

How Great Thou Art

In

Daniel

Chapter One

The little book of Daniel is by far the best known of all the books of the prophets because it contains, of course, not only the story of the lions' den but also that of the burning fiery furnace. We learn these stories as children, perhaps, and seldom forget them. We may even recall Belshazzar's feast where part of a man's hand appeared and wrote on the wall. But for all that it may have been some time since we sat down and read the whole book of Daniel, short though it be, and got the good of its twelve little chapters. Therefore our first priority today should be to read the book from beginning to end. We are seeking to know what God says, and how better than to actually read the scripture of truth for ourselves. It was God who shut the lions' mouths. It was One like unto the Son of God who walked in the midst of the fire. And the interpretation of the writing on the wall was given by the Spirit of the Holy God. So let us see God in the book of Daniel, because that is why the book of Daniel is in the scriptures. If we neglect the reading of the scriptures we are neglecting our own soul. If we cannot find time to read scripture then all the rest of our time is simply wasted. If it has been a while since we read the book of Daniel our remembrance of it may be hazy at best. Paul says repeatedly, "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren..." because the knowing is important to us, but most of our knowledge about the things of God comes from our reading of the scriptures or hearing the scriptures read to us, and if we can read at all then of course there is no excuse for us to be scripturally ignorant. So our immediate aim then is to refresh our memory of the book of Daniel, and to get an overall look at it before settling down to study its chapters and verses more closely. For God is great in the book of the prophet Daniel.

Having read through the book of Daniel again we will see that the book is really in two parts - the action; and the prophecy or speakings. There is what is done and what is said. Now this of course conforms with the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is what He did and there is what He said. And this is necessary in the life of any prophet. The prophet's actions and the prophet's speaking must be matched to give us a true picture. The life the prophet leads is to be holy, otherwise who will pay heed to the speakings? Our Lord lived without sin in the midst of an adulterous and evil generation, therefore His words are holy and we are to hear them. The trouble with modern prophets is that we see sin in their lives and cannot believe their utterance. The prophecy may be good, but can good come from an evil source? The book of Daniel illustrates this clearly. Here is a man who from chapter one to the end lived differently than those around him. As a young man he refuses the king's meat and drink in order to partake of God's abundance, with the result that he is fairer and wiser than all those about him, and no matter what the outcome may be for him personally he will worship only the One God. Indeed it was said of him that they could find no fault in him. So here is a man who is like Christ, a man beloved of God, whose life and words are in harmony together. As merely an example. Daniel should be

studied by all who seek to prophesy. Paul told his hearers, Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. If we cannot follow Christ directly, yet we seek to prophesy, let us emulate Daniel at least. Daniel's band should consist of those without a stain on their character from their youth up, who live holy lives devoted to God alone, who have suffered for Christ's sake and the gospel. Then we will believe their prophecy.

Now a prophet has no honor among his own kin or countryfolk. This is because the knew him as a young man. Even if he lived an exemplary life they remember the peccadilloes of his boyhood. He has to dwell among strangers to be highly regarded. Our Lord was born of a virgin and lived apart from sin entirely a blameless life, yet neither did His brethren believe on Him till He rose from the dead. So we see the dilemma of any prophet. Daniel appeals to us because from an early age he does what is right in the eyes of God. He refused the king's meat - no doubt meat offered to idols in that idolatrous kingdom. "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself." He was determined to stay clean, to steer clear of defilement. He purposed this in his heart, and God, who seeth our hearts, brought him into favor with the prince of the eunuchs. Even in impossible circumstances, if we purpose in our heart to walk with God alone, God will make a way. In Daniel's case the way certainly looked impossible in chapter one, for even though the prince of the eunuchs loved him like a son yet he feared his lord the king and refused the request. But Daniel was determined. He did not meekly accept the first refusal. He appealed to Melzar, and thereby won a ten-day grace period, and a trial of the matter. "So he consented to them in this matter" - that is, Daniel and his three companions, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego - "and proved them ten days." Now God had stated that "them that honour Me will I honour," therefore God honored Daniel's purpose and "As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom" so that "therefore stood they before the king." Great is the Lord!

Thus in Daniel chapter one we are instructed in the ways of God, in the importance of clean living from our youth upward, and in the need to purpose in our heart to serve God only. Yet that of course is merely an introduction to the book of Daniel. We have not started yet to consider the content of chapter one. Therefore let us now go back to the beginning again and look for a moment at the first two verses. It says, "In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god." So we see that all that follows in the book of Daniel comes after the siege of Jerusalem and the carrying away in Babylon. In that sense the book of Daniel is a resurrection book. When Christ died at Calvary the hope of the eleven disciples died with Him. They had, at that point, nothing, for they were not even contemplating a resurrection. They were, of course, only "part of the vessels of the house of the Lord," for we know that when our Lord Jesus rose from the dead the third day He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, and then to others, before the eleven. Nevertheless we see that our Lord's Crucifixion not only carried away the King of the Jews but also part of the vessels of the house of God, chosen vessels, dedicated to the service of God. They were overcome. They were carried away. They no longer served God. Indeed, while our Lord Jesus lay in the tomb no one was left to serve God at all. The apostles could be counted out, and even the women were inactive. So the book of Daniel is really a resurrection book. The Crucifixion of Christ is the prelude. Daniel comes after the carrying away into Babylon, you see.

“And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs,” says verse three, “that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes.” Now we begin to see here that certain of the children of Israel are hand-picked, as we say, to serve this great king. It is no surprise to discover in the New Testament that those who serve the Lord are chosen of God, for if the ancient race of Israel were ‘the chosen people’ so the New Israel of God are ‘the chosen people’ also. We are the king’s seed. We are set among princes. But what we want to see is the difference between Nebuchadnezzar’s choosing and God’s choosing if we are to behold the greatness of God. Nebuchadnezzar chose only “children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured,” verse four tells us, “and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.” God chose beggars from the dunghill, and gave them wisdom and knowledge and understanding, and made them ambassadors for Christ with ability to stand before kings - and He gave them the gift of tongues also as a witness to all men. We are not chosen for what is in us but what is in Him. There is no other king who would do so. Great as Nebuchadnezzar undoubtedly was, the greatness of God casts a shadow on all other greatness. The vilest sinner can come to Christ today and be made a new creature in Christ Jesus. It matters not whether we have learning or comeliness or ability. The gospel of Christ is a redeeming gospel, a gospel of grace, a transforming gospel. It is addressed to ‘whosoever will.’ It reckons nothing of color or race, inherent ability or lack of it, erudition or language. It is world-wide. It is meant for sinners. It is the gospel of a great God. It can make us great in Christ.

“And,” verse five adds, “the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king.” Nebuchadnezzar was a great king as far as this earth is concerned. No doubt about it. But we see that Nebuchadnezzar’s method of choice, and Nebuchadnezzar’s way of sustenance is not God’s way. We have all experienced Nebuchadnezzar’s choosing. When we look for employment, for example, it is those who are “well-favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science” who are picked for the best jobs. And if they want promotion, if they are ever to stand before the king, they must daily partake of the king’s meat and drink. They are nourished by what the authority above them provides. But we saw that God’s greatness stems from grace, from holiness, from what is eternal. And we are chosen to serve Him not from any inherent qualities of our own but because the less we have the more He can give us. And God would nourish us, if we would let Him. Christ is given by God as the Bread of Life. The Holy Spirit is given by God as the Water of Life! So if we feed daily on our portion of Christ, and if we drink daily our share of the Holy Spirit, we will do better than all they who only partake of the king’s meat and the king’s wine. Daniel and his companions proved it for us. The first chapter of the book of Daniel makes it self-evident. And thousands since have found it so. The “three years” of verse five shows it is a period of trial, a testing time. The king’s seed, the princes of Israel, the chosen people, are those who have been through a trial, a testing, and have abstained from all that nourishes the world around them. They have abstained from fornication. They have abstained from the pleasures of this world. As young men. As teenagers. Why? That they might stand one day in favor in the presence of their King.

“Now among these,” verse six continues, “were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Beltshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego.” Now here is a peculiar thing. Daniel today is known by

his Hebrew name, not by his Chaldean name. Few people today are called Belteshazzar, but the name Daniel is not uncommon or unknown in our society. Yet his companions are best known by their Chaldean names, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Now why is this? God gives us a new name when we become new creatures in Christ Jesus. If we live up to our God-given name we will do well. But the world in its wisdom gives us a name also, and we may seek to please the world by living up to its name for us. We may be called a go-getter, a success, a philosopher. We may be called honest, or a hard worker, or a financial wizard. The names are not derogatory. They emphasize a good quality seen in us. But once we get the name we tend to live up to it, you see, and that is what we are known by thereafter. Saul of Tarsus was a despoiler of the church. But after his conversion he became the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul, and that is how he is known today. The Lord gave new names to His disciples. Did they live up to them? But God gave to Mary's babe the name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins, it says. Did He live up to it? Is not that His name even today? Even in heaven? The Savior? Praise God He lived up to it! We would be in sorry plight if He hadn't. So if today we wish to be Daniels, let us live up to it. We are not disparaging Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, please understand. They were obviously children of God. No, we are only pointing out that Daniel lived up to his name, and he is Daniel still.

“But Daniel purposed in his heart,” the scripture of truth continues, “that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.” Daniel wanted to live up to his name. But how? First, he purposed in his heart. Jesus wanted to live up to His name. How? He purposed in his heart, you see. Our Lord was subject to every temptation we are subject to. He was not a eunuch. He had all the drives and desires of every young man. But He never defiled Himself. So we see in the picture of Daniel and his companions how to avoid defilement. The problem with “getting saved,” as we say, later in life is that when younger we may have defiled ourselves and thus lack the features of Daniel. We tend to look like those around us. It says of Daniel and his companions that at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat. So it should be with us. We should have a different look about us. People should be able to see the difference. The difference should be apparent even in our flesh. For defilement, unfortunately, shows in the face, in the glance of the eyes, in the mirror of the soul. And it shows up also in our speech. It says of our Lord there was no guile found in His mouth. It proves the utter lack of defilement, you see. When Nebuchadnezzar conversed with Daniel and his companions he “found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,” verse nineteen tells us. “The king communed with them...therefore stood they before the king.” In speech, in features, in aspect they proved once again the difference a pure life makes. You are free to speak, because there is nothing to hide. You can stand upright because there is an absence of defilement in you. There are no shadows in your face, in your eyes, because there are no shadows in your life.

So Daniel and his companions prove to us what we already know about our Lord Jesus Christ. He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. The picture in Daniel chapter one merely gives us an insight into our Lord's character which is lacking in the gospel accounts. He was purposeful, determined never to defile Himself, He who knew no sin. It is not a sin to be tempted; it is sin only when we give way to temptation. “As for these four children,” verse seventeen tells us, “God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom.” The sinless holiness of Christ can be judged from the fact that when only twelve years of age they were amazed at His understanding and answers. The perfection of His living can again be understood

from Daniel when as a Man full-grown His adversaries said, “Never man spake like this man.” He Himself said, “A greater than Solomon is here.” Whence came this knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom? From God, according to this prophecy in the book of Daniel. So Daniel is not only an example of all who prophesy, but also a prophet testifying of Christ. If we fail to catch a glimpse of Christ in scripture we fail to get the good of it. It is not Daniel on whom we fasten our eyes, but a Man whom Daniel could be proud to call ‘Lord.’ Yet Daniel can teach us how to follow this Man from our youth up, how to be more like Jesus, and how to get wisdom and understanding from God alone. “And Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams,” adds verse seventeen. Our Lord was greater again than Daniel, for it says of Him that, “He, knowing their thoughts...” There was nothing hid from Jesus Christ. He knew, even as a Man, the thoughts and intents of the heart. His understanding is infinite. Alas, such understanding caused Him in the end to sweat as it were great drops of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane. But Daniel is a Resurrection book so we will not look into that here. The picture of holy living is enough for chapter one.

But let us go back for a moment to verse twelve, where Daniel says, “Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.” What is pulse? No one knows for sure. The point is that we follow Daniel spiritually rather than literally. We are told elsewhere of John the Baptist that his meat was locusts and wild honey. Are we sure we know what the ‘locusts’ were? No, we do not follow literally because we cannot, but we can follow spiritually. We can keep ourselves from defilement. We can keep ourselves pure, even as children. We can grow up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Because from an early age, due to enlightenment we can eat as God has provided for us. We can partake of the Bread of Heaven. We can partake of the Water of Life freely. It has little to do with our daily diet, you see, though even in that we can be circumspect. “Man shall not live by bread alone,” our Lord said, “but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” So our nourishment, our soul food, is the Word of God rather than man’s bread, is it not? God is a Spirit. The word of God is spiritual. It is meant for our spirit. It is spiritual meat. And it is imparted to us by the Holy Spirit. The temptation is to be literal Daniels without understanding this basic truth, especially when we are young. Practical necessity forces us to eat food grown on earth, but the Lord is the Man from heaven. His meat and drink, He told His disciples, was to do the will of His Father which is in heaven. Such should be our aim also. Scripture is not a book on how to eat, but a collection of the words of God through the ages to man. Christ is not a Rabbi, a Teacher, a leader but a Man over on the other side of death, a Resurrection Man, who has given us His Spirit to be in us till He Himself come. But this is something which must be proved. He that doeth the will of God shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or not. Therefore to be more like Jesus let us all acknowledge Him first spiritually and then our literal lives will follow suit. Great is the Lord.

And one more word, before we leave this first chapter of Daniel. “So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days,” verse fourteen informs us. The Lord is a Resurrection Man, the Man from Heaven who has returned to the bosom of the Father, having risen from the dead. He is coming again - for us, to take us to be with Him where He is. The matter is proved. His time of trial on earth is over, His death is the seal set by God on all truth, His Resurrection is the attesting. We seek no other proof, for the case is closed, the trial is over. Amid the thousands of years of history the Lord’s time on earth was brief indeed, but it proved once and for all that God’s meat and drink is superior to man’s, that it is better for us even to the coming of our King. It says in the last verse of our chapter, “And Daniel continued eve unto the first year of King Cyrus.” So if we begin as Daniel’s band, let us continue even to the coming of

the King. Our time on earth is brief at best, and it may test us to continue as we set out, but we are already looking for the King's coming. It will not be long. It will not be the first year of an earthly king, but the beginning of an endless reign by the King of Heaven Himself. And if we suffer here for Him we shall reign with Him. Daniel continued, and we are meant to continue also. Continue in undefilement. Continue in holiness. Continue in our understanding. The word to the church in Revelation is - "Overcometh." He that overcometh, and keepeth My works to the end, is the person God is interested in most in the last days. Even when we have proved over and over again that we have purposed in our hearts and are determined to be in at the last, let us note also that Daniel continued even unto the first year of King Cyrus. Our Lord continued - past the Garden of Gethsemane, past the scourging, past the Crucifixion right through to Resurrection morning. Can we?

Chapter Two

We come now to Daniel chapter two. The chapter should be read again, for this time we see it is a post-Resurrection chapter. Here King Nebuchadnezzar dreams a dream which he cannot remember or recall, and only Daniel is able to tell the king what he dreamed and also the interpretation of it, wherefore the king made Daniel ruler over his kingdom. It is similar in many respects to the story of Joseph in Egypt. Joseph, as you know, was in prison till Pharaoh dreamed a dream which only Joseph could interpret, wherefore Pharaoh made Joseph ruler over his kingdom. But there are subtle differences. Joseph interpreted the dream for Pharaoh. Daniel does likewise, but first Daniel has to tell what the king dreamed, which was a rare thing. "The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh." The thing was impossible in the natural, but not in the supernatural, you see. Which is why at the end of the chapter we are told, "Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him." Daniel was obviously a man of God, as Nebuchadnezzar could see, for "the king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings," - a Lord of Lords and King of kings - "and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret." It is the part of all who prophesy, who are men of God, to reveal secrets. Daniel was indeed a great prophet, who served the Lord of lords and King of kings. And even Nebuchadnezzar her acknowledged the greatness of God. Great is the Lord, you see. How great Thou art!

Now we will get to the dream itself in a moment, but first let us see the greatness of God. God is a revealer of secrets, says the scripture of truth. There is nothing hidden from Him, He knows the end from the beginning. But it is the working out of the thing that causes the grief. Every true mother knows that when she was pregnant she looked forward to the time when the child would be born. She planned for it, prepared for it. But she knew also that she must endure grief in order to have what she so wanted. Likewise Christ could look forward, in that way, to His Resurrection, but He knew He must endure the grief, despising the shame, for the joy that was set before Him. Thus we can look forward to our own resurrection, but today we endure. Before Daniel got the promotion, you see, he was under sentence of death. There was a warrant out for his arrest, perhaps. Verse thirteen states, "they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain."

Now of course Daniel wasn't slain - this is a Resurrection book - but he lay under sentence of death at that point for all that. It was an anxious time. "The king was angry and very furious," we are told, "and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon," because none could tell him the dream. Not Shadrach, Meshach or Abednego. Not even Daniel, at that point. And if you read the chapter - did you? - you will see that Daniel was about to die. "Why is the decree so hasty from the king?" he asks. He needs time. Time to pray. Time to have his companions pray also. "Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would shew the king the interpretation." On that understanding, he got the time he needed. But it was a desperate situation for all that, for neither Daniel nor his companions knew for sure whether they would have this secret revealed to them. It was up to God. If God couldn't come through they would all perish. They were young men. They did not relish execution any more than you or I would. But they served a great God.

We will look at Daniel's extremity of fear again in chapter six when he is cast into the lions' den, but let us at least note that in chapter two Daniel passes through a time of extreme peril, under sentence of death, with only his faith in God to sustain him. His companions likewise. It is a prelude, we might say, to Daniel in the den of lions. We are not told, of course, that he sweat drops of blood, but the picture is clear enough to give us a sense of the fear at that time. The king is angry. Nay, the king is very furious. "His spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him." The time he allowed Daniel is a temporary reprieve only. He will not rest until either he is told the dream, or the wise men are all slain. All of them! "Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon." It was a long day for these four young men. Pray as they might, there is no answer. The time allowed them grows short as the day wears on. The heavens are brass, as the sun goes down. "Then was the secret revealed to Daniel in a night vision," and verse nineteen adds, "Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven." But if we turn to look back at Calvary we can see that for our Lord there was no last-minute reprieve. "Father, the hour is come," He said. The agony of the Garden of Gethsemane, even the possibility that the cup might pass from Him, is behind Him and ahead lies Calvary and the Tomb. His companions can go free, but He Himself must go on. If we catch only a glimpse of it in Daniel it is only because Daniel is a Resurrection book. The Cross is hidden in Daniel. It is the secret which is not revealed. There is no death in the book of Daniel for Daniel or any of his companions. But see how close they came! The secret which was revealed to them is only Nebuchadnezzar's dream after all. The secret which was not revealed we are left to discover. How great Thou art!

Now let us look at Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Daniel stands before the king and says, "Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay." We saw earlier that the Chaldeans told the king, "there is not a man upon the earth that can show the king's matter." This feat of Daniel's has never been equalled, but Daniel is at pains to point out that he is only God's mouthpiece, "but there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days." Daniel remains humble, giving God the glory, acknowledging God's greatness, and pointing out to the king how great God is. (Nebuchadnezzar offers an oblation to Daniel, not to God, and proceeds in chapter three to set up another idol, an image of gold. So much for

repentance!) Daniel continues, “This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king.” so we are told of four kingdoms: Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom represented by the head of gold; which is followed by an inferior kingdom represented by the breast and arms of silver; followed in turn by a lesser kingdom represented by the belly and thighs of brass; followed by a strong but divided kingdom represented by the legs of iron and the feet of iron and clay. This picture is so well known that the expression to have ‘feet of clay’ is current even today in our world. Daniel also tells the king, “Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.” The image then crumbled, “and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors,” but “the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.” Now that Rock is Christ, and the mountain Calvary’s mountain.

Now scripture is not a book of history, though it begins with Adam. So if we want to study these four kingdoms, we need to seek out those who are well versed in history. But for the purpose of this work we will look at the four kingdoms a little differently perhaps. Daniel, as we have said earlier, is a post-Resurrection book. The stone which was cut out “without hands” is the Stone which the builders rejected. Daniel tells the king, in verse 28, “there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days.” Or in the last days, as we say. The latter days are the times of the apostles until now, if we start from the Resurrection of Christ. So we see that at Calvary the Stone which the builders rejected struck a blow at idol worship, at all religion which is apart from God. “And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.” Did not Paul teach that the believers should not marry unbelievers, for what accord hath Christ with Belial? So believers in Paul’s day mingled themselves with the seed of men, but did not cleave to them - remained separate, you see - even as iron is not mixed with clay. We of course are the clay, as another prophet showed, ‘in the hands of the Potter.’ The little band of believers in the days of the apostles were easily broken even as Stephen. We have this treasure in earthen vessels, says the New Testament. But the Jews of those days had an iron-clad religion, and the Romans were strong with a multitude of gods, so the clay and the iron lay side by side but without cleaving to one another and above them towered the image seen by Nebuchadnezzar. Apart from the events in Jerusalem the whole world was dominated by the worship of idols. But notice what happened to the Stone cut out without hands in this prophecy.

Verse 35 continues, “and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.” As a result of persecution and the Jews’ rejection of the gospel, what began at Jerusalem only soon spread to other areas, even to Caesar’s household, till today whether in North America or China the great Rock of Salvation fills the whole earth. Golgotha was the merest hill, but today it is the great Mountain of the Lord. And the idols are now museum pieces, their names remembered only from history books. In the last days, or the latter days. And Daniel centuries before Christ is able to tell Nebuchadnezzar, “the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.” It was certainly a remarkable bit of prophesying, and Daniel is no mean prophet either. Can you see that? But the greatness of God is revealed as never before, and the work of Christ at Calvary is revealed for those with eyes to see. There was none other who could have smitten Nebuchadnezzar’s image, and remember, were it not for Christ we today would be out at midnight offering oblations to the queen of heaven. Today we are healed, clothed

and in our right mind, sitting at the feet of Jesus, but yesterday we were in chains of darkness sitting in the place of death. To God be the glory! To our Lord Jesus Christ be glory and dominion for evermore! He hath done all things well! He hath delivered us out of the kingdom of darkness into His marvelous light. Have we acknowledged His greatness? Centuries before Christ came to earth the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel; and the king, it says, “answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of lords, and a King of kings,” to give the full translation. Now if king Nebuchadnezzar could see that, what hinders us from seeing it? Are we blind leaders of the blind? Is the light that is in us darkness? Or are we, as Paul avers, all the children of light, and the children of the day? Let us examine ourselves. Great is the Lord!

Well, we had to start with the feet of the image, and work up, so now let us turn our attention for a moment to the belly and thighs of the image. “His belly and his thighs of brass,” it says in verse 32. These are four kingdoms, of which Nebuchadnezzar was chief. “Thou art this head of gold,” Daniel interprets for the king, “and after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth.” So we see that the kingdom of brass bore rule over all the earth. Brass is not a precious metal, as silver or gold, nor yet a common metal as iron, but a mixture of both, or bronze. Yet it bore rule over all the earth, according to the scripture of truth. We begin to glimpse it faintly in Paul’s day, where the believing husband was instructed not to put away an unbelieving wife, or a believing wife an unbelieving husband. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean, says Paul, but now are they holy. We have to remember that this is a matter of idolatry and idols. The unbelieving wife in the kitchen is offering the food to her idol, before serving it to the family. Likewise the believing wife is in no position to remove the idol set up by her unbelieving husband in the living quarters. So you see Paul’s instructions to the Corinthians were necessary, lest the home be broken up. And this curious mixture, neither common as iron nor yet precious in the sight of God as silver or gold, once held sway over all the earth. It is called in scripture a kingdom of brass. What tends to confuse us is that Daniel came before Christ and thus works forwards, starting with Nebuchadnezzar, whereas we are working backwards. Or if you prefer, he is working downwards from the head to the feet, and we are working upwards from the feet to the head. Nevertheless if we keep our eyes on Christ we should be able to see the matter. The great mountain should fill all our view. How great Thou art!

Very well, then, let us proceed. As we work upward, we come to “his breast and his arms of silver,” silver denoting spirituality. When the holy children of the ‘brass’ marriage grew up, of course they grew out of that situation or order of things. If they believed, they were free to marry a believer, and if unbelieving an unbeliever. So the previous kingdom no longer existed. What we had then was a much purer order of things, a silver kingdom, now precious in the sight of God. God cannot abide mixtures for long, although He is long-suffering. Either one thing or the other, you see. This is borne out in Leviticus, in the laws of Moses, and in Revelation, in the church of Laodicea. Yet God tolerated the kingdom of brass for the sake of the children, you see, and would not destroy a marriage even though a new creature in Christ slept with an unregenerate sinner before the Lord, because they were properly married of course. Nevertheless, He must have been better pleased when these conditions abated and the kingdom of silver began to bear rule over all the earth. Two believers, properly united before the Lord, exercising spirituality, is a ‘kingdom’ of silver, and such a marriage is precious in the sight of the Lord. But even today, if two unbelievers are united in marriage and one of them later is

converted to Christ, both can remain together, light and darkness combined into one, because of the kingdom of brass. It is a throwback, you see, to a day that is past, yet God is unchangeable and “the dream is certain.” However, God cannot condone sin, so if a believer marries an unbeliever so as to deliberately mix light and darkness, that is a sin and must be paid for. God is very merciful. He knows more about love than we do. But if we take another to our breast and fold our love in our arms it should be a kingdom of silver to conform with prophecy. Daniel put his life on the line to give us the prophecy and show us that picture. Our Lord Jesus Christ died for us, that we might live unto God. How great Thou art!

“The image’s head was of fine gold.” It should be easy to see this final kingdom if we have followed along thus far. In verse 37 Daniel says - and remember Daniel is among the prophets - “Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all.” Now Nebuchadnezzar was a great king, yet we can see that he hardly fits the description. Clearly he didn’t rule the whole world, “wheresoever the children of men dwell.” Equally clearly, he did not rule over all the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven. His greatness, indeed, was given to him by God, but only in order for us to have some sort of measure to measure by. When we say, How great Thou art! What yardstick of greatness do we have to measure with? To whom will ye compare Me? asks God in another place. Is He not our Creator to begin with? Therefore in order to compare the greatness of Christ’s kingdom with any other, God shows us in scripture the power and authority of an absolute monarch, Nebuchadnezzar, so that when we see Jesus we can hail Him as the King of kings and Lord of lords and mean what we say. ‘Comes around the age of gold,’ we sing, when Christ the King will reign on earth as He now reigns in heaven. “Thou art this head of gold,” says scripture. We are still in the age of silver today, but tomorrow a golden age, a truly great King of kings, and an everlasting kingdom. Can we kneel at the feet of our Savior today and say, “Thou, O Lord, art a King of kings...Thou art this head of gold”? Can we catch a glimpse of His greatness? Can we see His kingdom? There are kings on earth even today, but the prophecy is, verse 44, “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed.” We await the coming of our King! Great is the Lord!

“And the kingdom shall not be left to other people,” says Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar is dead. He had to leave his kingdom to those who came after him. But our Lord is risen from the dead, alive to die no more. His kingdom encompasses the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, “wheresoever the children of men dwell,” a worldwide rulership indeed. “And the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever,” the prophet proclaims. An everlasting dominion. All other kingdoms done away with, broken in pieces and consumed. One Man, alive to die no more, in absolute control. One Lord, one Head - but a Head of pure gold. Perhaps if we had stood with Daniel in Nebuchadnezzar’s palace we would have had an appreciation of what that might be like that we lack today. We can only imagine it now. But this we know, because we know our Lord, that He shall reign in righteousness, and just judgement and equity shall be the standard in His kingdom. Oh that He would come soon! O Lord, how great Thou art! In the words of Daniel, “Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him.” O Lord, how great Thou art!

“Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon. Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.” Did you notice their names in verse 48? Like Martha in Bethany there was much to oversee, but Mary sat at His feet. That’s why Daniel is Daniel to this day. How great Thou art!

Chapter Three

“Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.” We come now in chapter three to the well-known story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego being cast alive into the burning fiery furnace for refusing to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar’s image of gold. Nevertheless, though the story be familiar, we would encourage you to read the whole chapter again. Far too many people today pay homage to the golden image unthinkingly in our affluent society, therefore we need to read the scripture of truth to see the matter from God’s point of view. God is a God of gods, a Lord of lords, a King of kings. Though earthly rulers decree a matter yet God is able, through His servants, to annul the decree. Daniel himself is not involved, he does not appear in this chapter, therefore it is not a matter of prophecy so much as a matter of understanding. We need to understand the greatness of God in His eternal deity, and His love and regard for His creatures - man - in order to worship wisely. God is exceeding great, beyond all our comprehension, and worship is part of our kinship with God who is our Creator. Man worships by nature. Man naturally bows before the greatness of God. Man is born into this kinship, or relationship of adorer and Adored. Thus if an image be interposed between man and God, man will worship the image. We need therefore to see that Christ is God in order to understand that our Lord is not interposed between man and God but us simply God close up, God very near, God as the Adored in full face, in full view of the adorers. Thus no image of any other is allowed between us and Christ Jesus the Lord, in order that the built-in inclination to adore may be reserved for Him alone. So we want to narrowly eye the golden image, which here is set before us in a plain and is certainly big enough that we cannot overlook it. Then we will turn our eyes on the Son of God in this chapter.

“Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.” Now let us note that this is not a matter of concern for the common people, for the poor, initially; but for those whom Nebuchadnezzar has promoted to power and wealth - the princes, the judges, the treasurers, the rulers. Certainly the poor may worship the golden image, but not initially. When they get a chance to be rich, perhaps, they will be included. But what we are shown in this picture of the crowd gathered to the dedication of the golden image is that it is the well-to-do, the promoted, the powerful who are tempted to worship the false idol; and if that be not enough there is a herald adding a powerful incentive. “Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. Therefore,” adds verse seven, “all the people fell down and worshipped the golden image.” There is plenty of incentive, you see. First,

there is our natural inclination to adore. Then there is the music to give us the signal, and note that the harp and psaltry and all kinds of music endorsed in the Psalms is included. (It is music you might hear in church, you see.) And lastly there is dire consequence if we fail to obey. So we see that the rich are tempted because of their position, and natural inclination, and the delightful accompaniment (of sound), and the knowledge that if they don't they must suffer terrible consequences. To stand against it requires tremendous faith and courage. To do what everyone else is doing is not only made easy, it is commanded, and it would be suicidal to disobey, you see.

Now we all know what the image of gold represents. It is the glory of this world, the wealth, position, power obtainable to the accompaniment of all that is a sweet sound in our ears. It is discovered in wealthy churches as well as casinos and night clubs. It crops up in business, in deals, in prices, as well as in shadier arrangements. It is set in the plain of Dura, everyone with a claim to wisdom knows it is there. It is a world-wide phenomenon. The prince of this world once tempted the Lord with it. And Daniel's companions are forced to make a choice; either to worship the golden image or serve God only. Being haled before the king, they tell him, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter." They had one God whom they worshipped, and nothing else mattered - not the wrath of the king or the humiliation of their arrest or the prospect before them. The furnace could be seven times hotter for them than for anyone else, it could not alter their resolve. They loved not their lives unto death. Their name was not Demas. They were the adorers and God the object of their adoration, you see. "Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace," says verse 21. They didn't even bother to pray about the matter, for the will of God was clear on the subject, however dreadful the consequences. They didn't change, not even their clothes. They were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They have been shining examples to all of us ever since, God's noblemen, and many have followed their shining example, if we only were aware of it. For when once we love - actually love - God, no false image can ever be allowed to come between the adorer and the Adored, even under pain of death. It is not a question of law - 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God...' - but a question of love, which is stronger than death. We love Him, because He first loved us. Accepted in the beloved, Christ loved by God and by us His adorers. Nothing else matters, you see. The burning fiery furnace is almost irrelevant. Whatever the outcome, love conquers all.

Having said all that, let us reassure you. It is not money but the love of money which is the root of all evil. Not many of this world's great ones are called to the fellowship, but some are. Whosoever will, in fact, may come. But it is a question of love. We would go further indeed, and state it is a question of our adoration. When we give our hearts to Jesus we discover in Him an aspect we had not expected. He is not only perfect, and sinless, but beautiful to His admirers. We find He loves us personally. We grow to adore Him. Daniel had wealth, position, power and fame thrust upon him in chapter two, but he never even was asked to worship the golden image. Why? Because he had already proved that the God he served was above all gods. His loyalty was beyond question. So the picture is complete in Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. "And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace." Their love of God is unquestionable, you see. Their loyalty and devotion is tried by fire - and survives. "Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished," continues verse 24, "and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said,

Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” The Adored and the adorers together, you see. Even Nebuchadnezzar recognized the form of the fourth in the fire. We may lose all, even our own lives, to be true to God, but what compensation! To walk with Him through the midst of the fire. To be closer than ever before. To see the Adored up close, as it were. The burning fiery furnace is a mere incident in the life devoted to the Lord. If it brings us closer to the One we love, we could almost welcome it. Tried in the furnace, our faith will be like purified gold. We fall, not so much into the fire, as at the feet of Him who loves us. O Lord,...

“Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire.” Scripture is very specific, you see. Only Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came forth of the midst of the fire. Behind that scene is another picture, but concealed, of Him who was left to face the wrath alone. Gethsemane was agony enough, and the actual crucifixion cruel enough, to satisfy anyone. But beyond that is the fiery indignation of a holy and righteous God pouring out the fury of His wrath on the Sin-Bearer for the sins of the whole world. The Son of God, left alone in the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Can you see it? The pictures of the Cross in the book of Daniel are not easy to discern. It is the secret which is not revealed, even to Daniel. And because this is a Resurrection book, the emphasis is on the lack of death. Three times the thing is repeated - Daniel and his companions under sentence of death; Daniel’s companions in the burning fiery furnace; Daniel in the lions’ den - and three times we see that they came to no harm. But we know, and it is part and parcel of our gospel, that it is we the sinful who should have died, who should have been consumed in the furnace of the wrath of God, and who should have been thrown to the lions. But Christ bore the stroke of execution for us. Our Lord took our sins upon Him. It was He who went to the pit, that den of lions. And we escaped unscathed. Our execution was stayed, our reprieve granted. The fire had no power over us. The lions never touched us. So we, the adorers, bow before the Adored. We know about the execution. We know about the furnace of fire. We know about the lions’ den. But it is secondhand knowledge only. Our Lord’s knowledge of all three is firsthand knowledge. He, for us...says scripture. How great Thou art!

As for us, what does scripture say? In Daniel we are shown a picture. Verse 27, “And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king’s counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.” Praise God! The New Testament says, “For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.” What a Savior! Not a hair of our head singed, not the smell of fire passed on us! Can you clearly see that picture? We are passed from death unto life. We shall not come into condemnation. Because of the Son of God in the midst of the burning fiery furnace, these men were loosed from their bonds and walked with the Lord and escaped unscathed. They came forth as if they had never gone in, to show us what the Lord has done for us. They were prophets, prophesying by their lives, of Him who came after them in time. “Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.” Hitherto He was known as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But He is happy to change His Name for once, in order to include Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the company of the blessed. So if we are true to Him, and bow down before no other, and serve Him alone even unto death, not only will God change our name for us, but He will even change His own name to acknowledge us. That is how great He is!

Because it is not a one-sided matter of adorers and Adored, you know. God is love, and when God loves us - well, we are loved indeed. 'Of whom the earth was not worthy,' He will say, and make a new earth for us 'wherein dwelleth righteousness.' For the eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him. It is reciprocal love, you see. We love Him - because He first loved us. And greater love hath no man than this.....

"Then Nebuchadnezzar spake," says verse 28, "and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God." The problem with Nebuchadnezzar is that he plays more than one part, as we shall see later. In chapter one he is the one responsible for the carrying away into Babylon, he is the adversary. Then in chapter two he is the promoter of Daniel. Here in chapter three he is blessing God. So we see that Nebuchadnezzar is used in scripture to portray many characters and it depends on the setting or context which role he is in. But his name remains unchanged. He is above all the great king. Men once shuddered at the mention of his name, men in positions of power. He is this head of gold, says scripture. Thus even when we look at the Cross of Christ we are taught to bear in mind that our Lord is Risen, that He has been exalted far above all principalities and powers and that God has given Him a name which is above every name. He is the great King. He is the Head of Gold. All power and authority is in His hands. He has already absolute dominion. True, we await His coming, but let us ever remember that we serve Him today and pray we may be counted worthy of His kingdom at the end. Nebuchadnezzar was an absolute monarch, with the power of life or death in his hands. Whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive. Therefore men did not sneer at him, even behind his back, nor lightly take his name in vain. It paid to be circumspect in his kingdom, and a little afraid in his presence. We have seen what he was about to do to all the wise men of Babylon, and what he did to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. There was no court of appeal, either, for his word was law. Yet today men talk of the Risen Christ as if He were never coming back! One poet said, 'what fools these mortals be'!

So let us take note of Nebuchadnezzar's decree, in verse 29. "Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort." Yes, that is the decree, made by Nebuchadnezzar centuries before Christ, for every people, nation and language. And what does the New Testament say? 'Behold,' it says, 'the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.' So you see He will carry out the decree. Therefore the decree was given by a great king to let us see that when a greater cometh, a King of kings, the decree will be executed. Peter adds, 'Now if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?' Nebuchadnezzar was not accustomed to making decrees in vain. He says of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, they "have changed the king's word," in itself a rare thing in his day. Later on, when we come to consider the laws of the Medes and Persians, we will find that the king himself in chapter six couldn't alter the decree. So we have the law to consider, and the prophecy, and the apostles' doctrine, all pointing to a time when a far greater than Nebuchadnezzar comes to enact the decree, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and

that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not, you see, a matter to be lightly passed over. It is a fixed decree. It is, in fact, unalterable. Only those who have “yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God,” can change the king’s word. ‘For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.’ Great is the Lord!

Finally, in verse 30, let us see how the story ends. It says, “Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon.” Now the book of Daniel is a prophetic book. It points to a time when not only will Nebuchadnezzar’s decree be carried out, but when the righteous will receive their reward. Great as Nebuchadnezzar undoubtedly was, he could only promote in the province of Babylon. But when the Risen Christ comes, He is to rule worldwide. He can promote those who have yielded their bodies that they might not serve nor worship any god except their own God. The New Testament instructs us to yield our bodies to the Lord, our members as instruments of righteousness, does it not? And having done so, and by doing so changed the king’s word against us, we look forward to the Lord’s return not only because He will be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe, but because we will be glorified in Him. He will promote us, you see. We who are now the outcasts and offscourings of the earth will be seen to be among the wise, and promoted to positions of power and authority. If we suffer here for Him, we will reign with Him, avers the apostle. Moses, we are told, had respect unto the recompense of the reward. The Lord Jesus Himself endured the Cross for the joy that was set before Him. All our tears today, our sorrow, our sighing will be over when the Lord returns. He will wipe away all tears from our eyes, and sighing and sorrow shall be no more. The eternal kingdom of gold will usher in a day of gladness for the saints. They will receive their rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The yielded will receive their promotion, you see. The Resurrection Man will be at last amid His adorers at the Resurrection of the Just. How do we know? Because He is risen! And when the day of grace has run its course, and the books are closed, and God gives the word, the He will return. And in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, we shall be changed, never to be the same again. Lord Jesus, come! The Spirit and the Bride say ‘Come.’ To your adorers, O Adored. O lord, how great Thou art!

Chapter Four

Chapter four of the book of Daniel is a peculiar chapter, almost a copy of chapter two but with important differences. Here Nebuchadnezzar the king dreams a dream and Daniel is called upon to interpret the dream, but this time the king clearly recalls his dream and Daniel is not under sentence of death as he was in chapter two. And of course the dream is not the same. So let us look at these matters. It is Nebuchadnezzar speaking. Verse one, “Nebuchadnezzar the king, unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you.” It reminds one of the opening verses of any of Paul’s epistles, does it not? So we see it is an epistle, an open letter, a communication addressed to us - “unto all people” - from the great king himself. Now why would the great king be sending us an epistle? Verse two explains it - “I thought it good to shew the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me.” It is a rather marked change of tone from the furious man of our last chapter who sat to watch Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego burn to death in the fiery furnace for daring to worship the high God against his orders, is it not? What has happened? Well, if we read the whole chapter - did you? - we would be aware that Nebuchadnezzar is a changed man. God has dealt with him, and while he remains the great king he is now humble, giving God the glory, so that he is able to say, ‘How

great Thou art!’ for himself. Indeed, in verse three, he does just that! He says, “How great are his signs! and how mighty are his wonders! his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation.” Nebuchadnezzar converted? Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, the idolatrous and proud monarch of chapters one, two, and three, now praising God? Who brought him down? Who abased him? Who humbled him? A King greater even than Nebuchadnezzar. O Lord, how great Thou art!

Here is his epistle. “I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in mine house, and flourishing in my palace: I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me.” We have to remember that Nebuchadnezzar was king of the Chaldeans. His court was full of wise men, magicians, astrologers and the like. His dreams therefore were an important part of his lifestyle. In his heathen, Gentile way he was guided by dreams, omens, signs and portents. He could not make a move unless the stars were in harmony, or the date was auspicious, or his wise men agreed to it. And God came to him in that context to convert him. God did not send him a prophet as He once sent Jonah to Nineveh to warn its king. No, God gave him a dream, because there was a servant of God in his kingdom equipped to give the interpretation of it. And the dream troubled Nebuchadnezzar. “Therefore made I a decree to bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me, that they might make known unto me the interpretation of the dream,” he continues. “Then came in the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers: and I told the dream before them; but they did not make known unto me the interpretation thereof,” or, rather, they could not. At this point, no doubt, the great king was not very pleased, and saw earlier what that meant for those who displeased him. “But at the last Daniel came in before me, whose name was Belteshazzar, according to the name of my God, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods” - we would say, ‘The Holy Spirit of God’ - “and before him I told the dream”... So there is no sentence of death in this chapter, as there was in chapter two, and the sense of fear is missing, although the circumstances were somewhat similar. However, we should bear in mind that a great king displeased, a despot or absolute monarch who could easily become infuriated, was an intimidating character in those days. They trod warily who trod the courts of the great king!

Now the entire book of Daniel is a wisdom book, yet a book about dreams and visions in the main. We have been at pains to point out the background of greatness in its chapters. Nebuchadnezzar was a great king. But unless we see the greatness of God we may miss the relevance of the dreams. Nebuchadnezzar dreamed this time of a great tree which filled the whole earth but which was then hewn down, leaving only the stump of it in the ground. We have already shown that Daniel is a Resurrection book, so now let us look at the greatness of the Resurrection. The great Tree is Calvary. “Behold a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth.” We can clearly see that the Tree spoken of in the New Testament epistles grew and was strong. Its height reached to heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth. (Today, Calvary’s Tree can be seen as easily in China as Alaska or Australia.) “The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all.” Praise God! It is, as we know today, the Tree of Life. “The beasts of the field had shadow under it” - no more animal sacrifice in the worship of God - “and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof” - fowls of heaven representing spiritual thoughts, - “and all flesh was fed of it.” Now again, that description cannot be made to fit Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom, great as it was in its day. Its height never reached to heaven, and the ends of the earth never heard of Nebuchadnezzar. And of course “all flesh” was not “fed of it.” So there should be little

controversy as to what the Tree of Nebuchadnezzar's dream represents. The greatness of Calvary is not in question, and this is the only Tree that fits its description. Indeed, its height reached to the heaven of heavens; and the sight thereof to the ends of the earth, and beyond, when man explored space also. Great is the Lord, you see. Praise His Name!

But in Nebuchadnezzar's dream this Tree was hewn down, you see, and only the stump of it left in the earth. We have seen the greatness of Calvary in book after book of the scripture of truth. But for the moment, as it were, the Tree is removed from our sight. We are not looking at its height or its breadth, or its leaves or its fruit, because we want to fasten our eyes for a moment on the greatness of Christ's Resurrection. The Man Christ Jesus has been crucified and is dead and placed in a Tomb. Till the third day. And what happened then changed everything. But there is no picture of the Resurrection of Christ, because there is nothing to see. The Tomb is empty, save for a few grave-cloths. The Cross of Christ can be seen worldwide, but the Resurrection is a void, a black space, an empty Tomb. He is gone. 'He is not here, but is risen.' the angels said. So when we go to look, there is nothing to see. Therefore, if for a moment we remove the Tree, what is there to be seen? Nothing! Yet the greatness of the Resurrection surpasses, if it be possible, the greatness of the Tree. Because for a man to die and be buried is a human experience. There were three crosses on Golgotha, after all, three men who died together and were hastily buried because of the sabbath. But three days later there are only two still buried - the Third is Risen. And this is beyond all human experience. We have stepped out of the realm of the natural into the realm of the supernatural. The two thieves lie decomposing somewhere - the Lord is risen bodily, able to see, to hear, to speak, to walk, to eat, as He proved to His disciples. But as far as the Tomb is concerned there is just nothing to see. Even if the Tree itself be momentarily out of sight, still the greatness of the Resurrection of Christ is like looking into space. We know He is risen, but we have stepped into a different realm. How great Thou art!

If we have ever lived by a window where a tree fills our sight and then that tree be cut down, we will recall the sense of emptiness in that day. The whole view is altered. We have to adjust to the nothingness, to vistas not seen before. So in Daniel God orders the great Tree removed, so that we can adjust to a further scene. Christ now is no longer subject to death or any other human experience although He is still 'this same Jesus.' He has gone beyond death and the grave. To be seen now He has to manifest Himself. In His body of resurrection the limitations of time and the fragility of life are gone. His enemies can no longer threaten Him; no king has power over Him; no betrayer can kiss Him. He is simply not here, unless He wishes to be here. And He is alive for evermore. But He is alive in a new way, in a body of flesh-and-bone with the holes in His Hands and His Side and His Feet, but in a whole new order of things, a different dimension. He has stepped into Eternity again. He is King over an angelic kingdom. He is once again the Creator, the Lord of All. Indeed, all power and authority is in His hands today. If the Tree fill our view completely we may miss the sense of all that scripture teaches of our Risen Lord. His exaltation is so complete, His supremacy so universal, His authority of life and death so unassailable that we may lose the greatness in our wonder at the Tree. That is why in Daniel the Tree is removed, temporarily, only so that we can look beyond this life to a view less often seen, the view of Resurrection. To be alive, but on the other side of death, is too mind-boggling to grasp. Even Nebuchadnezzar in great Babylon was subject to sickness, disease and death, not to mention the sword in battle or the assassin's knife at home. To be beyond all that is greatness indeed in any kingdom. To be alive and beyond 'life' is to be truly great. There are no words or

phrases too extravagant to describe the greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ in Resurrection. How great Thou art!

The other side of the coin, the other thing we must bear in mind, is the stump of the Tree, left in the earth. Apart from the Resurrection of Christ the Cross has little significance for us. If Christ be not Risen, we are yet in our sins. And we can easily see that if Christ be not Risen we have no Justifier before God, no great High Priest, no Redeemer, no Saviour, no hope in life, and no King to return to take us to be with Himself. 'But now is Christ risen,' says the apostle, and the Comforter is come and is witness to that, for the Lord did explain that except He go the Comforter would not come. Therefore He is of course Risen, and has returned to the bosom of the Father and has sent the Comforter and has led captivity captive and has given gifts unto us. But you see that apart from the Resurrection of Christ the Tree would be just a stump, and Saul of Tarsus an unknown, and Peter, James and John simply fishermen who likely perished in a storm on the Sea of Galilee, of whom we never heard. Therefore the greatness of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ needs to be perceived in all its glory. The Cross of Christ in all its magnificence is still within human experience. The Resurrection of Christ goes beyond human experience. There are, as we know, some who have been recalled from death back to life, but only to die eventually after all from another cause. That is not resurrection. No, no! The Resurrection is a different state of being, to have eternal life, to live forever, to be changed. Lazarus wasn't changed, Eutychus wasn't changed, Dorcas wasn't changed - they are all long dead. But 'this same Jesus' is the First to be Resurrected, 'and behold,' He says, 'I am alive for evermore.' Can we see the greatness of that? It is God in action. It is God intervening. It is God demonstrating His power. The obedient Son was dead, but praise God He is alive evermore. So when we pray, 'Thy kingdom come,' we are praying for our own resurrection. We may die, but only in hope of resurrection. Therefore let us see clearly today the greatness of Resurrection.

"Nevertheless," says Nebuchadnezzar, "leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field," verse fifteen says. We do not do despite to the Cross of Christ in pointing to His Resurrection. Even in his dream, Nebuchadnezzar sees the stump bound with iron and brass - iron attesting to its certainty and sureness, and brass representing a mixed view of it. For the Cross without the Resurrection is only half the gospel, you see. We have to mingle or combine both in our message if we want to preach the truth of God. In the field, sowing or reaping, or just among the tender grass, wet with the dew of heaven, let the two sides of the matter be shown: Christ the First-fruits, we at our own resurrection the harvest. When He cometh, in a moment we shall all be changed. 'And so shall we ever be with the Lord.' This is the Epistle of Nebuchadnezzar to all, after his conversion. We will give our attention to both Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel again presently, but we want to ensure you have seen both the greatness of the Tree and the greatness of the empty space the third day. Christ Risen, Christ ascended, Christ seated at the right hand of God, is a glory of kingly greatness beyond compare. This same Jesus, the so-called carpenter of Nazareth, the friend of publicans and sinners, is the Eternal Son in the glory of the Father in Resurrection greatness. This King of kings and Lord of lords was once a Man upon earth in company with His disciples, now Lord of all. His glory is above the brightness of the sun. His is the Light of the City of God. He is coming to rule the whole world. And we are His witnesses, left on earth to share His love with our fellow men. Could anything be greater? Could a story be told which exceeds such a story? Could good news be more relevant, more cause for rejoicing than this? Our failure to do justice to the subject is no cause for criticism, for the subject is frankly beyond

us. The matchless grace of the wondrous story has for centuries been spoken of by many. O Lord, how great Thou art!

Well, if in Daniel chapter four we have seen the magnificence of the Tree and the greatness of the aftermath with the Tree removed, let us return to our contemplation of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel who was called Belshazzar. Nebuchadnezzar was a great king on earth in Babylon, but he could only dream of a kingdom which filled the whole earth and reached to heaven. Nevertheless he was proud of Babylon, proud of his empire, proud of his own achievements and his heart was lifted up with pride. He fell into the sin of Lucifer, you see. Satan was once a being of marvelous wisdom and beauty who became so proud of himself he thought he was equal with God, forgetting that the Creator must be superior to His own creation. Therefore Lucifer was thrust out and his followers with him. So in our chapter we see that Nebuchadnezzar, who was raised up by God to be king, and given authority and majesty and might and power - by the same God - began to think it was he and not God who was great. "The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" verse thirty tells us. "While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee," and this, of course, exactly fulfilled the dream which was given to warn him. That Daniel interpreted the king's dream correctly is borne out by the subsequent events. But obviously that is not why Nebuchadnezzar sent us his epistle, else the whole instruction of the chapter is contained in the proverb, 'Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.' Except we glimpse Christ in the chapter we are only learning history after all, and that is not the work of the Holy Spirit in us, for the Comforter takes the things of Christ - not Nebuchadnezzar or Daniel - and reveals them unto us. Praise God for His goodness to us! Great is the Lord!

"All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar," verse twenty-eight explains. Because of his pride, God abased him, "and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws" - or eagles' talons. Now this is a splendid picture also. We know that he that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted, for so scripture teaches. But when we say Christ is now exalted far above all, we need to see that in order to be so exalted He first of all had endure the abasement. In the case of Nebuchadnezzar the picture is reversed. We must bear in mind that the book of Daniel deals with greatness, and Nebuchadnezzar was a great king ruling an empire from great Babylon in his day. Therefore we need not be astonished by the greatness of Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation. In one hour, we are told, the kingdom was taken from him which was all his pride, and he is made equal to the beasts of the field. (How it may have come about we do not know - you could ask King Robert of Sicily!) But the greatness runs like a thread through the scene - even driven into the animal kingdom, Nebuchadnezzar grows in the likeness of a great eagle, the symbol of Rome, till seven times had passed over him, perhaps seven seasons, and then his kingdom was restored to him again. Now Daniel, in giving him the interpretation of his dream, had warned him of all this, and had given him good advice, in verse twenty-seven, at the same time. "Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity." And it was twelve months later that all this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar, "at the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon," so perhaps he did try to change - for a while.

But if we look at our Lord Jesus Christ for a moment we can see that the reverse is true; he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Our Lord was with God, glorified with the glory which He had with the Father before the foundation of the world. Though He was born in a manger in Bethlehem - and could a more humble beginning be arranged? - He was still the subject of angels' song and shepherds' wonder. He was 'Christ the Lord.' He was king over the animal kingdom even as a Babe, for Isaiah says, looking at the manger, that the ox knoweth his Owner and the ass his Master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. So we see that the Lord could humble Himself, but He could not shake off His greatness. And He could be subject to earthly parents, and be called a carpenter, but He could not disguise from John the Baptist that the greatest prophet of all time was not worthy to unloose His sandals. And He could teach and preach and heal, but asked to save the disciples on Galilee He once again demonstrated His Lordship so that they exclaimed, 'What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the seas obey him?' He was meek and lowly of heart, but He was Lord, you see. And He was Lord and Master of every situation, and every hard question, and every trying interview. Greatness clung to Him like a robe of glory, despite His menial attire and way of life. And when at last He stood before Pilate, and Pilate asked, 'Art Thou a king then?' His answer was so obvious that when they later came to Pilate to have the wording changed, Pilate refused. The Lord of Glory, Peter called Him. And they could blindfold Him and spit on Him and mock Him and slap His face with the palms of their hands and pull out His beard in handfuls, and scourge Him most cruelly, the description never changed, 'Behold your king!' And they could set Him between two thieves, and part His garments among them, and Crucify Him on a hill; still the inscription read, 'The king of the Jews.' And the very centurion had to acknowledge, 'Truly this man was the Son of God!' Amen!

So the great king, Nebuchadnezzar, discovered for himself that a far greater King ruled heaven and earth, even before the greater King came to earth from the excellent glory in order to save us. He says in verse thirty-four, "And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven," (or 'host' of heaven) "and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" And we should see that it was this King of kings who stood before Pilate and allowed them to do such evil things to Him that we are appalled; who voluntarily died for us on that most cruel Cross; and who lay in death in a Tomb on our behalf, before rising again to return to God. By His blood we are saved! Could a Greater be found who would do more for us? Nay, but Thou art worthy, O Lord... If we see nothing else in Daniel, let us at least see the greatness of our King. Nebuchadnezzar here plays the part of the prophet, pointing to the greatness of God, so that we might see the picture better. We have skimmed over these chapters very briefly, and lightly passed over many pictures of Christ, and have scarcely shown the substance of it, because we want you to study Daniel for yourself, but the greatness implied in its pages is too obvious to overlook and we trust you can see that, at least. Nebuchadnezzar was a great king, and Babylon a great city, in those far off days. And Daniel was a man of God, greatly beloved, who gave us a great book. And Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were great for the Lord in their day on earth. But our Lord so excels everyone else that words fail us! We can only exclaim, How great Thou art!

In verse thirty-six Nebuchadnezzar goes on to tell us, “At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me.” It is a little picture of the Resurrection of Christ, if you like, because Jesus was not only restored to His kingdom but “excellent majesty” was added unto Him. God gave Him a Name which is above every name, that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess Him Lord alone, to the glory of God the Father. But Nebuchadnezzar is now a changed man, as the last verse of chapter four indicates - “Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment:” and Nebuchadnezzar adds to that one word from personal experience, “and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.” So let “all people” take note of the epistle of Nebuchadnezzar, and follow his example so far as our Lord Jesus Christ is concerned in praising and extolling and honoring the King of Heaven, who is shortly to become the King of Earth also. If any has been too proud to acknowledge Jesus as Lord, let him repent and do it now, whilst it is called today, lest tomorrow the opportunity be gone for ever. When this King of kings and Lord of lords returns to earth in excellent majesty and glory the day of grace will be over, and the opportunity to repent passed. Then all those who were too proud to bow at His feet in their lifetime will be abased, and forced to bow to their utter humiliation and disgrace in the presence of those they despised, and then punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the great King and from the glory of His power. Indeed, as king Nebuchadnezzar teaches, we should all tread warily in the courts of the great King. Great is the Lord! “And His dominion an everlasting dominion.” Amen.

Chapter Five

“Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand.” Chapter five of Daniel opens on a new scene. Nebuchadnezzar has departed, and Belshazzar the king has taken his place. The picture we are looking at, the whole scene, the incidents recorded for us, all this happens in one night. It must therefore be vitally important, as far as we are concerned, to be so included in the book of Daniel. So we need to study this scene and the incidents that surround it. We are not concerned with history, nor with whether Belshazzar was son or grandson to Nebuchadnezzar, but we are concerned with Christ and how great He is. For here we see that, “Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand” - that is how the scene opens - and at the end of the chapter we learn, “In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.” So you see that what we looking directly at, and what the chapter is all about, could well be titled, ‘The last supper.’ It is, in fact, Belshazzar’s last meal on earth, for he was slain the same night. The background of greatness remains the same. The emphasis, indeed, is on the continuity. Verse two refers to Nebuchadnezzar as ‘his father Nebuchadnezzar.’ In verse 11, the queen, speaking to Belshazzar, says, ‘In the days of thy father,’ adding, ‘Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father.’ In verse 13 Belshazzar makes reference himself to ‘the king my father,’ and finally Daniel says in verse 18, “O thou king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom,” and after reminding Belshazzar of the events of chapter four in the life of Nebuchadnezzar concludes, “And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine hear, though thou knewest all this.” So the record, and the king himself, and the queen, and Daniel inform us that Belshazzar was the son, or direct descendant, of king Nebuchadnezzar.

Now the importance of this to us, rather than a matter of history, is to see that the greatness of Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom has not been lost or dissipated. If Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold, then the kingdom directly after him was the kingdom of silver, an inferior kingdom but still great. Belshazzar is not Nebuchadnezzar by any means, but still the succession of greatness has not been broken. Babylon here is still great Babylon, the kingdom is still intact even though it is Belshazzar and not Nebuchadnezzar at the head of it. And the sense of unlimited power and wealth is retained in the opening verse, "Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand." So we see the scene opens on "a great feast." But it is his last supper. If we go to the New Testament we find a far greater King surrounded by His disciples. But what a contrast! The upper chamber is no king's palace. The simple furnishings are no lordly array. The food is no gourmet's delight. The bread and the wine do not begin to compare with Belshazzar's banquet house, where the king drank wine before the thousand. And the little band of common folk, fishermen and the like, is nothing compared to Belshazzar's thousand lords. But whose kingdom remains to this day? Certainly not Belshazzar's. And who is alive and well today? Clearly not Belshazzar. So which kingdom is truly great, and which king is the King of kings and Lord of lords? We have to judge righteously, you see. For there are those even today who sit in banquet halls in their 'kingdoms,' and eat and drink wine in abundance, and surrounded by their vassals, but who pay no homage to the Lord who made them. And in their revelry and mirth they little think that another King is even now at the gate and their day of pleasure is about ended, for they paid not attention to Daniel when they had the opportunity, and Belshazzar's feast is only a painting to them.

"Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein. Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone." Belshazzar knew what had happened to Nebuchadnezzar his father. He knew the contents of Nebuchadnezzar's epistle. He was not ignorant of these things, yet like so many before him he derided them. He was drunk with power - and wine - and he just knew there was no Judgment Day, no Resurrection, no God in heaven, no Creator, no King greater than he was. And to prove it he caused them to drink their wine from the golden vessels dedicated to God, and praised the gods he could see and touch. Arrogant, insolent, disdainful and proud, he went out of his way to tempt God. "In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace." And suddenly all was changed. The supernatural had intruded into the affairs of the natural. The same verse says, "and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote." If we could only see God, or see the Kingdom of God, or see the Great White Throne, or see the lake of fire what different people we would be! But so long as we cannot see anything all is well with us. It never occurs to some people that spiritual blindness is the reason they don't see these things. Never! We see the gods of gold and silver, and we can touch the gods of brass, iron, wood or stone - the wood of the Cross even, or the stone at the mouth of the Tomb, but the Resurrection is a void, and what is not SEEN cannot be. "In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand...and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote." Great is the Lord, you see.

"Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another," - or against one

another, as we say. The drunken throng is suddenly sobered. The mirth, the revelry, the entertainment is ceased, the music stopped. The loudest sound for the moment is the knocking of the king's knees. All the color is drained from his face and the perspiration wets his brow as he sits with his lords watching the hand that writes on the wall, horrified. For everything he just knew a moment ago is discovered utterly false, and everything he derided utterly true, and doom stares him in the face. What we have here is not Resurrection so much as a look at the agnostic a moment after he dies. The dreadful discovery that the Hand he gleefully nailed to the Cross is writing the seal of his own doom is horrifying in the extreme. The physical discovery that there is life after death is a scream of despair as he is urged to the edge of the pit. The absolute knowledge that he has rejected the only One who could save him is too awful to contemplate. But Daniel is a resurrection book so we put that in as the resurrection of the damned. Belshazzar with a mighty effort could have saved himself even at this point, for he had Nebuchadnezzar's epistle and he had Daniel still, but he did not and death took him that night. There are men today who could save themselves by falling on their knees and calling on the Lord Jesus Christ to forgive them, but they will not. Proud, boastful - and damned, you see. The picture is clear enough. The great king is a pitiful sweating wretch. The banquet hall with his thousand lords, his princes, his wives and his concubines is irrelevant. His kingdom is only a memory as he comes face to face with reality. His staring eyes are riveted on the fingers of a man's hand. He is speechless. The odd noise he hears is the knocking of his own knees together. He is an abject coward. There is no greatness left in Belshazzar.

Now we want you to take a long look at that scene or picture, before we turn to another scene or picture. All that the world sees as great is in that picture. The king of great Babylon. The great feast. The banquet house with its thousand lords. The golden drinking vessels. Is that not what the world calls greatness? The picture we put in of the Resurrection of the Damned may not be so apparent, except to Belshazzar perhaps, whose knees are knocking. But let us turn now to the other scene or picture. It too is titled, 'The last supper.' But here the King is truly great. Scripture tells us, 'Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basen, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.' Can you imagine Belshazzar doing that? No, of course not. So you see true greatness is in the second picture, not the first. And this was His teaching also, that he who would be great among you should be the servant of all. The background in the second picture may seem puny compared to the background of Belshazzar's feast, but the background is largely irrelevant, is it not? For the greatness of the King of kings never stood out in clearer detail than when girded with a towel. Belshazzar had inherited his great kingdom from Nebuchadnezzar. Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands... He knew, even then, that all things were in His hands. He could have ordained that He never be crucified. He could have passed a decree, that no man should ever lay hands on Him. He had full authority at that point, you see, but He did not. Why? Because He had come to do the Father's will. He had purposed in His heart He would go on to Calvary, and die for poor sinners such as we. How great Thou art!

So when we look at the picture of Belshazzar's feast let us recall the last supper, or when we look at the picture of the last supper let us be reminded of Belshazzar's feast. Each is a picture of a great king just before he died. Each picture shows the king taking wine. Which is greater? In one the wine is used as an insult to God by a drunken fool. In the other the wine is used as a symbol of His Blood shed for us. Belshazzar was king of the wise of this world, king of

the Chaldeans. Our Lord was to embrace the folly of the Cross, scorned by rulers and commoners alike. In the picture in Daniel the king is warned by extraordinary means to save himself. In the gospel picture the betrayer is told, 'That thou doest, do quickly,' for He knew who should betray Him. In the picture before us faithful Daniel is brought in to help the king. In the other picture the King's right-hand man is getting ready to deny Him. Belshazzar's feast shows a king served by a thousand lords. The gospels show a King washing His disciples' feet! But true greatness lies where? In the banquet house of Babylon or in the upper chamber in Israel? Can we distinguish true greatness from false greatness? Have we got the message of Daniel chapter five? Do we all know to separate the Resurrection of the Just from the Resurrection of the Damned? Or do we still envy the rich, the worldly great, the drunken fools whose end is damnation, and despise them whom God has chosen to serve His King? Belshazzar the king inherited the kingdom from Nebuchadnezzar his father, a man who said, "Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven," and this kingdom and his life were lost in one night. Another Son, but One who came to do His Father's will, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hand, said, "This is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many." How great Thou art!

Well, we mustn't leave Daniel out, must we? After all, this is his book we are studying. Belshazzar has despised Daniel's wisdom and forgotten him, it seems, but the queen, in verses two, eleven, and twelve, gives a fair description of him, and Belshazzar recalls him. "Then was Daniel brought in before the king. And the king spake and said unto Daniel, Art thou that Daniel, which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry? I have even heard of thee..." We might alter it a little and say, 'Even I have heard of thee...', for everyone knew of Daniel, who in the days of Nebuchadnezzar was "ruler over the whole province of Babylon" as we learned in chapter two. So Belshazzar, as befitting a great king, tells Daniel how he will reward him if he can read the writing on the wall. "Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation." Daniel has little regard for Belshazzar and wants nothing from him. This great prophet, this nobleman of God, this prince among peers is a man greatly beloved. Did you notice he is Daniel all the way through now? You see, in chapter four, when Nebuchadnezzar told him his dream, verse 19 says, "Then Daniel, whose name was Beltshazzar, was astonished one hour, and his thoughts troubled him. The king spake," - Nebuchadnezzar, that is - "and said, Beltshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. Beltshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies." It was Beltshazzar, you see, who answered. So we gather that Daniel was not only a great interpreter of dreams and God's nobleman, but a very human person who had grown fond of Nebuchadnezzar in a sense, probably because he recognized the greatness of the man, and called 'My lord' from the high regard he held him in, which clearly was not carried over to his son.

So we can relate more easily to Daniel because of his obvious humanity, you see. He has little time for Belshazzar, whom he sees has no greatness in him. He is off-hand in his presence to the point of rudeness almost, and before giving the interpretation of the writing he gives Belshazzar something to think about. For Daniel reminds him how the Most High God had given "Nebuchadnezzar thy father, a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour," but later, "when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride," God took it off him for a time in order to teach him humility. "And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this," Daniel tells him freely. Then in ringing scorn Daniel points to the

evidence, the golden drinking cups dedicated to God, now desecrated by the king, his lords, his wives, and his concubines, and concludes, “and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified.” Well done, Daniel! Small wonder Daniel stands tall in the company of the greats! It takes courage to talk like that to the king of Babylon! If his dedication to God is not already proven, and his courage proven, well, we still have chapter six to look at. There is no critical account in the scripture of truth of any fault found in Daniel all his life, for he lived up to his name, you see, and only chapter four even hints that he was not perfect. If we examine closely the lives of God’s great men we may see faults here and there which lead us to believe they were human and not divine. It is only when we examine closely the life of Christ we are amazed to discover no fault at all in Him anywhere or at any time, which confirms our belief that he was divine whilst in human flesh. God can make us more like Jesus every day, but when the days are numbered and the life of Christ is weighed against our own life in the end, the writing on the wall before us reads, ‘Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin.’ So it is His righteousness we rejoice in, not our own, for by grace are we saved, praise the Lord for ever!

“And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.” For us, it means, God has numbered our days and finished them - Mene. Tekel, thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting. Upharsin, let another take over the reins. Daniel says, in verse 26 and on, “This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.” To each his own. But what we want to see is that the writing over the Cross was, ‘This is Jesus, the king of the Jews.’ For everyone else, yes, even Daniel, the summing up of a great life lived unto God is, Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin. But for the King of heaven there is none to be weighed against, none who can begin to even the scales, none to hope to compare, His hand must do the writing; his judgment will be fair to us. But He Himself is beyond compare and we are content with that. God has given all judgment into His hands, and we will know, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, how we did, whether we ran well or not, what the rewards may be. However, let each one be aware that we do not enter heaven on our own merit, but His. We cannot stand before God without a Mediator. All our righteousness is as filthy rags in the presence of purity. We need an Advocate with the Father, a Great High Priest even to worship God, a Sin-Bearer to bring us before Holiness. Our Lord Jesus us risen for our justification, remember, and to attempt to come into the courts of God clothed in anything but the righteousness of Christ is to invite disaster. For in the presence of absolute purity and unbelievable holiness there is no room for equivocation. The heavens are not clean in Thy sight, O God. If we can see from the book of Daniel that greatness belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ, let us ever remember the Lord’s own words, “My father is greater than I.”

Finally, to conclude chapter five, “Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.” The kingdom was not split at this point, but it took two rulers to replace the great king Nebuchadnezzar, so Daniel could only be number three, of course. It did Daniel little good, for the very next verse tells us, “In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain,” and the kingdom passed, “And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.” So Daniel, in our own phrase, has greatness thrust upon him whether he will or not, but it is up to Darius now if he is to retain the promotion. Worldly promotion, however well deserved, is an insecure tenure at best. The point of the Judgment Seat of Christ is reward enduring and everlasting. Some, according to Hebrews, refused deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection. The rewards are very great, you

see, because of the greatness of God. We only have to see what Christ got at His Resurrection to begin to perceive what we might get at our own resurrection. Some have seen this, and striven hard to finish well. The race is not always to the swift, you know or the battle to the strong. The 'lame duck' may finish powerfully, the weakest in Christ may be up there in front. But the contenders, whether apostle or prophet, will have to show they deserve promotion. There can be no doubt in anyone's mind that the Lord Jesus, at His Resurrection, deserved the very best that heaven has to bestow. They do not sing, 'Worthy is the Lamb,' without good reason. Ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands can be heard saying, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.' Daniel could say Amen to that, even great Nebuchadnezzar could say Amen to that. Today, we can add our voices to the thronging heavens. Can you say Amen to it? If so, praise the Lord for He is worthy.

Chapter Six

"It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; And over these three presidents" If we think of it as 120 states united, with three presidents, we can see it was a goodly kingdom all right. "Of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage. Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm." So Daniel prospered under the king Darius. He had done well under Nebuchadnezzar, being made ruler over the whole province of Babylon. And Belshazzar, just before he died, made Daniel the third ruler in the kingdom. And Darius thought to set him over the whole realm. So Daniel prospers, because an excellent spirit was found in him, and it is easy to see he deserved each high honor because he lived up to his name. But remember this is the third kingdom, the kingdom of brass if we count from the head of gold downwards. In other words, it was an inferior kingdom, a combination rulership, a kingdom which had been lost in battle and was now in enemy hands. The Chaldeans are now under Darius the Median, and the people come under the laws of the Medes and Persians, as we shall see, and the harmony is lost, the unity is gone, the one-people-one-king aspect is missing. So it is a kingdom divided against itself, and the strength of its unity is therefore inferior. It is a kingdom of brass, in the words of Daniel. However, excellent its leadership, however brilliant its administration, however vast its estate, it can never equal even Belshazzar's kingdom where the wealth and power is arrogantly displayed for all to see, and the people have never been conquered. This is a kingdom of conquest, a conquered people, under brilliant leadership, but it remains a mixed multitude and thus a kingdom of brass.

Now all this may be thought of as background material only, but if we remember that Daniel is a prophet and the scriptures testify of Christ, we will easily see that in our Lord's day the land of Israel lay in Roman hands and our Lord Jesus had in Him a more excellent spirit than great Daniel so that at one point they would have made Him king by force; only He said, 'I receive not honour from men.' Thus when we come to verse four, "Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom," we can see that in bringing to Jesus the woman taken in adultery, or in demanding to know of Him whether to pay tribute to Caesar or not, the rulers of the Jews were forever seeking occasion against Him. And we can see the near perfection of Daniel's life that the fourth verse can be transcribed to the life of Christ almost literally for it says, "but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him." Daniel ran a beautiful race,

you know, neither was there any error or fault found in him, and when we look at the Lord in this sixth chapter of Daniel we can see it was for envy they slew Him. “Then said these men,” verse five, “We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.” If we turn to the scenes in the high priest’s house or Herod’s palace or Pilate’s court we see exactly the same thing. Even their false witnesses couldn’t stand up under questioning. Herod could find no fault in Him. Pilate found no fault in Him. But when the high priest asked Him, ‘Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?,’ and Jesus said, ‘I am,’ then the high priest rent his clothes and said, ‘What need we any further witnesses?’ Under the laws of His God, you see, He was obliged to tell the truth only. Yes, He was - and is - the Christ, the Son of God, the Father’s well-beloved, the only Begotten Son, the King of heaven, the Lord of glory, the Lamb of God and the great ‘I am,’ of Moses, of the apostles, of John. ‘And Jesus said, I am.’ How great Thou art!

Now the story, or picture, of Daniel and the lions’ den, is too well known to bear repetition, but if it has been some time since you read it for yourself we urge you to do so now. The leaders of the rulers were determined that Daniel should be done away with, and they tricked Darius the king into signing a decree that ensured just that. “Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree,” says verse nine. Daniel knew what they were up to, and what they had planned for him, but he remained unalterable in purpose of heart. “Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.” So we see, at the end of verse 12, that “the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not,” clashed with the steadfastness and purpose of heart of Daniel. One or the other had to give way to avoid conflict, but this law was only in effect for thirty days, so if Daniel would only compromise a little he could save himself. What is thirty days, after all, out of a lifetime spent in the service of God? But Daniel was not a compromiser, otherwise God couldn’t have used him to paint for us a picture of Christ. (Given the circumstances, what would you have done?) Thus faithful and steadfast in purpose of heart, Daniel continues as aforetime, but well knowing what the result would be and well aware of the dreadful den into which he must come if he continues on his path. The king, Darius, could be blind to the duplicity but Daniel was not. It is one thing to pray and to give thanks in an alien world, but who could give thanks in those circumstances? Yet that is what Daniel did. So we see that when Jesus set His face as a flint to go up to Jerusalem He knew what awaited Him at the end of that path of true obedience. He foreknew and foresaw what would happen to Him if He continued, yet He never deviated from the path of steadfast obedience to the will of God. How great Thou art!

We are looking at Daniel here in order to see Jesus, as their races run parallel at this point. Daniel knows what is ahead of him. So does Jesus. The law of the Medes and Persians is unalterable. The will of God His Father is fixed at this point for our Lord. The king, Darius, may set his heart on Daniel to deliver him, “and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him,” but could not. Likewise Pilate - ‘and from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him’ - but the Lord Jesus was not released or delivered. Verse 15 of chapter six of Daniel says, “Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed.” In the gospels the reason is more subtle but equally compelling. ‘If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar’s friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.’ In our chapter before us we are told, “Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into

the den of lions.” In the gospels we learn, ‘Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away.’ Two men, two scenes, centuries apart and yet how similar! The difference is that Jesus Christ was King. Only He was great enough to overrule it. He had authority and power to overrule the Jews and the Romans and Pilate and the high priest and everyone else, but He would not, because we needed a Saviour. He was going to live up to His name, you see. He was going to carry out His Father’s will. He would be obedient unto death, and that the death of the Cross. He laid down His life of Himself, no man took it from Him. He could have come down from the Cross, even after they had crucified Him, but He came to die for us. His precious Blood had to be shed, for without shedding of blood there is no remission. He had to die in order that we might live unto God. And only after three days did He rise from the dead.

We see in chapter six that Daniel is like Jesus - obedient unto death - but there the likeness ends, for in verse 22 Daniel is able to tell the king, “My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me.” Our Lord for our sakes is forsaken, and with a loud cry gives up the ghost, and His dead body is removed and placed in a Tomb. Daniel’s experience may have been horrific in the extreme. The fear, the expectation of death, the near certainty that he would not survive are implicit in the chapter. But his deliverance is miraculous, for clearly none but God could have shut the lions’ mouths, and he is removed from the lions’ den unscathed. Daniel has been faithful unto death, indeed, but God intervened on his behalf, and his faith in God is vindicated. But our dear Lord Jesus is forsaken by God in His hour of need. He is thrown to the lions. He is cast into their pit. He descends into hell. Why? We know from other scriptures that the answer is ‘SIN.’ Sin will take us to hell if we do not repent. Thus we see that the sinless Christ could never have been forsaken by God except He had taken our sins - yours and mine, that is - in His own body on the Tree, and died for us, and went to hell for our sins. He was not delivered - how could He be, with our sins upon Him? But we are atoned for, and justified before God - just as if we had never sinned - and made in Him righteousness before God, so that we will never be forsaken, never go to hell. What a Saviour! Daniel could not have done it for us. Even though Daniel could say, “forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt,” yet for all that Daniel needed a Saviour for he was born in sin. Only Jesus Christ was great enough to die for us all.

But it was a lions’ den, according to chapter six of Daniel. And who goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour? Satan, of course! Also, scripture informs us that hell was prepared for the devil and his angels. Our Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, not only died for us but went to hell for us. If we read Daniel chapter six we can get a distant view of it. Perhaps we should go on to verse 23 to see it. Daniel has answered king Darius and “then was the king exceedingly glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.” The stone was rolled away - verse 17 told us that “a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet” - and Daniel was raised up out of the den, to give us a glimpse of Resurrection. But the den itself may be seen in verse 24. It says, “And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den.” What a scene! The den of hungry lions. The awful roaring. The screams of the victims. The dreadful sound of breaking bones. The snarling, blood-curdling noise of rage as the lions fight for their prey. The stench, the darkness of the pit, the bloodied walls, the mess on the

floor, the smell of death amid the frenzy of the savage beasts. It is an unforgettable sight. Daniel, by faith in God, spent the night in that den and lived to tell the tale. But what of his accusers? Let us ever remember that to die in sin, unforgiven, without God and without hope, and to be cast into hell is no matter for laughter here in this life, now. Our Lord went to hell for us. Should we continue to refuse His free salvation?

And now another epistle, similar in tone to Nebuchadnezzar's epistle but this time from king Darius, and a decree also - "Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end." Do all people, nations and languages tremble and fear before the God of Daniel today? Clearly they do not. Yet two great kings left us their epistles so that all men everywhere should read, mark, and learn from them to do just that. King Darius decreed it, and we know that such decrees are unalterable and irrevocable. Therefore when Christ comes this decree will be put into effect and carried out. It cannot be otherwise, you see. Darius himself cannot annul his own decrees. Verse 27 goes on, "He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions." King Darius uses Daniel as an example, but if you talk to a group of genuine believers today you will discover that God, in this day of grace, is delivering and rescuing to this day. And someday soon you will see His signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, the prelude to the return of Jesus Christ the Lord. Why? It has all been decreed, from long ago, and the decree is unalterable. You have only to read the sixth chapter of Daniel to see the matter for yourself. Now we have a choice, in this day of grace. We can either tremble and fear before the God of Daniel willingly and come before Him and bow before Him willingly in Christ Jesus our Lord, or we can refuse, and spurn the epistle of Darius, and pay no heed to the decree. That is our free choice. But when Christ comes, remember, every knee in heaven and earth must bow to Him. By decree of God Himself. Without exception. How great Thou art!

The last verse of chapter six ends, "So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian." The first six chapters of Daniel involve action, as we have seen. But we ourselves can be inactive and uninvolved, mere spectators, reading only to please ourselves and thus miss entirely Daniel's message. We are meant to be part of the action. When we see the greatness of God it should cause us to worship more fully. When we see the greatness of Christ we should want to fall on our own knees as Daniel did. When we read the scripture of truth and see Christ in it we should beg God for more of the Holy Spirit in us in order that more of Christ be revealed to us. "So this Daniel prospered..." it says. If we follow Daniel's example, set out for us in chapter one, and purpose in our own heart to avoid defiling ourselves with the things of this world, we too will prosper. God makes no secret of the fact that He has more for us - more than we have ever asked for, more than we have imagined possible. And God is a cheerful giver. He literally wants to give us more of Christ, to satisfy our souls with the Bread of Heaven, and to give us the Water of Life freely. But our part is to want more. Here in this work we have skipped hundreds of pictures of Christ in the first six chapters of Daniel in order to encourage you to ask, to seek, to knock till it be opened unto you. We want you to be involved, you see, to be part of the action. There are things concealed in Daniel that you may be the first to explore. God is a great God, and a revealer of secrets, says chapter two. Why not ask Him then to reveal them to you? Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus. If Christ reigns in your heart today you can prosper now - you do not have to wait till He comes to have His

glory and greatness revealed to you. Chapter three teaches that if nothing be allowed to come between adorer and Adored we should be able to walk and talk with the Lord Himself. How great Thou art!

Also we need to see our part in God's action. Verse 21 says this, "Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever." Now Daniel is a prophet. If God has made you a king and priest unto God, and given you eternal life, then you are meant to be part of the action rather than being a mere spectator. It is the part of a king to live for ever, you see. But not all kings are great kings, as a comparison of Nebuchadnezzar in chapter four and Belshazzar in chapter five shows. So what makes for greatness in a king? First, true humility before God. We do not begin to have excellent majesty added to us till we can praise and extol and honor the King of Heaven. As long as we are concerned with our own works and not His work in us, we are not great at all. Second, to wash one another's feet, as our Lord taught us. And third, to be faithful unto death, as Daniel by example shows. Our prophetic ministry, our part as prophets, we will look at more closely in the other half of the book, but here in chapter six let us be concerned with who Christ is and who we are in Him. "O King, live for ever." And He is alive for evermore, Amen, and has the keys of hell and death. But God's word to you also is, "O king, live for ever." Have you eternal life? Will you rise at the Resurrection of the Just? Will you reign with Him? If not, you need to take action - today! If so, you cannot be inactive now. For it is in the here and now that God must try your faith, and test you, and cause you grief in order to make you into a great king in His image, in the likeness of the king of Heaven. 'If we..' what? 'If we suffer with Him, we shall reign with Him,' it says. "Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me." It may be so for us also, but it tested Daniel's faith for all that, and our faith will be tested also if we are of Daniel's band. But only let us keep our eyes fixed on Him who was thrown to lions and not delivered - for us, who deserved only to die. How great Thou art!

Chapter Seven

We come now in chapter seven to the other half of the book and we can see, if we read the chapter for ourselves, that the action is over and we have arrived at the speakings or prophetic utterances. Daniel remains the same Daniel, and the background remains the same - "In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters." Nebuchadnezzar is dead and with his passing passed 'Belteshazzar,' leaving us with Daniel only against the background of greatness under Belshazzar. So these dreams and visions as Daniel dreams and visions, that we might be sure they come from the One God alone and are not tainted by false gods. Verse two begins, "Daniel spoke and said..." perhaps to his companions Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. So what follows is pure Daniel, we might say. It is prophetic utterance. We have seen the quality of Daniel's life in the earlier chapters, and there can be no doubt that this Daniel is a man of God dedicated to the service of God and speaking by the Holy Spirit of God. Still later we learn he is a man greatly beloved of God. Therefore the dreams and visions follow the character of Daniel and the background of greatness. They are not local, or recent, or irrelevant (to us), but rather they are of worldwide events millennia away from that day and relevant only to us in the very last days. So let us treat them properly and give them their importance, as we turn to see the greatness of God in chapter seven.

“Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea.” The great sea represents mankind, the great mass of people. The four winds of heaven represent the diverse and opposing elements which blow upon it and cause turbulence. Thus verse three, “And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another.” Man is a creature of tides, borne from time to eternity whether he will or not; born on a neap tide, dying on an ebb tide. He has no control over the sea, over the tides; no say in when he will be born or where, little say in his manner of dying. Nor can he control the turbulence of the sea around him. But our Lord Jesus Christ demonstrated for us, in His simple ‘Peace, be still’ on Galilee, that He alone can control both winds and sea. He is not called Lord for nothing. It is no mere title. He is called Lord because He is Lord. He is King of heaven. The four winds are the winds of the heaven, according to Daniel. Scripture warns against following every wind of doctrine - ‘be ye steadfast, unmovable,’ it says. Having grasped the truth in Christ we need not so much as waver, when we have seen how great He is. Let the turbulence rage around us, we in Christ are immune to the strivings of the opposing winds and the tossing of the restless sea of humanity around us. We are fixed in Him, steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

So with that in mind, let us consider the four great beasts of Daniel’s vision. “The first was like a lion, and had eagle’s wings,” says verse four. The lion is said to be king of the jungle, the eagle is great in the air. So the first ‘beast’ that is stirred up from the sea by the four winds of heaven is a lordly brute with supremacy in the air also. “I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man’s heart was given unto it.” Now we are not going to argue the meaning of all this, nor quarrel with more godly men than we who have already given the interpretation. Instead we would like to know how this applies to Christ, and how it is relevant therefore to us. You see, at the time of Christ there were four elements at work in the sea of mankind. There was the envy of the Jews. There was the brutality of the Roman. There was what Satan did. There was the Holy Spirit of God. The Lord Jesus was a Man of the Spirit of God. Satan opposed Him at every turn and sought to destroy Him. The envy of the Jews was stirred up and caused turbulence. Finally, the brutality of the Roman system came into play. So we can say that as a result of the interplay of these four, the turbulence among the people ended in the Cross. Daniel prophesied that when the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea it produced something beastly, something powerful (as a lion) but which was ‘lifted up from the earth’ as if on eagle’s wings. How great Thou art!

“And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh.” So the first beast is like a lion, and the second like a bear. Though these are pictures of the Cross, yet the second includes the Resurrection also. In the first picture we are told, “It was lifted up from the earth,” but in the second “it raised up itself...and they said thus unto it, Arise...” We will look at each picture again more closely in a moment to see the details of each, but God does not teach us about the Cross without including the Resurrection. So what we have seen so far is that Daniel was a prophet, and like all prophets of God he testifies of Christ. Then we have seen that the Cross of Christ is not merely man’s inhumanity to man, but it is in fact orchestrated by God through the interplay of the four winds of the heaven upon the great sea: the four elements noted earlier. We cannot say Satan did it, or the Romans did it, or the Jews did it, or even that Jesus did it. All we can say is that God did it, God over all blessed for ever, by bringing into play the four winds of heaven, causing the turbulence in the sea of

mankind. And out of the turbulence there is that which is lifted up, first of all, and later told to “Arise,” in verses four and five. So even though Daniel is a Resurrection book, as we saw in the earlier portion of it, yet the Cross is too important to be left out, you see. Great is the Lord.

“After this I beheld,” says Daniel, “and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it.” We have to bear in mind that Daniel is writing or speaking from a background of greatness. These beasts are actually great beasts, as a great lion, a great bear, a great leopard. We can easily see therefore in the third picture that when it says, “dominion was given to it,” it implies great dominion. So when we look at the savagery of the lion, it is great savagery. Or when we look at the ferocity of the bear it is great ferociousness. Or when we look at the speed of the leopard it is great speed. We may tend to overlook this. Our Lord Jesus was prepared for Calvary, forewarned and foreknowing, yet to His disciples the suddenness of it is a shock. One moment Peter, and indeed all the apostles, are vowing to die for Him, and the next they all forsook Him and fled, and Peter denies every knowing the Man. The Lord had forewarned them, yet the speed of the thing simply overtook them. Like a leopard, you see. It all happened so suddenly. For years they had learned to walk with danger, as the evil rulers of the Jews sought opportunity to take Him and could not. They had been long accustomed to knowing that Jesus led them safely, in the very midst of alarms and perils. And suddenly it is all over. It comes on them with the speed of a leopard. They scattered and fled, and Jesus is left all alone.

“After this I saw in the night visions,” Daniel continues, “and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns.” Daniel is looking at a beast so dreadful and terrible he has nothing with which to compare it. We may say that Christ died a death comparable to a common criminal such as the two thieves, but the lion reminds us of the fact that He was no criminal or common man but the Lion of the tribe of Judah. We may say that Jesus died in weakness, but when we see the bear we are reminded that He could have called for twelve legions of angels, could have come down from the Cross in view of them all, could have called down fire from heaven, as Elijah did, and annihilated every one of them, for all power lay with Him. We may say that our Lord died soon, so that Pilate marveled that He was dead already, but the leopard reminds us that death must stalk the prey before the kill. But if we ever get a true picture of Calvary comparisons all fail, for the fourth beast is incomparable. At the Cross man’s inhumanity reached a climax. At the Cross all the hatred of mankind for God was vented on Jesus Christ. At the Cross Satan did his utmost to kill the Son of God for ever. And, also, at the Cross God poured out His righteous indignation for the sins of the whole world. “And behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly.”

So before we come to the specifics of each picture, let us pause to take an overall look at what the prophet Daniel would teach us. We are looking in chapter seven at inhumanity. Inhuman-ness. But we do not call it inhuman-ness, we call it beastliness. It is pictured for us as beasts, and not even ordinary beasts at that. The first is a lion with eagle’s wings. The second is a bear with three sets of teeth instead of two. The third is a leopard with four wings. And the fourth is simply dreadful in the extreme, so that comparisons fail. So we see that the lion is not only king of the jungle but master of the air also. The devouring bear has not only great teeth to devour but an extra set of teeth. The leopard is not only swift to the kill but has wings to assist it to fly. And the fourth beast has ten horns. Thus we see that the Cross is no mere crucifixion, beastly as that may be, but something unique. The matter is no mere matter of three men once

dying side by side on a hill, all suffering equally. The beasts in this scene of beastliness are no mere lion, no mere bear, no mere leopard or any other ordinary jungle beast. They are different, spectacular, beastlier than anything we have ever seen or imagined. If we were to go on to verse 15 for a moment we see that Daniel says, "I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me." The visions, you see, are great visions. They are nightmarish. They grieved and troubled the prophet, and remember Daniel was not easily troubled, even by a den of lions. Great is the Lord.

"And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another." Having seen the four beasts in toto, as it were, let us consider each separately. "The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it." Now crucifixion is one of the cruelest deaths known to man. In our Lord's day it was king of the jungle. They led Him away to be crucified, it says, but Jesus Christ couldn't be killed because He was from eternity and had eternal life in Himself as God. He could give others eternal life, but no man could take His life from Him. He had, as it were, "eagle's wings." He could return to God. Therefore in order to die for us, He must give up or relinquish His eternalness. "I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked," is how the prophet sees it. And this was done even before the Cross is set up. "And it was lifted up from the earth." So amid the scenes of brutality and brutishness and bestiality Christ is also subjecting Himself to a transformation. "And made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it." God, as we know, is too holy to be touched by sin. But the Son of God, Himself holy, had to take our sins in His own body on the Tree. He has to relinquish His divinity, you see. He has to become mere mortal, "to stand upon the feet as a man," in order to die for our sins. He has to divest Himself of His eternalness, His innate divinity and absolute holiness. "And a man's heart was given to it," in the prophet's words. How great Thou art!

"And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh." Again, a picture of the Cross. This time the beastliness is a devourer of flesh. The Lord has given up His eternality, given up His divinity, in order to die as a man. But not merely to give up the ghost. His flesh is devoured, as it were. Now God shows us the Resurrection in this picture that we might be sure that the Risen Christ is in fact 'this same Jesus.' The marks are in His flesh, you know. The marks made by the crown of thorns. The marks of the scourging. The holes in His hands, His feet. The gaping hole in His side. They are all still there, just as they were on the day He died. But this picture has two sides, you see. God does not want us to dwell exclusively on the beastliness of the Cross. We have to see the other side. "And it raised up itself on one side." God wants us to see the Resurrection of Christ, but it is put in one picture so that we will know it is this same Jesus, the Lamb that was slain, that we worship today. "And it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it," or as we say, an extra set of teeth. They shall look on Him whom they pierced, you know. And He will be to them as an angry bear, a great bear, and they will all be devoured. "And they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh." He is Risen, as they will learn to their hurt very soon. How great Thou art!

"After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it." And if you have followed thus far you will know it is great dominion. We presume you already are familiar with the speed of the leopard. And this beast is faster than any leopard for it can fly. So we see that one moment Christ is with His disciples in the garden, the next He is caught and held. One day

He is the Messiah, the next He is a convicted insurrectionist. At one point He is the Lord, and before the Cross is lifted up He is mere mortal. Once He is sinless, holy, harmless and undefiled. But swifter than the leopard's pounce my sins and yours are His sins and He must pay the price. We cannot follow the speed of the change, it is just a blur, from absolute purity to disgusting uncleanness. He who knew no sin - can you imagine our sins imparted to Him? Now the wages of sin is death, as you know. "The beast had also four heads," it says. There is the physical torture of the Crucifixion, number one. There is the divesting of divinity, number two. There is the taking of our sins in His own Body on the Tree, number three. And there is the wrath of God, number four. But our Lord Jesus Christ, risen the third day, will return. He will come with the speed of lightning. And how long will it take for us to be changed? In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, it says. How's that for speed? "...and dominion was given to it." Come, Lord Jesus! How great Thou art!

"After this I saw in the night visions," continues verse seven, "and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns." If we go back to verse one of chapter seven for a moment we will see it says, "Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters." So in this fourth beast we see the sum of the matters. To fully grasp Calvary, beloved, it is not enough to see the four heads of the previous beast, for each considered separately is less than the sum of the matters. In other words, they are synergistic - that is, the total is far greater than the sum of the elements. You see, when we look at the Cross and say, 'Ah, yes, but He was divine, you know,' we are underestimating it. Or if we say, 'He bore the sins of the world,' and forget that He bore our sins which in themselves were enough to send us each to hell. Or if we say, 'He was numbered with the transgressors,' and fail to see that He became greater, through our transgressions, than the wicked one himself. Or if we say, 'He died for us,' and omit He went to hell for us - we fall short of the total. We are missing out the fourth beast. We have not told the sum of the matters. For the Cross is one thing added to another till the whole be dreadful and terrible and strong exceedingly. Christ was King of kings, but at Calvary He was overcome by one thing after another till the ten horns ruled and He died.

Let us therefore consider the horns. "I considered the horns," says Daniel, "and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things." Now that 'little horn' is death. We can easily see that death put an end to our Lord's physical suffering, as if that 'horn' were plucked up by the roots. Yet death did not put an end to the devouring of His flesh, for only after He died did the soldier plunge the spear into His side. He was dead already, scripture says, yet the devouring continued, 'and forthwith there came out blood and water.' This was after He was dead, for without shedding of blood there is no remission, so if the devouring had ended at His death, we would still lack redemption. So the brutality continued, even after He was dead, and the beastliness continued, the inhumanity to man. Then again, He went to death and to hell, after He gave up the ghost, another pair of horns exercising their dominion over Him. So death was only a 'little horn,' you see. It clearly ended His physical suffering, and it clearly ended all hope or possibility that God would intervene on His behalf. That possibility is gone, plucked up by the roots, whilst the forsaking continues, you see. So the physical kingdom is lost, and the kingdom of hope is lost, and we should be able to discern that with the shedding of blood the flesh-and-blood era or kingship is gone too, so that He cannot rise again in a flesh-and-blood state. "Behold, there came up among

them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots." You might pick three different ones. These are ours.

Now the horns of the fourth beast in Daniel's vision represent ten kingships. As we saw earlier, Nebuchadnezzar had absolute kingship, but the vision occurs in the time of Belshazzar, a great but not absolute kingship. So we can see that the Crucifixion had dominion over Christ but yet not such absolute dominion as to prevent Him crying with a loud voice at the end. And we can see that death had dominion over Christ but yet not such absolute dominion as to prevent Him rising the third day. And we can see that the devouring of flesh had dominion over Christ, but yet not such absolute dominion as would prevent His disciples recognizing Him when they saw Him again. And we can see that the forsaking (by God as well as man) had dominion, but not such dominion as to come between Father and Son. And we can see that the bearing of our sins had dominion, but yet not such absolute dominion as to cause Him to cease to love us and forgive us fully. Praise God! How great He is! But all of these ten 'horns' had dominion over Him, and He was subject to each one; but the sum of the ten is greater than ten. Verse 24 tells us, "And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings." We will look at the interpretation given to Daniel in a moment, but in this work at least let us consider only the greatness of Christ, that death itself had only a very brief dominion over Him, and He was still able after all this to rise from among the dead.

Now in verse 16 Daniel says, "I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things." The interpretation of the things is given to Daniel, and he wrote it, and we have only to read it for ourselves to see what it all means, and if we are in any difficulty God has set teachers in the church who can tutor those desirous of learning more. We have no quarrel with the interpretation given to them, any more than we would have a quarrel with the interpretation given to Daniel. Our object is only to focus attention on Christ, on the Cross and the Tomb and the Resurrection, and on His return. "These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth." Perhaps if it were translated 'kingships' instead of 'kings' it would be easier to understand. We are not concerned with who the 'kings' are but with what the 'kingships' are. Kingships involve dominion. If we turn in chapter seven to verses 9 - 14 we will see, "One like the Son of man" brought before the Ancient of days, "And there was given him dominion." Thus in verse 18 it says, "But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever." Our eyes are on the Son of man, and on His glory, and on His kingdom, as we wait for His return. We are not so much concerned with earthly kingdoms, you see, as with heavenly, though both may be involved. So if one talk of heaven, and another of earth, both may be heard without argument, for neither disagrees with the other. How great Thou art!

Finally, in chapter seven, Daniel says, "Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet." We see in verse ten that, "the judgment was set, and the books were opened," and we know we shall not come into condemnation for Christ has paid for our sins. But our judgment, which He bore, was the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful. That judgment is the judgment of God against sin. Whatever 'residue' was left in Christ after the scorning, the humiliation, the abasement, the physical abuse, the scourging, the crown of thorns, the actual Crucifixion, was stamped out by the fourth beast, which "devoured, brake in pieces,

and stamped the residue with his feet.” Like Daniel, we need to know this truth, the truth of the fourth beast, “And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows.” We have tried to show the truth of the ten horns, and of the other which came up. The other horn is death, which even today speaks loudly and prevails, even against the saints, in whose sight all men are equal. Death once had dominion over Christ. Death may prevail against the saints, and wear them down. But even death’s dominion comes to an end at the resurrection and the day of judgment. Our Lord proved it by rising again. We will prove it at our resurrection. “Hitherto,” it says, “is the end of the matter.”

Chapter Eight

As we come now to chapter eight of the book of Daniel, we see that Daniel and the background of greatness (but not absolute dominion) remain as they were in chapter seven. “In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar,” says Daniel, “a vision appeared unto me, even unto me Daniel, after that which appeared unto me at the first.” So if you have followed through chapter seven then we need not repeat what was said. We will therefore begin at verse two. “And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when I saw, that I was at Shushan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai.” This is a powerful vision. From where Daniel stood it was a long way off, “for at the time of the end shall be the vision,” and indeed Daniel is instructed, “wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days.” Daniel is at Shushan the palace, yet not in Babylon but in the province of Elam. And he was by the river Ulai. So the background of greatness is emphasized here by the mention of Shushan the palace, and for the first time a river is introduced. So what we are about to see is set against a background of palatial grandeur looking out over a river. In other words, it is a vision, a picture if you like, of events after the Resurrection of Christ when the river of God, here symbolizing the Holy Ghost, is seen flowing in the affairs of men. It is a follow-on vision, connected to the vision of chapter seven, but afterwards, “after that which appeared unto me at the first.” It is therefore a Resurrection scene.

“Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last.” If we are to understand the vision we need to look for a moment at verse 20. Gabriel is explaining to Daniel, “The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia.” So the two-horned ram we are told represents the kings of Media and Persia. The significance of the Medes and Persians is of course the law, as we saw earlier in chapter six. Now it is important for us to get a clear picture of the law. The law was given by Moses, as we know, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. Again, we all know that we are not under law but under grace in this day of grace and truth. Does this mean that we annul the law? Not so, for the law, as the kings of Media and Persia teach, is unalterable. Our Lord came not to destroy the law but to fulfill it. Indeed, after His Resurrection the apostle Paul clearly states that far from annulling the law, we establish the law. If we consider the picture before us of the ram we see it had two horns, not one horn. In other words, the law which was in force at Calvary is equally in force after the Resurrection of Christ. But not only equally, for the second horn is higher than the first, the law being added to. “A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another.” So we come under the higher law of love in the day of grace, and we establish the law. This is the clear teaching of the New Testament.

Daniel tells us, in verse four, “I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward.” Not eastward, of course, for that is the direction of the rising sun, or as we would say, the Risen Son. “I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great.” Now if the law of the Medes and Persians, set by kings, is unalterable, how much more the law of God! No beastliness could stand if the law be kept. So we see at Calvary, where beastliness abounded, none but Jesus kept the law, and He was numbered among the transgressors. Again, it clearly states that “neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand.” For all, as we know, have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and God hath concluded all under sin. So you see we needed a Deliverer, and Christ at Calvary is He who delivers us from the wrath to come. “But he did according to his will, and became great.” The law was given by Moses, to Israel only, yet the second horn is higher and includes all men since Christ died, that all might be damned who believe not the truth. Our Lord Jesus Christ rose for our justification but if we receive not the love of the truth that we might be saved we are held accountable under the law, you know. We are saved in Him. We are redeemed by His blood. We are atoned for by the One Sacrifice for Ever, and we are delivered by the righteousness of Christ. Otherwise we are damned. How great Thou art!

“And,” continues Daniel in verse five, “as I was considering, behold, an he goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes.” Again, let us turn to Gabriel for the interpretation. “The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia. And the rough goat is the king of Grecia” (or Greece) “and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king.” In the ancient world the Greeks personified wisdom, and the rough goat is the ‘king’ of Grecia. So the conflict in chapter eight of Daniel is between the law and worldly wisdom. “And,” says Daniel, “as I was considering...” When we consider the law do we judge it to be annulled or do we seek to establish the law? When we consider the law do we deem it extinct or extant? When we consider the law up to the day of Christ do we regard it as destroyed or fulfilled? Has it one horn or two horns? You see, man’s ‘wisdom’ conflicts with the law of God. The ‘ram’ comes from the east, but man’s wisdom springs out of darkness and covers the face of the whole earth - “from the west on the face of the whole earth,” it says. Man scoffs at sin, sneers at holiness, and makes a jest of God’s salvation for sinners. He is above all that - “touched not the ground,” in our picture. His loftily evolving, or reeducating himself, or somehow day-by-day in every way getting better, so what does he need a Saviour for? Or a Deliverer? Or a Redeemer? Or One to atone for him? So speaks the wisdom of mortal man.

So the notable horn, you see, is between his eyes. According to verse 21, “the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king.” Thus at Calvary man’s wisdom proved stronger than the law, (which said, Thou shalt not kill) by sliding the affair over to the Gentiles who at that point were not under the law. So the ‘first king’ or kingship is that which had dominion over Christ. “And he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power.” Pilate said he had power to crucify Jesus or power to release Him. (We are spending time on this in order that you might see it the more clearly.) Man’s thinking, at Calvary, is seen to be lawlessness. Pilate attempts to wash his hands of the matter, but we see clearly from scripture that ‘whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive,’ for he released Barabbas to them. In our picture of the great goat, verse seven says, “And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns: and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he

cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand.” So at Calvary man’s wisdom seems all-powerful, man’s thinking takes the day, man’s astuteness results in Christ’s demise. The Lord of Glory is treated as worse than a common thief, and the law which He upheld is broken at every point. The ram in that sense is delivered into the hand of man. “And there was none that could deliver the ram.”

Verse eight continues, “Therefore the he goat waxed very great.” What a triumph for man’s wisdom, man’s thinking, man’s astuteness! And they even thought to put a guard round the Tomb, to make sure He stayed down. How wonderfully clever! What clear heads they all had, to be sure! How smart of them! “Therefore the he goat waxed very great.” - but, this is a Resurrection book - “and when he was strong,” - or at the pinnacle of his strength - “the great horn was broken.” Alas, not so smart after all. Not so great, not so powerful as before. What happened? He arose! “The great horn was broken, and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven,” says the scripture of truth. In light of the Resurrection of Christ man’s wisdom is seen to spring from darkness, from the going down of the sun. In light of His glorious Resurrection all man’s vaunted smartness, clear-headedness, and brilliance is seen to be goatishness. In light of the third day the foolishness of God is seen to be wiser than all man’s wisdom. For He will return to His palace and the river will flow in the affairs of men and their greatness will be snuffed out whilst He will grow greater and greater till His gospel encircles the earth. All their cunning cannot prevent it. All their wit cannot stamp out the new church. All their intelligence, directed against God, cannot prevent the glad cry, “He is Risen!” And thousand thousand since their day have grasped the truth of the matter, and understood the vision, and sung praises to God. How great Thou art!

Now that is the gist of chapter eight. Of course, we could go on and elaborate on the four horns that came up in place of the great horn, or we could enquire further from Gabriel as to the meaning of all that follows, or why Daniel heard one saint speaking to another saint. But we will not. Instead we will leave it to you to come before God, and ask that ye may receive, whilst we go on to chapter nine. There is much still to come “at the time of the end” when man’s wisdom will again be in conflict with the law of God, and then shall the end be, when Christ shall return and the law will be out of Zion, and He shall rebuke many. Daniel is told to “wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days.” The man of sin, the man of perdition, is still to come, “a king of fiery countenance,” as Daniel describes him, “and understanding dark sentences” - the black art - “and his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power,” for Paul tells us his coming is after the working of Satan. Daniel and his companions were simply too far away to be able to see it all, and that is no reflection on them. We are very near, and should be able to see it clearly. The last verse says, “And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; afterward I rose up, and did the king's business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it.” Are we today so hardened, so inured to scenes of violence, that the contemplation of the Cross of Christ has no effect on us? Daniel fainted! O Daniel, good for you! Let us at least be sickened. How great Thou art!

Chapter Nine

Chapter nine begins, “In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.” Now we

learned in Daniel chapter six that it was in the beginning of the reign of Darius that Daniel was found praying with the windows of his chamber open toward Jerusalem, and thrown to the lions. So in chapter nine we learn why he was praying so earnestly, what he was praying for, and how important it was to him to pray. But in these introductory verses there are one or two points to note first. Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom is lost, and the reign of Belshazzar his son is ended, and the realm of the Chaldeans is now ruled by Darius the Mede as we call him. So there is no longer a background of greatness in our picture, but only a background of desolation, the desolation of Jerusalem, and in the foreground Daniel and the angel Gabriel. We see too that Daniel has been reading and studying - "I Daniel understood by books" - and this of course we fully understand because of course we do so also in order to comprehend God's plan of salvation. We use every means available, whether listening to other prophets, or reading Moses or Paul, in order to gain understanding in the things of God. Now God is very great.

"And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes." Daniel is in earnest, you see. He has been given visions. He has had dreams. He has read and studied and listened. But yet he is not satisfied. He wants to understand. He seeks wisdom and understanding, as Solomon's precepts taught, 'With all thy getting, get understanding.' And what a noble example this man of God sets us! (But he is not learning history, you know, nor studying the greatness of Alexander and his four generals.) "I set my face unto the Lord God," he says. And in his prayer he adopts the role of intercessor for God's people. He is becoming more Christ-like, not merely more erudite. And his prayer in chapter nine reflects his comprehension of God. He understands that his exile in Babylon is the result of wickedness and condoned sin in Israel. His circumstance he sees is God's righteous judgment on His own people. His cry is for mercy. His desire is that God would glorify His own Name, and restore Jerusalem. His plea is that of the repentant sinner seeking mercy and grace to help. He is not crying over the den of lions. He is not asking for anything for himself. He is asking that God's great Name be glorified and God's people restored, and Jerusalem become again the place of the temple. He is laying the foundation for the work of Ezra and Nehemiah. By prayer. By supplication. With fasting and sackcloth and ashes.

"And I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God..." Daniel has a true comprehension of the greatness of God, the adjective "dreadful" here meaning the One who is to be feared and regarded with awe. "O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments." The righteousness of God, who made the covenant with Abraham, "keeping the covenant," is in stark contrast with Israel, who broke the covenant. "We have sinned," confesses Daniel, "and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments." In the background of our picture, attesting to all this, is the desolation of Jerusalem. So when we confess our own sins and the sins of God's people, we too should have our 'windows' open to Jerusalem, to the Cross of Christ and the shed Blood of our redemption, as a backcloth, so to speak, in our own mind's-eye. "We have sinned," says Daniel. If we had not sinned, if Adam had not partaken of the forbidden fruit, Christ had not died. Therefore when we begin to pray and to confess, when we begin to intercede, it is the Cross which is in view, "the desolation of Jerusalem," as the prophet calls it. When we seek mercy, for ourselves and all God's people, we need to kneel in the shadow of the Cross of Christ and be reminded that the price of sin is terrible at Calvary. O lord, how great Thou art!

“O Lord,” prays Daniel, “righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day.” When we truly see our sad situation, and how far short we have come, we blush with shame in the presence of the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. From His holy birth, through years of subjection to earthly parents, to wonderful times of demonstration of the righteousness of God among men, He is seen to be holy, harmless, undefiled, utterly apart from sin, the very temple of God among men. And when the people of God destroyed that temple, He restored it in three days. Daniel and his fellow prophets humanly sought for restoration of an earthly temple, a city known to them, a nation of an older covenant, but we live in the light of a new covenant, a greater Israel, a new Jerusalem they could only dream of. And the Risen Christ is the temple of God in our revelation according to John. At Pentecost, when men began to comprehend that the desolation of Jerusalem caused by the sins of their fathers were as nothing in view of what they as a people, with their rulers and high priests, had accomplished, they had only one question, ‘What shall we do?’ And Peter replies, ‘Repent...’ And God commandeth all men everywhere to repent, to this day. Kneel before the Cross! Confess that righteousness belongeth to Him alone. Accept the free salvation of God offered in Jesus Christ, and leaving there the burden of sin come away with the righteousness of Christ by the Holy Spirit of God. How great Thou art!

In verse twenty Daniel says. “And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God.” Daniel’s prayer is a complex matter. He is praying first of all for the restoration of the city of Jerusalem. He is praying for the sanctuary which is desolate. He is praying for Israel and God’s people. And he is praying that God will be glorified. But Daniel is a prophet, and his prayer is prophetic also. He is praying “for the holy mountain of my God” in verse twenty. He is confessing sin, Israel’s sin. So prophetically he is coming to Calvary with the burden of sin, his own and his people’s, to the “holy mountain” where all sin must be brought and dealt with. It is only at the Cross of Christ that all the sin of Israel can be atoned for, for the blood of bullocks cannot atone for sin. So we see that Daniel is the sin-confessor in this picture, taking the position of the repentant sinner, and he is coming to the holy mountain of God by prayer and supplication. In eternal things the time factor is missing. The Cross is from eternity. Daniel is centuries before Christ, but that does not hinder him coming to Calvary prophetically with the sins of the people. “Yea,” continues verse 21, “whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.” As all the sacrifices, from Abel onwards, are prophetic, so the prayer of the prophet carries forward the sin of the people, bringing it to the holy mountain of God to be dealt with there.

One difficulty we have with Daniel is the concern with time. The latter part of the book seems to deal with times and half a time, or with weeks and days, so that we tend to become confused. But if we will bear in mind that our Lord Jesus Christ is the Eternal Son of the Everlasting Father, and the Cross is from eternity, and Gabriel is the messenger of God Himself, and Daniel is a prophet and a man greatly beloved, we will see that what we are viewing is far greater than the restoration of ancient Jerusalem. It is a scene out of eternity, manifested on earth. Of course, time is involved in it, and space, and limitations. The man Gabriel, the archangel, has to fly swiftly in order to touch Daniel about the time of the evening oblation. In the fulness of time Christ came to His own. After His Resurrection the time of the Gentiles began. The wheel turns till in our lifetime Israel is restored to the land and Jerusalem is once more in the hands of the Jews. The day of grace is only for a time; it has limitations. Our own brief time on the earth

may be longer or shorter but it has limits also. The Lord will return, it could be in our lifetime. Eventually, time will be no more. But if we are to see the greatness of God let us be less concerned with time and space but more and more with eternity. Our Lord is alive for evermore. He is the Eternal Son. As King of heaven and earth He is omnipotent, His kingdom an everlasting dominion. We are instructed to look up, to seek those things which are above. Only then will we understand days and weeks and times. How great Thou art!

Now Jerusalem, as we know, lay in desolation for seventy years, as verse 24 says, "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city." Daniel's prayer does not alter that, but Daniel's prayer alters Daniel. We need to see that even if our praying does not seem to make a difference, it will make a difference to us. Prayer, righteous prayer, is heard in heaven. Gabriel was sent from God to Daniel in exile in Babylon, and he informed Daniel, "At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision." So Daniel learns that God loves him, that his prayers are heard, and that the archangel himself is sent to him. Such consolation for the exile! Furthermore the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet is confirmed, that the Lord would accomplish seventy years in the desolation of Jerusalem as stated in verse two of our chapter. But why does Gabriel speak of seventy weeks when he is talking of seventy years? Because a week is seven days. One day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. So Christ comes to earth and ministers for three years and a half, or half a week in Daniel's language, or three and a half days. These are eternal statistics, worked out and determined before the world was. The Cross is not an accident, the Tomb has a time limit, the Resurrection is strictly adhering to a set time. The day of grace is called a day, but it is for a set time. Christ will return in a day and an hour known only to the Father.

So the days and the weeks and the times mentioned in Daniel are not our days and weeks and times but God's. And they are given this because they apply to more than one event. They apply to Christ, and also they apply to Jerusalem and the Jews. We may not confuse them. We may only consider them. "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy." Now it is obvious, is it not, that the rebuilding of Jerusalem after the seventy years of desolation did not finish the transgression or make an end of sins or reconciliation for iniquity and bring in everlasting righteousness? Of course not. When Christ came to the city He wept over it. No, no, it was the Cross and the shed Blood of Jesus which atoned for the transgression and sins and iniquities. It was of course the Resurrection which brought in everlasting righteousness and fulfilled all the visions of the prophets. And it was the Ascension which led to the anointing of the Most Holy. So the seventy weeks are not exactly the same as the seventy years spoken of by Jeremiah the prophet you see, even though they appear in the same context. Daniel in chapter nine has taken the place of intercessor and confessed the sins. So to Daniel it is said, "Seventy weeks are determined upon **THY** people and upon **THY** holy city." But till Christ came there could be no reconciliation, for all who come to Him alone can be reconciled to God. How great Thou art!

"Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times." Now we are not concerned in this work with history. There is certainly history involved in Daniel, both that of kings and empires, and also the history of the Jewish people. Neither are we concerned with

times, for it is irrelevant to us to know the number of the years from the restoration of Jerusalem to the coming of Messiah. What we are concerned with here is the greatness of God. What we want to know is why our Lord is referred to as “Messiah the Prince.” So what have we learned thus far, what do we “know therefore and understand”? We know that Christ died for us. And we know He is risen for our justification. Those two things we know assuredly. Again, we know He is coming again, and that He will reign and His dominion will be an everlasting dominion. But what we should understand is that He will reign at Jerusalem - not London, or New York or Paris or any other great center. Therefore He is called Messiah the Prince. He will not be rejected, or ignored, or overlooked this time, for He will come in His glory. He will not be born in a manger, or work in a carpenter’s shop. He will not be in peril or in danger from the rulers of the Jews. But He will be Prince, and He will be the Messiah, and all shall know Him from the least to the greatest, and He shall reign in triumph them. How great Thou art!

Now all this is not only prophesied but decreed. The commandment has already gone forth. “Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks.” This seven week period we call the day of grace. It is a set time, from the Resurrection of Christ to His Coming, or Coming again. Only God knows exactly how long it is, but we “know and understand” that we are in it today, probably close to the end of it. But verse 25 goes on, “...unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks.” To understand the threescore and two weeks we need to go back to chapter five. The last verse of chapter five says, “And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.” So the threescore and two is separate from the seven weeks. The seven pertains to God, the threescore and two pertains to man. Indeed, the threescore and two pertains to Darius, who is called in our chapter in verse one Darius the son of Ahasuerus. It is the age of a king the son of a king. So there is what we know and there is what we may understand. We know our Lord Jesus died for us, and we know He is Risen for us, and we know He is coming again for us. And we may understand also that during the seven week period till He come, man rules the earth in his so-called greatness. We do not rule. We are the outcasts and off-scourings of society. Man and his four-horned wisdom is in charge - his great science, great technology, great weaponry, great understanding - till Christ come and reign in righteousness.

If we go on to verse 26 we see the same thing. “And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself.” The Lord came unto His own. But it was an age of kings. King Herod sought to destroy Him in Bethlehem. Countless evil rulers sought to destroy Him from among the Jews. And in accord with prophecy, He was cut off out of the land of the living, but not for Himself. And after His Resurrection and after Pentecost there arose a new king who sought to destroy Him. He was not called ‘king,’ but Saul (of Tarsus) was the first ‘king’ in Israel, and he sought to destroy Him, till he was converted and became Paul, the first apostle. And there have been many ‘kings’ since then who sought to destroy the kingdom of God among men. So we see that the threescore and two week period runs concurrently with the seven week period, and that is why we suffer persecution for Christ’s sake and the gospel to this day. Till He come, in fact. We have taken liberties, perhaps, with the interpretation, but only because we want you to see that there is what you “know and understand.” You know Christ died for you. You know He arose. You know He is coming again. And you understand that one day you may reign with Him, but today you are down and others reign over you as kings. This is in accord with all scripture. This fulfills the scripture of truth. This fulfills the prophecy. This is the will of God. This follows the pattern laid down by the apostles. Indeed, this follows the path of Christ our

Lord. Man reigns, we do not. But only till He come. Then we may reign with Him, if we are faithful here. How great Thou art!

“And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.” Now you are no doubt going to say that that verse refers to Jerusalem and its destruction by the Romans under Titus circa A.D.70. And no doubt you are correct. Only we tend to avoid historical details and so look at it differently. We believe we worship God by Jesus Christ. He is our city of refuge, our sanctuary, His Cross our altar. When He was cut off, but not for Himself, there was no way to come to God. As long as He was dead and buried our city and our sanctuary were destroyed. It was devil’s work. The people of God were the people of the prince of this world; ‘ye are of your father the devil,’ He once told them. Men are servants to whomsoever they serve. “And the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary,” says Daniel, “and the end thereof shall be with a flood.” At Calvary there was a fountain opened of blood and water, a veritable flood at the end thereof, and the ‘desolation of Jerusalem’ is complete, the warfare over. There was no city, no sanctuary, no wall of salvation, no street to God, nothing, for three days and three nights. The desolation of that needs to be seen, if we are to appreciate His Resurrection, and what it all means to us. Great is the Lord!

Finally, a brief look at the last verse, “And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.” Once the day of grace is over there will be no way back to God and the desolate in that day will call for the rocks to fall on them. We urge all today to come to Jesus Christ, the Risen Lord, the One Mediator between God and man, the Redeemer and Reconciler, while there is yet time. There is great tribulation ahead, and to spurn the way of escape today is to be desolate at the end. Abominations will so increase, so overspread, that even man will see that an end must be put to them. The world will be set on fire and consumed, eventually. God created it in one week. God confirmed the covenant with many for one week. But man did such violence to the Holy One of God in the midst of the week that God will not allow the earth to stand much longer. Time is running out. Who knows if tomorrow the door will be shut, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate? It will then be too late. Today there is forgiveness, a way to God’s grace, a Saviour, a Deliverer. God has sent us His prophet to warn all of the end in sight. Daniel has done his work. It is up to each one of us to take heed to the warnings. The Lord Jesus Christ is risen for our justification, and willingly welcomes the sinner who repents - today. How great Thou art!

Chapter Ten

“In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the thing was true, but the time appointed was long: and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision.” We have seen the background of greatness under Nebuchadnezzar change to the desolations of Jerusalem of chapter nine. But Cyrus king of Persia brings in a new background, a background of Resurrection. So to understand the thing, and to have understanding of the vision, we need to view it in the light of the Resurrection of Christ. “The thing was true,” it says in verse one, “but the time appointed was long.” So now we see that this truth is long after our Lord rose from the dead, and this thing is for our day. What is the truth

in our day? Is it not the Lord's return? Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The clock has been ticking for two thousand years and at any moment Christ may return and the end be. It is true, but for Daniel and his companions the time appointed was long. So Daniel is called Belteshazzar here that we might understand that the thing spoken about has nothing to do with ancient kings or empires of Daniel's time, or things long past, or history, or days of old. Belteshazzar was Nebuchadnezzar's god. Nebuchadnezzar gave the name to Daniel. Daniel fulfilled the name so that Nebuchadnezzar worshipped Daniel in chapter two. But the mention of the name here is only to let us see that all that is over, and passed, and done with. Christ is Risen. How great Thou art!

"In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks." In verse two and on, it is now, "I Daniel." "I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled." Daniel's three whole weeks correspond to the three days in the Tomb. "I Daniel was mourning three full weeks," it says. So the mourning is for the death of Christ, but the vision is of the Risen Christ. "His body also was like the beryl," in Daniel's vision, "and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude." Bearing in mind that the time was long, and that of course the exact wording of the description has been changed through interpretation of the ancient language, we can still see the Risen Christ in this fifth verse and know it is the same sight seen by John in Revelation. Indeed, the reaction of both John and Daniel is similar. John said, "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen,..." Daniel says in verse eight, "I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me," and in verse ten, "And, behold, an hand touched me," and in verse 12, "Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel." So in the mouth of at least two witnesses the thing is confirmed. O Lord, how great Thou art!

"Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words." Now this manifestation, whilst similar to John's revelation, is for a different reason. John was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind him a great voice speaking, but here the manifestation is given in response to Daniel's speaking - "I am come for thy words." So we see that the words of the prophet pointed to, looked ahead to, and came before Christ's advent, whereas John being an apostle was after the event. So John sees the Risen Christ, Daniel sees the Christ who was to arise. John clearly understood the Cross and the Tomb and the Resurrection for he was a witness to it all; Daniel set his heart to understand. But the Christ of Daniel and the Christ of John is one and the same, the changeless One of God, only in eternal things time ceases to be relevant. Therefore we see that in fact the Resurrection of Christ is as predestined as the Cross of Christ, and is spoken of in all the prophets and in the Psalms of David. We need to be assured of this, perhaps. It is easy to see that Jesus died, for all die; but it requires faith to know that the Lord is Risen, for He is the only One so far who could do so. But if we understand that the Cross and the Resurrection are inextricably linked together from eternity, then all difficulty vanishes. The Lord had to die for us. The Lord had to rise for us. The two are essential.

Verse 13 enlightens us still further. "But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia." We understand that the speaker is not speaking here of

earthly kingdoms or princes. Cyrus is described in verse one as “Cyrus king of Persia,” yet Cyrus saw no glorious Being to withstand him. No, we are seeing past the veil into the other realm where spirits rule, where Michael the archangel does his work, where the speaker was withstood. Our Lord did not become Man till He came as a Babe in Bethlehem. He did not die till Calvary. He did not rise till the third day. And only when He ascended to God did God highly exalt Him and give Him a name which is above every name. None can withstand Him today, but we see from the scripture of truth that He was withstood by the prince of Persia in Daniel’s time. Obviously if He had always been supreme there would have been little point in God exalting Him. So we see from this verse that there was a time when He could be withstood, and would have to rely on Michael for help, and could be held up for 21 days by the prince of Persia. Not so today. All power and all authority has been given Him by the Father. None can prevent Him. None can hinder Him now. None can withstand Him. God has set Him at His own right hand in majesty, and it is God who will make His foes His footstool. For great is the Lord. O Lord, how great Thou art!

“Now I am come,” verse 14 goes on, “to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days.” Now this Being who stood before Daniel is so glorious that Daniel is bereft of speech. “I became dumb,” Daniel tells us in verse 15, meaning unable to speak, speechless. And the next verse says, “And, behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spake.” Daniel was familiar with kings upon earth. He had conversed with Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar and Darius the Mede and Cyrus king of Persia. In his visions he had spoken with Gabriel. In chapter eight when Gabriel first appeared Daniel was afraid and fell on his face and was in a “deep sleep” or trancelike state till Gabriel touched him and set him upright. But in chapter nine when Gabriel came to him Daniel seems to have got over his fear, and reacts normally. So Daniel is accustomed to greatness, accustomed to talk without fear to the greatest kings of the earth in his days, and he has also become accustomed to talk with angelic messengers up to the highest, the archangel. Yet Daniel reacts to the glorious Being of chapter ten as though he were seeing greatness for the first time, and his companions fled the spot even though they saw nothing, according to verse seven. And the whole chapter is taken up with the vision alone, and Daniel has to be helped by angelic beings just to stand and to listen and to speak, for he is in the presence of a greatness he has never known before.

We need to be reminded, you see, that however great we may become on earth, or however great before God we may be, or however familiar with greatness, until we see the Christ of God we have not understood greatness at all. Daniel had had great visions. He had beheld, in chapter seven, till the thrones were cut down and the Ancient of Days did sit. He had beheld the great beasts, the great horns. He had heard the saints speaking to one another. He himself had approached “and came near unto one of them that stood by,” and asked him the truth of all this. But in chapter ten he is utterly overcome. Men in their ignorance think that when they see God they will give Him a piece of their mind, as they say. They scoff at John saying that the great ones of earth will attempt to hide themselves from the face of Him that sitteth upon the Throne, calling on the rocks to fall on them and cover them. The apostle John lay on Jesus’ bosom at the last supper, yet in Revelation at the sight of Him who called him to come up hither, John fell at His feet as dead. The Man Christ Jesus and the glorified Holy One of God may be one and the same indeed, but in the presence of His glory we may become bereft of speech. Daniel in our chapter here has to be helped to kneel at His feet. Daniel has to be helped to stand trembling. Daniel has to be helped to speak. And Daniel, a man greatly beloved, one of the most courageous

and Christ-like men of scripture, can only say, “O my Lord....how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord?” Indeed, he might have added, ‘How great Thou art!’

Now this was before the Lord came to earth as a Man, before He suffered, before He died, before He lay in the Tomb, before His glorious Resurrection. Therefore it is easy to see that the greatness of Christ today is utterly without parallel in the understanding of man. If God has so exalted Him, so glorified Him, so added to Him excellent majesty and splendor, as we saw in chapter four, then the Risen Christ is a sight to behold. And when He comes in His glory with the holy angels, and we shall see Him as He is, does not the heart miss a beat at the magnificence before us? For today it is His return that we now await. And Daniel has left us a picture of how we should act in His presence. But perfect love casteth out fear, and our joy no man can take from us, so we will be swept up in joy and great gladness to meet the Lord in the air. And we will rejoice evermore. Let us only hear His, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant,’ and we will dwell in bliss for ever and ever. Then all the meanness of earth will be swallowed up in the greatness of our Lord’s presence, until eventually we forget we were ever otherwise. He will be our constant source of joy. He will be the fulfillment of our adoration. He will be the perfection of our love. And He will fill our horizons, captivate our affections, be our all-in-all. Today we are directed into the love of God and into the patient waiting for Christ. But what of tomorrow? And to see Him? How great Thou art!

“Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me, And said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me.” Now Daniel was what we would call a strong man of God; strong, that is, in the Lord. Yet he needs a touch to be strengthened, you see. And we may be strong in the Lord, needing only a touch to be strengthened still further. Therefore as we wait for the coming of the Lord, let us follow Daniel’s example. What example does Daniel leave us? As a youth, as a young man, he refuses the pollution of the king’s meat, the king’s wine, that he might be pure. Then he sets his heart to attain to wisdom and understanding in the things of God. His faith is tried, yet he refuses to bow down or worship other gods, neither will a den of lions cause him to cease his daily devotions. He is an exile in Babylon, a stranger and pilgrim in the earth. And more and more he is given dreams and visions as he seeks after the things of God till in the end his Lord manifests Himself to him. And Daniel is a prophet of the Lord. There is great gain in a life so lived, but to be addressed by the Lord Himself as a “man greatly beloved” is worth ten dens of lions. “O man, greatly beloved” - and who would not want that commendation? “O man, greatly beloved, fear not” - and who would not want that consolation? “Peace be unto thee” - and who would not want that conciliation? “Be strong, yea, be strong.” Great is the Lord!

“And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me.” Where does the man of God turn for strength? Is it not to the Lord? Therefore let us not be confused at all. It is the word of the Lord, not the voice of angels, which strengthens us. “Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee?” The answer of course is given previously in verse 14. “Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days,” but Daniel is a prophet, and this vision of Christ is given him to complete his prophet’s ministry. For what good would it do us if all that happened was that Daniel understood what should befall his people? And could not Gabriel or any other angel have instructed him? But this manifestation is for us, that we might learn more about the Lord Himself. So we see that even the Lord could be withstood by the prince of Persia in His pre-

advent state. It was because of the Cross and the Resurrection that God gave Him all power and all authority. 'Wherefore,' says scripture, 'Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him.' In verse 20 of Daniel chapter ten we read, "Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia." We can see therefore that the Lord was a glorious Lord, a Lord of glory, glorified with the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, but all authority and power was not His till Calvary, and since He arose God has added to Him excellent majesty, till today He is very great indeed.

Now Daniel is a Resurrection book, and in chapter ten it is the Lord's return we must keep in mind. The kings of Persia and the kings of Grecia still reign in the spirit world today, still fight against Michael and his angels, still withstand the messengers. Satan has not been done away with. Evil battles for supremacy in the affairs of man to this day. But Christ will come. The Lord will return. And the devil will be locked up for a thousand years, and the Lord Jesus Christ will be supreme. Only His Father is greater than He. God has now given all things into His hands, and at the end of the thousand years He will hand it all back that God may be all in all. Today Jesus reigns in heaven, tomorrow on earth. We await His return. With the shout of the archangel and with the trump of God! And we shall see His glory and His greatness for ourselves. Daniel chapter ten is only a prophetic moment, an insight into eternal things, a brief glimpse behind the curtain. "But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth," the last verse assures. Chapter ten runs into chapter 11, and we will come to it in a moment, but let our hearts rest now in the sure and certain hope of the Lord's return. As the Resurrection was the sequel to the Cross, so the Return is the sequel to the Resurrection of Christ. As sure as He arose, so sure will He return. It is inevitable. Our question is not 'Will He?' but 'When?' Lord Jesus, come. How great Thou art!

Chapter Eleven

"Also I in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him." The Speaker is the One we saw in chapter ten. The 'Also' connects chapters 10 and 11. Chapter ten finished with, "and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince." Now the Lord was greater, even in a pre-advent state, than the best. Only Michael the archangel could hold his own with the Lord in fighting against these princes of the spirit world. And also, the Lord could confirm and strengthen rulers among men, as Darius the Mede. Furthermore, the Lord knew the end from the beginning, and could go on in verse two to say to Daniel, "And now will I shew thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all." So He thought it not robbery to be equal with God. He was and is the Son of God. But we have to remember that He put all that aside to be born as a Babe in Bethlehem. The Babe was Christ the Lord indeed, but the Babe could not hold His own against the princes of Persia or anyone else, for He was clothed in humanity and could do no more than any other infant. And if your had asked the young child Jesus about the end of the world He could not have answered you. He had to grow in wisdom and stature. In His pre-advent state He could instruct Daniel. But when He was a Child He spake as a child, He thought as a child, He understood as a child. It is important to recognize this fact.

"And now I will show thee the truth," declares verse two. Now the truth is that all scripture testifies of Christ. We are not instructed in history, nor are we required to learn of ancient, long-forgotten kings, for that is head-knowledge, not heart-knowledge. Mary kept all these things in her heart, says the gospel writer. So chapter 11 of Daniel is heart-knowledge, and brings us the truth about the Lord. "And now will I shew thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand

up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all: and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia.” The chapter then goes on in great detail to tell of the king of the south and the king of the north. So verse two, quoted in full, is the introductory verse. The Speaker has already declared at the close of the previous chapter that He will return to fight with the prince of Persia, and that the prince of Grecia will come. We are looking beyond the veil, past the curtain, into the spirit realm here. We have already seen that the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood the Speaker on his way to Daniel, and here in chapter 11 three kings of Persia shall stand up to withstand. So Persia is the place of withstanding, and Grecia is the place of wisdom and knowledge and learning. If we fix those two locations in our mind we will see the thing. Persia-withstanding. Grecia-learning. And one other piece of information - princes are rulers striving for dominion and authority; kings are those with the dominion.

Now if we read through chapter 11 we will be only mystified. How relevant is it to us to learn that three kings of Persia shall arise and the fourth shall be far richer than the others? Or how will it affect our understanding if we learn that the king of the south fought with the king of the north? If you were well on in years and someone came to you and told you that there would arise three more American presidents and the fourth would be richer than any of them, would you be even interested? Probably not! Your attitude would likely be, ‘So what?’ Because it would be of little relevance to you. Therefore if we read Daniel 11 as history, it is totally irrelevant to us, and confusing, and of no interest whatsoever. Yet Daniel 11 is a profound chapter that deserves serious study. Let us only allow that Persia is the place of withstanding, and Grecia is the place of learning, and the relevance to us becomes obvious. At the Cross our Lord was called on to withstand. And at the Cross He had to learn obedience through the things which He suffered. At the Cross the ‘princes’ sought to have dominion over Him that they might become ‘kings’ and He had to withstand them. And eventually three had dominion, three kings, arose, and the fourth became very rich indeed. One of them at least we know already. Death had dominion over Him. Death ruled that day. He gave up the ghost. The withstanding was over. The broken body is taken away and buried. (But Daniel is a Resurrection book.) How great Thou art!

Now we have used death as an illustration, something we all know, but Persia is the place of withstanding. So the first king of the three kings of Persia is pain. In the mockery of the Lord, they struck Him, but He could withstand the pain. They pulled out His beard in handfuls, but He could withstand the pain of that painful deed also. They crowned Him with thorns - He withstood the pain. They scourged Him cruelly, yet He withstood the pain. They pierced His hands and His feet; still He withstood the pain of it. But crucifixion is a torture, an agonizing death. Pain begins to fill the body. Muscles go into spasm. Tendons stretch till they snap. Ligaments give up. The body is wracked by pain till it becomes agony. Breathing is difficult. It is an effort just to hang there and live. Pain such as few ever experience it is a fact of life, a moment by moment torment, increasing with each heartbeat at the end to become intolerable and unendurable. So this ‘prince of Persia’ eventually becomes ‘king’ and rules, has absolute dominion, takes over till there is no withstanding any longer. We need to see the relevance of the kings of Persia if Daniel 11 is to mean anything to us. There has in the past been martyrdom; there may in the future be more. The martyrs were called on to withstand pain and not give in. The ways the pain was inflicted are varied, but they all could be classed as a ‘prince of Persia’ seeking to become ‘king.’ “And now will I show the the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia.” Great is the Lord.

Well, we have looked at one of the three kings of Persia that were to arise. And the second is like the first. But the second is mental torment. Hanging concentrates the mind. At death one's whole life is revealed. Christ was sinless, as we know, but as His mind reviews His life, so the questions begin. There are more than a thousand points to the law. Did He keep every one? Every day? Did He do the will of His Father all the way through? Could He have done more? Was His Father well-pleased? Has He fulfilled the law? Fulfilled all the prophecies? Left anything undone? Dotted the i's and crossed the t's? Taken care of Mary His mother? Done all He can do for His disciples? As the Crucifixion takes its toll, so the mind clouds, clears again, races ahead only to cloud again. He must review His whole life in light of a thousand and more points of law, and He must do it before the darkness falls, carefully, point by point. The sun is hot - He is consumed with thirst. The pain is now sheer agony. He must withstand long enough to complete His self-imposed task, with death staring Him in the face, in the midst of a jeering, singing crowd of mocking onlookers. In that position, in that extreme, would you have done it? But He did it! How great Thou art! Till the withstanding is over, and the mind finally clouds, and another king of Persia stands. We are not learning history. We need to know that Jesus hath done all things well.

"Behold," prophesies Daniel, "there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia." The third king then is the spirit of the Man. We are created spirit, soul and body to form man. Now the spirit of man is subject to moods. Even when the body is well the heart may be bowed down with woe. Or we may be fearful in spirit when no disaster threatens. Or the spirit of a man may be disquieted in the most tranquil setting. We may sing, 'It is well with my soul,' and mean it, but the future outlook on earth may cause us despair. Men have been known to commit suicide in the prime of life whilst physically in good health, simply because in their spirit they could no longer withstand. They look ahead and see what is before them and instead of withstanding they leap to their death. Now at Calvary our Lord Jesus Christ is called upon to face (for us) the wrath of God against sin. The first 'king of Persia' is dreadful enough, and the second calls for all His determination to withstand, but the prospect still facing Him is of such a category that dread like a cloud lies over His spirit. He is still great enough to give up the ghost before the darkness falls. But who then will atone for me? No, He must withstand, He must go through with it, He must head into that darkness before Him and still be alive on the other side of the cloud. Can He withstand till the darkness falls? Abraham speaks of 'an horror of great darkness' falling upon him. The Lord, in His physical agony and mental torment, plunges into the darkness. Great is the Lord.

"And now will I shew thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all: and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia." Let us look at the realm of Grecia for a moment. Jesus was 'obedient unto death, and that the death of the Cross.' It was learned obedience. Naturally, the body rebels against ever-increasing pain. Naturally, the tormented mind switches off. Naturally, even the spirit of man refuses an horror of darkness. Obedient unto death, in the realm of Grecia, is learned obedience. But "he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia," you see. Daniel, we know, purposed in his heart; he is our example of determination. But to determine to withstand the three kings of Persia - well, even Daniel would have to bow and own Him Lord of all. For the body, mind and spirit is stirred up to rebel against learned obedience like that - "he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia," it says. It is only iron determination to withstand that can win in that situation. "And the fourth shall be far richer than they all." There are only three kings in Persia mentioned, but the fourth is the accumulation of the three. "And

the fourth shall be far richer than they all” - it is not a question of withstanding one after another, you see, but each accumulates till “by his strength through his riches” the dominion is secured, “and a mighty king shall stand up, and shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will.” At that point, the withstanding is over. Can you say, Great is the Lord?

Now this “mighty king” is short-lived, according to verse four. “And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven.” It was death, you see, that put an end to the agony, to the torment, and to the grief. They are gone, scattered to the four winds of heaven. And none coming after shall ever inherit them. “And not to his posterity,” is how scripture puts it, “nor according to his dominion which he ruled.” No, no! The martyrs were led to painful deaths enough, but none has ever had to withstand or come against the three kings of Persia. None ever had to die for my sins, save Jesus only. Christians may suffer, may resist even unto blood, but only Christ endured the Cross. “For his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those,” is the prophecy. Stephen, the first martyr, faced no horror of great darkness. Nay, he lifted up his eyes to heaven and saw Jesus. If Paul was executed, or Peter crucified upside-down, they were at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. “Not to his posterity” is the good news of Daniel 11. You may be put in chains in some dungeon, but the word of the living God is, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” You may be led to the torture chamber. “I am with thee, saith the Lord.” Or you may be taken out to be executed. “Present with the Lord,” scripture tells. But hear again that dreadful cry, “My God, My God, why hast Thou - why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Lord Jesus Christ, how great Thou art!

“And the king of the south shall be strong, and one of his princes; and he shall be strong above him, and have dominion; his dominion shall be a great dominion.” The rest of chapter 11 is devoted to a detailed study of the king of the south, and the king of the north. Now in Daniel 11 north and south are not so much locations as what we might call characteristics. The south represents ease and comfort, the north represents what is bitter and stern. The south is warm and sunny, the north is cold and icy. The south is pleasant and bearable, the north is unpleasant and at times unbearable. And if we go on to verse 11 we would find that the king of the south fought against the king of the north. This picture may best be summed up in the Lord’s own words, “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” So the conflict here is between the spirit and the flesh. At Calvary the flesh is protecting against such treatment. “And the king of the south shall be strong,” it says. The flesh is strongly protecting. “And one of his princes.” The flesh is protecting the mockery, the crown of thorns, the scourging, and then the bearing of the Cross on the way to Golgotha. “One of his princes” at that point indicates that the flesh could not endure the weight and so another had to carry the Cross. And at Golgotha the flesh is not only protecting strongly but is attaining great dominion. The flesh is urgent that He should either come down from the Cross or give up the ghost. It is strong.

“And in the end of years they shall join themselves together,” verse six. One day is with the Lord as a thousand years. So time is meaningless to the Crucified One. That day was to Him as a thousand years, you see. “And in the end of years they shall join themselves together,” we are told, “for the king's daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement.” The daughter represents weakness through loss of blood. He has refused to come down from the Cross, and His determination, like Daniel’s, is fixed purpose of heart. But He has agreed to die, as the flesh weakens through loss of blood in the end. Yet He will not give up the ghost till all is accomplished. “But she shall not retain the power of the arm,” it says. The whole picture is a triumph of spirit over flesh, but in the end He must commit His spirit into His Father’s hand, and give up the ghost. If we were to go through it verse by verse, you would see

the titanic struggle for supremacy. Indeed, you might say that the flesh won the battle, overcame at the last, because He died - but it is not as simple as that. Chapter 11 of Daniel is a long and detailed account which deserves much study. It is put in the context of the king of the south and the king of the north as that is the only way to understand it, but it is full of intimate and precious details which would otherwise miss entirely. The gospel writers made a single statement - 'They led Him away to be crucified' - but it is the work of the prophets to teach what that statement involved for Jesus. He was manifested - in flesh. And He suffered - in the flesh. Dear Lord!

"But out of a branch of her roots shall one stand up in his estate, which shall come with an army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall prevail." We have seen that the king's daughter represented weakness by blood, and we know that even today the church is the body of the Lord on earth, so the blood of martyrs is merely the continuation of the struggle for supremacy. "And shall deal against them, and shall prevail: And shall also carry captives into Egypt their gods," - meaning chief ones - "with their princes, and with their precious vessels of silver and of gold; and he shall continue more years than the king of the north." Calvary did not end the struggle, you see. Much blood has been spilled since our Lord died, the blood of the church on earth. "So the king of the south shall come into his kingdom, and shall return into his own land." The Lord suffered and bled for us. Many since have bled for the Lord. But the distinction of course is that only the Blood of Jesus could atone for our sins. He as a Man of flesh and blood as we are, but there is a difference between the Man Christ Jesus and all other men. We may be sons of God; He was the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. He has suffered in the flesh, and we are told to arm ourselves likewise with the same mind. In the kingdom of flesh and blood we see He could be prevailed against, but not any more. The Resurrection Man cannot be prevailed against now or ever.

"So the king of the south shall come into his kingdom," - that is, into the kingdom of the king of the north, - "and shall return into his own land." So it is an invasion, if you like. We all know of the struggle between the flesh and the Spirit, between what we want to do and what we actually do, even between our own spirit and our own flesh. When we seek to be more spiritual, the flesh seems to invade ever more strongly. And if we were to resist unto blood, striving against sin, we would discover the meaning of Daniel 11 for ourselves. For the flesh is king of the south, you see, desiring only ease and comfort and summer. And if we adopt the attitude of the king of the north - that bitter land - we will need the determination of Daniel to hold our own and return the king of the south "into his own land." Paul says he kept flesh in subjection. Good for Paul! But there are times when the king of the south invades, as verse nine says, "So the king of the south shall come into his kingdom," - and what a struggle then ensues before the matter is resolved - "and shall return into his own land." But in this, as in all things, Christ is our example. Indeed, we are called on to crucify the flesh in order to be like Jesus. Therefore if we spend time in chapter 11, just looking at the Cross, and view the titanic struggle for ourselves with God's help, perhaps we can be helped to reckon ourselves dead to sin, alive unto God. Crucified with Christ, is how the New Testament puts it. Lord Jesus Christ, how great Thou art!

Now if we move on rapidly through verses 10-15 we will see the warfare involved. It is no longer a mere invasion by the king of the south but all-out war. Verse 10, speaking of the king of the north, says, "But his sons shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces." His sons represent what is begotten in strength. Righteous indignation is the major one. When the flesh invades, we can see the result; therefore let us bring to the fore our righteous indignation and a host of scriptures to back us up and mortify our flesh once more. Verse 11 goes

on, “And the king of the south shall be moved with choler, and shall come forth and fight with him, even with the king of the north: and he shall set forth a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into his hand.” Yes, the flesh can produce a multitude of reasons why it should not be put down or mortified; all sound, all strong arguments, clearly logical, which can defeat the scriptural reasons seen in verse 10; and, in verse 12, “when he hath taken away the multitude, his heart shall be lifted up,” or, happier. But verse 13 tells us that “the king of the north shall return, and shall set forth a multitude greater than the former.” It calls for a real knowledge of scripture to be able to do that, of course. And determination. And character. Indeed, all the things exemplified by Daniel. But if we do that, then verse 15 assures us that “the arms of the south shall not withstand.” Great is the Lord!

Now chapter 11 of Daniel is 45 verses long, and we have looked briefly at only a third of it. So you see a whole book could easily be devoted to this one chapter alone, without uncovering the half of it. We do not here seek to go fully into it, but rather to outline its precious truths concerning Christ Jesus our Lord, and leave the rest to you to discover for yourself. When once you have seen the three kings of Persia, and the outline of the king of the south versus the king of the north, and that protracted struggle for supremacy, you should be able to say, ‘Great is the Lord!’ which is the aim of this work. We would like only to point to a detail here and there. In verse 20, for instance. “Then shall stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes in the glory of the kingdom.” At Calvary His strength is taxed, His endurance is taxed, and even His faith is taxed. He is taxed to the uttermost, indeed. And verse 21, “And in his estate shall stand up a vile person.” Here we need to remind ourselves that Moses used a serpent on a pole to signify Christ crucified. Why? Because the Lord Jesus Christ took our sins in His own Body on the Tree. He became vile instead of pure. Thus verse 23”...he shall work deceitfully” - that is, to become what He is not so that verse 27 says, “They shall speak lies at one table.” It is the Lord of Glory now vile and sinful, but that is a lie, you see, for He is holy.

Well, chapter 11 of Daniel needs much more serious study than that, of course, and much more time to be spent in it than we can afford. We have looked only at the Cross of Christ in it, and that briefly, but we can assure you that for the little we have revealed there remains a great deal more to be discovered in it. Indeed, the more one would dig into it the much much more might one expect to find. For it goes on to deal with the aftermath of Calvary, still in the context of the king of the north and the king of the south, because to this day the struggle between the spiritual and the physical continues. Even when our Lord returns, He will have to subdue all nations in order to rule at Jerusalem, and we will be with Him in that millennial period. So the battle for supremacy is not over by any means. However, this we know - that at Calvary the Lord showed us how to fight the flesh. At His Resurrection He overcame all the limitations of flesh and rose triumphant from the grave. We in turn at our resurrection shall be raised in newness of life, in new and glorious bodies like unto His, to join Him in the air. And thereafter we will be with the Lord in all He comes to do. Thus the outcome is never in doubt, however subtly the flesh and the devil may suggest otherwise. The earth is the Lord’s, even though Satan lay claim to it and man uses it to his own ends. Satan worked through man to bring Christ to Calvary, but neither the world, the flesh nor the devil could stop Him rising again. How great Thou art!

Chapter Twelve

“And at that time shall Michael stand up,” the Speaker continues, “the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered,

every one that shall be found written in the book.” In chapter 12 we are looking at the end of the matter. We are looking at resurrection. We are looking at the cessation of the warfare between spirit and flesh. Verse two goes on, “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” From our knowledge of the New Testament this is now familiar ground. If we have believed in Jesus, if we have acknowledged the Lord as our Saviour, we know we have everlasting life. We already know of the tribulation period and the time of trouble such as never was which today is ahead for the world, and how that only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life shall be delivered. But what we should see in Daniel 12 is that our resurrection is based on His Resurrection. If Christ be not raised from the dead we are still in our sins, says the apostle. If Christ be not risen, we might add, who then shall arise? For our resurrection depends on His Resurrection. Could we arise, and He be dead? Of course not! But now is Christ risen, and we in turn shall arise; else were there no gospel, no good news, no hope in Christ, no heaven for the blessed, and both prophets and apostles are found liars.

Let us look at that first verse again. “And at that time shall Michael stand up,” says verse one. When there was war in heaven it was Michael and his angels who fought against the devil and his angels, When the Speaker was withstood in the realm of Persia it was Michael who came to the rescue. So this mighty prince, this warrior prince among angels, this great being of the spirit world, this archangel of God in charge of the warrior angels, is the Captain of the Host who fought for the children of Israel even in the time of Joshua and beyond. “Michael...the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people.” No doubt he was involved in the battle fought by Abraham against the kings to rescue Lot. No doubt he was involved in the exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt when Pharaoh followed them into the Red Sea, after God opened a passage for them there. No doubt he was the one whose angels cast the great hailstones down on the Amorites, in Joshua’s time. Many times must he have been involved in standing for the people of God, to deliver and to rescue in times of trouble. And when there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation of Israel, we can be sure that Michael will be there, too, helping and delivering. “And at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book,” Daniel 12 assures us. God has made provision, you see, even when the devil is at his worst, for help and deliverance to reach the people of God, even every one that shall be found written in the book.

Verse three - “And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.” Now Proverbs tells us, ‘He that winneth souls is wise’; so that when we read in Daniel 12 that they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, we clearly understand that saying. “And they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.” We are actually looking past resurrection now to the Judgment Seat of Christ where the righteous will get their reward. But there can be no reward unless Christ be Risen, any more than there can be a Judgment Seat of Christ without Christ. So the Resurrection of Christ is implied if not actually stated in all this, and our whole future is based on the fact that He is risen from the dead. Daniel is a wisdom book, one that seems to speak of many matters apart from the Lord Jesus Christ altogether, and like all such books needs to be seen in the light of God. For Christ is not only the object of the book, but Daniel is a prophet and is speaking of or testifying to Christ. When John saw Him in Revelation chapter one His countenance was as the sun shining in all his strength. When the noonday sun shines even the stars fade to the far background. They are all still there, still shining as brightly as ever, but

one glance at the sun causes them to disappear from view. So Christ's glory outshines all other glories, for God has made this same Jesus Lord of All. How great Thou art!

"But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end." How do we know we are in the time of the end? The book of Daniel is open to us. It is a sign of the end times. The Holy Spirit will open up the book of Daniel to any true believer today who is desirous of knowing more of Christ and His glory. The man Daniel, the prophet of the Lord, who heard the Speaker first-hand, tells us in verse eight, "And I heard, but I understood not;" because the words were a sealed book to him. It was not the time of the end in his day. Christ had not even come in Daniel's time, therefore the words are prophetic, and are intended for us, the people of the time of the end. Another sign of the end time is also given in that fourth verse, "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." There is far more hithering and thithering today than there was even a generation or so ago, and an information explosion, as it is called, which is unprecedented in the history of man. So today we stand in the time of the end. The great tribulation is still ahead. The Return of Christ is still ahead. The resurrection is still ahead. The Judgment Seat of Christ is still ahead. The rewards are still ahead. But even today we know we have everlasting life, and if we are wise we will spend these last precious moments among men seeking to turn many to righteousness, that we may someday soon awake to everlasting life and to shine as the stars for ever and ever. And we shall see His glory! Our Saviour! Our Lord! O Lord, how great Thou art!

"Then I Daniel looked," verse five tells us, "and, behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river. And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" The Speaker, you see, is a Man who walks on water - "which was upon the waters of the river" - and this Daniel saw clearly. "Then I Daniel looked, and, behold..." is how it is stated. Now Daniel was not mistaken either. It is put in such a way that no one could mistake it - one on this bank of the river, another on that bank of the river, and the Speaker between them "upon the waters of the river." The only One we know who walks on water is Jesus. This is the final sign, the token to us that it is He, that it could be no other. Paul, you remember, says to the Thessalonians, 'The salutation of Paul, with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle, so I write.' Why? Because he wanted them to know it was he himself writing to them, and no other. So in Daniel 12 the Lord gives us a token, His signature as it were, that we might be sure it is He Himself. Despite that, men still profess uncertainty as to whether this was the Lord Himself or an angel speaking to Daniel. Scripture goes to great lengths to assure us that it was the Lord, so why not accept it? An angel might walk on water - so might Peter - but this, to us at least, is the token that this was the Lord. Great is the Lord!

"How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" Daniel talks of days, weeks, times and half a time. "And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished." But notice the wording of the question - "How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" What wonders? The advent of Christ as Bethlehem's Babe. The ministry of Christ. The Cross of Christ. The Resurrection of Christ. The Return of Christ. These were the wonders still ahead in Daniel's day. Now all is accomplished save for the Return of Christ. But if you think you can discover when Christ will return from the book of Daniel you are wrong. Of that day and hour knoweth no man, but the Father only. So the information given in the book of Daniel is given only to assure us that there

will be an end, and that there is an allotted time span, and that God above is in complete control of events on earth, and that Christ will return. In the fulness of time Christ came to His own. That is the first “time” mentioned. After the rejection of Christ by His own, we come to the times of the Gentiles. That is the second period, or “times.” After that there is half a time, when the Jews are restored as a nation, the times of the Gentiles being fulfilled, and God begins to draw all things to a close. We await the Return. How great Thou art!

Daniel himself says, in verse eight, “And I heard, but I understood not.” Now Daniel was a man of understanding. He had been brought up among the Chaldeans. From his youth he had sought after wisdom and understanding. He was one of God’s greats. He had seen the Ancient of Days. The Lord Himself had spoken to him. So if we fail to fully understand everything written in his book we are at least in good company. Daniel was a prophet. Yet Daniel himself understood not his own prophecy. Nor did the Lord enlighten him. “Then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.” So the mystery of Daniel continues till one be found worthy to open the book. “Many shall be purified,” verse 10 tells us, “and made white and tried.” These words are for the pure in heart. These words are for those like Daniel, who have endured, who have been purified and made white and tried. “But the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand.” The understanding, you see, is based on purity. Unless we grasp that, we have missed the teaching of Daniel. “But the wise shall understand.” This completes the circle. As we pointed out earlier, ‘He that winneth souls is wise.’ If we are found pure, and preaching a pure gospel, and turning many to righteousness, and diligently seeking understanding at the same time, and willing to endure trial for the Lord, we should be able to read Daniel with understanding. For this is the time of the end. How great Thou art!

“And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.” For this, let us refer to Matthew’s gospel. Matthew, quoting the Lord, says, ‘This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: for there shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved.’ Here is where the one thousand two hundred and ninety days begin. “And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days.” So we see clearly that this event, connected as it is with the great tribulation, has not yet come to pass. And perhaps we should take the time, as we come to the end of the book of Daniel, to look at this particular happening more closely. For great is the Lord! Amen!

First, ‘This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world,’ or worldwide, ‘for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.’ This has now been achieved, we are told. There is not a nation on earth today left without a witness, it seems. And then shall the end come. What is the sign of the end? ‘When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation,’ or the abomination that maketh desolate, ‘spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place..., then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains.’ This abomination of desolation

then is to be seen in the holy place, and it is local to Judea. The holy place would imply Jerusalem, and the site of the temple. So something terrible is to appear in Jerusalem, at the holy place, which will cause them of Judea to flee. But note the particulars of the flight. It is sudden. It is immediate. It is in desperate haste. And it is long. 'Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house.' Why? There isn't time!! 'Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.' Why? Because of the urgency!! So the abomination of desolation is something in Jerusalem, at the holy place, which can be seen throughout all Judea by them who are out-of-doors - either in the field or on the housetop. And it is of such a nature that immediate flight is called for, flight of such urgency as not to pause even to pick up clothes. And this abomination is that which maketh desolate. It is cause for fear. It can be seen for miles around. 'And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days.' Why? Because they will be hampered, slowed down, when the only way to escape is to get out of there as quickly as possible. 'But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day.' Why? Obviously eight furlongs, or a sabbath day's journey, is not long enough to escape. They have to run or ride till they reach the mountains to be safe. 'For there shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.' Now Daniel could not have understood it, even if one explained it to him, but we can understand it. So it must be something pertaining to our day and age, the nuclear age. And what is this abomination that maketh desolate which will stand in the holy place and be seen all over Judea, signaling the end of the world? A mushroom cloud. A nuclear explosion set off in the holy place. As the stem of the mushroom rises straight up it is seen throughout Judea. And as it begins to mushroom out at the top, let them in Judea flee for their very lives, without pausing, without stopping, till they reach the security of the mountains, leaving all behind them. For that single column, reminiscent of Nebuchadnezzar's idol, rising into the air, is a terrible sight, signaling the end. And that mushrooming cloud, spreading so rapidly over Judea, is that which maketh desolate. Therefore it is called the abomination of desolation, a product of our age, unknown even to Daniel. Woe to the world when that appears!

Well may we shudder at the terrible events, at the great tribulations, which are prophesied to close out the day on earth! And the fact that we understand them, but Daniel could not, is proof enough of how near it all is. We are not yet down to the wire, as they say, or at the place where the days are literally numbered, but how far off are we? "There shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days," says the Old Testament prophecy, and the New Testament adds, 'And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved.' We need salvation now, and not wait till the end. We ought to come to Jesus Christ today, if we have not already done so. We urgently need to make our peace with God, whilst it is called today. Then we may face the future with equanimity. But to hang back till the opportunity is gone would be foolishness indeed. "Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days," says scripture. Even now we are waiting for the Lord's return, though not yet counting the days. Daniel has gone on before us, as the last verse says, "But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." Daniel has done his work. He has forewarned us. He is gone to his rest, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, a man greatly beloved. It is now up to us, it is our responsibility, it is today we must give heed to the prophecy he has left us. And when we come to Jesus Christ, and see how great He is, we can join with Daniel and all the saints in one great voice of praise, Great is the Lord. How great Thou art!