

# INTRODUCTION TO 27<sup>TH</sup> BIBLEBOOK

## DANIEL (6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.)

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### A. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL.

#### **1. The book of Daniel is a book of revelation in apocalyptic terms.**

##### **a. The book of Daniel reveals the course and significance of history from God's point of view.**

The book of Daniel is unique in the whole Old Testament. It does not contain prophetic proclamations in the name of the LORD after the manner of the prophetic books of the Old Testament. It also does not relate history after the manner of the historical books of the Old Testament. Although the book of Daniel is not a historical book, it is certainly concerned with *history*.

*The book of Daniel is concerned, not with describing history of the past, but with revealing what may be expected to take place throughout the whole history of mankind on earth. The book of Daniel is a book of revelation! By making use of dreams and visions, signs, symbols and numbers it appears to map out the course of history in this world and to show the significance of history in this world. By means of a series of special visions, it was revealed to Daniel what is God's purpose for this world.*

##### **b. The book of Daniel is concerned with the history of the whole world.**

Like the author of Genesis chapter 1-11, Daniel is concerned not only with the history of Israel, but with the history of all the nations and kingdoms and rulers of the world. In the Old Testament, the tension between God's promises and the fulfilment of these promises made history. But *while the prophets of the Old Testament looked towards the fulfilment of God's promises in the history of Israel only, Daniel looked to the fulfilment of God's promises in the history of all the nations of the world!* Like the author of Genesis 12:3<sup>1</sup>, Daniel looked to the end-time and the completion of God's purpose for the whole world he created.

##### **c. The main message of the book of Daniel is that God is sovereign in the affairs of man.**

God is sovereign over all the nations and their kings, sovereign over all the empires and their emperors, at all times in history right up to the second coming of Jesus Christ! The God of the Bible created human life, controls human time, human life and human history on earth, and will bring human history to its appointed goal! Whatever the threat against God's people may be, God's purpose cannot be thwarted! *The reason why certain governments today forbid the preaching from the books of Daniel and Revelation is that these books undermine confidence in human governments in general and undermine supporting tyrants in particular!*

##### **d. The book of Daniel reveals that throughout the history of the world, three events may be expected.**

- God will sovereignly set up kingdoms and empires with their kings and depose them again (2:21).
- The kingdoms of the world together with their tyrants will persecute God's people and God's people will suffer (7:25; 12:1).
- After death and the resurrection of the dead God will vindicate his people and they only will inherit the new earth (7:26-27; 12:1-3).

##### **e. The book of Daniel reveals that at the end of the history of the world, three great events will happen.**

- All people who have ever lived will be resurrected from the dead (12:2).
- All people and nations will be judged at the Final Judgement before God's throne. God's court will be seated and the books will be opened (12:3; 7:10).
- God will give the authority, glory and sovereign power to one like the son of man (7:13-14) and to his people (7:18,27) and they will possess it forever!

#### **2. The book of Daniel reveals future world-history in the form of four kingdoms.**

Daniel unveiled the subsequent history "from the exile to the end" in the form of four kingdoms.

##### **a. The four kingdoms during the Old Testament period.**

- The first kingdom was identified as the Babylonian empire (2:38)
- The second kingdom was identified as the Medo-Persian Empire (8:20).

<sup>1</sup> Genesis 12:3, "All peoples (nations) will be blessed through you" (through Abraham's seed = Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:16))

- The third kingdom was identified as the Greek Empire (8:21).
- The fourth kingdom was not identified at all (7:7).

The four-kingdom scheme first of all had its significance for people living between the time of the exile and the first coming of Christ. The fact that God is sovereign over all people and all events of history is a marvellous revelation for believers! Because the explaining angel in Daniel *did not give the fourth kingdom a name*, the book of Daniel may still have symbolic meaning, representing the relationship between the kingdoms and rulers of the world and the people of God throughout the history of this world.

#### **b. The fourth kingdom in the New Testament perspective.**

The early Christians were not wrong when they gave the fourth kingdom a name, saw the fourth kingdom as the Roman Empire and regarded the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the focal point to which Daniel chapters 2 and 7 were looking. Christians had the Gospels and the Letters of Paul to teach them that during the first coming of Christ *a cosmic battle had been won on the cross*<sup>2</sup>. The first coming of Jesus Christ marked the powerful *coming of the kingdom of God* onto the earth<sup>3</sup>.

However, the fact that in Matthew chapter 24, Jesus applied Daniel 9:27, 11:31, 12:11 concerning ‘the abomination that causes desolation’ to a time still in the future, shows that *the book of Daniel still has relevance for the Christian Church right up to the second coming of Christ*. According to Matthew 24:6, the “end was not yet”, because the task of proclaiming the gospel throughout the world had not yet been carried out<sup>4</sup>. *The book of Revelation takes up the theme of the book of Daniel*.

#### **3. Revelation in the book of Daniel is both parallel and progressive.**

*Revelation is both parallel and progressive* in the various chapters of the book of Daniel and in the book of Revelation.

##### **a. The contents of the chapters in Daniel are to some extent parallel.**

Especially chapters 2, 7, 8, 9 and 11. Chapters 2 and 7 span the whole subsequent history of the world from the exile to the end of the present world history. They deal with four kingdoms. Chapters 8 and 11 has a later starting point, deal only with the second and third kingdoms and especially concentrate on a particular wicked king, the Old Testament type of the antichrist.

##### **b. The contents of the chapters in Daniel are to some extent progressive.**

While Daniel 2 reveals that God is ultimately going to have his way in the affairs of nations by setting up an everlasting kingdom, Daniel 7 reveals more, namely that God will judge the human kingdoms and their arrogant rulers and give the kingdom of God to God’s people, who will possess it forever!

While Daniel 8 concentrates on *the defilement of the earthly sanctuary* (8:9-14), which happened in 167 B.C. by Antiochus IV, Daniel 9 goes further and speaks of *the destruction of the earthly sanctuary* (9:24-27), which happened in A.D. 70 by Titus. Daniel 12 goes the furthest and reveals *the replacement of an earthly sanctuary* by the holy people, delivered, purified, registered in the book of life, resurrected and shining like stars for ever and ever (12:1-3,10). The sanctuary will not be a lifeless monument, but the Church (Hebrew: qahal; Greek: ekklesia), ‘the assembly of God’s called out ones’.

While Daniel 9:25-27 speaks of persecution and sacrilege during the first half of the final 70<sup>th</sup> week (of years), but nothing is said about the final half of the 70<sup>th</sup> week, Daniel 11-12 goes further and speaks not only of unprecedented persecution (11:33-35), but of a general resurrection of the dead (12:2-3) that will bring history to its completion (‘end’)(12:13)!

#### **4. The numbers in the book of Daniel have symbolic significance rather than numerical significance.**

### **B. THE WRITER, TIME AND PLACE THE BOOK WAS WRITTEN.**

There are people who hold the view that the book of Daniel was written by an unknown writer in Palestine at the end of the Greek Empire, during the reign of the tyrant Antiochus IV between the second century B.C. This view is mainly based on the view *that revelation of future events are scientifically impossible*, that the whole book was written against the tyrant Antiochus IV, and that the Aramaic language proves a later date. However, there is increasing evidence that the book was written by Daniel in Babylon during the sixth century B.C.

#### **1. The internal evidence and the unity of the book.**

Daniel 1:1 states that Daniel was taken to Babylon in 605 B.C. and according to Daniel 10:1, he lived to at least 537 B.C., by which time he must have been well over eighty years of age. He was an eye-witness, a well-educated person and a very capable high official, who, according to the early Jewish and Christians traditions, wrote his own book. The division of the book shows a wonderful unity. As a literary work, it manifests unity of purpose and design. *The history contained in chapters 1-6 are historical proof that God sovereignly controls the history of this world, as the visions in chapters 7-12 reveal.*

<sup>2</sup> John 12:31-32; Colossians 2:15

<sup>3</sup> Mark 1:15

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 24:14

## 2. The Aramaic language.

*Aramaic was the main world language in the near east from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries B.C.* Three facts point rather to an earlier than a later date for the book of Daniel: The word-order of the Aramaic in Daniel has been influenced by the Babylonian language. The Persian words used in Daniel belong to the old Persian language from before 300 B.C. But most remarkable is the fact that there are only three Greek words in the whole book. If the book had been written during the height of the Greek Empire in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C., one would have noticed more influence from the Greek.

## 3. Against a second century writer.

Daniel chapter 1 raises a cultural problem: "How far should a loyal Jew accept the alien culture of the conqueror?" The second century orthodox Jews during the Greek Empire, rejected outright the language, literature and customs of the Greeks, whereas Daniel and his friends accepted and adapted to all three, taking a stand only on the matter of gifts from the royal table.

In Daniel 4, the gradual capitulation of Nebuchadnezzar before the God of his captives, and in Daniel 5-6, the favour shown towards Daniel by Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 B.C.), Belshazzar and especially Darius (521-486 B.C.), show that these kings do not function as types of the arrogant tyrant Antiochus IV, who lived in the second century B.C., defied God and showed no favour whatsoever to the people of God. Nebuchadnezzar publicly praised God (4:34-37). Belshazzar does not even appear as the destroyer of the Jewish religion, but only as a typical spoiled and frivolous king. And Darius made a decree in his whole empire that the God of Daniel should be feared and revered (6:25-27).

### Conclusion.

We conclude that the book of Daniel was written by Daniel himself in Babylon during the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.

## **C. DIVISION OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL.**

The book of Daniel may be divided into two parts

### **EITHER: Daniel 1-6 (stories) and Daniel 7-12 (visions)**

Daniel 1-6 relate incidents that happened to Daniel and his friends and Daniel 7-12, which overlap chronologically, recount four visions that came to Daniel in his old age.

#### **1. Daniel 1:1 to 6:28. Stories.**

- Daniel 1:1-21. Introduction and setting of the stories.
- Daniel 2:1 to 6:28. The acts of the Most High God within the nations.

#### **2. Daniel 7:1 to 12:13. Visions.**

- Daniel 7:1-28. The first vision concerning the four kingdoms of the world and the kingdom of God.
- Daniel 8:1-27. The second vision concerning identification of the second and third kingdoms of the world.
- Daniel 9:1-27. The third vision concerning the seventy weeks.
- Daniel 10:1 to 12:13. The fourth vision concerning the heavenly messenger and his final revelation.

The title of the book of Daniel may then be:

**"God sovereignly controls human history in the present and will bring human history in the future to its appointed goal"**

### **OR: Daniel 2-7 (Aramaic) and Daniel 1,8-12 (Hebrew)**

The book of Daniel may also be divided in another way. The main part is written in the Aramaic language and the rest is written in the Hebrew language. *Aramaic was the main world language in the near east from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries B.C.* Daniel 2:1 to 7:28 was written in Aramaic, because it contains the main message of the whole book and is a message, not only for Jews but for all the kings, emperors and people in the world.

The Aramaic part, Daniel 2 to 7 is arranged *cyclically in ascending and descending themes* as follows:

#### **1. Three ascending themes**

- Daniel 2:1-49. Nebuchadnezzar dreams about the four kingdoms of the world and the kingdom of God.
- Daniel 3:1-30. Nebuchadnezzar, the tyrant, sees God's servants rescued from the fiery furnace.
- Daniel 4:1-37. God's judgement strikes Nebuchadnezzar.

#### **2. Three descending themes**

- Daniel 5:1-31. God's judgement strikes Belshazzar.
- Daniel 6:1-28. Darius the Mede sees God's servant rescued from the lion's den.
- Daniel 7:1-28. Daniel has a vision of the four kingdoms of the world and the kingdom of God.

The title of the Aramaic part of the book of Daniel may then be:

**"A theology of history addressed to the rulers of the world: God wants the rulers of the world to acknowledge Him as the God of heaven."**

Daniel 2-7 as a whole forms *a theology of history*, addressed to the kings of the world. The central two chapters or the climax of Daniel's message are Daniel 4 and 5: God wants to be acknowledged as the God of heaven by the mighty rulers of the world. That is why it was written in the international language, Aramaic!

## **D. OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL.**

### **Daniel 1.**

In the history of the world God himself is the sovereign King. It is not king Nebuchadnezzar<sup>5</sup> who plays the most significant role in international affairs, but the God of the Bible who delivered the exiles from Judea to him (1:2a) and who equipped Daniel and his three friends with knowledge and understanding without loss of holiness in order *to serve in a foreign kingdom in the world*. "To these four men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds" (1:17). *Christians may participate in the government of a country*. Joseph served in Egypt. Daniel and his three friends served in the Babylonian Empire and Nehemiah in the Persian Empire.

### **Daniel 2.**

In the history of the world it is God who "changes times and seasons and sets up kings (governments) and deposes them (2:21)! When God's time has come to act, then the kingship or kingdom of God demands the destruction of the regimes or kingdoms of the world rather than acting through them. "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed. Nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to the end, but it will itself endure forever (2:44)."

### **Daniel 3.**

In the history of the world, believers who refuse to make compromises with the kingdom of the world are persecuted (3:17-18)<sup>6</sup>. *Christians should take an uncompromising stand on principles that can cause suffering*. "They trusted in him (God) and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than to serve or worship any god except their own God" (3:28). In chapter 2 and 3 it was the religious astrologers and in chapter 6 it was the jealous politicians that caused trouble for Daniel and his friends. *The devotion of Daniel and his friends to principles kept them apart from their contemporaries*, but also caused the hatred and jealousy of their enemies.

### **Daniel 4.**

In the history of the world it is God who humbles proud kings (4:33,37). In pride Nebuchadnezzar said, "Is this not the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty" (4:30). For 'seven times' he was driven away from people and ate grass like cattle. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird (4:33)." At the end of that time, humbled himself before God and said, "His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation... He does what he pleases with the powers of heaven (the creation) and with the peoples of the earth... Everything he does is right and all his ways are just" (4:34-37). *Christians should hold to the conviction that God is sovereign in all the affairs of man*.

The fact that the people of God were conquered by the Babylonians does not mean that the gods of the Babylonians were superior to the God of the Bible! Daniel's purpose throughout the main part of the book was to exalt the greatness and absolute sovereignty of the God of the Bible. His message is that there can never be a king or emperor so mighty that he is not under the sovereign control of the only God. During their lives, the kings and emperors will serve God's purposes, and if they persist in their arrogance, they will be brought low by God's intervention (4:28; 5:30).

### **Daniel 5.**

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

### **Daniel 6.**

In the history of the world it is God who promotes dedicated believers. "Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom... They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent" (6:3-4).

### **Daniel 7.**

*In every segment of the history of the world 'the four-empire scheme' represents 'the kingdom of the world'. God eventually dooms the anti-Christian tyrants of the kingdom of the world (7:7-8) and gives the kingdom to one like a son of man (7:13)*. "He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all people, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed" (7:14,17-18). "Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High" (7:27).

### **Daniel 8.**

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

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<sup>5</sup> Or any modern political or military leader

<sup>6</sup> 2 Timothy 3:12

### **Daniel 9.**

In the history of the world the symbols in the book of Daniel have repeated application: symbols like the cutting off of an Anointed One, the destruction and rebuilding of Jerusalem and the sanctuary, the setting up of an abomination that causes desolation and *the bringing of a sudden, unexpected end at the halfway mark*. However, the definite end of all history has not yet dawned (9:24-27)!

### **Daniel 10-11.**

In the history of the world the people of God suffer due to the political and military successes and set-backs of ambitious rulers like the king of the South and the king of the North. But regardless of the desecration and corruption of these rulers (11:31-32), *“they will stumble and fall, to be seen no more”* (11:19)!

### **Daniel 12.**

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

## **E. DANIEL 2. THE FINAL TRIUMPH OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD OVER THE KINGDOM OF THE WORLD**

The book of Daniel is *an apocalypse*,<sup>7</sup> that is, a book that *reveals God’s perspective on the events of God’s history of salvation within the history of the world*. The writer of the book Daniel explains how God looks at events in the history of the world.

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

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

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

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

The political and military might of kings and the kingdoms in the world is like this huge statue: it has feet of clay. It always has a weak spot. Feet of clay threatens the stability and durability of the kings and their kingdoms. Only one rock needs to strike the statue on its weak spot and it collapses!

#### **b. The first regime (system of government).**

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

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

Because Nebuchadnezzar himself is the head of the whole statue, *the four ‘malku’ rather refer to the reign of four kings over a single empire!* The statue represents the Babylonian Empire that passes from king Nebuchadnezzar to other Babylonian kings. Nebuchadnezzar is ‘the king of kings’, but Daniel puts the emphasis on the fact that Nebuchadnezzar only rules because the God of heaven had given him this dominion, power, might and glory (2:37)! The real ‘Lord of kings’ is God Himself (2:47)<sup>8</sup>!

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

The three other regimes are not identified, remain indirect references and must not be interpreted<sup>9</sup>. Jeremiah speaks about *the history* of Babylon: Israel and its surrounding nations “will serve the king of Babylon seventy years”<sup>10</sup>. “All nations will serve him (Nebuchadnezzar) and his son and his grandson until (70 years later) *the time for his land comes*; then many nations and great kings will subjugate him”<sup>11</sup>. *Daniel adapts Jeremiah’s words about ‘the history of the world’ into ‘the theological form of four regimes’.*

<sup>7</sup> Literally: a revelation or an unveiling (a disclosure) (of the theology of history)

<sup>8</sup> cf. Revelation 1:5; Revelation 19:16

<sup>9</sup> cf. 1 Corinthians 4:6

<sup>10</sup> Jeremiah 25:11

<sup>11</sup> Jeremiah 27:7

The four regimes show no logical order of degeneration. Just as ‘the four corners of the earth’<sup>12</sup> represent the whole earth, so ‘the four regimes’ represent ‘the kingdom of the world’ (all the governments in the world with their political, economic, military and religious systems) within the history of the world. They do not point to historical demonstrable regimes, but point to completeness of earthly regimes in one kingdom of the world within the history of this world.

Daniel refers in passing to the second and third regime and then concentrates on the fourth regime. The fourth regime is an oppressing power that smashes everything as iron (2:41), yet is unexpectedly brittle as clay (2:41-42). It tries to overcome this weakness and division, possibly by a marriage to another regime, but fails (2:43; 11:17).

The four regimes do not refer to Nebuchadnezzar and three of his Babylonian successors, because then ‘the rock’ would have to represent Cyrus<sup>13</sup>. Daniel does not describe the coming of Cyrus the Persian as ‘the end of the Babylonian Empire’ or ‘the end of the Babylonian exile’ of Judah in Babylon. The coming of Cyrus makes no difference for the Babylonian Empire or for the exiles. Nevertheless, Daniel does refer to four specific regimes.

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

- The regime of Nebuchadnezzar over the whole earth (605–562 B.C.)(2:36-38; 5:18-19).
- The weak and divided regime of Belshazzar (550–539 B.C.), the son of Nabonidus (556–539 B.C.). He was the second highest ruler in the kingdom after Nabonidus (2:39a; 5:25-30).
- The regime of Darius the Mede over the whole earth (539–538 B.C.)(2:39b; 5:31; 6:1,26-28). The regime of Darius the Mede was simultaneous with the regime of Cyrus the Persian. Darius the Mede took over the Babylonian kingdom at the age of 62 (5:31). After the taking of Babel in 539 B.C. Daniel speaks of ‘the first year of Darius the Mede’ (9:1; 11:1). Thereafter the Hebrew text speaks of ‘the *third* year of Cyrus, king of Persia’ (10:1), while the Greek text (Septuagint) speaks of ‘the *first* year of Cyrus. This means that the Hebrew text allotted the two years of Darius the Mede to the reign of Cyrus over Babylon. Apparently Darius the Mede only ruled over Babylon for two years by the grace of Cyrus and simultaneously with Cyrus (6:28).
- The regime of Cyrus the Persian (559–530 B.C.)(6:28; 10:1). Cyrus reigned from 539 B.C. over the Babylonian Empire. Cyrus was known for his victories in military campaigns and his irresistible power<sup>14</sup>. The fourth regime is said to be divided. Apparently Cyrus was half Mede and half Persian. He was married to a Persian.

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

The four regimes in Daniel 2 span the period from Nebuchadnezzar to Cyrus. *The coming of the Medes and Persians during this period did not terminate the dominion of ‘the kingdom of the world’ over the people of God, as the prophet Jeremiah<sup>15</sup> and the prophet Isaiah<sup>16</sup> had promised. The kingdom of the world is here represented by the Babylonian Empire that continued as the Medo-Persian Empire. The people of God are here represented by the Jewish exiles in that Empire.*

*The implied readers of the book of Daniel during the Medo-Persian period in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. were probably disillusioned and depressed like those whom the prophets Haggai<sup>17</sup> and Zechariah<sup>18</sup> addressed (520 B.C.). Daniel urged them to hold on to the conviction that this colossus consisting of the kingdom of the world would not stand forever! The colossus has feet of clay! This is the message of Daniel chapter 2 however the parts of the statue are identified.*

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

### **a. The message of the ‘Rock’ in the Old Testament.**

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

The message of ‘the Rock’ was that the God of the Bible has sovereign power to establish his kingdom. This was also the message of ‘Mount Zion’<sup>19</sup>.

The prophet Isaiah, in referring to Tiglath Pileser, the king of Assyria (745-726 B.C.), had a similar message. The God of the Bible is himself ‘the Sanctuary’ (that is, the place of protection) for his own people (the believers) and also ‘the Stone’ that causes his enemies to stumble and ‘the Rock’ that makes people (the unbelievers) in both houses of Israel fall<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Revelation 20:8

<sup>13</sup> cf. Isaiah 41:2; Isaiah 45:1-2

<sup>14</sup> Isaiah 41:2-3,25; Isaiah 44:28; Isaiah 45:1-4,13

<sup>15</sup> Jeremiah 25:11-14

<sup>16</sup> Isaiah 13:19-22; Isaiah 43:14; Isaiah 44:27 – 45:4

<sup>17</sup> Haggai 2:3

<sup>18</sup> Zechariah 1:12

<sup>19</sup> Isaiah 2:2-3; Ezekiel 17:23-24; Psalm 2:6; Psalm 48:2-3; cf. Hebrews 12:22-24; Revelation 14:1

<sup>20</sup> Isaiah 8:6-15

*The God of the Bible is himself the Great Threat for kings, governments and kingdoms that build their own empires and fortresses. He is the Rock that will cause their stumbling, fall and destruction. All nations that trust in the kings or governments of this world will certainly stumble, fall and be destroyed!*

**b. The message of the ‘Cornerstone/Capstone’ in the New Testament.**

Jesus Christ is the chosen and precious Cornerstone (the most important foundation stone of a building). The one who trusts in him will never be put to shame. He is also the Capstone (the final large stone at the top of an arch) which the political and religious leaders of the world have rejected. Their disobedience to him will cause them to stumble and fall<sup>21</sup>.

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

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

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

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

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

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

*The book of Daniel describes in one sweep the history of the kingdom of the world from the reign of king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. to the reign of king Antiochus of Syria in the 2<sup>nd</sup> B.C. The direct rule or reign of the kingdom of the world over the people of God (still Israel) began with king Nebuchadnezzar in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. (when Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judea in 605 B.C., 597 B.C. and 586 B.C.). This suppression of the people of God by the kingdom of the world did not stop with king Nebuchadnezzar (605–562 B.C.), but was continued until king Antiochus (175-164 B.C.).*

At the beginning the reign or kingdom of the world is still described in positive terms. The power and glory that God gives to the regime or kingdom of the world is impressive and deserves admiration (2:37-38)<sup>22</sup>. But in its final appearance the power of this kingdom of the world is depicted as hard iron<sup>23</sup> with brittle baked clay sticking to it (2:40-43)! *The governments of this world are as hard as iron, but simultaneously as brittle and vulnerable as baked clay. The governments of the world always have a weak spot, which they desperately try to prop up by worldly means (e.g. political and military power or religious terrorism within home affairs and in foreign affairs).* These worldly means are doomed to fail! Every kingdom of the world (that is, government of the world) is ultimately and finally smashed by this ‘rock’ (the kingdom of God)! Note how this is predicted again and again in the Book of Daniel:

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

*While the prophecy of Jeremiah did not look further than the destruction of the Babylonian Empire as ‘the kingdom of the world’<sup>24</sup>, the message of Daniel proclaims the establishment of a completely different kingdom, namely, ‘the kingdom of God’ (2:44). ‘The rock’ symbolises God’s power and sovereignty in establishing his everlasting kingdom, namely, the kingdom of God<sup>25</sup>. Within the history of the world, the kingdom of God ultimately and finally smashes all the governments (regimes or kingdoms) of the world and grows to become a huge mountain (rock) that fills the earth!*

**c. The application of the scheme of four regimes by Christians.**

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

- they lived during ‘the fourth regime of the kingdom of the world’ (represented ultimately by Antiochus IV)
- ‘this kingdom of the world’ would be followed by ‘the kingdom of God’!

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<sup>21</sup> 1 Peter 2:6-8

<sup>22</sup> cf. Romans 13:1-7

<sup>23</sup> cf. Revelation 13:1-2

<sup>24</sup> Jeremiah 25:12-14

<sup>25</sup> cf. Matthew 21:42-44

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

#### 4. Daniel presents a theology of history.

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

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

- Genesis chapters 1-11 relates the history of the nations in the world.
- Genesis chapter 12 onwards narrows history down to the history of one nation, God's people (Israel) in the world. *The history of God's people in the world spans from Abraham (2092 B.C.)<sup>26</sup> to the exile of God's people to Babylonia during the three invasions of Nebuchadnezzar (in 605, 597 and 587 B.C.)<sup>27</sup>.*
- From the exile onwards Daniel again relates the history of the nations in the world.

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

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

- the Old Babylonian Empire (about 2500 - 1100 B.C.)<sup>29</sup>
- the Assyrian Empire (883 - 610 B.C.)<sup>30</sup>
- the New Babylonian Empire (626 - 539 B.C.)<sup>31</sup>
- the Medo-Persian Empire (539 - 331 B.C.)<sup>32</sup>
- the Greek-Seleucid Empire (312 - 56 B.C.) with its great forerunner of the final antichrist, Antiochus IV (175 - 164 B.C.)<sup>33</sup>.

God sets up kings and deposes them (2:21). The history of all the nations in the world is now on the way to become the history of the rule or reign of the God of the Bible or the history of the kingdom of the God of the Bible! The establishment and development of the kingdom of God is revealed completely in the New Testament<sup>34</sup>, especially in all the parables of Jesus Christ about the kingdom of God<sup>35</sup>.

Compare the message of the book of Daniel (2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. in the Old Testament period) with the message of the book of Revelation (1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. in the New Testament period). *Read Revelation 17:8-11.* In the time of the apostle John in the New Testament period the above mentioned five former mighty world empires "were no more". They are represented by "the beast that was and is not"<sup>36</sup>! All these kingdoms in which 'the beast' had been embodied earlier perished! *'The beast', in the form of the five<sup>37</sup> former mighty world empires: e.g. the Old Babylonian Empire, the Assyrian Empire, the New Babylonian Empire, the Medo-Persian Empire and the Greek-Seleucid Empire, was no more!* These 5 former world empires were an example of 'the beast was and is not'<sup>38</sup>. However, in the days of the apostle John the 6<sup>th</sup> mighty world empire that 'is'<sup>39</sup> (still existed)<sup>40</sup>, was the Roman Empire of the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. (31 B.C. - 98 A.D.) with its many Caesars<sup>41</sup>. This Roman Empire lasted in the west till 476 A.D. (the fall of Rome) and in the east till 1453 A.D. (the fall of Constantinople/Istanbul).

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<sup>26</sup> Genesis 12:1-5

<sup>27</sup> In 605 B.C. (2 Kings 24:1-4). In 597 B.C. (2 Kings 24:8-17). And in 587 B.C. (2 Kings 25:1-12)

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>34</sup> cf. Matthew 12:28-29; John 18:36-37

<sup>35</sup> The development of the kingdom of God in the New Testament is taught in all the parables of Jesus Christ about the kingdom of God.

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

<sup>36</sup> Revelation 17:8,11

<sup>37</sup> Revelation 17:10b

<sup>38</sup> Revelation 17:8ab,10-11

<sup>39</sup> Greek: ho eis estin (present continuous tense)

<sup>40</sup> Revelation 17:10c

<sup>41</sup> cf. Matthew 2:1-17; Matthew 27:11-26

But during the New Testament period this reign (or kingship) of the God of the Bible is established in the hearts of Christians. Jesus said, “The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, ‘Here it is!’ or ‘There it is!’, because the kingdom of God is within you”<sup>42</sup>. The kingdom of God is most visible in the lives of Christians<sup>43</sup>.

The book of Daniel does not say that the kingdoms in the world oppose God or his purpose for his people. But it does say that the regimes or kingdoms of the world, including those under which the people of God must live, stand under the power and sovereignty of the God of the Bible in the same (though indirect) way as the kings of Judah stood under the power and sovereignty of the God of the Bible before the exile. God says, “Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will stand. ... This is the plan determined for the whole world; this is the hand stretched out over all nations. For the LORD Almighty has purposed and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back”<sup>44</sup>? *God sets the reign of the governments (regimes or kingdoms) of the world in motion, but also terminates them. The LORD “changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them” (2:21)*<sup>45</sup>.

Compare this message in the Old Testament with the message in the New Testament. “The Lamb breaks the seven seals of the scroll in heaven” and thereby reveals and sets in motion the history of the world and the history of the Church within this world (Revelation chapters 5 and 6). At the end of the history of the world Jesus Christ permanently terminates the reign of the final antichrist and his allies (the kings of the earth and their non-Christian subjects that follow that antichrist)<sup>46</sup>!

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

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

The fourth regime or kingdom of the world ultimately falls because it was inherent brittle – it had feet of clay. The kingdoms of the world were, are and will remain the work of merely man. Note the number ‘6’, the number of mortal man, can never reach the number ‘7, the number of God’s perfection, even when it tries to attain this repeatedly (e.g. three times: ‘666’)<sup>47</sup>!

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

The revelation in the book of Daniel (in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.) hints that the history of the world (for example in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.) is known by God before it happens.

It is not true that God has predetermined every event in the history of the world before the foundation of the world. God sometimes uses the plans, decisions and actions of the kingdoms (governments) of the world leaders in the world and sometimes terminates them.

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

The revelation in the book of Daniel does not speak of a division of the history of the world into several ‘dispensations’<sup>48</sup>, which have been predetermined by God.

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

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

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<sup>42</sup> Luke 17:20-21

<sup>43</sup> cf. the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7 and the parables of Jesus Christ.

<sup>44</sup> Isaiah 14:24-27

<sup>45</sup> cf. Romans 13:1-2 and Revelation 17:12-14

<sup>46</sup> Revelation 19:19-20

<sup>47</sup> Revelation 13:18

<sup>48</sup> According to the teaching of dispensationalism, a ‘dispensation’ is a period of time in which God deals with people according to a divinely ordained arrangement. It is a religious system regarded as divinely ordained for a person, community, nation or period. Study supplement 6 of a commentary on the book of Revelation (the last-biblebook) in [www.deltacourse.org](http://www.deltacourse.org) or [www.biblebooks.site](http://www.biblebooks.site) in order to understand the view of dispensationalism about the book of Revelation.

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

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

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

But there comes a time when God will act! God acts at a point of time that is known only to him! It is impossible to predict that point of time, because God can always and at any moment intervene in the history of the world (as Christ does within the churches in Revelation 2 and 3).

Gods acting in the history of the kingdoms in the world proceeds from his complete free and sovereign will and for reasons which he alone knows and has not revealed to us. God says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways"<sup>49</sup>!

When God's time has come to act, then the kingship or kingdom of God demands the destruction of the regimes or kingdoms of the world rather than acting through them. For the time being the human kingdoms are in accordance with God's will. However, not for always! When God's moment to act has arrived, then the coming of the kingdom of God is accompanied by catastrophes rather than development, and by destruction rather than building up<sup>50</sup>!

Compare this Old Testament message with the New Testament message. There comes a time within history when Jesus Christ will act<sup>51</sup>. And there is also a final coming of Jesus Christ<sup>52</sup>.

### **5. The coming kingdom of God in the Book of Daniel.**

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

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

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

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

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

#### **b. The coming kingdom of God is not an Israelite kingdom.**

Daniel views 'the rock' not as representing the kingdom of Israel. *Daniel chapter 2 contains no reference to Israel as the people of God and also no reference that the land of Israel, the city of Jerusalem or the temple in Jerusalem has any special significance.* Daniel does not speak about 'the remnant' of the people of God as the prophet Isaiah does<sup>53</sup>. He does not speak about the coming Messiah and also not about the eternal destiny of humanity. *The whole focus of Daniel is directed on the kingdom of God (his sovereign reign or kingship) within the history of the world!* Daniel emphasises that wisdom and power belong to the God of the Bible and as a result it is he who sets up kings and deposes them again (2:20-22).

#### **c. The coming kingdom of God is also not changed into a different kind of kingdom.**

- The kingdom of God is not a national kingdom (limited to one nation). Some expositors think that Isaiah chapters 40 to 55 are a promise to realise the kingdom of God in the nation-state of Israel after the return from exile. But after the termination of the exile this kingdom in Israel never materialised! The history of the world simply continued. The reaction of Daniel was not to change the kingship or kingdom of God into a national kingdom, as if the kingdom of God had to be limited to Israel.

<sup>49</sup> Isaiah 55:8-9; cf. Deuteronomy 29:29; Romans 9:17

<sup>50</sup> cf. Jeremiah 18:5-10; Matthew 13:40-42; Revelation 19:21-23

<sup>51</sup> Revelation 2:5,16; Revelation 3:3,20

<sup>52</sup> Matthew 24:36; Acts 1:7

<sup>53</sup> Isaiah 1:9; Isaiah 10:20-23

- The kingdom of God is not an individual kingdom (limited to one individual). Daniel does not change the kingship or kingdom of God into something individual, as if the kingship of God had to be realised only in the life of an individual believer.
- The kingdom of God is not a super mundane kingdom (limited to heaven). Daniel also does not change the kingship or kingdom of God into something above and beyond this world, as if the kingdom of God does not exist on earth, but can only be realised in heaven<sup>54</sup>.
- The kingdom of God is realised within the created world and within human history. Daniel proclaims that the kingship or kingdom of God concerns human beings living here and now on earth, just as the prophecies of Isaiah chapter 40 to 55 also proclaim.

**d. The coming kingdom of God is more a matter of expectation than fact.**

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

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

- *Also the kingdom of God is not yet fully unveiled on earth - what she in fact is destined to be!* What the kingdom of God in reality already is (namely 'completely righteous'), has also not yet been fully revealed. Things still remain hidden and sealed until "the time of the end" (12:9). The kingship or kingdom of God has not yet made a definite end to all these other kingdoms in the world (2:44) and has not yet filled the whole earth (2:35).

When the kingdom of the world will be *fully exposed* and the kingdom of God will be *fully revealed*, the wicked people will only be wicked and the righteous people will only be righteous (enlightened, purified, spotless and refined) (12:10)<sup>55</sup>!

Compare the message of the Old Testament with the message of the New Testament. Only 'at the end of the age', that is, at the second coming of Jesus Christ, "he will send out his angels, and they will *weed out of his kingdom* everything that causes sin<sup>56</sup> and all who do evil<sup>57</sup>. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father"<sup>58</sup>.

- *The coming kingdom of God begins at the first coming of Christ and is fully manifested at the second coming of Christ.* *The book of Daniel is not a prophecy in the sense of a prediction about future events*, because the events in the kingdom of the world were already taking place in Daniel's time and are already taking place in our time. *The book of Daniel is an apocalypse that unveils or reveals the true character of the history of the world!* But while the book of Daniel was a *sealed apocalypse* (12:9-10), the book of Revelation is an *unlocked apocalypse*<sup>59</sup>!

Compare this message in the Old Testament with the message in the New Testament. In the book of Revelation, at the enthronement of Jesus Christ when the seals of the scroll in heaven are broken, these realities about the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world are revealed and are set in motion (Revelation chapter 5 and 6). Then what already exists in principle becomes reality. *Then one can no longer view the history of the world by itself (secularly, without taking God into account)<sup>60</sup>, but must view the history of the world against the background of what God in heaven is doing in heaven and on earth.<sup>61</sup>*

Thus, in the New Testament the kingdom of God has *already begun* at the first coming of Jesus Christ<sup>62</sup>, but it has not yet come in all its completeness and perfection. The kingdom (kingship) of God will *continue to grow*<sup>63</sup> until the second coming of Christ.

Also in our present time the kingdom (kingship) of God has *not yet been fully or perfectly manifested*<sup>64</sup>. That is why Christians continue to pray: "Let your kingdom (kingship over everyone and everything) come"<sup>65</sup>! The kingdom of God will come with all its completeness and perfection only at the second coming of Jesus Christ<sup>66</sup>.

<sup>54</sup> When Matthew speaks about 'the kingdom of heaven' (e.g. Matthew 13:31-33) the other Gospels speak of 'the kingdom of God' (who dwells in heaven)(Luke 13:18-20). Matthew wrote to Jews who were afraid to mention the name of God. So they rather used the place where God dwells.

<sup>55</sup> cf. Revelation 22:10-11

<sup>56</sup> Like brothels, casino's, cocaine fields, drug labs, etc.

<sup>57</sup> Romans 1:28-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10

<sup>58</sup> Matthew 13:41-43

<sup>59</sup> Revelation 22:10-11

<sup>60</sup> As all secular history books do.

<sup>61</sup> As the Bible does.

<sup>62</sup> Mark 1:15; Matthew 12:28; Ephesians 1:20-22

<sup>63</sup> Matthew 13:31-33. The parables of the mustard seeds and leaven

<sup>64</sup> Matthew 25:34; Revelation 11:15

<sup>65</sup> Matthew 6:10

<sup>66</sup> Matthew 25:34; Revelation 11:15

**e. The coming kingdom of God is an everlasting kingdom.**

Daniel does not describe the characteristics and qualities of the coming kingdom. He only says that *the coming kingdom will be the kingdom of the God of the Bible and that it will endure forever!* It is not a kingdom of any god of any other religion. It is also not a kingdom of any political-, economic -or military system, because all these kingdoms on earth are very limited and very temporary! All these kingdoms will be crushed and brought to an end (2:44)!

The characteristics of the kingdom of God form a contrast with those of the foregoing kingdoms of the world. For a short period of time dominion, power, might and glory were given to the kingdom of the world, to king Nebuchadnezzar (2:37). But now these characteristics are manifested in another place and forever. “For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen”<sup>67</sup>.

This dominant thought with respect to ‘the time’ appears again and again. The kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar cannot endure forever (2:39; cf. 2:21a), but the kingdom of the God of the Bible will certainly endure forever (2:44; 4:34-35)<sup>68</sup>!

**f. The coming kingdom of God was not established in the time of Daniel.**

The vision of Daniel was not fulfilled in the historical period to which the book of Daniel refers (i.e. the second century B.C.). Just as in the prophetic books, ‘the Day of the Lord’ seems to be near; but then the years move along and people ask: “Where is the coming he promised?”<sup>69</sup>

Likewise in Daniel’s vision. The kingdoms or empires of the world, which the writer of the book of Daniel (in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.) and his readers (during the second century B.C.) knew from the vision and history (the Babylonian Empire, the Medo-Persian Empire and the Greek Empire), had already passed away. The reign of God in Jerusalem had been restored, partly when the temple was rebuilt in 516 B.C. (after the return from exile)<sup>70</sup> and partly when the temple was cleansed in 164 B.C. (after Antiochus had defiled it)(8:14)<sup>71</sup>. Thus, the readers of the book of Daniel were aware that they had witnessed the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies in part, namely:

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

That is why they were convinced that the words of the prophets would be fully fulfilled in God’s perfect time.

**g. The coming kingdom of God began to be fulfilled at the first coming of Christ.**

At the beginning of the New Testament period ‘the rock’ in Daniel 2:44 was associated with the other ‘rock’ passages in the Bible. Jesus Christ, ‘the stone’ which the builders (that is, the leaders) of Israel rejected<sup>72</sup>, has become the capstone<sup>73</sup>.

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

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

- *The view of Isaiah about ‘the rock’ during the Old Testament period.* The LORD Almighty will be ‘a stone’ that causes men to stumble and ‘a rock’ that makes them fall. The people who stumble and fall are those who formally belong to Israel, but fear the king of Assyria (the kingdom of the world) more than they fear the LORD<sup>74</sup>.

The LORD said, “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed”<sup>75</sup>. God has laid a foundation stone on Mount Zion and this can only refer to the royal house of David, who carries the promise of God<sup>76</sup>. In its deepest sense, this word speaks of Jesus Christ in whom this promise is fulfilled<sup>77</sup>. Christ is the ‘sure foundation’ for salvation by way of the rule: “the one who trusts (believes) will never be dismayed”. The building that will be erected on this foundation stone is ‘the kingdom of God’, the Community of the Messiah, which will be characterised by justice and righteousness<sup>78</sup>.

<sup>67</sup> Matthew 6:13; cf. 1 Chronicles 29:11-12

<sup>68</sup> cf. Isaiah 9:7

<sup>69</sup> 2 Peter 3:4; Ezekiel 12:22; Matthew 24:48

<sup>70</sup> Ezra 6:13-15

<sup>71</sup> 1 Maccabees 4:36-60

<sup>72</sup> Psalm 118:22

<sup>73</sup> Matthew 21:42

<sup>74</sup> cf. Isaiah 8:6-8

<sup>75</sup> Isaiah 28:16

<sup>76</sup> 1 Chronicles 17:11-14

<sup>77</sup> Romans 9:33; 1 Peter 2:6-8

<sup>78</sup> Isaiah 28:17

- *The view of Jesus Christ about 'the rock' during the New Testament period.* In the New Testament Jesus Christ came to fulfil the Old Testament revelation<sup>79</sup>. He sees himself as this 'cornerstone' over which some people stumble and they are broken to pieces and as this 'capstone' which falls on others (and their human kingdoms) and they are crushed<sup>80</sup>. Jesus Christ sees himself as 'the rock', the real embodiment of the kingship (sovereign reign) or kingdom of God!
- *The view of Christians about 'the rock' after the New Testament period.* According to the conviction of Christians after the first coming of Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ appeared to be the One who caused the ultimate fall of the kingdom of the world and set the establishment of the kingdom of God in motion. Jesus proclaimed the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"<sup>81</sup>. The kings of the kingdom of the world "will make war against the Lamb (Christ), but the Lamb will overcome them because he is the Lord of lords and King of kings – and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers (Christians)"<sup>82</sup>.

## **F. DANIEL 7. THE KINGDOM OF GOD WILL COME IN THE PLACE OF THE KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD.**

According to the explanation (7:15-28), 'the four beasts' *represent* four kings (7:17) or four kingdoms (7:23) that will arise on earth. They will be terrifying and destructive. Especially the fourth kingdom will be absolutely frightening, because it will crush the whole earth (7:23). However, there will be internal dissension in that kingdom (7:24) and especially the last king will be a terrible tyrant (a type of the antichrist).

His rule will be characterised by the following: He will subdue his rival kings, speak against the Most High God, oppress God's people and try to change the set times, (of religious festivals) and try to change the laws (moral laws) in order to subjugate the people of God (7:25). *He tries to change the times*, but the sovereign God has all time in his control and has already decreed for this tyrant king 'a time, times and half a time'<sup>83</sup>. The tyrant may have expected his plan to work as 'one, two, three' times, etc. and stretch it to seven times (the divine number), but *the sovereign God suddenly, unexpectedly and decidedly cut off his ambition halfway* before it is completed (after 3½ times, halfway to 7 times, the full time). The tyrant will never reach seven times! He will not be allowed to accomplish his evil plan (7:25)! The last king, whose rule will be totally destructive, will see his dominion completely destroyed forever (7:26)! *The numbers should be explained symbolically, theologically, not numerically.*

The people of God (the saints), who pass through this trial and persecution, will finally triumph! "Then the sovereign power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the people of the Most High (God). His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom and all rulers will worship and obey him (7:27)." While the vision says that the kingdom of God will be given to "one like the son of man" (7:14), the explanation says that it will be given to "the saints of the Most High" (7:18,27). The astonishing thing is that 'the saints of the Most High' are identified with 'the one like the son of man'<sup>84</sup>! The explanation is that "*one like a son of man" is the representative of "the people of God"*.

In the light of the New Testament revelation, "one like a son of man" is Jesus Christ. He is not called "the son of Israel", but "the Son of Man", and thus shows that he is the King of all the nations on earth. He represents Christians from every nation and he embraces all people who acknowledge his authority.

## **G. DANIEL 8. IDENTIFYING THE SECOND AND THIRD KINGDOMS.**

According to the explanation (8:15-27), the 'ram' *represents* the Medo-Persian Empire, with the 'two horns' *representing* the king of Media and the more dominant king Cyrus of Persia (8:20). The 'shaggy goat' *represents* the Greek empire and the 'large horn' between his eyes *represents* its first king, Alexander the Great (8:21). The fact that the horns of both animals break, *typifies the brittle nature of political and military power*, especially as the goat had his great horn broken at the height of his power (8:8).

The continuing vision shows 'four prominent horns', which *represent* four kingdoms within the Greek Empire. In the latter part of their reign, 'a little horn' grows out of one of these horns, and it *represents* a tyrant king. *The description of this tyrant king can apply to more than one political leader known in the history books of the world. He is the symbol of the many antichrists in history.*<sup>85</sup> He will be so proud and arrogant that he will defy God. His defiance takes the form of a sacrilegious attack on the temple, as had taken place once before under Nebuchadnezzar and was tantamount to an attack on God himself. He achieves his ends at the price of many human lives including the people of God (8:24). Yet he will be decisively broken and his downfall will not be the result of human scheming or human power (8:25).

According to the vision, the temple will remain desecrated for "2300 evenings and mornings", that is, for less than three and a half years (7:25), thus a relatively short time, after which it will be restored (8:13-14).

<sup>79</sup> Matthew 5:17

<sup>80</sup> Matthew 21:42-44; Luke 20:17-18; cf. Luke 2:34; Isaiah 8:13-15

<sup>81</sup> Mark 1:15

<sup>82</sup> Revelation 17:14

<sup>83</sup> Cf. 1 Kings 17:1; James 5:17; Luke 4:25

<sup>84</sup> Just like in Revelation 17:14

<sup>85</sup> 1 John 2:18

However, in the explanation, this number is not explained. The point of interest is not the attempt to predict future dates, but the vindication of God's sovereignty by the restoration of his sanctuary.

When this vision was given in the third year of Belshassar (550/549 B.C.), the sanctuary in Jerusalem was still in ruins and hopes of return from exile and rebuilding the sanctuary could not yet be implemented. *Because this vision referred to a later desecration and restoration of the sanctuary*<sup>86</sup>, Daniel had "to seal up this vision, for it concerned the distant future"; it had no immediate application.

#### **H. DANIEL 9. GOD'S PURPOSE FOR ALL HISTORY.**

In the first year of Darius the Mede (king Cyrus), that is, 539 B.C., Daniel understood from the Scriptures from Jeremiah 25:8-11 that the desolation of Jerusalem would last *seventy years* (9:2)

##### **a. The explanation of the number 'seven' (9:27).**

The number *seven* has *symbolical or theological* meaning. *Seven is the number of divine perfection in creation, salvation, judgement and history*: there are seven creation days, seven lampstands around Christ, seven bowls of God's wrath and the cycle of seven days in human history.

Long before the period of the kings, Leviticus 26 (verses 18,21,27-35,43) warned that God would punish his people seven times over for their continued disobedience and stubborn pride. It says, "I will multiply your afflictions seven times over as your sins deserve." Their punishment will be with perfect divine justice and mercy<sup>87</sup>.

##### **b. The explanation of the number 'seventy' (9:2).**

*The number 'seventy' represented the period of the Babylonian exile.* Jeremiah 25:8-11 says, "This land ... and all the surrounding nations ... will serve the king of Babylon seventy years." Zechariah 1:12 says that *seventy years was the fixed period of God's indignation against Israel's sins*. 2 Chronicles 36:19-21 says that from the time Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed and the people were carried into exile to Babylon to the beginning of the Persian Empire, "the land enjoyed its (70) sabbath rests (which Israel had neglected during the period of the kings); all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed." *The period of seventy sabbath rests (70x7=490 years) refers symbolically to the period the kings of Israel ruled but neglected to keep the sabbath years (about 1050-587 B.C.)*. Thus, during the symbolical seventy years of exile in Babylon (605-538 B.C.), the land of Israel enjoyed its sabbath rests! The end of this period is represented by *God's forgiveness and acceptance*.<sup>88</sup>

The number 'seventy' was *not literally chronological*, because the period of exile was shorter than 70 years. *Numerically*, there are various ways of reckoning the years of the exile, but only one comes to seventy years, namely, the period from the temple destroyed<sup>89</sup> to the temple rebuilt<sup>90</sup> (586-516 B.C.). However, the first deportation from Jerusalem to the first return to Jerusalem was only 67 years (605-538 B.C.). And the period of Jerusalem's desolation or abandonment according to 2 Kings 25:8-12 was about 48 years (586-538 B.C.)!

The number 'seven' is the number of divine perfection and the number 'ten' is the number of completeness. Therefore the number 'seventy' primarily has *symbolical or theological* importance. This *ritual* understanding of the term 'seventy years' as 'sabbath rests', which the Israelites previously neglected, takes us beyond the merely *numerical* realm into the theological and ethical realm. *Theologically*, the important point was that *the restoration of Jerusalem marked acceptance with God: God had forgiven and reinstated Israel in the land*<sup>91</sup>. It is possible to be so preoccupied with numbers as to miss the essential truth which those numbers declare! It does not speak merely about Israel's history, but about God accomplishing his purpose.

##### **c. The explanation of the number 'seventy sevens' or 'seventy weeks' (9:24).**

Daniel 9:24 prophesies, "Seventy sevens/weeks (of years) are decreed for your people and your holy city *to finish* transgression, *to put an end to* sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and *to anoint (inaugurate)* the most holy (place)(8:11,14; 9:17)".

For Daniel, the *seventy sevens* of years (the 490 years) also has *symbolical or theological* importance. The angel Gabriel explained that the seventy sevens represents *the fixed period decreed by God to accomplish his purpose in divine and secular history*. This period lies ahead of Daniel and begins in 539 B.C. with the decree of the Persian king Cyrus to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple<sup>92</sup> and would end when God's purpose for that part of history was accomplished, that is, when Jerusalem and the temple would again be destroyed by the tyrant Antiochus (167 B.C.)(9:26) and again be rebuilt (restored by the Maccabees)(164 B.C.)<sup>93</sup>. That will be "the end that is decreed" on this tyrant (9:27).

<sup>86</sup> as the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. by the Romans (Matthew 24:1-2; Luke 21: 20-24) and the building of the Church thereafter. Cf. also the destruction of 'this temple' (2 Corinthians 6:16) in the day of the Lord (before the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ)(2 Thessalonians 2:1-4; Revelation 11:7-10).

<sup>87</sup> Revelation 15:5-7; James 2:13

<sup>88</sup> Isaiah 40:1-2

<sup>89</sup> 2 Chronicles 36:19

<sup>90</sup> Ezra 6:17

<sup>91</sup> Isaiah 40:1-2

<sup>92</sup> Ezra 1:1-4

<sup>93</sup> 1 Maccabees 4:36-61

Daniel defines 'the end of this period' by three negatives and three positives. The three negatives: "to end the rebellion, to do away with failures, to wipe away waywardness" are practically synonyms and refer to *the ending of the sacrilege of the temple* by Antiochus Epiphanes IV of Syria (167 B.C.). The three positives: "to bring in lasting vindication, to seal a prophet's vision, to anoint the most holy (the most sacred place/the temple)" are also synonyms and refer to *the reconsecration and rededication of the temple* after its defilement (164 B.C.). Daniel 9:24 is restated in Daniel 8:11-14 and again in Daniel 11:36.

God's purpose in secular history is to establish his sovereignty in the affairs of political and religious leaders in this world. Because *the last half of the seventieth seven* (9:27) is not accounted for in the book of Daniel, *the number should be explained symbolically, not numerically.*

#### **d. The explanation of the number 'seven sevens' and 'sixty two sevens' (9:25-26).**

There are people who claim that Daniel 9:25-26 predicted the exact time of the crucifixion of Jesus in the future. Their calculation is reckoned from 445 B.C., the time king Artaxerxes I gave Nehemiah permission to go to Jerusalem and repair its walls and gates<sup>94</sup>. Using 360 days to the year and adding extra days for leap years, they arrive at "the cutting off of an anointed one", namely, Jesus Christ, in A.D. 31<sup>95</sup>.

However, numbers in the Old Testament often have symbolical significance. *The numbers in Daniel 9:25-26 are not explained and we should be careful to give it a definite explanation!* Artaxerxes did not issue a decree concerning the rebuilding of the city or the temple, but Cyrus did<sup>96</sup>. The starting point is thus 539 B.C.<sup>97</sup> rather than 445 B.C.<sup>98</sup>! Moreover, it is more certain that Jesus Christ was crucified in April A.D. 30 and not in A.D. 31. Therefore, it would be more consistent to *explain the numbers symbolically, not numerically.*

Leviticus 25:8-24 teaches that the fiftieth year after seven times seven sabbath years is the Year of Jubilee. Then the people of God *must return to their inherited land* and freedom must be proclaimed to prisoners. The 'seven sevens' of years answered Daniel's prayer concerning the restoration of the city of Jerusalem. Although the command to rebuilt Jerusalem is given in 539 B.C., it was not until the time of Nehemiah that Jerusalem as a city was completed with a wall (432 B.C.)<sup>99</sup> and 'squares and a moat' amidst much opposition (9:25).

The period of '7 sevens and 62 sevens' refers to *the period between the two desolations of Jerusalem*, the period during which Jerusalem was rebuilt (9:25). It is the long postexilic period from the decree of Cyrus in 539 B.C. to rebuild Jerusalem and its temple (9:25) to the 'cutting off of an anointed one', that is, the murder of a high priest<sup>100</sup> (171 B.C.) and the destruction of the city and the sanctuary (167 B.C.) and the restoration of the temple (164 B.C.) (9:26).

#### **e. The explanation of the number 'one half of the seven' (9:26-27).**

In Daniel 9:24-27, sixty-nine and a half weeks *fall short* of seventy weeks. The period of the last seven refers to the period of unholy alliance between the opponents of God's people and *the completion of God's purpose in divine and secular history*. Daniel 9:24-27 refers in allusive terms to this unholy alliance directed against God's people and God's cause. One high priest would be put to death. Another ruler, also a high priest, would enforce an agreement on many people by means of his superior strength and finally destroy the city and the sanctuary. He would terminate the temple worship and set up an abomination in the temple (167 B.C.). Armies like floods of water would fight wars until the end decreed by God.

The tyrant king had intended to enforce his unholy alliance on many people for a period of 'one full seven', but carries his defiant activities against God and God's people out only *during the first half of the seven!* 'In the middle of the seven' (167 B.C.) a crisis would erupt that would finally lead to the termination of this unholy alliance and its unholy allies. Antiochus died of a sickness in the height of kingdom (164 B.C.) *God suddenly, unexpectedly and sovereignly cut his plan and activities short. The tyrant king was not be allowed to complete the full seven.* Without accounting for *the second half of the seven*, the book of Daniel ends with the statement that this tyrant is judged: "God's decreed judgement would be poured out on him (9:27)."

Because Daniel does not give an account of 'the second half of the seven' he is saying that "the end is not yet"<sup>101</sup>, that is, *the final end of divine and secular history* has not yet arrived! This is confirmed by Daniel 7:12, which says that although God's judgement had already fallen on the fourth beast together with all its horns, the other beasts were sovereignly allowed to live "for an appointed period of time"<sup>102</sup>. Daniel 9:24-27 does not describe the very end of world-history as for example Daniel 12:1-3 does. Evidently, *after* the fall of the fourth beast, world-history had *not yet* come to an end! Therefore *these numbers should be explained symbolically, not numerically.*

<sup>94</sup> Nehemiah 2:1-10

<sup>95</sup> 7+62 weeks (sevens)(of years)(69x7) = 483 years      x 360 = 173,880 days + 40 leap days = 173,920 days      divided by 365 days = 476½ years.  
445 B.C. + 476½ years brings one to 31½ A.D.

<sup>96</sup> Isaiah 44:28; Ezra 1:1-5

<sup>97</sup> Ezra 1:1-4

<sup>98</sup> Ezra 4:12

<sup>99</sup> Nehemiah 6:15

<sup>100</sup> 'The anointed one' refers to the high priest Onias who was murdered in 171 B.C.

<sup>101</sup> cf. Matthew 24:6, "the end is still to come".

<sup>102</sup> Greek: from an appointed time to an appointed time

#### **f. The fulfilment of ‘the last seven’.**

As in Daniel 8:11-14 and Daniel 11:21-36, Daniel is first of all referring to the Antiochene crisis in which king Antiochus IV of Syria made an unholy alliance with the reformist Jews in Jerusalem. Antiochus IV highhandedly replaced the high priest Onias in 174 B.C. by his brother, Jason, who enforced the godless Greek culture and religion on God’s people in Jerusalem. In 171 B.C. Antiochus IV replaced Jason with Menelaus, who bribed Antiochus to get into power. Menelaus bribed an assassin to ‘cut off’ or murder Onias in 171 B.C. In the following years the treasures of the temple were looted, the temple ritual was suspended, the sacred scriptures destroyed, the Sabbath and other Jewish festivals forbidden, the food-laws abolished and circumcision discontinued. Finally in December 167 B.C. an altar was erected on top of the altar of the temple, dedicated to Zeus and unclean animals were sacrificed on it. This was “the setting up of the abomination that caused desolation”, that is, caused the *depopulation of the temple and its service*. Pagan altars were erected in every town and severe penalties were imposed on inhabitants who refused to bring sacrifices there.<sup>103</sup>

The circumcision of children, the possession of the sacred law and the refusal to eat unclean meat were capital offences. This devastation would continue to overwhelm desolate Jerusalem until “the appointed time decreed by God” to end wickedness and to restore his people, that is, *until God’s divine purpose had been accomplished*.

#### **g. The application of Daniel 9:24-27.**

The traditional understanding of Daniel 9:24-27 by many Jews and Christians (see ‘d’ above) is mistaken. They applied it to rather later events like the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in 31 A.D., the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., various subsequent historical events and even the second coming of Jesus.

*But Daniel is a prophet (in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.) and with the prophets in the Bible, revelation of future events are scientifically NOT impossible! Daniel himself understood the events of Daniel 9:24-27 as referring to the Antiochene crisis in the second century B.C.* The details of Daniel 9:24-27 fit this second century B.C. crisis and agrees with allusions to this crisis in the other chapters of the book of Daniel. The verses in Daniel 9:24-27 do not indicate that they are looking centuries or millennia beyond the period to which the context (chapters 8, 10-12) refer. They do not suggest that the cleansing and renewal of which Daniel 9:24 speaks is the cleansing and renewal of the world (at the second coming of Christ). It is rather the cleansing and renewal of Jerusalem and its temple by Judas the Maccabee in 164 B.C.<sup>104</sup> which you may read in 1 Maccabees 4:36-61. Daniel 9:24-27 clearly refers to the Antiochene crisis.

#### **h. The reapplication of Daniel 9:24-27.**

*Yet the allusive terminology of Daniel 9:24-27 justifies reapplication of the passage, as is the case with previous chapters in Daniel, but only in the following sense: Daniel 9:24-27 does not refer specifically to concrete persons and events in the way of historical narrative such as 1 Maccabees (4:36-61), but refers in terms of symbols to what those persons and events embodied, symbols such as sin, justice, an anointed prince, a flood, an abomination. Concrete events and persons in history are understood in the light of such symbols, but the symbols transcend them!*

*The symbols are not limited in their reference to these particular concrete realities! The symbols have other embodiments that happen in other periods of divine and secular history as Matthew 24:15-20 and Revelation 13:11-18 prove! What these other embodiments are is a matter of theological, not exegetical, judgement. It is a matter of faith, not of science.*

*If Christians on the basis of the teachings in the rest of the Bible are justified in believing that Jesus Christ is God’s anointed, and that his birth, ministry, death, resurrection, and appearing are God’s ultimate means of revealing himself and achieving his purpose in this world history, then Jesus Christ, his life and his work are also God’s ultimate application of what the symbols in Daniel 9:24-27 speak of!* It is this point that is made in the traditional explanation of Daniel 9:24-27.

*Christians maintain that there is a typological relationship between the following:*

- *the events and people of the Antiochene crisis and deliverance*
- *the events during the first coming of Jesus Christ*
- *the events at the final end of history at the second coming of Christ!*

### **I. DANIEL 10-12. A VISION OF CONTINUED CONFLICT RIGHT UP TO THE END.**

*The book of Daniel prepares God’s people ahead of time so that their faith will not falter them when the test comes.*

#### **Daniel 10.**

This chapter reveals that behind the visible conflict on earth between the kingdoms and rulers of the world on the one hand, and God’s people in the world on the other hand, there is a vital conflict taking place on a world-wide scale in the heavenly realm<sup>105</sup>.

<sup>103</sup> 1 Maccabees 1:29-64; 2 Maccabees chapters 4-7

<sup>104</sup> In 148<sup>th</sup> year of the Seleucid dynasty, which began in 312 B.C.

<sup>105</sup> The New Testament in Revelation 12:1-5 reveals that this conflict is between the dragon (Satan) and the man-child (Jesus Christ).

Daniel 10 reveals that the angelic beings have a part in that conflict. The demon ‘prince of the Persian kingdom’ or the demon ‘prince of the Greek kingdom’ may have had power to hinder the proclamation of the good news in their respective countries during the Old Testament period. After the first coming of Jesus Christ and his death and resurrection, the demon princes (and their leader, Lucifer or the dragon) have been conquered and have been bound (curbed)<sup>106</sup> in the sense that they can no longer keep the nations from hearing the gospel!

From the first coming of Christ onwards the gospel is preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations. Only when that has been done the end of history will come<sup>107</sup>.

#### **Daniel 11.**

The political rulers of the world cannot agree and so they fight among themselves. Their successes are followed by their defeats. In Daniel 11, this principle is *illustrated* by the wars between the southern kingdom of Egypt and the northern kingdom of Syria during the third and second centuries B.C. Between them, they had a monopoly of political and military power.

But the main message of this chapter is that the people of God will suffer as a result of the political and military setbacks of ambitious world rulers. The people of God will experience suffering and will be threatened with extinction.

The primary reference in this chapter is to the confrontation between a ruthless tyrant, who is identified as Antiochus IV, who tried to impose the Greek worship and lifestyle throughout his empire, and the struggling people of God (11:31-35). This tyrant was trying to impose his will and to wipe out the people of God. It was what the apostle Paul later described in Ephesians 6:12, a struggle against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. The final message of Daniel 11 is that, however powerful the rulers of the earth may be, “they will stumble and fall, to be seen no more” (11:19)!

Daniel revealed that ‘the time of the end’ when the kingdom of the world will fall to be seen no more is still future, it will still come at the appointed time (11:35).

#### **Daniel 12.**

In Daniel 12:9-10, the book of Daniel ends with the mysterious words that right up to the end of history, the wicked people will continue to do wicked things, but nevertheless there will be many who will be purified and refined (11:35). Because by the end of Daniel’s book, the kingdom of God had “not yet” been ushered in, the words of Daniel are closed up and sealed until “the time of the end” (12:9).

Like all the prophets of the Old Testament, Daniel only saw the future as mountain ranges in the far distance, without being able to see the distance that separated one range from another. *Therefore, the words “the time of the end” in the book of Daniel refers to both the first coming of Jesus Christ when he inaugurated the kingdom and the second coming of Jesus Christ when he completed the kingdom.*

The book of Daniel closes with the very encouraging message that everyone’s name that is written in God’s book, will be delivered (12:1)<sup>108</sup>! After the resurrection from the dead and the final judgement (12:2), God’s people will forever shine like stars (12:3)<sup>109</sup>.

### **J. CONCLUSION.**

The book of Daniel *outlined all subsequent history in the world in a schematised form of four kingdoms and then depicted the end of history in the world.* But although God is sovereign in the events in history, *the numbers given may not and cannot be used as historical data. The numbers have symbolical, theological significance.* Within this framework of the kingdoms of the world and the growing kingdom of God, human rulers throughout history will unwittingly fit into a pattern of behaviour and implement policies that are recognisable from the book of Daniel.

The people of God throughout history will be victims of these policies. They are forewarned and must set themselves to endure suffering in the knowledge that their *God is still in control of* this world, its rulers and *its times* and that time and again he will vindicate his own people.

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<sup>106</sup> Revelation 20:2

<sup>107</sup> Matthew 24:14

<sup>108</sup> Revelation 20:15

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Matthew 13:43 “shine like the sun in the kingdom of their father”.