

History

of the Church of God

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Chapter V

THE BABYLONISH CAPTIVITY AND THE RESTORATION TO CANAAN.

THE land of Judah, according to prophecy, was to enjoy its Sabbaths, and therefore the king of Babylon did not do with that what the king of Assyria had done with Israel, viz.: Substitute another population in place of the people removed. This country remained open and at rest, ready to be reoccupied when the people to whom it had been given should return from their captivity.

The history of the ten tribes from their captivity to the captivity of Judah—one hundred and thirty-three years—is a blank never to be filled. The distinction was no longer to exist. Israel was lost sight of. Many of the ten lost tribes^[1] returned and associated themselves with Judah during the 133 years. The others were dispersed in the Assyrian provinces; and, when the empire of Babylon included Egypt, Assyria, and other nations to the number of one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, the remnant of Israel belonged to that empire, and therefore were found to exist under the same government with their brethren of Judah after the fall of Jerusalem. They became one people again then, under the reign of the Babylonish kings, and were so reckoned and so treated by those great eastern rulers. Henceforward all the descendants of Abraham were called Jews down to the Christian era, and have been ever since so called. According to this view the ten lost tribes need no longer be searched for; they are already found. Nebuchadnezzar was a great king; he was the great “head of gold” among

the kings of the succeeding empires. He was "the great tree which grew and was strong, whose height reached unto the Heavens, and the sight thereof to all the earth; whose leaves were fair and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of Heaven had their habitation" (Dan. 4). Under the shadow of this great tree the chosen people of God, Judah and Israel, now dwelt, and dwelt as *one people*, though scattered beneath the shadow of various branches of it.

Daniel and his three friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, who had been carried down to Babylon when Nebuchadnezzar first took Jerusalem, were destined to occupy places of distinction under the reign of that and succeeding monarchs. After four years' preparation they were permitted to stand before the king, and he gave them positions even within the royal court itself, where they might be prepared, when necessary, to render assistance to their kindred in captivity.

Ezekiel, who had been carried to Babylon in the second deportation from Jerusalem, was called to the prophetic office about B.C. 595. He was located among the captives on the river Chebar, which is described as falling into the Euphrates about two hundred miles north of Babylon. Thus far away in the heart of this vast empire his solitary voice was heard, and the people received his communications and sought his instruction (Ezek. 8; 14; 20). He prophesied in all about twenty-two years. His prophecies, regarding the destruction of Jerusalem and the conquest of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar, are the same in substance with those of Jeremiah, though widely separated, and unable to hold correspondence with each other. The prophecies were fulfilled to the letter. This proves them to have been prophets of God, and both moved by the Holy Ghost to speak and write as they did (Ezek. 1; 24). Ezekiel died B.C. 574.

Daniel was known to Ezekiel, for he twice names him in his prophecies (Ezek. 14:14; 28:3). Daniel attained a high distinction in the king's court among the heathen, as well as among his own people, and was regarded by both as being superior to all other men for wisdom and holiness.

He was very similarly situated at the court of Nebuchadnezzar, as was Joseph at the court of Pharaoh.

"The one stood near the beginning and the other near the end of the Jewish history of revelation; both were representatives of God at heathen courts; both interpreters of the dim presentiments of truth expressed in God-sent dreams, and therefore raised to honor by the powers of the world; so representing Israel's calling to be a royal priesthood among the nations; and types of Christ, the true Israel, and of Israel's destination to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, as Romans 11:12, 15, foretells."—*Auberlen*. "Among the prominent characteristics of Daniel are his personal purity and self-restraint amidst the world's corrupting luxuries (Dan. 1:8-16; compare Moses, Heb. 11:24-27; Joseph, Gen. 39:9); his faithfulness to God at all costs, and fearless witnessing for God before great men (Dan. 4:17-23), unbribed by lucre and unawed by threats (6:10, 11); his pure patriotism, which, with burning prayers, interceded for his chastened countrymen (9); and his intimate communion with God, so that, like the beloved disciple and apocalyptic seer of the New Testament, John, he also is called 'a man greatly beloved,' and this twice, by the angel of the Lord (9:23; 10:11), and received the exactest disclosure of the date of Messiah's advent, and the successive events down to the Lord's final advent for the deliverance of His people.

"The infidel philosopher, Porphyry (born A.D. 233; died 304), asserted that the book of Daniel was a forgery of the time of the Maccabees (B.C. 170-164)—a time when *confessedly* there were no prophets, written *after* the events as to Antiochus Epiphanes, which it professed to *foretell*, so accurate are the details—a conclusive proof of Daniel's inspiration, if his prophecies can be shown to have been *before* those events. Now we know from Josephus that the Jews in Christ's day recognized Daniel as in the canon. Zechariah, Ezra and Nehemiah, centuries before Antiochus, refer to it. Jesus refers to it in His characteristic designation, 'Son of man' (Matthew 24:30; Dan. 7:13), also, expressly by name, and as a 'prophet' (Matthew 24:15, 21; Dan. 12:1, etc.), and in the moment that decided His life (Matthew 26:64) or death, when the high priest adjured Him by the living God. Also in Luke 1:19-26, 'Gabriel' is mentioned, whose name occurs

nowhere else in Scripture save Daniel 8:16, and 9:21. Besides the references to it in Revelation, Paul confirms the prophetic part of it, as to the blasphemous king (Dan. 7:8, 25; 11:36) in 1 Corinthians 6:2, and 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4; the narrative part, as to the miraculous deliverances from the lions and the fire in Hebrews 11:33, 34. Thus the book is expressly attested by the New Testament on the three points made the stumbling block of neologists—the predictions, the narratives of miracles, and the manifestations of angels.”—*Fausset*. The language of the book of Daniel, partly Hebrew and partly Chaldee, and the exact knowledge which the writer shows of the ancient Babylonian manners and customs, as confirmed by the latest monumental discoveries, prove the authenticity of the book. The ancient Jews classed Daniel in the same division of the Scriptures (*Ketubim*, writings) as the Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, Canticles, Esther, Lamentations, Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles; and they showed their high regard for the book of Daniel by having it, with other portions of the *Ketubim*, read before the high priest on the night of the Day of Atonement.

The astonishingly exact fulfillment of many of the prophecies of Daniel demonstrates the divine inspiration of the book. The extraordinary importance of this book must be our excuse for the extended space that we give to its consideration in this work.

“Daniel, with deliberate purpose of heart, would not defile himself with the king’s meat or wine; because to have partaken of it would have been a tacit sanction of idolatry, seeing that an initiatory offering had been made of it to consecrate the whole meal to idols. He who was to be the interpreter of Jehovah’s revelations against the heathen world-power, must not himself feed on the dainties, nor drink from the intoxicating cup of the world. Like Moses, he must ‘choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.’ Faith was the secret principle of Daniel’s consistency. Faith alone can enable the young to overcome the carnal appetites of sense, which are especially strong in early life and youthful vigor. They who would excel in wisdom and piety must learn early to keep the body in subjection to the spirit. Temperance is conducive alike to the health of body and soul. A pampered body clogs the

intellect, and still more incapacitates the man for *spiritual* exercises."—*Fausset*.

The second and the seventh chapters of Daniel, under different figures, foretell the same events—the successive existence of four great world-empires, to be followed by a fifth indestructible and finally-universal spiritual kingdom to be set up by the God of Heaven and the Son of man. "In the second chapter, the world-kingdoms are seen by the heathen king in their outward unity and glory, yet without life, a metal colossus; in the seventh chapter they appear to the prophet of God in their real character, as instinct with life, but mere beast life, terrible animal power, but no true manhood; for true manhood can only be realized by conscious union with God, in whose image man was made. The Son of God as the 'Son of man' is the true ideal standard and head of regenerated humanity. When Nebuchadnezzar glorified and deified self he became beast-like and consorted with the beasts; but, when he lifted up his eyes to Heaven, his understanding returned, and he blessed the Most High, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion."—*Fausset*. The First world-kingdom is represented by the golden head of the image and by the lion with eagle's wings; the second by the arms and breast of silver, and by the bear with three ribs in its mouth; the third by the belly and thighs of brass, and by the four-headed and four-winged leopard; and the fourth by the legs of iron and feet partly of iron and partly of clay, and by an unnamed, terrible, exceedingly strong, ten-horned, iron-toothed, brazen-nailed beast, different from all the others, and devouring and stamping the others in pieces. The first world-kingdom, as Daniel himself says, was the Babylonian, whose vigor began and ended with Nebuchadnezzar—chief among the kingdoms, like gold among the metals, and the lion among beasts, with wide-spread and rapidly acquired power, indicated by the wings of an eagle. The second world-kingdom is almost universally admitted to have been the Medo-Persian, formed by the union of two nations, the Medes and the Persians, as the two arms are united in the breast—inferior to the Babylonian kingdom in antiquity—and its early effeminacy and the dependence of its king on his nobles, as silver is inferior to gold and the bear to the lion—cruel and slow—moving like the bear—the three ribs in its mouth representing Lydia, Babylon and Egypt, not properly parts of its body, but seized by Medo-Persia. The third world-kingdom is by

the union of the Greeks and the Macedonians, as the two thighs are united in the body (or the two thighs may represent the principal and longest-lived kingdoms into which the Macedonian empire was divided, that of the Seleucidæ in Syria and that of the Ptolemies in Egypt), of an inferior mercenary character, and with its soldiers clothed with brass or bronze armor—the leopard representing slyness and pertinacity, and the four wings the unexampled rapidity of the conquests of Alexander the Great, and the four heads the four Diodochi, or successors, among whom Alexander's dominions were divided, Ptolemy in Egypt, Seleucus in Asia, Lysimachus in Thrace, and Cassander in Greece; the inferiority of the Macedonian empire is forcibly illustrated by the repeated and protracted debauchery and intemperance of Alexander and his army, and by the very brief duration of his empire. Divine Providence brings good out of evil; the wide diffusion of the Greek language in Western Asia was among the most important natural preparations for the spread of Christianity. In regard to the identification of the fourth world-kingdom opinions vary. A few modern scholars think that it was the Syrian monarchy of the Seleucidæ, or the Seleucidæ of Syria and the Ptolemies of Egypt; the ten toes and horns representing the monarchs of the Syrian dynasty especially—the foreign Greek element of iron, and the native Oriental element the clay; intermarrying with the Ptolemies, but still hostile to them; the little horn plucking up three others, and having the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things, being supposed to be the Syrian king, Antiochus (IV.) Epiphanes, of whom it is generally agreed that Daniel prophesies in his eighth, eleventh and twelfth chapters. But the Seleucidæ and Ptolemies were the thigh sequelæ of the brazen Macedonian kingdom; and it was the almost universal opinion of the ancient Jewish and Christian scholars, and it is still advocated by a very large proportion of English and German interpreters, that the fourth world-kingdom was the ROMAN. If not the Roman, then the prophet, in his anticipatory survey of the kingdoms of the world, has omitted the greatest world-kingdom that ever existed, and one which was existing not only long before but actually when Christ came into the world, and one with which and its subdivisions His kingdom has had the most to do; and yet the prophet, at the proper place in his predictions had used remarkable language that applies more appropriately to the Roman empire than to any that ever existed. For these reasons we are satisfied that the fourth world-kingdom was the Roman. It

was a gigantic monstrosity, surpassing, in terribleness, all the beasts of the field and all the other kingdoms of the world. "Irresistible in the battlefield, within there were internal weakness, the struggles of fierce factions, civil dissensions, and finally an oligarchy of rich men, the most corrupt, since the deluge, that ever existed on earth, before whom all manliness vanished away. To save itself it had to bow to the yoke of absolute power, and at length, from the necessities of administration, was divided into the western and eastern empires, symbolized by the two legs, in which there was still vast strength, but also much weakness, the extremities of the Roman dominions being constantly harassed by incursions of the barbarians, who often even carried their raids into the very heart of the empire. It was thus partly strong and partly broken (or brittle), because, while its armies of mercenaries were irresistible, its own subjects were too feeble to defend themselves; and its toes were of iron, if protected by fortresses and regular armies, but of clay if these aids were withdrawn. As finally the government of this vast realm was ever the prize of revolt, of artifice and of crime, the emperors were always trying to strengthen themselves by 'mingling with the seed of men,' by marriages with members of rival families, and by national alliances, but in vain. The two dreams carry the description of the Roman empire down to a period long subsequent to the foundation of the Messiah's kingdom—the ten toes and ten horns representing the subdivisions of the Roman empire, the number ten being the prevalent one at the chief turning points of Roman history, and it may be the number of kingdoms into which Rome shall be found finally divided when Antichrist shall appear (Rev. 13: 1; 17: 12). And of Messiah's kingdom itself we have not merely the beginning, but the growth, until it had crushed and taken the place of all these empires."—*R.P. Smith*. The "little horn," in the seventh chapter, is the intensest development of the God-opposing, haughty spirit of the world represented by the fourth monarchy, and plainly denotes the Pope of Rome, plucking up three horns, the exarchate of Ravenna, the kingdom of the Lombards, and the state of Rome, which constituted the Pope's dominions at first, obtained by Popes Zachary and Stephen II., A.D. 754, in return for acknowledging the usurper Pepin lawful king of France—the fact of *three* states first constituting his dominions being *still* indicated by the Pope's *triple-crown*, a tiara with *three* coronets rising one above another. This little horn is diverse from the others, has in it the eyes as of a man, denoting

intelligence and cunning, and a mouth speaking great words against the Most High—no other blasphemy ever equaled that of the Pope of Rome, and he wears out, persecutes and murders the saints of the Most High, and thinks to change times and laws, assuming to himself all the authority of God on earth, and finally culminating in avowed Antichrist.

These four great military world-kingdoms, though seemingly so splendid, powerful and enduring, are in reality but transitory shadows. "The metals in the image lessen in specific gravity as they go downwards; silver is not so heavy as gold, brass not so heavy as silver, and iron not so heavy as brass, the weight thus being arranged in the reverse of stability, indicating the ease with which the image can be destroyed."—*Tregelles*. A stone cut out of a mountain without hands smites the image upon its feet, and breaks it to pieces and makes it like the chaff of the summer threshing-floor, scattered and, as it were, annihilated by the wind, while the stone becomes a great mountain, and fills the whole earth; that is, "in the days of these kings," *the kings of the fourth or iron kingdom*, the God of Heaven sets up a kingdom, which shall destroy all the world-kingdoms, and itself fill the earth, and stand forever. Or, as the same great fact is described in the seventh chapter, the Ancient of days, the Everlasting Father, the Infinitely Holy God, with garment white as snow, and hair like pure wool, appears upon a fiery throne, surrounded by myriads of the angelic host, *during the existence of the fourth beast* (verses 7, 9, 10, 11, 23) or *fourth kingdom*, which is to be destroyed and given to the burning flame, and the Son of man comes to the Ancient of days with the clouds of Heaven, and there is given to Him a universal and everlasting dominion. While the fourth or Roman empire was reigning over the world, the Son of God, the equal of the Father, comes down from the heavenly mount, not by human agency, but by Divine power, and veils Himself in flesh as the Son of man, the weeping Babe of Bethlehem, like a poor, little, humble, worthless, off-cast, powerless stone upon the ground, and lives a life of poverty and persecution, and dies as a crucified malefactor; but behold He soon arises from the grave, and, from the top of Mount Olivet, he ascends upon a radiant cloud to the Ancient of days, His eternal Father, and receives a dominion, glory, and a kingdom, wide as the universe, and lasting as eternity (Acts 1:9, 12; Matthew 28:18). The ancient Jews understood the "stone" in the second, and the "Son of

man" in the seventh chapter of Daniel, to be the Messiah. Metallic images are made by the hands of men; but stones and mountains are made by God. Christ is "the stone of Israel" (Gen. 49:24), "rejected by the builders, but become the headstone of the corner" (Ps. 118:22), a "stone of stumbling" to carnal Israel (Isa. 8:14; Acts 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:7, 8), but the sure chief foundation stone of the true church (Isa. 28:16; Eph. 2:20; Matthew 16:18). With distinct reference to these words of Daniel, Christ said: "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" (Matthew 21:44; Luke 20:17, 18). Cut out of the same mountain originally, it ends in becoming a mountain; coming from Heaven, it ends in establishing Heaven on earth. "High in the impalpable air, above the highest human colossus and human kingdom, projects itself another colossus formed from the mount and rock of the heavenly Zion. A stone from this holiest of mounts looses itself and falls. If it destroys the earthly material which it strikes, it brings also with it that new, pure, heavenly spirit and material which shall fill again the earth with a stronger mount, and found a new and better city, Zion."—*Ewald*.

"Thus, then, the captive Jewish youth unrolled before the eyes of the tyrant that had crushed his country, his home, and the temple of his God, the course of the five universal empires. Four rise, one after another, each to fall. For a while they beat down and destroy and fill the fair surface of the earth with tears and misery: for their weapons are force, violence and cruelty; and scarcely has one seized the sceptre before another rises to wrench it from his loosening grasp. At length, ushered in by no trumpet-blast, with no clashing of arms nor banners fluttering in the breeze, but by a still, calm, unseen influence, the fifth empire begins to arise. Its armies are recruited from the poor, the outcast, the slave. Those whom men despise are summoned to its standard; and that standard is one of suffering; but with this for their symbol, they shall conquer. This empire has its heroes; they are martyrs who bear the utmost cruelty that debased men can invent, and bear it with joy, for their love to Him who gave His life for them. It has its warriors—men who use no carnal weapons, and who wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the powers of darkness. It has its armies—thousands whose joy it is to do well and bear evil for their master's sake. And the regeneration of the race will come when the Spirit of Christ, working

in the hearts of all, has won the world for the Lord. The Persians robbed the Babylonians of the sceptre, the Greeks tore it from the Persians, and the Romans from the Greeks. But Christ is an eternal King, the true King of kings, and His people will never perish, for the very gates of hell will be forever powerless against the spiritual kingdom of our God."—*R.P. Smith*.

The great, proud, lifeless, many-metalled colossus of the world stands up as the idol in every human heart, until the Spirit of God overturns this haughty image, humbles the heart, and prepares it to be filled with the glorious presence of Christ.

Daniel's language, in his second and seventh chapters, contains an allusion, not only to the *first*, but to the *second*, coming of the Son of man. As He ascended to glory in a cloud, so shall He return, surrounded with His holy angels, to consign His enemies to the "burning flame," while He welcomes his people into "life eternal" (Acts 1:11; Rev. 1:7; Matthew 25:31-46). Charlemagne, Charles V. and Napoleon have in vain endeavored to establish a fifth temporal universal empire. "The fourth, or Roman empire, in its subdivisions and colonies, still continues. We live under it; our civilization, letters, language and laws are essentially connected with those of imperial Rome. This fourth kingdom, though now professedly Christianized, is regarded in Scripture still in its essence to be ranked among the God-opposed beast-like world-powers, not only not better, but actually worse, than its three predecessors, in the ultimate intensity of its opposition to God and His Christ, and the full development of Antichrist, 'the man of sin,' 'the son of perdition,' that denieth both Father and Son (2 Thess. 2: 1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3). The New Testament views the present age of the world as essentially heathenish, which we cannot love without forsaking Christ (Rom. 12:2; 1 Cor. 1:20; 2 Cor. 4: 4; Gal. 1:4; Eph. 2:2; 1 John 2:15, 17). The present outward Christianity is to give place for a time to an almost universal apostasy under the last Antichrist (2 Thess. ii.) As the first, or Old Testament Antichrist, Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria B.C. 176-164, whose career is circumstantially predicted by Daniel in the eighth, eleventh and twelfth chapters of his prophecy, was the product of the highest ancient Greek civilization, so the last New Testament Antichrist is to be the product of the highest modern civilization, ignoring and despising God and vital

religion, and substituting therefor a false liberalism in faith and practice, a growing laxity of morals, and a worship of money and of human science and art and invention, degenerating into avowed atheism and an unholy alliance with the Pope of Rome, for the extermination of the Church of Christ.”—*A.R. Fausset*.

Upon the interpretation of his dream, Nebuchadnezzar conferred extraordinary honors on Daniel; made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon, and declared the God of Daniel to be supreme over all gods. His three companions, whose Chaldean names now were Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, were also made rulers over the affairs of Babylon, but Daniel sat in the gateⁱⁱ[2] of the king.

Kings' minds are changeable, as well as those of other people. Nebuchadnezzar soon forgot Daniel's God, and made one to suit him better. He set it up in the plain of Dura, and commanded all his subjects to fall down and worship it. Daniel was overlooked, it seems; but Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were not. They were watched, and complaint made against them as refusing to obey. They still refused to worship the idol, and, as a punishment therefore, were thrown bound into a burning, fiery furnace,ⁱⁱⁱ[3] heated seven times hotter than usual; that is, as hot as possible. The heat of the furnace destroyed those who cast them in, but only burned off the shackles of the three who were willing to die rather than worship an idol. The king looked into the furnace and exclaimed: "Lo! I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." He called on them to come out, and he blessed the Most High for their deliverance, and said: "I make a decree that every people, nation and language which speak anything 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 God that can deliver after this sort." The king again promoted them to their distinguished positions as before (Daniel 3).

Thus by faith the violence of fire was quenched. And the hearts of these three men, as well as of all the children of God who heard of it, were strengthened and confirmed.

The king had a second dream in regard to himself more particularly. Daniel interpreted that, and then besought the king to break off his sins by righteousness, and his iniquities by showing mercy to the poor—that it might be a lengthening of his tranquility; but he heeded not the warning and went on his course, rejecting all allegiance to God and deifying himself until the Almighty struck him down, divested him of reason,^{iv}[4] turned him into a brute, and drove him from the haunts of men. Seven years passed over him—his reason was restored, and so was his kingdom. He was a changed man. He no longer desires to bind other people or take their lives if they do not do as he says, but, as a pardoned sinner, he looks to himself, and praises God for what He had done for him. “Now I Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol the God of Heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment; and those that walk in pride He is able to abase” (Daniel iv. 37). Here was a God-fearing man upon the throne now, ready to wield his power in protecting and enlarging the liberties of God’s people dwelling in all parts of his dominion.

Evil-Merodach, his son and successor, when he came to the throne of Babylon, soon released Jehoiachin from prison and honored him highly, and gave him ample support for the remainder of his life. His father, in the case of Jehoiachin, had commuted the death penalty into imprisonment for life. And this act shows the kind feelings of this monarch toward the Lord’s people, and that God, though He had sent Israel into captivity, remembered them in mercy.

Belshazzar,^v[5] the son or grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, succeeded Evil-Merodach, and during his reign Darius the Median overthrew Babylon and took the kingdom. Belshazzar made a great feast, and among other impious acts of his, ordered the gold and silver vessels that had been taken from the temple in Jerusalem to be brought forth and used in this sacrilegious carousal, and the order was obeyed. At that moment the fingers of a man’s hand appeared to be writing upon the wall, and these are the words written:

“Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin.” None could interpret the writing but Daniel. It may have been in the older Hebrew, or in altogether strange characters. Daniel was sent for, and interpreted it as follows: “Mene [*numbered*]; God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it. Tekel [*weighed*]; thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. Peres [*divided*]; thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.” (In *upharsin*, *u* means *and*, and *pharsin* means *dividers*; *Peres*, the singular passive participle, is substituted by Daniel for *pharsin*, the plural active participle of the same verb, probably because of its greater similarity to *Persia*.) Then they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain about his neck, and proclaimed him the third ruler in the kingdom. In that night was Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans, slain, and Darius the Medianvi[6] took the kingdom (Daniel 5).

“It is an appalling scene when a sinning mortal knows that the great God has come to meet him in the very midst of his sins! How changed the scene from the glee of blasphemous revelry to paleness of cheek, convulsion of frame, remorse of conscience, and dread foreboding of doom!”—*Cowles*. “What a picture we have in king Belshazzar of every reprobate sinner’s course and final ruin! Unwarned by the judgments inflicted on others before him, on account of pride and rebellion against God, the sinner still takes no heed to glorify the God in whose hand his breath is. Instead of humbling himself in repentance, he either openly or else virtually lifts up himself against the Lord of Heaven, following after worldliness, covetousness or sensuality as his portion, and making the perishing things of time his idol. At last judgment, long deferred in mercy, goes forth. God brings to the appointed end the allotted number of the sinner’s days. Then follows the judgment whereby, weighed in the balances of God, he is found wanting in the only thing that carries weight with God—faith working by love. His past privileges are taken from him forever, and given to another, whilst he himself is ‘cut asunder, and his portion is appointed with the hypocrites, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ As God’s writing against Belshazzar was perfectly fulfilled, so let the impenitent be warned that no one tittle of God’s writing in His volume of inspiration shall fail to come to pass: alike the self-righteous, when weighed in the balance of the law, and

the formalist and hypocrite, weighed in the balance of the gospel, shall be found wanting and shall suffer accordingly."

"Daniel faithfully and fearlessly sets before the proud, impious king his great sin; and he interprets the mysterious writing not for any hope of reward, though the inalterability of the decrees of the Medo-Persian kings thrusts the promised rewards upon him. Estimating all things, even spiritual realities, by the standard of money, the ungodly think that the godly do the same; and therefore they try to bribe the servant of God (Dan. 5:16, 17) to procure for them deliverance from wrath, and an easy mind. But the true child of God will show a spirit superior to the love of gain, even as Daniel agreed to read and interpret the writing, but declined to accept the king's gifts and rewards. Nothing tends more to injure a believer's usefulness than that he should be seen by the world, like Balaam and Gehazi, to be greedy of gain; and, on the contrary, nothing tends more to make the worldly feel that believers are influenced by principles far above their own, than that they should see the children of God, as Daniel and Paul (Acts 20:33-35), ready to perform the work of faith and labor of love, without regard to worldly advantage."—*Fausset*.

The Scripture prophecies relating to the conquests of Babylon, the method of the conquest (draining the river Euphrates), the name of the conqueror, Cyrus, and the restoration of Israel to their own land, may be seen in Isaiah 13, 14, 16, 44, and Jeremiah 25:1, 51. How astonishing that Isaiah, in 712 B.C., should have predicted the very name of Cyrus, as the conqueror of Babylon in 538 B.C.—174 years before the event! And then to state the exact method of conquest which Cyrus would employ! What a clear proof of the Divine inspiration of the prophet, and of the perfect foreknowledge of God!

When Belshazzar was overthrown, there was an end of the kings in Nebuchadnezzar's line, and an end of the first great universal monarchy mentioned in the prophecies of Daniel.

Darius (associated with Cyrus or governing in his stead, by appointment, at the time) was well apprised of the character and standing of Daniel, and appointed him chief of the three presidents, whom he set to aid him in

managing the affairs of the nation, and also chose him as prime minister of the realm. Thus it appears that the captive Jews had friends at court still, notwithstanding the change in the dynasties.

Others in court who hated the Jews and envied Daniel's distinction, not being able to bring an accusation against him in regard to his want of wisdom, or high moral standing, brought one against him for praying to his God in violation of a decree which themselves were the cunning authors of, and which they had with flatteries induced the king to sign and seal. Daniel, on learning the nature of the decree and the penalty attached to its violation, in the sublimest exhibition of Divine faith and moral courage, opened his window, and, with his face turned toward Jerusalem, prayed three times a day to God, as he was wont to do. He was brought before the king for punishment, and much against his will he had to sentence Daniel to be thrown into a den of lions. Daniel was calm and quiet, and so were the lions, while the king was miserable and spent a sleepless night. He went early to the den and found Daniel alive, had him taken out and his accusers thrown in, with their wives and children, who were destroyed immediately by the wild beasts. Thus after his three friends had through faith "quenched the violence of fire," he by the same power "stopped the mouths of lions." Daniel's God locked their jaws. The same want of conformity to the world and faithfulness to God have characterized His elect people in all ages of the world, before and since the coming of Christ; and for their "stubbornness," as the world calls it—if for nothing else—they have been horribly maltreated, both under the legal and Christian dispensations. And we in this connection would ask a candid world, who of all the people on the face of this earth at the present time, do they believe, would be as willing to follow these four men and sacrifice their lives, for the testimony of Jesus, as these people called Primitive Baptists? They may be called "stubborn," "unsocial," "unyielding," "too exacting," etc., but when the Son of man cometh again on earth, where will He find faith if He does not find it among them?

"Amidst the business of a vast empire Daniel found time habitually to pray three times a day. As Daniel, in exile, looked towards the earthly temple, so let us lift up our eyes towards Christ, our heavenly temple, from this earthly scene of our captivity. As Daniel prayed openly and avowedly, so

let us act as God and conscience dictate, and not as the fear of man's anger or love of his praise might suggest. And as Daniel, even when earthly prospects were dark, and destruction seemed impending, still gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime, so have we, in our highly favored position, still more cause to thank God at all times, and to have his praise continually in our mouth (Ps. 34:1)."—*Fausset*.

The years of captivity were nearly ended; Daniel confessed his sins and the sins of his brethren in captivity, and prayed to God for pardon for his sins and the sins of the captives. He prayed for the fulfillment of the promise, and that the Lord would make a way for the return of the people to Jerusalem, and give him a clearer insight into the particulars thereof. The Lord heard his petition, the angel Gabriel touched him and talked with him, and gave him to understand: 1. That a commandment should go forth for the return of the people and for the rebuilding of Jerusalem. 2. The long expected Messiah, the Prince, should come sixty-nine weeks from the rebuilding of the walls and settlement of Jerusalem. 3. In the seventieth week He should be cut off, but not for Himself, but for His people; and by the one offering of Himself should make reconciliation for iniquity, bringing in everlasting righteousness, doing away with all typical sacrifices, sealing up in fulfillment vision and prophecy respecting Himself, and making an end of the dispensation which looked forward to His advent. 4. Finally, after His advent and death, a people should come and destroy city, temple and sacrifice, and break up the civil state of the church forever. This is the third prophecy (Gen. 44:10 being the first, and Dan. 2:44 the second) that fixes the time of our Lord's appearing, and of the end of the civil constitution of the church of God. (Dan. 9:1-29).

This is the most *definite* prophecy of the *very time of Christ's coming* that is contained in the Old Testament. The fact of its general fulfillment in the coming, ministry and crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, which was followed, in about a generation, by the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman army under Titus, A.D. 70, has been admitted by the ablest scholars for 1,700 years; though there have been a great many different opinions as to the exact date when the seventy weeks, or 490 years, began and ended. The Jewish historian, Josephus, and both the old Jewish Gemaras, and the

prevailing Talmudic and Rabbinical traditions of the early centuries of the Christian era, considered the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus predicted in Daniel 9:26, 27. The Old Testament Scriptures had been carried over the civilized world before the birth of Christ; and the old pagan Roman historians, Tacitus (Hist. v. 13) and Suetonius (Vesp. iv.), inform us that there was, on account of some ancient prophecies, a general expectation, in the first century of the Christian era, that there would arise out of Judea, at that time, a great personage, who would obtain the sovereignty of the world. The prophecies referred to were, no doubt, principally those in Daniel 9:24-27. And the very learned Jewish Chief-Rabbi of Venice, Simon Luzzato, in 1590 A.D., declared that "the consequence of a too extended and profound investigation on the part of Jewish scholars would be that they would all become Christians; for it could not be denied that, according to Daniel's limitation of the time, the Messiah must have already appeared." Sir Isaac Newton says: "He who denies Daniel's prophecies undermines Christianity, which is founded on Daniel's prophecies concerning Christ." And Christ Himself (in Matthew 29:15, 21, 28, 34) not only affirms the prophetic character of Daniel, but applies Daniel 9:26, 27 to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, which was to take place before the passing away of that wicked generation that rejected and murdered Him.

The word *shabuim*, rendered weeks in Daniel 9:24-27, literally means *sevens*, that is, as it probable from Daniel 9:2, *sevens of years* (compare Lev. 25:4-8). Seventy sevens of years make 490 years. Now there is allusion, in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, to *five* different commandments for the restoration of the temple or city of Jerusalem: 1st. the commandment of God, the date of which is not given (Ezra 6:14); 2d. Of Cyrus, B.C. 536 (Ezra 1:1-4); 3d. Of Darius, B.C. 520 (Ezra 6:1-14); 4th. Of Artaxerxes to Ezra, in the seventh year of his reign, B.C. 458 (Ezra 7:11-26); 5th. Of Artaxerxes to Nehemiah, in the twentieth year of his reign, B.C. 445 (Neh. 2:1-8). The commandment of God, we know, was the cause of the other commandments; but He has not revealed to us its date. The commandments of Cyrus and Darius were of a general nature, not directed to any particular persons, and authorized the rebuilding only of the *temple*. But the commandment of Artaxerxes to Ezra, B.C. 458, is special, full and explicit, authorizing Ezra to "organize the colony in Judea, and institute a

regular government, according to the laws of the Hebrew people, and by magistrates and rulers of their own nation, with full power of life and death." The text of Artaxerxes' commission to Nehemiah is not given in Scripture; but it is simply said that, at Nehemiah's request, the king gave him letters to the governors beyond the river (Euphrates), ordering them to help him on his way, and to furnish him with materials for building the palace and wall of the city. The weight of authority is, therefore, in favor of considering B.C. 458 as the initial date of the seventy sevens, or 490 years, in Gabriel's prophecy to Daniel (9:24). In the next three verses this period of seventy weeks is divided into three unequal periods—seven weeks, sixty-two weeks, and one week. The first seven weeks of years, or forty-nine years, was the closing period of Old Testament revelation, the age of Ezra, Nehemiah and Malachi. The sixty-two weeks, or 434 years, are the intermediate period between the seven and the one, in which there was no new revelation designed to increase the sacred canon. And the closing one week (or seven years), in the midst of which the Messiah was to be cut off, and cause the legal sacrifices and oblations to cease their virtue and efficacy, includes the three-and-a-half years of Jesus' own preaching to the Jews, and the three-and-a-half years of the Apostles' preaching to the Jews only; then the martyrdom of Stephen and the persecution following drove the evangelists from Jerusalem to Samaria. Soon afterwards Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, was called, and Peter, the Apostle of the circumcision, preached the gospel to Cornelius, the Roman centurion; and, though multitudes of the Jews had been converted before, we read of very few having been converted afterwards. The Jews were not immediately cast off upon their murder of Christ (Luke 24:47; Acts 3:12-26); but, after the martyrdom of Stephen, A.D. 33, they were virtually and theoretically dead, though Jerusalem was not destroyed by Titus till A.D. 70. All the arithmetics make a mistake in computing the interval of time between two dates, one of which was before, and the other after Christ; as there is no year in history known as B.C. 0 or A.D. 0, but the year immediately preceding A.D. 1 is called B.C. 1, the sum of the nominal years must be diminished by one (Sir John Herschel's *Outlines of Astronomy*, section 916). Even the very learned and usually accurate A.R. Fausset and William Smith, apparently not aware of this fact make the seventh year of Artaxerxes Longimanus 457 B.C. instead of 458 B.C., which it was, according to all the best authorities. Thus, 458 added to

33, and diminished by one, makes the 490 years of the prophecy. Christ was born four years before the beginning of the common Christian era; because He was born before Herod the Great died, and the latter died four years before the commencement of the common era. As he was 30 years old at His baptism, He was baptized 26 A.D. or 27 A.D., and crucified 30 A.D., in the midst of the last week (or seven years) of the prophecy. Still He, after three days, arose from the dead, and was present by His Spirit with His Apostles in confirming the covenant with many Jews the three-and-a-half years that composed the last half of the last prophetic week. *Kanaph*, translated *overspreading*, in verse 27, literally means *wing*. Sir Isaac Newton thinks that it refers to the Roman ensigns (silver eagles) brought to the east gate of the temple, and there sacrificed to by the soldiers. During the siege of Jerusalem by Titus it was perfectly evident, even to the Jewish general, historian and eye-witness, Josephus, that the Jews were "*desolate*," or forsaken of God. Josephus asserts that it was the most ungodly generation that ever existed on earth; and he declares his belief that, if the Romans had not destroyed Jerusalem, the city would have been "swallowed up by the earth, or overwhelmed with a flood, or consumed, like Sodom, with fire from Heaven." Titus besieged Jerusalem in April, A.D. 70, just after the feast of the passover, when twelve hundred thousand Jews, according to Josephus, or six hundred thousand, according to Tacitus, were crowded together in the city. Divided into three hostile factions, the Jews fought with and destroyed one another; reduced to famine, mothers ate their own children, as Moses predicted (Deut. 28:49-57); they suffered unexampled horrors, as Christ had foretold (Matthew 24:21). And when the temple was burned, and the city fell, August 10th, A.D. 70, Josephus records that eleven hundred thousand had perished in the siege, and ninety-seven thousand were sold into slavery. What an impressive commentary are these historical facts, related by an intelligent Jewish eye-witness, upon the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh verses of the ninth chapter of Daniel, and upon the predictions of Moses and Christ! And it is a most remarkable fact that, as Christ had warned His disciples (Luke 21:20, 21) to flee to the mountains when they saw Jerusalem compassed with armies, history states that Cestius Gallus, prefect of Syria, having besieged Jerusalem for six days, when he might have captured it in an hour or less, yet to the *universal surprise*, abandoned the siege, November, A.D. 66, and retreated, and his

army was destroyed; so that, before the final siege by Titus, in April, A.D. 70, all the Christians in Jerusalem, remembering the words of Christ, emigrated beyond the Jordan to Pella, in the north of Perea, in the mountains of Gilead (some sixty miles northeast of Jerusalem), where king Herod Agrippa II., before whom Paul once stood, opened to them a safe asylum (Milman's History of the Jews, Book xiii.; Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History, Book iii., chap. v.; Schaff's History of the Apostolic Church, section 98). These facts furnish a most forcible illustration of the ultimate salvation of all the true people of God, and the destruction of all their enemies.

"It was the general impression of the Jews in exile that, after the *seventy* years of captivity should end, Messiah would come in glory to vindicate the cause of Israel, and to set up his kingdom in Jerusalem. Daniel is, therefore, commissioned, in the ninth chapter of his prophecy, to inform them that *seventy* times seven years must elapse after their return before Messiah would come, and that even then Messiah would not come as yet in the glory foretold by the earlier prophets, and anticipated prematurely by the Jews, but would come to die for the making an end of sins. Thus, the faith and patience of the ancient servants of God were to be greatly exercised. Daniel studied the revelation given from God in the letters of Jeremiah (5:2), in order to know the times and events foretold. Herein we see his teachableness and humanity." "God's promise of deliverance from the Babylonish captivity did not restrain Daniel from prayer, but was rather his incentive to greater earnestness in supplications, as having the strongest ground of assurance that his prayers would be heard. Daniel humbly confessed, not only his nation's, but his own sins, and acknowledged the righteousness of God in their punishment, but pleaded, in his own and Israel's behalf, God's covenant and mercies and forgiveness. Daniel's confession of sin precedes immediately the revelation as to the coming of Messiah. So it ever is. The Spirit first convicts the soul of its sin, and next points to Christ, 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' Messiah died in the midst of the great prophetic week, for the confirmation of His covenant with the many who believe on Him: by His one sacrifice all other sacrifices are done away with: and by the fact that the four hundred and ninety years have long since elapsed, the falsity of the Jews' expectation

of Messiah, as if He had not yet come, is unanswerably proved.”—*A.R. Fausset*.

Daniel went not back to his own country. He could give greater assistance to his kindred by remaining in Babylon. He witnessed the moving forward of the first caravan, and heard of the laying of the foundations of the second temple. He delivered his last prophecy in the third year of Cyrus (Dan. 10, 11, 12).

The eighth, eleventh and twelfth chapters of Daniel (the eleventh in the most minute detail) foretell “the successive histories of Xerxes of Persia; Alexander the Great, king of Macedon, and conqueror of Persia; the four-fold division of Alexander’s kingdom at his death and the consequent conflicts between the kings of the north and the kings of the south, the Seleucidæ and the Ptolemies; and, lastly, the proud violence of Antiochus Epiphanes (of the Seleucidæ) against the covenant people of God, and his final doom. The history of Antiochus’s furious persecution of the Jews will be given in its proper place. The details are given with such minuteness beforehand by the prophet, in order to strengthen and support the faithful ones among God’s ancient people in the fiery ordeal through which they were about to pass during the long period when they were to be without any living prophets. If the world-powers were about to be permitted to trample under foot the people of the covenant, the latter would take comfort in knowing that their God had told them of it ‘in the Scripture of truth’ (Dan. 10:21) long before; and had also engaged that the trial, though most severe, was yet to be of short duration. Like the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, Antichrist was to have two advents—a more immediate and a more distant future. As there is to be the last great Antichrist in the latter days of the New Testament, just before the second coming of Christ, so there was to be a typical and precursory Antichrist, in the latter days of the Old Testament, just before the first coming of Christ. Both alike deal with Israel in the way of perverting her by flatteries, and then persecuting her. Hence arises the need that we should take heed to the signs of the times, and be on our guard ourselves, and put others, too, upon their guard, against the seductions, errors and dangers of these latter times, which are verging fast towards the times of Antichrist. Romanism and other forms of apostate Christianity, combined with

rationalism and the godless wisdom of the world, have most of the elements of Antichristianity which are preparing the way for the man of sin (2 Thess. 2). Let us then, with holy zeal, chastened with humility and love, 'earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints' (Jude 3)."—*Fausset*.

"Towards the close of the visions of Daniel there is a melting away, as it were, of the things of time, and a transition to the things of eternity. It is, therefore, impossible fully to explain these portions of the book of Daniel. They are left as a precious possession to the church of Christ, till the time shall come when their fulfillment shall reflect light upon the written word of God."—*Rose*.

Daniel is thought to have lived to be over ninety years of age, and to have died in his office at court. With him died the prophetic office in the land of captivity. He had no successor. To the remnant of the twelve tribes who yet remained scattered abroad God gave no prophet. Their spiritual advantages thereafter to be obtained were by going up to Jerusalem annually, which many of them did, even down to the second destruction of Jerusalem. The prophets in Jerusalem at the rebuilding of the temple were men who had come up with the people out of Babylon and her provinces.

Of the captivity now brought to a close we may say that it was foreordained, and predicted by Moses, Hosea, Amos, Micah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zephaniah and Habakkuk. It was to purge away the dross from the church, even the mass of formalists, apostates and idolaters, and purify and sanctify God's elect ones who adhered to Him, together with their seed and those connected with them. It certainly cured the Jews of gross idolatry, such as the worshiping of images, the sun or moon or anything which God had made. This change was, probably, more natural than spiritual, and mainly caused by their disgust at the idolatries of their conquerors, and a patriotic clinging to their own national monotheistic religion. *Mental* idolatry, where in a man loves something else better than his Maker, the Jews never got entirely rid of, neither have Christians to this very day. The captivity was of great advantage to the Jews, because it humbled them—gave them a spirit of confession and supplication with deep humility, and prepared them

with their whole heart to praise God for the fulfillment of this prophecy: "For thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then ye shall call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the Lord: and I will turn away your captivity." "And I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive" (Jer. 29:10-14).

The captivity, with the light emanating from Judea for centuries previous, was of advantage to the heathen world, not indeed generally and permanently, but in particular instances and for a season.

In the first year of his sole reign at Babylon (B.C. 536), Cyrus, acknowledging that the God of Israel is the Lord God of Heaven, proclaims that the Jews may return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple of God.vii[7] The time arrived for the departure of the caravan, consisting of nearly 50,000 persons—say 42,360, besides their servants and maids, 7,337, and their singing men and singing women, 200. For the transportation of these, with their clothing, provisions and property, they required 736 horses, 245 mules, 435 camels, and 6,720 asses—a total of 8,136 beasts of burden (Ezra 2:1-70).

The People were chiefly of the tribes of Judah, Benjamin and Levi—those last carried away; and their ecclesiastical rulers and guides were their military leaders in this march. It was a sublime spectacle to behold this peaceful caravan marching through the great wilderness that intervened between Babylon and the Holy Land.

Long was the march across the barren waste, and tedious was the journey. But with their splendid outfit they accomplished it in safety. On arriving in Judea each one or family selected his or their own location, and, after a partial settlement therein, came together, at the old site of Jerusalem, as one man, and upon its old foundation built the altar of the

Lord, which had been overthrown at the destruction of the temple; and, on the first day of the month, set up the worship of God. From that day forth the priests lodged in the city and kept up the daily sacrifice. The smoke as of old ascended heavenward from amid the solitary ruins of the once great Jerusalem, the people came from all quarters to this identical spot, to engage in the public worship of God, and nearly the whole month was consumed in the exercise of religious services, and finally closed by the celebration of the feast of tabernacles (Ezra 3:1-16).

The rebuilding of the temple was resolved on and the work hastened. The king of Babylon made a royal contribution, but not sufficient; then all the people, from the highest to the lowest, donated what they could afford, and some of them gave abundantly. In the second month of the second year of their return they laid the foundation of the building. Zerubbabel the governor, the high priest Jeshua, and all the priests and Levites, were present. There was great rejoicing on the occasion, but some mourning. Some of the old men who had seen Solomon's temple standing, shed tears when they saw the great contrast between that and this.

The Samaritans hindered the building of the temple, and caused an order for its suspension to be issued by the king of Babylon, and the work remained dormant fourteen years. It was no disadvantage to the Jews, because they had the more time to attend to and improve their own private affairs. At length, being urged by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, the people renewed the building of the temple (Ezra 5:1; Haggai 1:1-11). Although inferior in one respect (the lack of gold and silver) to the former, the prophet assured the people that it should excel it in another (spiritual) respect; for the "Desire of all nations" should come and fill it with His glorious presence, and this would be superior to the precious metals and the Shekinah of old. So, to the poor believer, Christ is of infinitely more value than all the treasures of earth. This prophecy, in Haggai 2:6-9, is the fourth Old Testament prediction of the *time* of Christ's coming. A part of the language of Haggai has reference to Jacob's dying prophecy of the coming of Shiloh, or the Peace-Giver, unto whom should the gathering of the people or nations be (Gen. 49:10). Divine Providence shook all nations by allowing the wars of the Græco-Macedonian and the Roman Empires, making the Greek

language and the Roman dominion universal, for the early rapid propagation of Christianity. And God shook the Heaven, in Christ's time, when He spake from it; the earth, when it quaked; and the sea, when He commanded the winds and waves. He who alone can satisfy the true desires of all nations came, and by His holy and peace-giving presence filled the second temple with greater glory than the first. (See Isa. 49:20, 21; 60; Mal. 3:1; Matthew 12:6; 21:12-14; 26:55; John 1:14; 14:27; Colossians 1:20; 2 Cor. 4:6). Herod thoroughly repaired, enlarged and adorned Zerubbabel's temple, but the Jews still considered and called it the *second* temple (Josephus, *Ant.*, xv. 11; *War*, vi. 5). They expected their Messiah to come before its destruction (Josephus, *War*, vi. 5). The temple this time was twenty years in building, from B.C. 535 to B.C. 515. Its completion was joyfully celebrated by the offering of seven hundred sacrifices of bullocks, rams and lambs; and a special offering for all Israel of twelve he goats, according to the number of the twelve tribes of Israel. The priests were set in their divisions and the Levites in their courses, and the whole routine of temple worship fully reinstated once more. Of course the ark, with the tables of stone, the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the mercy-seat, and the cherubim, and the mysterious Urim and Thummim, were all wanting. The dedication being over, all the people observed the Passover for seven days; and then the temple remained open for the worship of God, and so continued until He who was greater than the temple entered it amid the shouts of the surrounding multitude, crying, "Hosanna to the son of David: blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest" (Matthew 21:9).

Xerxes the Great, who was king of Babylon, was equally favorable to the Jews as his predecessors. So was his son Artaxerxes, called Longimanus, B.C. 464; and he is the Artaxerxes alluded to by Ezra, 7:1. He is also the king Ahazuerus, who divorced his wife Vashti in the third year of his reign, and married Esther, one of the Jewish captives (Esther 1:1-22; 2:1-15). After reigning six years he appointed Ezra, the priest, governor over Judea, and authorized him to go up to Judea with all those who wished to accompany him. Ezra accordingly gathered a company at the river Ahava, there proclaimed a fast, and humbly asked the Lord for wisdom and direction in the great undertaking, so that they and their little ones might be

protected. Artaxerxes and his counselors were liberal in contributions to support this second exodus from Babylon to Canaan, and poured out their silver and gold freely. The king authorized him to draw on his treasury at Babylon for what he needed, and also gave him an order on the treasurers beyond the river for silver, wheat, wine, salt and oil. He also relieved the ministers of the sanctuary from toll, custom and tribute. He authorized Ezra to appoint judges, and have justice executed in the land, and directed him to have the people taught the laws of God and the king.

Ezra left the river Ahava with his caravan on the twentieth day of the first month, and reached Jerusalem in the fifth month (Ezra 7 and 8). The whole number of persons who accompanied him appears to have been 7,104, made up of 1,776 males and 5,328 females and children.

There were seventy-eight years between the appointments of Zerubbabel and Ezra; and we infer that Zerubbabel was dead when Ezra was appointed. Ezra corrected the vice of intermarrying with strangers, so that many put away their wives. The prophet Zechariah encouraged the church about this time by saying, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass" (Zech. 9:9).

Mordecaiviii[8] was a man of wisdom and integrity, and, although a captive, was faithful to his king. During the first year of queen Esther he discovered a plot made by two of the king's chamberlains to murder their royal master, and, upon his making it known to the queen, the conspirators were hanged. The king commanded his prime minister Haman to dress up Mordecai in the royal apparel, place him on the king's horse, lead the horse through the streets of the city, and proclaim to the multitude the honor thus conferred on Mordecai. This was done at the very time that Haman was about to obtain the king of Persia's permission to hang Mordecai on the gallows fifty cubits high, that he had made for that purpose, because Mordecai rose not up when Haman approached him, nor did him reverence. But the king, on learning that Haman was the author of the decree to have all the Jews in his empire destroyed, for the offense of Haman, ordered

Haman to be hanged on the gallows which he had made for Mordecai. He also virtually reversed the decree which had been made against the Jews, and authorized them to slay their enemies on the very day that they were to have been slain by them, and made Mordecai prime minister in the place of Haman. Thus we see that in the days of Ahasuerus there were a queen and a prime minister at court of the Jewish race, and, of course, friends of the Jews (Esther 2: 21-23; 3-10).

King Artaxerxes (Ahasuerus) appointed Nehemiah, his cup bearer, who was full of wisdom and courage, governor over Judea in place of Ezra, who had been governor there twelve years (from B.C. 458 to B.C. 446). Nehemiah went up with a full military escort, authorized to rebuild the city and the walls around it. All engaged in building the walls, priests, princes, smiths, merchants, etc., and even females. It had to be done in troublous times (Dan. 9:25). For, by reason of the deadly opposition of the Samaritans, the workmen on the walls had to work with one hand and hold a weapon with the other. But the work progressed and was completed in fifty-two days.

Strange wives had to be put away again, and the people under Nehemiah and with Nehemiah confessed their sins and the sins of their fathers, and entered into a solemn covenant, under a curse and an oath, to walk in the law of the Lord—to observe the Sabbath and the Sabbatical years—to consecrate their sons—to pay tithes—to worship God, and never forsake His house. They wrote the covenant and sealed it (Neh. 8-10). The Jews were now cured of gross idolatry. At last that vile passion, which had prevailed so fearfully for so many centuries, seemed to have disappeared.

Nehemiah's government of Judea was long and prosperous, though he met with much opposition at times, in carrying out his noble reforms, from sinful and rebellious Jews. Nehemiah was alive after Joiada became high priest (Neh. 13:28); but the termination of his government over Judea and the end of his noble and useful life are hidden in obscurity.

Malachi, the last prophet of the Old Testament, is believed to have lived at the same time with or just after Nehemiah; and his prophecy was

probably composed about 420 B.C. Its canonicity is established by several New Testament quotations (Matthew 11:10; 17:12; Mark 1:2; 9:11, 12; Luke 1:17; Rom. 9:13). Like Nehemiah, Malachi censured the profane and mercenary spirit of the priests, the people's marriages with foreigners, the non-payment of the tithes, and the rich men's want of sympathy towards the poor. He predicts the coming of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, under the name of Elijah the prophet, and also the coming of Christ, as the Lord coming suddenly to His temple. He points to the great separating time between the righteous who serve merciful and unchangeable Father of all that fear Him and think upon His name, arising upon them as the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings, keeping their name in His book of remembrance, and finally gathering them as His jewels to Himself; while he represents God as the righteous and terrible Judge of the proud and wicked, whom He will smite with a curse, and forever destroy with burning.

From the close of Nehemiah's rule over Judea and the end of Malachi's prophecy to the birth of our Savior, was about four hundred years; and the account of God's chosen people during this long period must be gained from profane history, and a few items from the apocryphalix[9] writings of the Jews. These latter writings are, to a great extent, inconsistent and unreliable; and the history of the Jews by Josephus is, to some extent, unreliable during this and former periods. Events that came under the notice of Josephus during his life, including the last war with Rome, the destruction of the temple, and city of Jerusalem, etc., are regarded as quite authentic.

Although the four great monarchies overran and subdued Jerusalem and Judea, yet they were not permitted by an all-wise and covenant-keeping God to destroy utterly the people of that land, or even break down their nationality until Christ came to set up His spiritual kingdom on earth. The prophet Ezekiel is to the point here. He was a captive in the Babylonish empire, and predicted the succession of the three great natural kingdoms to come (the Persian, Greek and Roman), and then the coming of Christ to overcome them all by His spiritual reign. Said he: "Thus saith the Lord God, Remove the diadem, and take off the crown; this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn,

overturn it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him" (Ezek.21:26,27).

These three great overturnings were to take place after Ezekiel's prophecy, and then Christ should come, whose right it was to reign over His people, spiritually, among all nations, and have no need whatever for any further temporal nationality. To Him as the Shiloh should be the gathering of His people, irrespective of locality. As saith He to the woman of Samaria: "The hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor at Jerusalem, worship the Father." "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:21, 23, 24).

ENDNOTES:

1[1] It has been seriously and learnedly argued, in recent books, that the American Indians are the ten lost tribes of Israel.

x[2] The gate is the place of holding courts of justice and levees in the East (Esther 2:19; Job 29:7). So 'the sublime Porte, or Gate, denotes the Sultan's government, his councils being formerly held in the entrance of his palace. Daniel was a chief counselor of the king, and president over the governors of the different orders into which the Magi were divided.'—Fausset.

xi[3] The ancient cuneiform inscriptions on bricks found among the Babylonian ruins mention that burning was one of the national punishments of Babylon.

xii[4] The mental disease with which God afflicted Nebuchadnezzar is believed to have been one of a well-known class of maladies known by such names as lycanthropy (wolf-man), kynanthropy (dog-man), etc., according to the animal which the patient imagines himself to be, and whose habits he imitates. During his madness, his counselors and lords (Daniel iv. 36) carried on the government.

xiii[5] The identification of Belshazzar and of Darius the Median with persons mentioned by uninspired writers is among the most intricate problems of ancient history. Combining the evidence of Scripture and of profane historians and the cuneiform inscriptions, the succession in the Babylonian monarchy was probably as follows: Nebuchadnezzar, 43 years; Evil-Merodach, son of Nebuchadnezzar, 2 years—murdered and succeeded by his sister's husband, Neriglissar, who reigned 4 years; the latter's son, Laborosoarchod, a mere child, reigned but 9 months, and was slain by a conspiracy, which elevated a usurper, Nabonnedus, to the throne, which he occupied 17 years. During the latter part of his reign, he associated with him in the empire his oldest son, Belshazzar, who was grandson, on the mother's side, of Nebuchadnezzar. The term "son," in Scripture, often means grandson, or descendant. Nabonnedus was at a neighboring city, Borsippa, where he surrendered to Cyrus; while Belshazzar perished in Babylon the same night of his sensual and blasphemous banquet. Such joint kingships were not uncommon in ancient times. As his father and himself were the first and second rulers, Belshazzar offers to make Daniel only the third ruler in the kingdom (Daniel v. 16). [As to the identification of Darius the Median, see the next foot-note.]

xiv[6] It is most likely that Darius the Median was the same as Cyaxares II. (mentioned by Xenophon), who was the son and successor of Astyages (called also Ahasuarus), king of Media. Cyrus, a Persian nobleman, conquered Astyages, and married the daughter of Cyaxares II. (or Darius); and, uniting the Medes and Persians into one kingdom, and wishing to conciliate the Medes, he yielded his aged and weak uncle and father-in-law a nominal supremacy at Babylon, where the latter reigned till his death two years afterwards, while Cyrus, the real conqueror of Babylon, being fond of war, continued his military career, going against the Hindoos, the Derbaces, and the Massagatae. In accordance with this explanation, Daniel (ix. 1) says that Darius "was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans." Some think that Darius the Mede was Astyages himself, the grandfather of Cyrus.

xv[7] God caused Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes to be favorable to His people. "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water:

He turneth it whithersoever He will" (Prov. 21:1); then of course the hearts of other men, inferior to kings in power and rank and wealth and honor, are in the absolute control of God. The personal motives of the Persian kings in favoring Israel may have been their worship of but one good Supreme Being (Ormazd) like Israel; Isaiah's prophecy of Cyrus by name as the servant of God, who should deliver Israel from Babylon; and the Persian policy to place a people friendly to Persia on the frontier of Egypt.

xvi[8] "The book of Esther supplies the gap between Ezra 6 and 7. Xerxes, the Ahasuerus of Esther, intervenes between Darius and Artaxerxes. Ahasuerus was a common title of many Medo-Persian kings. Though the name of God does not occur in Esther, His presence pervades the book. Although invisible, He is none the less active. God works no less by His providence in the world where he is veiled, than by His grace in the church wherein He is revealed. He exercises a special providence for the preservation of all His chosen people, wherever they may be."—*Fausset*.

"No scene of Scripture history is more often applied to a spiritual use than Esther's bold venture into the presence of the 'king of kings' (as the Persian monarchs called themselves), and his reaching out to her the golden sceptre as the sign of grace."—*Wm. Smith*.

xvii[9] *Apocrypha* means *hidden* or *spurious*. The books called the Apocrypha, in the Old Testament, are not contained in the Hebrew Bible at all, but are found in the Greek Septuagint. They were written by unknown authors from 300 to 30 B.C. They are not quoted at all by the writers of the New Testament, and they abound in fictitious stories and doctrinal errors. The Catholic council of Trent in 1546 endorsed as canonical or inspired all the Apocrypha except 1st and 2nd Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh. The Hebrew church, "to whom were committed the oracles of God" (Rom. 3:2), and all the Protestant or non-Catholic denominations, reject the Apocrypha as uninspired. These writings are interesting as showing the workings of the Jewish mind in the interval between the Old and the New Testaments. It is from the Apocrypha that the Roman Catholics derive the texts for the proof of their unscriptural doctrines of purgatory, prayers for the dead, and the meritoriousness of good works. In the Apocrypha, as derived from the

Persian Zend-Avesta, two-seedism, or dualism, can find its strongest arguments.
