465 BCE), Artaxerxes I (465-423 BCE), Xerxes II (423 BCE, Sogdianus (423 BCE), Darius II (423-404 BCE), Artaxerxes II (404-359 BCE), Artaxerxes III (359-338 BCE), Arsēs (338-226 BCE) and Darius III (336-331 BCE).

The reference is to three kings following Cyrus, but the figure need not be pressed into a literal number. It may represent the Persian kings as a whole or *the four Persian kings mentioned in the Old Testament: Cyrus II, Darius I, Xerxes I and Artaxerxes I. The Persians utilized their wealth and power to stir everyone up against the Greeks.*

#### **11:3-4. The Greek Empire.**

##### **The one great Greek Empire of Alexander the Great.**

“Then a warrior-king will appear who will rule a great realm and act as he pleases” (11:3).

Alexander the Great became king in 336 BCE. He *invaded and conquered* the east and ruled from Greece in the west to India in the east. This was the largest empire in the ancient history of the world!

##### **The four Greek Provinces ruled by Satraps.**

“But as soon as he arises, his empire will break up and divide towards the four winds of the heavens. It will not belong to his surviving family nor be a realm such as he ruled, because his empire will be uprooted and will belong to others besides these” (11:4).

When Alexander died of fever in 323 BCE his empire shattered. It was divided into four areas, not necessarily corresponding to the four points of the compass. The real heirs of Alexander were not his descendants, but his provincial governors (satraps) (11:4).

- In the north: Antigonus administered the satrapy of Thrace (part of eastern Europe and western Turkey)
- In the south: Ptolemy I (Soter)(323-305 BCE) administered the satrapy of Egypt
- In the east: Seleucus I (Nicator)(312-281 BCE) administered the satrapy of Babylonia and later Syria.
- In the west: the satrapy of Macedonia and Greece.

##### **The three dynasties of the former Greek Empire: Antigonids, the Ptolemies and the Seleucids.**

Soon *civil war* reduced the dynasties to three in number.

- The Antigonids in Macedonia.
- The Ptolemies in Egypt. The Ptolemaic dynasty reigned from 323 - 31 BCE. Alexandria became the capital. Because Ptolemy I controlled the coast of Syria and Phoenicia, he became master of Judea. From 323 BCE onwards Jerusalem found itself obliged to recognize the Ptolemaic king as overlord. Ptolemy I deported Jews to Alexandria, where they adopted the Greek language. Many other Jews settled in Alexandria and received special privileges from the Ptolemies. The Old Testament was translated into Greek in Alexandria during the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus of Egypt (285-246 BCE).
- The Seleucids in Asia. The Seleucid dynasty reigned from 312 - 65 BCE. Babylon was the capital, but was soon eclipsed by Antioch in northern Syria and Seleucia on the west bank of the River Tigris just north of Babylon (on east side of the River Euphrates). Jewish merchants settled in these cities and received special privileges from the Seleucids.

##### **The wars between ‘the king of the south’ and ‘the king of the north’.**

*The dynasty of the Ptolemies in the south* and *the dynasty of the Seleucids in the north* are important for the history of Judea, which lay between these two dynasties. Daniel chapter 11 describes the wars between ‘the king of the south’ (Egypt) and ‘the king of the north’ (Syria). The ‘king of the south’ and ‘the king of the north’ are generic terms that refer to whoever occupied the throne in Egypt or Babylon/Syria in that period of time.

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<sup>327</sup> Isaiah 8:6-8; Isaiah 10:5-6

<sup>328</sup> Jeremiah 25:9

<sup>329</sup> Isaiah 41:25

The year 312 BCE marked the beginning of the Seleucid dynasty. See the dates in 1 and 2 Maccabees. Daniel 11 refers to 13 rulers of the Ptolemaic and Seleucid dynasties:

Ptolemaic dynasty		Seleucid dynasty	
Ptolemy I	322-305 B.C. (satrap of Egypt)	Seleucus I	312-281 B.C.
	305-285 B.C. (king)	(Antiochus I)	281-261 B.C.
Ptolemy II	285-245 B.C.	Antiochus II	261-246 B.C. (+ Laodice, + Berenice)
Ptolemy III	247-221 B.C.	Seleucus II	246-226 B.C.
Ptolemy IV	221-203 B.C.	Seleucus III	226-223 B.C.
Ptolemy V	203-181 B.C. (+ Cleopatra)	Antiochus III	223-187 B.C. ('the great')
Ptolemy VI	181-146 B.C.	Seleucus IV	187-175 B.C.
		Antiochus IV	175-163 B.C. ('Epiphanes')

### **11:5. Seleucus I (312-281 B.C.) and Ptolemy I (322-285 B.C.)**

“The southern king (Ptolemy I) will then be powerful, but one of his officers (Seleucus I) will himself be more powerful than he, and will rule a greater realm than his” (11:5).

Here the king of the south is Ptolemy I (322-285 BCE). He ruled Egypt from 322 BCE, but only assumed the Egyptian throne in 305 BCE. When Antigones drove Seleucus I out of Babylon in 316 BCE, Seleucus I found employment as admiral with Ptolemy I. When Ptolemy I, Seleucus I and Lysimachus of Thrace defeated Antigones in 313 BCE, Seleucus I returned to Babylon in 312 BCE. Seleucus I ruled a greater realm than Ptolemy I. It was the largest of the post-Alexander empires. Antiochus I (281-261 BCE) is not referred to. In 275 BCE war broke out when Ptolemy II *attacked* Antiochus I in northern Syria, but the outcome was indecisive.

### **11:6. Antiochus II (261-246 B.C.) and Ptolemy II (285-245 B.C.)**

“After some years they will become allies. The daughter of the king of the south will go to the king of the north to make an alliance, but she will not retain her power, and he and his power will not last. In those days she will be handed over, together with her royal escort and her father and the one who supported her” (11:6).

Here the king of the south is Ptolemy II (285-245 BCE) and the king of the north is Antiochus II. In 261 BCE a second war broke out when Antiochus II *attacked* Ptolemy II, but also this outcome remained indecisive.

In 252 BCE they made a peace treaty and ‘became allies’ which was confirmed by Antiochus II receiving Berenice, daughter of Ptolemy II in marriage. He *divorced* Laodice, thus excluding their son Seleucus II from succeeding him. The third *war* broke out when Antiochus II was *poisoned* by his first wife Laodice in 246 BCE and Laodice’s partisans *murdered* Berenice and her son together with her Egyptian attendants. Her father Ptolemy II also died at that time. Thus both Antiochus II and Berenice lost their power.

### **11:7-9. Seleucus II (246-226 BCE) and Ptolemy III (247-221 BCE)**

“One from her family line will arise to take her place. He will attack the forces of the king of the north and enter his fortress; he will fight against them and be victorious. He will also seize their gods, their metal images and their valuable articles of silver and gold and carry them off to Egypt. For some years he will leave the king of the north alone” (11:7-8).

Laodice’s son ascended the throne as Seleucus II in Syria. Berenice’s brother, Ptolemy III, became the king in Egypt. He *invaded* the Seleucid kingdom, gained control of a large area in Syria up to Damascus, captured Antioch and the port fortress of Seleucia and *avenged* the murder of his sister Berenice by *killing* Laodice. He had to return to Egypt in order to *quell* an uprising in Egypt, but *took much booty* (including the gods of Syria) with him.

“Then he (the king of the north) will invade the realm of the king of the south, but will retreat to his own country” (11:9).

After two years (242 BCE) Seleucus II *invaded* Egypt, but because his army was *decimated*, he had to retreat to Syria.

Seleucus II was succeeded by his son Seleucus III (226-223 BCE) who was *poisoned* during a campaign in Turkey. He was succeeded by his brother Antiochus III.

### **11:10-12. Antiochus III (223-187 BCE), Ptolemy IV (221-203 BCE) and Ptolemy V (203-181 BCE)**

“His sons (Seleucus III and Antiochus III) will prepare (commit themselves) for war and assemble a great army (a massive horde), which will sweep on like an irresistible flood and carry the battle as far as his fortress” (11:10).

Antiochus III of Syria assembled a great army and *recaptured* the port fortress of Seleucia in 219 BCE. He *invaded* Palestine and *conquered* a large part of it.

“Then the king of the south will march out in a rage and fight against the king of the north, who will raise a large army, but it will be defeated. When the army is carried off the king of the south will be filled with pride and he will slaughter many thousands, yet he will not remain triumphant” (11:11-12).

Ptolemy IV of Egypt was provoked to come out in 217 BCE and engage Antiochus III at the Egyptian stronghold at Raphia on southern border of Gaza strip. Antiochus III raised “a large horde mercenary soldiers, but the horde will be given into his (i.e. the king of the south) power”. The historian Polybius relates how Ptolemy IV with an army of 70000 infantry, 5000 cavalry and 73 elephants *defeated* the army of Antiochus III with 62000 infantry, 6000 cavalry and 102 elephants. Ptolemy IV *slaughtered* many thousands and was filled with pride. He *recaptured* Palestine and Phoenicia, but then made peace with Antiochus III. He did not remain triumphant.

### **11:13-15.**

“Because the king of the north will muster another army, larger than the first; and after several years, he will advance with a huge army fully equipped” (11:13).

Antiochus III of Syria spent the next 14 years campaigning in Turkey and the east, regaining much of the old Seleucid empire. He gained the title ‘Antiochus the Great’. He raised an even larger army in alliance with Philip V of Macedonia in order to invade the Ptolemaic kingdom.

“In those times many will rise against the king of the south. When wild men among your people will assert themselves in fulfilment of a vision, they will stumble” (11:14).

This may refer to Egyptian rebellions in Egypt against the Ptolemies or to Antiochus III and Philip. Nevertheless, Ptolemy IV died in mysterious circumstances and was succeeded by his infant son Ptolemy V.

“The wild men among your people” is a reference to the Jewish reformists (the Tobiads). In their resistance against holy things promoted by the conservative Jews (the Oniads), they sought visions<sup>330</sup> to encourage themselves, however without success. God judged them and they unconsciously fulfilled Ezekiel 7:26, “They will try to get a vision from the prophet; the teaching of the law by the priest will be lost, as will the counsel of the elders.”

“Then the king of the north will advance and build up siege ramps and will capture a fortified city. The forces of the south will be powerless to resist; even their best troops will not have the strength to stand” (11:15).

Antiochus III *defeated* general Scopas of Ptolemy V at Paneas (Caesarea Philippi at the south-western base of Mount Hermon), *pursued* him to the Egyptian fortified city of Sidon and *laid siege* to it. *In 198 BCE the Egyptian army surrendered. Antiochus III gained control over all Syria and Palestine as far as the frontier of Egypt.*

*From 198 BCE onwards Jerusalem found itself obliged to recognize the Seleucid king as overlord.*

### **The reformist Jews and the conservative Jews.**

The collection of taxes in the Ptolemaic domains was arranged by *farming the right to collect taxes to the highest bidders*. With money borrowed from friends, Joseph, son of Tobias, bought this right and exercised his right for 22 years with *ruthless severity*. His family found it difficult to transfer their services to Antiochus III in 200 BCE. *A struggle erupted between the leading families in Jerusalem that desired to enjoy the amenities of Greek culture and city life (an open-air gymnasium and theatre, hippodrome and stadium) (2 Maccabees 4:7-20) on the one hand and the conservative and pious ‘Chasidim’ on the other hand.*

### **The Oniads and the Tobiads (200-175 BCE)**

The Jewish communities in Alexandria and Antioch and even in Jerusalem were greatly influenced by the Hellenistic (Greek) civilization. *Between 200-175 BCE two Jewish families struggled for power in Jerusalem: the Oniads and Tobiads*. Simon II was high priest in 200 BCE and his family are referred to as the Oniads. The Oniads (derived from the name Yohanan shortened to Honi). The Oniads deplored the excessive assimilation to Greek ways. The Tobiads (derived from Tobyah) welcomed the Greek ways at the cost of Jewish ways (cf. 11:14).

### **11:16-19.**

“The invader (the king of the north) will do as he pleases; no one will be able to stand against him. He will establish himself in the Beautiful Land and will have the power to destroy it” (11:16).

Antiochus III (the Great) of Syria controlled Palestine and Phoenicia, including Judea.

“He will determine to come into control of his whole empire, and will make an agreement with him (the king of the south) and give him a wife (the daughter of women) in order to destroy it (the kingdom of the south). But it will not succeed; it will not come about for him” (11:17).

Antiochus III determined to come into control of his whole empire. So, in 197 BCE he made an alliance with Ptolemy V. He gave his daughter Cleopatra (and sister of Antiochus IV) to Ptolemy V in marriage in order to destroy the kingdom of Egypt. But his plans failed, because *Cleopatra was loyal to her husband and country and encouraged Egypt to make an alliance with Rome*. This prevented her father, Antiochus III, from pursuing his ambition to conquer Egypt.

“Then he will turn his attention to the coastlands and capture many. But a commander will put an end to his insolence and will turn his insolence back upon him” (11:18).

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<sup>330</sup> Ezekiel 7:26

Antiochus III turned his attention on *attacking* Egyptian held areas of Asia Minor in order to invade Macedonia, Thrace and Greece. But in 191 BCE the Romans defeated Antiochus III at Thermopylae (191 BCE) and in 190 BCE they defeated his Aegean fleet and his army at Magnesia (near Smyrna). Antiochus III accepted the Roman conditions of peace with the peace of Apamea (188 BCE). *Antiochus III became a vassal of Rome* and his younger son, Antiochus IV was kept hostage at Rome in order to secure the full payment of the war indemnity.

“After this, he will turn back towards the fortresses of his own country, but will stumble and fall to be seen no more” (11:19).

After Antiochus III returned to Syria, he *plundered* a wealthy temple of Bel in Elam (south-west of Iran) in order to pay his taxes to the Romans. But he was *killed* in a surprise attack from the locals there (187 BCE) and was seen no more! Temples were largely used as banks in antiquity and some temples had large stocks of treasure, which made them a target for robbery.

In 181 BCE Ptolemy V died and his infant son Ptolemy VI (the nephew of Antiochus IV) succeeded him. His mother, Cleopatra, acted as regent until she died in 176 BCE. Two courtiers in Egypt became joint regents in her place and *plotted* to regain Southern Syria and Phoenicia including Judea for the Ptolemaic kingdom. But Apollonius, the governor of southern Syria and Phoenicia including Judea got wind of the plot and it was forestalled.

### **11:20. Seleucus IV (187-175 BCE)**

“His successor (Seleucus IV) will send out a tax collector to maintain the royal splendour (literally: an oppressor of imperial splendour). In a few years (literally: days), however, he will be destroyed, though not in the heat of battle (literally: yet not in anger or in battle)” (11:20).

Seleucus IV was the elder son of Antiochus III. He was an unpopular ruler whose main task was to collect taxes imposed by the Romans on his father. He increased the taxes to be paid by his subjects (including Southern Syria, Phoenicia and Judea, together called Coelesyria). The governor of Southern Syria and Phoenicia, Apollonius, desired to plunder the temple of Jerusalem after an informant had told him about the treasures in the Jerusalem temple. The informant was the captain of the temple guards, Simon, the son of Joseph the Tobiad, because he had a quarrel with the high priest, Onias III. Apollonius reported this to Seleucus IV. Seleucus IV sent his chancellor, Heliodorus, to Jerusalem to take charge of the temple treasures. However, due to an apparition he did not plunder the treasury.

Simon kept poisoning the minds of the people in Judea against the king’s governor in Judea and against Onias. When Onias went to meet Seleucus IV, Seleucus IV was *murdered* by Heliodorus (possibly with the aid of Antiochus IV, the younger brother of Seleucus IV).

### **11:21-24. Antiochus IV (175-163 B.C.) and Ptolemy VI (181-146 B.C.)**

#### **The intrigue of Antiochus IV.**

“He (Seleucus IV) will be succeeded by a contemptible person (Antiochus IV) who has not been given the honour of royalty. He will invade the kingdom when its people feel secure, and he will seize it through intrigue” (11:21).

This contemptible man was Antiochus IV. He gave himself the title ‘God Manifest’ (Greek: Theos Epiphanes), but the people called him ‘Epimanes’ (madman).

He had no right to claim the throne, because the oldest son of Seleucus IV was Demetrius I and he had been sent to Rome to take the place of Antiochus IV (as hostage) in 175 BCE Antiochus IV rushed back from Athens to remove Heliodorus and become guardian and co-regent of Antiochus V, the younger son of Antiochus III. Thus, Antiochus IV “seized the kingdom through intrigue” (11:21).

“Then an overwhelming army will be swept away before him; both it and a prince of the covenant will be destroyed” (11:22).

Antiochus IV *removed his rivals*, especially Ptolemy VI, the son of his sister Cleopatra and the high priest Onias III. Onias was pro-Egypt, but his brother Jason belonged to the pro-Syrian party of the Tobiads. *The Tobiads had come from across the Jordan and were either Jews who adopted the Greek culture or Greeks who adopted the Jewish religion, without adhering to the Law.* Jason bribed Antiochus IV to make him high priest in the place of his brother Onias. It was a logical policy of Antiochus IV to *appoint his own nominees in key governmental positions* within his empire.

#### **Antiochus IV changed the constitution of Jerusalem to become a Greek city-state.**

Since the decree of Artaxerxes in 458 BCE the Old Testament Law (Torah) had been the law of the land of Judea. Antiochus III confirmed this when he made the Jews a people with internal self-government on the basis of the Law. The government was effectively in the hands of the priesthood and the high priest was the means to implement the king’s authority.

*So when Jason and the Tobiads (now the authority in Jerusalem) requested Antiochus IV to change the constitution of Jerusalem from a community governed by the Law to a Greek city-state governed by pagan Greek culture, Antiochus IV welcomed it, because a Hellenistic city-state was a means to control his empire. The conservative Jews (Chasidim)*

however regarded this as abandoning the Law and breaking the covenant with God, which excluded making covenants (alliances) with other people.

#### **Antiochus IV plundered temples.**

“After coming to an agreement with him (i.e. Jason), he will act deceitfully, and only with a few people he will rise to power” (11:23).

Antiochus IV acted deceitfully by *breaking his agreement* with Jason when he took a larger bribe from Menelaus and made Menelaus (a Hellenised form of Menahem) high priest in stead of Jason! He also made alliances with the people in power in the provinces.

“When the richest provinces feel secure, he will invade them and will achieve what neither his father nor his forefathers did (i.e. he plundered temples). He will distribute plunder, loot and wealth among his followers. He will plot the overthrow of fortresses – but only for a time” (11:24).

Antiochus IV had left his brother Lysimachus as his deputy in Jerusalem. Lysimachus’s committed an *act of sacrilege* by appropriating some sacred vessels from the temple with the approval of the high priest Menelaus. This sparked *serious riots in Jerusalem*. While robbing temples was part of royal policy and an absolute necessity for paying taxes to their rulers, it was a dreadful sacrilege for pious Jews. While from the point of view of Antiochus IV, Judea was only a minor province, from the point of view of Judea Antiochus IV was the very incarnation of the devil. Three members of the Sanhedrin were sent to complain to Antiochus IV when he was in Tyre. But Menelaus once more bribed Antiochus IV to acquit him and instead have the three members of the Sanhedrin condemned as responsible for the rioting in Jerusalem and *executed*.

The career of Antiochus IV was divided into episodes marked by ‘time’ references:

- Daniel 11:21-24. “until a certain time” (verse 24).
- Daniel 11:25-28. “an end will still come (yet await) at the appointed/set time” (verse 27)
- Daniel 11:29-35. “At the appointed/set time” (verse 29), “until the time of the end” (verse 35), “for it will come at the appointed time” (verse 35)
- Daniel 11:36-39. “until (the time of) wrath is completed” (verse 36)
- Daniel 11:40-45. “at the time of the end” (verse 40)
- Daniel 12:1-3. “At that time” (verse 1) ... “to all eternity” (verse 3).

#### **11:25-28. First invasion of Antiochus IV into Egypt and Jerusalem (169 BCE)**

##### **Antiochus IV the invader.**

“With a very large army he will stir up his strength and courage against the king of the south. The king of the south will wage war with a large and very powerful army, but he (Ptolemy VI) will not be able to stand because of the plots devised against him. Those who eat from the king’s provisions will try to destroy him; his army will be swept away, and many will fall in battle” (11:25-26).

This is a reference to the first invasion of Antiochus IV into Egypt in 169 BCE<sup>331</sup>. Ptolemy VI’s own courtiers *devised plots* against him and *betrayed* him. He was defeated at the border fortress of Pelusium.

“The two kings themselves, with their hearts bent on evil, will sit at the same table and lie to each other, but to no avail, because an end will still come at the appointed time” (11:27).

This is a reference to the alliance between Antiochus IV and Ptolemy VI to regain the throne for Ptolemy VI. Antiochus IV made his nephew Ptolemy VI the titular-king of Egypt, but the Alexandrians repudiated him and also repulsed an attack of Antiochus IV on Alexandria. These two kings *deceived one another* and neither achieved his ultimate goal.

##### **Antiochus IV the plunderer.**

“The king of the north will return to his own country with great wealth, but his heart will be set against a holy covenant. He will take actions against it and then return to his own country” (11:28).

This is a reference to Antiochus IV *plundering Egyptian treasures* in order to support his very large army. On his return journey in 169 BCE *Antiochus IV acted with determination against the covenant people (the believers in Judea) and plundered the treasures of the Jerusalem temple*<sup>332</sup>.

#### **11:29-31. Second invasion of Antiochus IV into Egypt and Jerusalem (168 BCE).**

##### **Antiochus IV invades and plunders Egypt.**

“At the appointed time he will invade the south again, but this time the outcome will be different from what it was before” (11:29).

This is a reference to the second invasion of Antiochus IV into Egypt in 168 BCE<sup>333</sup>. He had *himself crowned in Memphis as king-protector* of Egypt according to the traditional rites of Ptah, besieged Alexandria and looted the Egyptian temples.

<sup>331</sup> 1 Maccabees 1:16-19

<sup>332</sup> 1 Maccabees 1:20-24

<sup>333</sup> 2 Maccabees 5:1,11-16

### **Antiochus IV forced to leave Egypt.**

“Ships of the western coastlands will oppose him, and he will lose heart and turn back” (11:30a).

Just at that time Rome had finally defeated Macedonia in the battle of Pydna. The Roman senate sent Laenas “with ships of the western coastlands” to Alexandria with a decree demanding Antiochus IV leave Egypt at once. Antiochus IV “lost heart and returned”.

Thus, within one week, the Roman Empire had conquered Macedonia, had taken Egypt under her protection and had forced the Seleucid king to submit to her orders. From 168 BCE the three chief heirs of the Greek Empire had to acknowledge a new and superior power, the Roman Empire.

### **Antiochus IV invades, kills, enslaves and plunders Jerusalem.**

Following a rumour that Antiochus IV had been killed in Egypt, Jason returned to Jerusalem and led a violent rebellion against his successor Menelaus and the Tobiad ruling party<sup>334</sup> and against the Syrian governor<sup>335</sup>. Conservative Jews may have supported this action, but Antiochus IV regarded this as an attempt to overthrow his appointed government in Jerusalem in favour of a pro-Egyptian and anti-Syrian government.

“He (Antiochus IV) will vent his fury against the holy covenant. He will return and show favour to those who forsake the holy covenant” (11:30b).

On his return from Egypt, Antiochus IV invaded Jerusalem with his army. He ordered his soldiers to kill everyone they could find. They killed 40000 with the sword and sold 40000 in slavery! He entered the temple under guidance of the traitor Menelaus and stole sacred utensils and 1800 talents from the temple. He appointed a foreign governor (Philip) to torture the people<sup>336</sup>. Thus “he paid heed to such as have abandoned a holy covenant” (11:30b).

In 167 BCE from Antioch he sent Apollonius, the commander of his mercenary army from Mysia in Asia Minor with an army of 22000 soldiers to kill the men in Jerusalem and sell the women in slavery. It was then that Judas the Maccabee and his men (the Maccabees) fled into the desert<sup>337</sup>.

### **Antiochus IV desecrates the temple.**

“His armed forces will take their stand and desecrate the temple (the fortress) and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that cause desolation” (11:31).

The armed forces of Antiochus IV built a temple fortress in the temple area in order to strengthen his position in Palestine against the Egyptians and to enable the members of his Greek city-state (the minority) to oversee the temple and the city. This was a desecration of the temple, allowing non-Jews (soldiers) into the temple. This may imply that conservative Jews (the Chasidim) opposed the measures of Antiochus IV and their opposition spurred Antiochus IV on to take even further measures. He abolished the daily offering, i.e. he forbade the continuation of the temple worship. Then he had the desolating abomination set up, i.e. he had a pagan altar for Zeus constructed on the altar of burnt offering in the temple court. This desecration of the temple caused many Jews to flee and abandon the temple worship.

## **11:32-35. The reformist Jews and the conservative Jews.**

### **Antiochus IV corrupts the reformist Jews and destroys others by sword, fire, captivity and plunder.**

“With flattery he (Antiochus IV) will corrupt those who have violated the covenant (literally: such as have acted wickedly in relation to a covenant, i.e. the reformist Jews, he will turn into apostates by means of empty words), but the people who know their God will firmly resist him” (11:32).

Only the Tobiads and the Hellenistic community accepted the edict of Antiochus IV. These reformist Jews may not have wished to abolish the external distinctives of the Jewish religion, but found themselves drawn into cooperation with a policy that had gone beyond their original expectation.

“Those who are wise will instruct many (literally: the discerning ones within a people will enlighten the multitude), though for a time they will fall by the sword or be burned or captured or plundered” (11:33).

*The conservative Jews (the Chasidim) probably made active attempts to prevent the implementing of the edict of Antiochus IV. “The wise or discerning” is a reference to their leaders who had the wisdom to submit to the Lord and who understood from history how the Lord’s cause would ultimately triumph. They used their wisdom (insight into the meaning of prophecies, dreams and visions) to interpret the prophetic Scriptures and visions of Daniel for the persecuted community.*

*‘The multitude’ is a reference to the community as a whole and implies that the majority of Jews resisted Antiochus IV, even “though they will stumble by sword<sup>338</sup>, by fire<sup>339</sup>, by captivity<sup>340</sup> and by becoming prey (plundered)<sup>341</sup> for some time”.*

<sup>334</sup> 2 Maccabees 5:5-10

<sup>335</sup> 2 Maccabees 5:21-23

<sup>336</sup> 2 Maccabees 5:11-23a

<sup>337</sup> 2 Maccabees 5:23b-27; 1 Maccabees 1:29-32

<sup>338</sup> 1 Maccabees 2:9,31-38

<sup>339</sup> 2 Maccabees 6:11; 7:1-41

<sup>340</sup> 1 Maccabees 3:41

<sup>341</sup> 1 Maccabees 1:31

“When they stumble they will receive little help and many who are not sincere will join them. Some of the wise will stumble, so that they may be refined, purified and made spotless until the time of the end, for it will still come at the appointed time” (11:34-35).

The successes of the Maccabees, the first Judean activists<sup>342</sup>, will be ‘little help’ compared to the ultimate triumph, deliverance, awakening and exaltation that would come at the appointed time (cf. 11:40 – 12:3)! “The many (the insincere) will join them with empty words” is a reference to the many Jews who joined the resistance movement, probably out of fear for the ruthlessness of the Maccabees<sup>343</sup>. “Some of the discerning will stumble to refine them until the time of the end” is a reference to how persecution became a test of sincerity for the conservative Jews.

#### **The purpose of Antiochus IV.**

*It was the set purpose of the ruthless tyrant, Antiochus IV, to root out the Faith of the people of the Bible, to destroy their Holy Scriptures and to replace their faith with the idolatrous Greek religion and culture.*<sup>344</sup>

#### **11:36-39. The end of the tyrant Antiochus IV.**

##### **Antiochus IV magnifies himself above every god.**

“The king will act as he pleases; he will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard of things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what had been determined must take place” (11:36).

Daniel describes the apparent unchallenged authority of the tyrant, Antiochus IV. Compare Antiochus IV (11:36) with Cyrus (8:4), Alexander (11:3) and Antiochus III (11:16). They all assumed arrogant and unchallenged authority. But after a time their authority was terminated! Their subsequent disasters caused increased expectation that also the successes of Antiochus IV would not and could not last!

*This is not a prophecy about the future antichrist, even though Antiochus IV is a type of every antichrist.* Antiochus IV “will magnify himself over any god and utter awesome statements concerning a God of gods”, suppressing the worship of JaHWeH. This is a reference to the title he gave himself, ‘God Manifest’ which was stamped on his coins; to his plundering of temples and to his suppressing of other religions. Antiochus took his religion serious as a political means to bind his empire together. Religion was the servant of his political position. Antiochus IV regarded himself as more important than any god!

Other Greek kings also associated themselves closely with religion in order to enhance political support. The political leaders stood under the protection of some god and sometimes even encouraged worship of themselves! Alliances between political leaders and religious leaders have always been evil!

“He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the one desired by women, nor will he regard any god, but will exalt himself above them all” (11:37).

Of all these tyrants, only Antiochus IV came into direct conflict with ‘the God of gods’! He suppressed the worship of the God off the Bible! Religion in his kingdom had to serve his political ambitions. “He showed no regard for the gods of his ancestors” by replacing the god Apollo with the god Zeus, probably to support the fact that he usurped the throne. He not only slighted the god of the Seleucids (Apollo), but also the god of the Ptolemies (especially Adonis or Dionysus), “the one women loved”, by his invasions into Egypt.

“In his place he will honour a stronghold god; honour a god his fathers did not acknowledge with gold and silver, with precious stones and rich gifts” (11:38)

In the place of Apollo, he promoted the worship of Zeus, who was worshipped as ‘Baal Shamem’<sup>345</sup> by the Syrian garrison in the Jerusalem temple area.

##### **Antiochus IV builds a fortress within the temple area.**

“He will deal with a most secure stronghold with the help of a foreign god; those he shows partiality he will endow with great honour and make them rule over the multitude, and will divide up the land as payment” (11:39).

This is a reference to the building and use of the fortress within the Jerusalem temple area (cf. verse 31) and showing favouritism to the Tobiads.

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<sup>342</sup> 1 Maccabees chapter 2

<sup>343</sup> 1 Maccabees 2:44; 3:5-8; 6:24

<sup>344</sup> Compare the message in the Old Testament with the message in the New Testament. The apostle Paul later depicted this spiritual war as follows, “Our struggle is not against flesh and blood (i.e. humans), but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world (i.e. the evil political, economic, military and religious authorities (*of the kingdom of the world*) and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realm (i.e. fallen angels that are now called evil spirits or demons)” (Ephesians 6:12).

<sup>345</sup> ‘Baal Shamem’ means ‘lord of the heavens’ and is one of the two supreme gods in Ancient Mesopotamia. The other is ‘Marduk’ or ‘Bel’.

## **11:40-45. 'The end' of a tyrant in that segment of history.**

### **The transition from quasi-prophecy to actual prophecy.**

In this passage there is no hint of a transition to Antiochus V or to the future antichrist. Antiochus IV is still the subject. Verses 40-45 cannot be correlated with actual historical events as verse 20-39.

Therefore Daniel 11:40 – 12:3 is a transition from quasi-prediction based on historical facts to actual prediction based on Scripture. But these predictions are not to be read as if they were announcements of expected future events (including names and dates). It is not the nature of biblical prophecy to give a literal account of events before they take place! They only paint an imaginative scenario of what must come from present events.

### **The final battle.**

“At the time of the end the king of the south will engage him in battle and the king of the north will storm out against him with chariots and cavalry and a great fleet of ships. He will invade many countries and sweep through them like a flood. He will also invade the Beautiful Land. Many countries will fall, but Edom, Moab and the leaders of Ammon will be delivered from his hand. He will extend his power over many countries; Egypt will not escape. He will gain control of the treasures of gold and silver and all the riches of Egypt, with the Libyans and Nubians in submission” (11:40-43).

Daniel recapitulates the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE in order to prophesy the expected end of Antiochus IV. ‘The king of the south’ is unmasked as ancient Egypt and ‘the king of the north’ as ancient Babylonia, both foes of ancient Israel. The difference is that he now spares the three nations (Edom, Moab and Ammon) that had formerly taken advantage of Israel (cf. Ezekiel 25).

“But reports from the east and the north will alarm him and he will set out in a great rage to destroy and annihilate many” (11:44).

In 168 BCE at the end of his second invasion into Egypt, Antiochus IV is alarmed by reports about the rebellion in Jerusalem and returns to fight his last battle in which he intends “to devastate and annihilate many” (cf. verse 30-31). *This final battle described in prophetic language in the Bible signifies ‘the end’ of this apparently unassailable earthly power!* This will be his final battle, because he committed the ultimate sin by attacking God and God’s people!

“He will pitch his tents (royal headquarters) between the Mediterranean Sea (‘seas’ is a plural of extension, not two seas) and the beautiful holy mountain (the temple mount). Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him” (11:45).

*The place of the final battle is at the midpoint between Babylon and Egypt, namely, Jerusalem, the place where the Bible had long expected the final battle to take place.* Antiochus IV schemed against an unsuspecting and vulnerable people (the believers, the people of God), but he himself becomes the victim of God. God promises that the tyrant will come to his end and there will be no one to help him!

## **Daniel 12.**

### **12:1. The time of trouble as never before.**

#### **The end of that segment of history.**

“At that time Michael<sup>346</sup>, the supreme leader who protects your people (the people of God), will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not occurred since they became a nation until that time (the subject is nation instead of beginning)” (12:1a).

‘At that time’ (12:1) indicates continuity from what preceded in Daniel 11 and excludes the idea that Daniel is now speaking of some far future event. This is a reference to the final battle of Antiochus IV against God’s people in Jerusalem, which is prophesied in Daniel 11:40-45.

It is not a reference to ‘the end of the world’, but a reference to ‘the end’ of that segment of history that began with Nebuchadnezzar in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and would end with the atrocities of Antiochus IV in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. In 167 BCE Antiochus IV sought to terminate the worship of the One True God and to annihilate God’s people! That event triggered God to intervene! That brought ‘the end’ of this tyrant!

#### **The invisible representatives in heaven behind the visible struggle on earth.**

Daniel 12:1 reveals *the involvement of God and his army of angels that underlies the defeat of ‘the king of the north’* in Daniel 11:45. Each nation has a representative in the heavenly court that fights its legal and military battles. The angel Michael represents (the believers in) Israel in so far Israel resists the pressure of Antiochus IV and the reformist Jews. The reformist Jews can hardly be regarded as a part of ‘Israel’, because they had violated the covenant (11:32)<sup>347</sup>.

*The victory in heaven* of the representative of ‘the covenant people’ (Michael) over the representative of ‘the kingdom of the world’ (the leader of the kingdom of Persia or Greece)(10:13,20-21) means that Antiochus IV *is already defeated on earth!*

<sup>346</sup> Michael is *only one* of the supreme heavenly beings, because several such supreme (great) leaders (princes) appear in chapter 8 and 10, among others Gabriel.

<sup>347</sup> cf. Romans 9:6

### **The book of life.**

“But at that time your people – everyone whose name is found written in the book - will be delivered” (12:1b).

It means that “at that time your people (i.e. the believers to which Daniel belonged) will be delivered (escape) (from the final battle or from death through resurrection). *“Everyone whose name is found written in the book” belongs to God’s people* (12:1). This book is not ‘the reliable book’ (the book of truth) in Daniel 10:21, which tells the future acts of the wicked and the righteous. This is also not ‘the books opened’ in the court of heaven in Daniel 7:10, which recorded the past basis for God’s judgement. *This ‘book of life’ is the list of names of those who belong to God’s people, the citizens of the True Jerusalem*<sup>348</sup>.

‘Deliverance from what?’

- Their ‘deliverance’ may mean that they escape from destruction/death and the annihilation referred to in Daniel 11:44 in contrast to the martyrs in Daniel 11:33-35.
- Or it may mean that they (for example, the martyrs) escape from the realm of death by the resurrection from the dead as in Daniel 12:2.

### **12:2. The great reversal in history.**

#### **Lasting life or lasting abhorrence.**

“Thus many of those who sleep in a land of earth<sup>349</sup> will *wake up, some to lasting life, others to utter shame, to lasting abhorrence*” (12:2).

The context of Daniel 12:2 is Daniel 11:21 – 12:3 and this context must be kept in mind. *The Pharisees and later Christians* have not taken the context of Daniel 12:2 serious and *have explained these words as a reference to the doctrine of the final future resurrection of the dead*. In this context this is not likely, because the resurrection of Gentiles is not in view at all!

Daniel’s “awakening to lasting life” is clearly as historical “an awakening of the people of God” as that of Ezekiel 37:1-14. The destiny of the faithful (and obedient believers) among the Jews in Jerusalem will be lasting (a long) life and honour. They will “shine like stars of heaven” (verse 3)! God’s promise was already recorded long ago in the book of the Law, “Keep his decrees and his commands, which I am giving you today, so that it may go well with you and your children after you and that you *may live long in the land the LORD God gives you for all time*”<sup>350</sup>.

But Daniel’s “awakening to utter shame, to lasting abhorrence” is also as historical “an awakening of the unbelievers and disobedient” as that in Ezekiel 39:1-6,17-20.

The destiny of the apostate (oppressors, persecutors and blasphemers) among the Jews in Jerusalem will be *lasting shame and abhorrence*. They and the Gentile nations with them (symbols of the unbelievers) and their armies will fall on the mountains of Israel and will be given as food to the wild animals. God’s threat was already recorded long ago in the book of the law, “I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you this day that you will quickly perish from the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess. You will not live there long but will certainly be destroyed. The LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and only a few of you will survive among the nations to which the LORD will drive you”<sup>351</sup>.

Those believers who suffered under ‘the king of the kingdom of the world’ were deprived from a place in ‘the covenant people of God’. They were plundered, sold into slavery, slaughtered, burned or driven away from their dwellings and country (Jerusalem and Judea) and banished from the temple and the temple service.

*Now, at the end of this segment of history, the great reversal in history will take place!* Then the powerful will be put down (humbled)<sup>352</sup> and the nobodies will be exalted and given power. “The bows of the warriors are broken, but those who stumbled are armed with strength. Those who were full hire themselves out for food, but those who were hungry hunger no more. She who was barren has borne seven children, but she who has had many sons, pined away. The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up. The LORD sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts. He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honour”<sup>353</sup>.

The people of Jerusalem will look on the decomposing bodies of those who rebelled against God in the Valley of Hinnom<sup>354</sup> and they will witness the restoration to lasting life for the righteous. ‘Many’, but not everybody, will escape the annihilation of Daniel 11:44. There will be suffering and there will be martyrs!

<sup>348</sup> cf. Revelation 20:15

<sup>349</sup> Hebrew: ‘<adamat (soil/ground) ‘<afar (dust/soil) (the grave?)

<sup>350</sup> Deuteronomy 4:40

<sup>351</sup> Deuteronomy 4:26-27

<sup>352</sup> Isaiah 2:12,17

<sup>353</sup> 1 Samuel 2:4-8; cf. Psalm 113:7-9; Matthew 5:3-12; 1 Peter 5:5-6

<sup>354</sup> Isaiah 66:24

### **12:3. The discerning set the multitude right.**

#### **The wise and discerning will shine like stars.**

“The discerning will shine as bright as the sky, those who set the multitude right will shine like the stars to all eternity” (12:3).

The wise or discerning had their teaching despised and some had lost their lives in the persecution (11:33). They will not only be restored to lasting life here on earth, but will also receive great honour. They will shine like stars! Daniel is not speaking of ‘the resurrection life after death’ or ‘eternal life’, but of ‘the full, honourable and lasting life here on earth’. Their life on earth will have a heavenly character.

### **12:4. Sealing the book of Daniel.**

“You, Daniel, are to close up these words and seal the book until the time of the end. Many will hurry to and fro, and suffering will increase” (12:4).

The contents of both the message of the angel Gabriel (10:11 - 12:3) as well as the book of Daniel as a whole must be withheld from disclosure until ‘the time of the end’ (cf. 8:26). That is why many people will run here and there, unable to find a word from God. There will be “a famine for the word of God”<sup>355</sup>. This famine will only end when the book of Daniel is unsealed and disclosed during the crisis around Antiochus IV in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE.

### **12:5-7. The awesome events during 3½ periods.**

*Daniel 12:5-10 returns to Daniel 10:2-18.* The two men standing on opposite banks of the river Tigris connect with Daniel 8:13-14.

“Then I, Daniel, looked, and there before me two other figures were standing, one on the river bank on this side, one on the river bank on the other side. The man dressed in linen who was further upstream was asked, “How long is it to the end of these awesome events?” I listened to the man dressed in linen who was further upstream: he raised his right hand and his left to the sky and swore by the One who lives for ever that it would be for a set period, two set periods and a half, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people is ended, all these things will come to an end” (12:5-7).

These ‘awesome events’ are a reference to Antiochus laying his hand on the realm of God (8:24-25; 11:36).

The answer to the question was that the shattering of the power of God’s holy people (the believers) would take ‘a set period, two set periods, and a half’<sup>356</sup>. Only then would all these things come to an end.

The number ‘3½’ suggests a time that threatens to extend itself longer (a period, a double period, a quadruple period, etc, until the full number of seven periods has been reached), but the anticipated sequence is suddenly broken off and the seven periods (in effect an eternity) is suddenly and unexpectedly halved! The shattering of believers will end when the oppression and persecution by unbelievers (and non-Christians) had reached its full measure. Then God will certainly intervene, act and terminate the tyrant.

The allotted time (by God) in which the tyrant rules over God’s people and they must suffer is not without end. The tyrant may rule for a long period, but his rule will be suddenly and unexpectedly terminated! It is God and not the tyrant or the suffering people of God who control the set times! The tyrant is under the sovereign control of God, even when he does not recognize it or acknowledge it. Also the suffering people of God are under the sovereign protection of the same God, even when they do not always experience or see it. The number ‘3½’ carries no implication whatsoever for the chronological length of time that corresponds to this symbolic period!

### **12:8-10. The continuing contrast between the discerning and the wicked.**

“I listened, but could not understand, and said, “My lord, what will be the last stage of these events? He said, “Go your way, Daniel, because these words will be closed up, sealed until the time of the end. Many will purify themselves, cleanse themselves and refine themselves<sup>357</sup>, but the wicked will act wickedly; none of the wicked will give heed (understand), though the discerning will give heed (understand)” (12:8-10).

Daniel listened, but could not understand the answer about 3½ set periods. He wanted to pinpoint the exact last stage of these awesome events around the tyrant Antiochus IV. But the angel Gabriel gave him no further information and said that Daniel should simply “go his way”, which he was already doing during chapters 1 to 6.

While the discerning will certainly give attention and understand the message in the book of Daniel, the wicked will certainly not pay attention and will not understand the message in the book of Daniel.

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<sup>355</sup> Amos 8:11-12

<sup>356</sup> Hebrew: ki le-mo>ed mo>edim wa-chetsi. Mo>ed = a set period of time.

<sup>357</sup> Hebrew: 3x Hitpaal

The faithful believers have no scope for action that will change history. Running away from suffering will not change history and violent opposition to the tyrant will also not change history. Daniel is not responsible for the evil happening in the world, but he is responsible to give heed to the message in the book of Daniel (and the rest of the Bible) and discern what is really important in life!

‘The discerning’ are those people who know their God, who resist the political tyrants (represented by Antiochus IV) as well as the devious religious leaders of the world (represented by the corrupt high priests). The discerning instruct many people even though for a time they are plundered, captured, burned and killed<sup>358</sup>. While the discerning continue right up to the end to purify, cleanse and refine themselves, the wicked continue right up to the end to be godless and act wickedly. While the discerning continue right up to the end to understand and obey the message revealed in the book of Daniel, the wicked will continue right up to the end to forsake or violate the covenant<sup>359</sup>.

### **12:11-12. The desolate abomination lasts a set time.**

“From the time the daily offering is taken away and the desolating abomination is set up will be 1290 days. Happy the one who waits and reaches the 1335 days” (12:11-12).

The Babylonians used a lunar calendar of 354 days, the Essenes a solar calendar of 364 days and the Greeks a lunar-solar calendar of 360 days. In each calendar the true length of the solar year was corrected to the true length of a solar year of 365¼ days by an extra month. Both figures (1290 days and 1335 days) could begin with one of Antiochus’s edicts, the actual desecration of the temple, or the ban on the daily sacrifices. Both figures could terminate with the victories of Judas, the rededication of the temple, or the death of Antiochus IV. The Book of 1 Maccabees makes the period of rededication exactly 3 years long<sup>360</sup>.

### **12:13.**

“But you may go your way and rest. You will rise to your destiny on the final day” (12:11-13).

The Greek text omits “until the end” – i.e. “until your death”. The heavenly messenger exhorts Daniel and the readers of the book of Daniel that they must go their way and rest. With these words the Hebrew text intends to say, “They must go their way until they die.” ‘Death’ is pictured as ‘entering rest’ and ‘resurrection’ is pictured as ‘rising from sleep’<sup>361</sup>. *The faithful believers are challenged to face life with all its challenges (oppression and persecution), and even face death if that is called for. This is the calling of the discerning (the believers)*<sup>362</sup>.

And the heavenly messenger assures Daniel and the readers of the book of Daniel, “You will rise to your destiny on the final day.” God will not fail in his plan for the believer and the believer will not fail to reach his destiny!

## **5. A description of the oppression by Antiochus IV in 1 Maccabees 1:20-64.**

The history of the Seleucid-Syrian Empire was calculated from its beginning in 312 BCE.

The books 1 Maccabees and 2 Maccabees were probably written in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, originally in Hebrew, but survived in the Greek translation.

**20** After subduing Egypt, Antiochus returned in the one hundred and forty-third year (169 BCE). He went up against Israel and came to Jerusalem with a strong force. **21** He arrogantly entered the sanctuary and took the golden altar, the lampstand for the light, and all its utensils. **22** He took also the table for the bread of the Presence, the cups for drink offerings, the bowls, the golden censers, the curtain, the crowns, and the gold decoration on the front of the temple; he stripped it all off. **23** He took the silver and the gold, and the costly vessels; he took also the hidden treasures which he found. **24** Taking them all, he departed to his own land. He committed deeds of murder, and spoke with great arrogance. **25** Israel mourned deeply in every community, **26** rulers and elders groaned, maidens and young men became faint, the beauty of women faded.

<sup>358</sup> Daniel 11:33-35

<sup>359</sup> Compare the message in the Old Testament with the message in the New Testament. The book of Revelation closes in a similar way as the book of Daniel, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near. Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile; let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy” (Revelation 22:10-11). Every person can already now know what destiny is waiting for him (cf. Ezekiel 18:21-24). The word ‘let’ has two meanings. The owner and master of the harvest has commanded the reapers to let ‘the weeds’ (a symbol for the sons of the wicked one) and ‘the wheat’ (a symbol for the sons of the kingdom of God) grow together until ‘the harvest’ (the second coming of Christ and the final judgement) (Matthew 13:30). The ‘let’ of withdrawal lets go of a person (Revelation 22:11a). It means that Christians should not hinder a person who, in spite of exhortations and warnings, has completely hardened himself in his wickedness. Christians should not hinder him from continuing in his unrighteousness and also not hinder the filthy person from continuing in his filth. For the wicked this ‘let’ is a terrible reality, because God ‘gives him over’ or abandons him to his wicked ways (Romans 1:24,26,28)!

The ‘let’ of positive exhortation urges a person to do something (Revelation 22:11b). For example, “Let the wicked forsake his way” (Isaiah 55:7). It also means that Christians should not hinder the righteous and holy person from continuing in the way of righteous deeds and sanctification.

<sup>360</sup> 1 Maccabees 1:59; 1 Maccabees 4:52-53

<sup>361</sup> Job 3:13,17; Isaiah 57:2; Revelation 14:13

<sup>362</sup> Compare this message in the Old Testament with the message in the New Testament. Also Christians are called, “If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord” (Romans 14:8).

27 Every bridegroom took up the lament; she who sat in the bridal chamber was mourning. 28 Even the land shook for its inhabitants, and all the house of Jacob was clothed with shame. 29 Two years later (167 BCE) the king sent to the cities of Judah a chief collector of tribute, and he came to Jerusalem with a large force. 30 Deceitfully he spoke peaceable words to them, and they believed him; but he suddenly fell upon the city, dealt it a severe blow, and destroyed many people of Israel. 31 He plundered the city, burned it with fire, and tore down its houses and its surrounding walls. 32 And they took captive the women and children, and seized the cattle. [33] Then they fortified the city of David with a great strong wall and strong towers, and it became their citadel. 34 And they stationed there a sinful people, lawless men. These strengthened their position; 35 they stored up arms and food, and collecting the spoils of Jerusalem they stored them there, and became a great snare. 36 It became an ambush against the sanctuary, an evil adversary of Israel continually. 37 On every side of the sanctuary they shed innocent blood; they even defiled the sanctuary. 38 Because of them the residents of Jerusalem fled; she became a dwelling of strangers; she became strange to her offspring, and her children forsook her. 39 Her sanctuary became desolate as a desert; her feasts were turned into mourning, her sabbaths into a reproach, her honour into contempt. 40 Her dishonour now grew as great as her glory; her exaltation was turned into mourning.

41 Then the king wrote to his whole kingdom (the edict:) that *all should be one people, 42 and that each should give up his customs. 43 All the Gentiles accepted the command of the king. Many even from Israel gladly adopted his religion: they sacrificed to idols and profaned the sabbath. 44 And the king sent letters by messengers to Jerusalem and the cities of Judah; he directed them to follow customs strange to the land, 45 to forbid burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings in the sanctuary, to profane sabbaths and feasts, 46 to defile the sanctuary and the priests, 47 to build altars and sacred precincts and shrines for idols, to sacrifice swine and unclean animals, 48 and to leave their sons uncircumcised. They were to make themselves abominable by everything unclean and profane, 49 so that they should forget the law and change all the ordinances. 50 "And whoever does not obey the command of the king shall die."*

51 In such words he wrote to his whole kingdom. And he appointed inspectors over all the people and commanded the cities of Judah to offer sacrifice, city by city. 52 Many of the people, every one who forsook the law, joined them, and they did evil in the land; 53 they drove Israel into hiding in every place of refuge they had.

54 *Now on the fifteenth day of Chislev, in the one hundred and forty-fifth year (December 167 BCE), they erected a desolating sacrilege upon the altar of burnt offering. They also built altars in the surrounding cities of Judah. 55 and burned incense at the doors of the houses and in the streets. 56 The books of the law which they found they tore to pieces and burned with fire. 57 Where the book of the covenant was found in the possession of any one, or if any one adhered to the law, the decree of the king condemned him to death. 58 They kept using violence against Israel, against those found month after month in the cities. 59 And on the twenty-fifth day of the month they offered sacrifice on the altar which was upon the altar of burnt offering. 60 According to the decree, they put to death the women who had their children circumcised, 61 and their families and those who circumcised them; and they hung the infants from their mothers' necks. 62 But many in Israel stood firm and were resolved in their hearts not to eat unclean food. 63 They chose to die rather than to be defiled by food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die. 64 And very great wrath came upon Israel.*

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