**THE FUNDAMENTALS: A TESTIMONY TO THE TRUTH**

**VOLUME 1; CHAPTER 13. THE BOOK OF DANIEL**

BY PROFESSOR JOSEPH D. WILSON, D.D., THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE REFORMED EPISCOPAL CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA, AUTHOR OF "DID DANIEL WRITE DANIEL?"

Modern objections to the Book of Daniel were started by German scholars who were prejudiced against the supernatural. Daniel foretells events which have occurred in history. Therefore, argue these scholars, the alleged predictions must have been written after the events.

But the supernatural is not impossible, nor is it improbable, if sufficient reason for it exists. It is not impossible, for instance, that an event so marvellous as the coming of the Divine into humanity in the person of Jesus Christ should be predicted. So far from being impossible, it seems to common sense exceedingly probable; and furthermore, it seems not unreasonable that a prophet predicting a great and far distant event, like that indicated above, should give some evidence to his contemporaries or immediate successors that he was a true prophet. Jeremiah foretold the seventy years captivity. Could his hearers be warranted in believing that? Certainly. For he also foretold that all those lands would be subjected to the king of Babylon. A few years showed this latter prophecy to be true, and reasonable men believed the prediction about the seventy years.

But the attacks of the German scholars would have been innocuous had it not been for their copyists. The German scholars - even theological professors - are not necessarily Christians. Religion is with them an interesting psychological phenomenon. Their performances are not taken too seriously by their compeers. But outside of their learned circles a considerable number of writers and professors in schools, anxious to be in the forefront, have taken the German theories for proven facts, and by saying "all scholars are agreed," etc., have spread an opinion that the Book of Daniel is a pious fraud.

There is another class of impugners of Daniel - good men, who do not deny the ability of God to interpose in human affairs and foretell to His servants what shall be hereafter. These men, accepting as true what they hear asserted as the judgment of "all scholars" and regretfully supposing that Daniel is a fiction, have endeavored to save something from the wreck of a book which has been the stay of suffering saints through the ages, by expatiating on its moral and religious teaching. It is probable that these apologists - victims themselves of a delusion which they did not create but which they have hastily and foolishly accepted - have done more harm than the mistaken scholars or the hasty copyists, for they have fostered the notion that a fraud may be used for holy ends, and that a forger is a proper teacher of religious truth, and that the Son of God approved a lie.

The scholars find that in chapter 8 of Daniel, under the figure of a very little horn, Antiochus Epiphanes is predicted as doing much hurt to the Jews. The vision is of the ram and he-goat which represent Persia and Greece, so specified by name. A notable horn of the he-goat, Alexander the Great, was broken, and in its place came four horns, the four kingdoms into which the Greek empire was divided. From one of these four sprang the little horn. That this refers primarily to Antiochus Epiphanes there is no doubt. He died about 163 B.C. The theory of the rationalistic critics is that some "pious and learned Jew" wrote the Book of Daniel at that time to encourage the Maccabees in their revolt against this bad king; that the book pretends to have been written in Babylon, 370 years before, in order to make it pass current as a revelation from God. This theory has been supported by numerous arguments, mostly conjectural, all worthless and, in a recent publication, a few designedly delusive.

The imaginary Jew is termed "pious" because lofty religious ideas mark the book, and "learned" because he exhibits so intimate an acquaintance with the conditions and environments of the Babylonian court four centuries before his date. But as no man, however learned, can write an extended history out of his own imagination without some inaccuracies, the critics have searched diligently for mistakes. The chief of these supposed mistakes will be considered below.

We meet a difficulty at the threshold of the critics' hypothesis. Dan. 9:26 predicts the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple; a calamity so frightful to the Jewish mind that the Septuagint shrank from translating the Hebrew. What sort of encouragement was this? The hypothesis limps at the threshold.

Having Antiochus Epiphanes in chapter 8 the rationalistic critics try to force him into chapter 7. They find a little horn in chapter 7, and struggle to identify him with the "very little horn" of chapter 8. There is no resemblance between them. The words translated "little horn" are different in the different chapters. The little horn of chapter 7 springs up as an eleventh horn among ten kings. He is diverse from other kings. He continues till the Son of Man comes in the clouds of heaven and the kingdom which shall never be destroyed is set up. Antiochus Epiphanes, the little horn of chapter 8, comes out of one of the four horns into which Alexander's kingdom resolved itself. He was not diverse from other kings, but was like scores of other bad monarchs, and he did not continue till the Son of Man.

These divergencies render the attempted identification absurd, but an examination of the two sets of prophecies in their entirety shows this clearly. Chapters 2 and 7 are a prophecy of the world's history to the end. Chapters 8 and 11 refer to a crisis in Jewish history, a crisis now long past.

Chapter 2, the Image with its head of gold, breast of silver, belly of brass, legs of iron, feet and toes of mingled iron and clay, tells of four world-kingdoms, to be succeeded by a number of sovereignties, some strong, some weak, which would continue till the God of heaven should set up a kingdom never to be destroyed. Chapter 7, the Four Beasts, is parallel to the Image. The same four world-empires are described; the fourth beast, strong and terrible, to be succeeded by ten kings, who should continue till the coming of the Son of Man, who should set up an everlasting kingdom.

These four world-empires were Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. There have been no other world-empires since. Efforts have been made to unite the divided sovereignties of Europe by royal intermarriages and by conquest, but the iron and clay would not cleave together. The rapidity of the Greek conquest is symbolized by the swift leopard with four wings; its division by four heads. The Roman empire is diverse from the others - it was a republic and its iron strength is dissipated among the nations which followed it and which exist today, still iron and clay.

These prophecies which are illustrated in every particular by history to the present moment stand in the way of the unbelieving theory. The Roman empire, the greatest of all, must be eliminated to get rid of prediction, and any shift promising that end has been welcomed. One set of critics makes the kingdom of the Seleucidae, which was one of the parts of the Greek empire, the fourth world-kingdom, but it never was a world-kingdom. It was part of the Greek empire - one of the four heads upon the leopard. Another set creates an imaginary Median empire between Babylon and Persia. There was no such empire. The Medo-Persian empire was one. Cyrus, the Persian, conquered Babylon. All history says so and the excavations prove it.

Among the nations which were to take the place of the fallen Roman empire, another power was to rise - "a little horn," shrewd and arrogant. It was to wear out the saints of the Most High, to be diverse from the other ten sovereignties, to have the other sovereignties given into its hand, and to keep its dominion till the coming of the Son of Man.

Whatever this dread power is, or is to be, it was to follow the fall of the Roman empire and to rise among the nations which, ever since, in some form or other have existed where Rome once held sway. Whether that power, differing from civil governments and holding dominance over them, exists now and has existed for more than a thousand years, or is to be developed in the future, it was to arise in the Christian era. The words are so descriptive, that no reader would ever have doubted were it not that the prophecy involves prediction.

The attempt of the "very little horn" of chapter 8, Antiochus Epiphanes, to extirpate true religion from the earth, failed. Yet it was well-nigh successful. The majority of the nation were brought to abandon Jehovah and to serve Diana. The high priest in Jerusalem sent the treasurers of the temple to Antioch as an offering to Hercules. Jews out-bade each other in their subservience to Antiochus. His cruelties were great but his blandishments were more effective for his purpose; "by peace he destroyed many". Idolatrous sacrifices were offered throughout Judea. Judaism was all but dead, and with its death the worship of the one God would have found no place in all the earth.

This prophecy encouraged the few faithful ones to resist the Greek and their own faithless fellow countrymen. God foresaw and forewarned. The warning was unheeded by the mass of the Jews. Sadduceeism then did not believe in the supernatural and it has repeated its disbelief. Fortunately there was a believing remnant and true religion was saved from extinction.

The Seventy Weeks. (Dan. 9:24-27.) "Weeks" in this prophecy are not weeks of days but "sevens," probably years, but whether astronomical years of 365.25 days or prophetic years of 360 days does not appear. Our Lord's saying when referring to the prophecy of Daniel (Matt. 24:15), "Let him that readeth understand," seems to indicate a peculiarity about the period foretold.

From the issuance of a commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem unto Messiah there would be sixty-nine sevens, i.e., 483 years. Messiah would be cut off and have nothing, and the people of a prince would destroy Jerusalem and the temple.

It came to pass in the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate. Messiah appeared; He was cut off; He had nothing, no place to lay His head, nothing except a cross. And before the generation which crucified Him passed away, the soldiers of the Roman emperor destroyed the city and sanctuary, slew all the priests and ended Jewish church and nation.

Unto Messiah the Prince there were to be 483 years from an edict to rebuild Jerusalem. That edict was issued in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes Longimanus. Somewhere between 454 B.C. and 444 B.C. is the date, with the preponderance of opinion in favor of the later date. Four hundred and eighty-three years brings us to 29 - 39 A.D. Or, if prophetic years are meant, the terminus ad quern is 22 - 32 A.D. Pontius Pilate was procurator of Judea from 26 A.D. to 36 A.D.

All this is plain enough, and if the words of Daniel had been written after the death of our Saviour and the fall of Jerusalem, no one could fail to see that Jesus Christ is indicated. But if written in the exile this would be supernatural prediction, and hence the struggles of the critics to evade somehow the implications of the passage. To find some prominent person who was "cut off" prior to 163 B.C. was the first desideratum. The high priest Onias, who was murdered through the intrigues of rival candidates for his office, was the most suitable person. He was in no respect the Messiah, but having been anointed he might be made to serve. He died 171 B.C. The next step was to find an edict to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, 483 years before 171 B.C. That date was 654 B.C., during the reign of Manasseh, son of Hezekiah. No edict could be looked for there. But by deducting 49 years, the date was brought to 605 B.C., and as in that year Jeremiah had foretold (Jer. 25:9) the destruction of Jerusalem, perhaps this would do.

There were two objections to this hypothesis; one, that a prophecy of desolation and ruin to a city and sanctuary then in existence was not a commandment to restore and rebuild, and the other objection was that this also was a supernatural prediction, and as such, offensive to the critical mind. Accordingly, recourse was had to the decree of Cyrus (Ezra 1:1-4) made in 536 B.C. But the decree of Cyrus authorized, not the building of Jerusalem, but the building of the temple. It is argued that forts and other defences, including a city wall must have been intended by Cyrus, and this would be rebuilding Jerusalem; but the terms of the edict are given and no such defences are mentioned. Nor is it likely that a wise man like Cyrus would have intended or permitted a fortified city to be built in a remote corner of his empire close to his enemy, Egypt, with which enemy the Jews had frequently coquetted in previous years. At all events, the city was not restored until the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, as appears from Neh. 2:3, 8, 13, etc., where Nehemiah laments the defenceless condition of Jerusalem. Permission to build could safely be given then, for Egypt had been conquered and the loyalty of the Jews to Persia had been tested. Moreover, the date of Cyrus' decree does not meet the conditions. From 536 B.C. to 171 B.C. is 365 years and not 483. A "learned and pious Jew" would not have made such a blunder in arithmetic in foisting a forgery upon his countrymen.

There were four decrees concerning Jerusalem issued by the Persian court. The first under Cyrus, alluded to above, the second under Darius Hystaspis. (Ezra 6.) The third in the seventh year of Artaxerxes. (Ezra 7:12-26.) All of these concern the temple. The fourth in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes was the only one to restore and rebuild a walled town.

The Book of Daniel was translated into Greek about 123 B.C., forty years after the death of Antiochus Epiphanes. This prophecy of the Seventy Weeks troubled the Jewish translators. It foretold disaster to Jerusalem. City and sanctuary would be destroyed. They had been destroyed 464 years before by Nebuchadnezzar. Would they be destroyed again? The translators were unwilling to believe that such a calamity would occur again. Could they not make out that the words referred to the troubles under Antiochus? It was true that he had destroyed neither city nor temple, but he had polluted the temple. Perhaps that was equivalent to destruction. At all events they did not dare to say that another destruction of Jerusalem lay in the future.

But there stood the words. From the going forth of commandment to restore Jerusalem unto Messiah the Prince would be seven weeks and three score and two weeks, 483 years. They could do nothing with those words. They left them out, and mangled the rest of the passage to give obscurely the impression that the disasters there foretold were a thing of the past.

This mistranslation of a Divine oracle to make it say what they wished it to say was a high-handed proceeding, but it did not prevent its fulfillment. At the time appointed Messiah came and was crucified and Jerusalem fell. The critics' efforts to force some meaning, other than a prediction of Christ, into this prophecy is thus seen to be not without precedent.

**SUPPOSED INACCURACIES**

But the rationalistic interpretations of the forementioned great prophecies are so unnatural, so evidently forced in order to sustain a preconceived theory, that they would have deceived none except those predisposed to be deceived. Accordingly attempts have been made to discredit the Book of Daniel; to show that it could not have been written in Babylon; to expose historical inaccuracies and so forth. The scholars discovered some supposed inaccuracies, and, the fashion having been set, the imitation scholars eagerly sought for more and with the help of imagination have compiled a considerable number. They are in every case instances of the inaccuracy of the critics.

**(1).** First, may be mentioned, as the only one ever having had any weight, the fact that no historian mentions Belshazzar. It was therefore assumed that "the learned and pious Jew", whom the critics imagined, had invented the name. Since 1854 this "inaccuracy" has disappeared from the rationalistic dictionaries and other productions. The excavations have answered that.

**(2).** Disappointed at the discovery of the truth, the critics now find fault with the title "king" which Daniel gives to Belshazzar and assert that no tablets have been found dated in his reign. It is not probable that any such tablets will be found, for his father outlived him and even though Belshazzar were co-king, his father's name would be in the dates. The tablets, however, show that Belshazzar was the commander of the troops, that he was the man of action - his father being a studious recluse - that he was the darling of the people and that the actual administration was in his hands. He was the heir to the throne and even if not formally invested, was the virtual king in the eyes of the people.

**(3).** It is objected next that Belshazzar was not the son of Nebuchadnezzar as the queen mother says in Dan. 5:11. If he were the grandson through his mother the same language would be used, and the undisturbed reign of Nabonidus in turbulent Babylon is accounted for in this way.

**(4).** The quibble that the monuments do not say that Belshazzar was slain at the taking of Babylon is unworthy of the scholar who makes it. It is admitted that Belshazzar was a prominent figure before the city was captured, that "the son of the king died" and that he then "disappeared from history". He was heir to the kingdom. He was a soldier. His dynasty was overthrown. He disappeared from history. Common sense can make its inference.

**(5).** It is hard, however, for the impugners of Daniel to let the Belshazzar argument go. To have him appear prominently in the inscriptions, after criticism had decided that he never existed, is awkward. Accordingly, we have a long dissertation ("Sayce's Higher Crit. and Monuments," 497-531) showing that the claim of Cyrus to have captured Babylon without fighting is inconsistent with the accounts of the secular historians, which dwell upon the long siege, the desperate fighting, the turning of the river, the surprise at night, etc. Very well, the two accounts are inconsistent. But what has this to do with Daniel? His account is as follows:

"In that night was Belshazzar the Chaldean king slain, and Darius the Mede received the kingdom" (Dan. 5:31). Not a word about a siege, etc. An account entirely consistent with the inscription of Cyrus. And yet the critic has the audacity to say that "the monumental evidence has here pronounced against the historical accuracy of the Scripture narrative"! ("H. C. & M.", 531). This is not criticism; it is misrepresentation.

**(6).** Daniel mentions the "Chaldeans" as a guild of wise men. This has been made a ground of attack. "In the time of the exile", they tell us, "the Chaldeans were an imperial nation. Four centuries afterward the term signified a guild; therefore, Daniel was written four centuries afterward". It is strange that none of the critics consulted Herodotus, the historian nearest to Daniel in time. He visited Babylon in the same century with Daniel and uses the word in the same sense as Daniel and in no other. (Herod. 1:181, 185.)

**(7).** The Book of Daniel spells Nebuchadnezzar with an "n" in the penultimate instead of an "r"; therefore, the critics argue, it must have been written 370 years later. But Ezra spells it with an "n". So do 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, and so does Jeremiah seven times out of sixteen. Jeremiah preceded Daniel, and if either Kings or Chronicles was written in Babylon we have the same spelling in the same country and about the same time.

**(8).** As to the Greek words in Daniel, relied on by Driver to prove a late date: when we discover that these are the names of musical instruments and that the Babylonians knew the Greeks in commerce and in war and realize that musical instruments carry their native names with them, this argument vanishes like the rest.

**(9).** But, it is urged, Daniel gives the beginning of the captivity (1:1) in the third year of Jehoiakim, 606 B.C., whereas Jerusalem was not destroyed till 587 B.C., therefore, etc.

Daniel dates the captivity from the time that he and the other youths were carried away. A glance at the history will suggest when that was. Pharaoh Necho came out of Egypt against Babylon in 609 B.C. He met and defeated Josiah at Megiddo. He then marched on northward. In three months he marched back to Egypt, having accomplished nothing against Babylon. The interval, 609 to 605 B.C., was the opportunity for Nebuchadnezzar. He secured as allies or as subjects the various tribes in Palestine, as appears from Berosus. Among the rest "Jehoiakim (2 Kings 24:1) became his servant three years". During that time he took as guests or as hostages the noble youths. At the end of the three years, in 605, Necho re-appeared on his way to fatal Carchemish. Jehoiakim renounced Nebuchadnezzar, and sided with Necho. A merciful Providence counted the seventy years captivity from the very first deportation and Daniel tells us when that was. The captivity ended in 536 B.C.

**(10).** The Aramaic. One critic said Aramaic was not spoken in Babylon. Others, not so self-confident, said the Aramaic in Babylon was different from Daniel's Aramaic. None of them knew what Aramaic was spoken in Babylon. There was Ezra's Aramaic. It was like Daniel's and Ezra was a native of Babylon. To save their argument they then post-dated Ezra too. In 1906 and 1908, there were unearthed papyrus rolls in Aramaic written in the fifth century, B.C. It is impossible to suggest redactors and other imaginary persons in this case, and so the Aramaic argument goes the way of all the rest. Before these recent finds the Aramaic weapon had begun to lose its potency. The clay tablets, thousands of which have been found in Babylonia, are legal documents and are written in Babylonian. Upon the backs of some of them were Aramaic filing marks stating in brief the contents. These filings were for ready reference and evidently in the common language of the people, the same language which the frightened Chaldeans used when the angry monarch threatened them. (Dan. 2:4.).

There are some other alleged inaccuracies more frivolous than the above. Lack of space forbids their consideration here.

Two new objections to the genuineness of Daniel appear in a dictionary of the Bible, edited by three American clergymen. The article on Daniel states that "the Baba Bathra (The passage is found in the Talmud Babylon, Tract Baba Bathra, fol. 15a., and reads, "The men of the Great Synagogue have written Ezekiel, the Twelve Minor Prophets, Daniel and Esther." - Editor.) ascribes the writing not to Daniel but along with that of some other books to the men of the Great Synagogue". This statement is correct in words, but by concealment conveys a false impression. The trick lies in the phrase, "some other books". What are those other books? They are Ezekiel, Hosea, Amos - all the minor prophets- and Esther. The statement itself is nonsensical, like many .other things in the Talmud, but whatever its meaning, it places Daniel on the same footing as Ezekiel and the rest.

The other objection is as follows: "Chapter 11 [of Daniel] with its four world-kingdoms is wonderfully cleared when viewed from this standpoint [i.e. as a Maccabean production]. The third of these kingdoms is explicitly named as the Persian. (11:2.) The fourth to follow is evidently the Greek".

Every phrase in this is false. The chapter says nothing about four world-kingdoms. Nor does 11:2 say explicitly, or any other way, that the Persian was the third; nor that the Greek was the fourth.

No explanation or modification of these astonishing statements is offered. How could the writer expect to escape detection? True, the Baba Bathra is inaccessible to most people, but Daniel 11 is in everybody's hands.

Daniel was a wise and well-known man in the time of Ezekiel, else all point in the irony of Ezek. 28:3 is lost. He was also eminent for goodness and must have been esteemed an especial recipient of God's favor and to have had intercourse with the Most High like Noah and Job. Ezek. 14:15, 20: "When the land sinneth, though Noah, Daniel and Job were in it, they shall deliver but their own souls". A striking collocation: Noah the second father of the race, Job the Gentile and Daniel the Jew.

Daniel is better attested than any other book of the Old Testament. Ezekiel mentions the man. Zechariah appears to have read the book. The bungling attempt of the Septuagint to alter a prediction of disaster to one of promise; our Saviour's recognition of Daniel as a prophet; these are attestations. Compare Ezekiel; there is not a word in the Bible to show that he ever existed, but as he does not plainly predict the Saviour no voice is raised or pen wagged against him.