

Daniel 11

The Scripture of Truth — The Kings of the North and South

From W. Kelly's *Writings on Prophecy*

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Introduction: The Language of History

One of our sages, the founder of inductive philosophy, distinguishes between divine prophecies, and such as have been of certain memory and from hidden causes. These were no better than probable conjectures or obscure traditions that many times turn themselves into prophecies. Lord Verulam undoubtedly was a man of profound thought, and (whatever his sad failure) a great deal wiser than those who now in effect deny divine prophecy altogether, and merely show themselves out as unbelievers. Now unbelief is an insult to God and His word and not merely so, but along with it goes as the rule ignorance of Christ and of redemption. Everything is shaken thereby; for the moment you begin to cavil at Scripture, where is the line to be drawn? It is no better if you question the beginning. You may begin with Genesis; for the same principle is apt to carry the mind in doubt throughout the Bible to Revelation. There is abundant evidence for Scripture, more by far than for any books of antiquity; but evidence of an external sort never raises you to faith. Scripture claims to be the written word of God and carries its own evidence as light to the conscience. Unless received on its own divine authority, men do not really believe it savingly. They may readily allow that it has a character intrinsically superior to other so-called sacred books. But this makes it only a question of old Hebrew sages or of those who wrote in Christian times, who were better or abler men.

In the prophecy which now claims our attention we have as nearly as possible the language of history. We have seen the symbolic style in the earlier visions of the book. Dan. 9 is transitional, the weeks being in a measure enigmatic; the rest plain language with figures interspersed, as in all the interpretations. The peculiarity of Dan. 11 and 12, like Dan. 9, is in leaving symbolic form for the language of every day on historical matters. Thus we have a succession of kings in a double contemporary series, north and south of the holy land, which was beyond controversy God's center on the earth. We must

therefore look up or down from that fixed point.

The Kings of Persia and the Rise of Greece

Here we find a striking introduction before we hear of kings of the north and the south. "And now will I show you the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia." Cyrus was then the great ruling personage. Darius was in honor only as a sort of complementary king; the conqueror of Babylon put him forward in recognition of the Medes who joined his enterprise. There were then to be three more Persian kings, to be followed by a fourth who should be "far richer than they all," and "by his strength through his riches" stir up "all against the realm of Grecia." Cambyses, Smerdis, and Darius Hystaspis fulfill the first part; and Xerxes, who invaded Greece with his enormous army and fleet, answers to the fourth.

And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those {Dan. 11:3, 4}.

Here we have a most exact description of Alexander's career and the break-up of his empire after his death. The four generals who succeeded him -- Ptolemy, Seleucus, Lysimachus, and Cassander -- correspond to "the four winds of heaven." In all the earlier part of Dan. 11, from v. 5 to v. 31, we have a detailed and remarkably accurate account of the wars and intrigues of the kings of the north and the south, the Seleucid and Ptolemaic dynasties.

Antiochus Epiphanes and the Maccabean Period

Here we have those that were persecuted by their enemy -- Antiochus Epiphanes. "And they that understood (or, are wise) among the people shall instruct many"

(Dan. 11:33). "And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed" (Dan. 11:35). This answers to the Maccabean period, when the faithful Jews resisted the tyranny of Antiochus and maintained their religion at the cost of their lives.

But even this is not the full and final fulfilment of the prophecy. There is a gap between verse 35 and verse 36, where the prophecy leaps forward from Antiochus to the final king of the end time. The words "even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed" intimate that, though the passage describes events of the Maccabean period, they are not the final and complete fulfilment. The complete fulfilment is at "the time of the end," which is the great crisis of the last days. "The time of the end" is a technical phrase in Daniel, always referring to the final crisis at the close of this age.

Even the incredulous Gibbon in his Letter to Bp. Hurd says, "The four empires are clearly delineated, the expedition of Xerxes into Greece, the rapid conquest of Persia by Alexander, his untimely death without posterity, the division of his vast monarchy into four kingdoms, one of which is mentioned by name, their various wars and intermarriages, the persecution of Antiochus, the profanation of the temple, and the invincible arms of the Romans are described with as much perspicuity in the prophecies of Daniel, as in the histories of Justin and Diodorus." He argued that the author of the Book of Daniel was too well informed of the revolutions of the Persian and Macedonian empires, supposed to have happened long after his death. It is enough to reply that the book is no less distinct in Dan. 9 about Christ's death and the destruction of Jerusalem; and that the alleged contemporaneous history is declared to be at "the time of the end" when Israel are to be delivered, and therefore, as future, necessarily unfulfilled prophecy.

The Wilful King: The Antichrist of the Last Days

And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done {Dan. 11:36}.

This description cannot apply to Antiochus Epiphanes, for he died before the indignation against Israel was accomplished. It must refer to the Antichrist of the last days, the wilful king who shall reign in the holy land at the time of the end, and shall exalt himself above every god. "The king," in Dan. 11:36, is, without doubt, the political side of the same Person whom St. John designates religiously or irreligiously as "the Antichrist." It is clear from Daniel that his seat of power is "the Holy Land" -- the object of attacks at the close from the powers of the South and of the North (i.e. Egypt, Syria or Turkey of our days). However, his destruction is reserved for the Lord Himself, appearing from heaven (2 Thess. 2:8, Rev. 19:20).

It is of the Syrian power (whoever then may hold it) that the last verses of Dan. 11 speak. "And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships" (Dan. 11:40). The king of the north -- the "Assyrian" of the prophets in general, and the "king of the north," whose last doings and end we read of in Dan. 11:40-45 -- is destroyed no less signally than the Beast and the False Prophet soon after their awful catastrophe. He also falls by divine judgment (see Dan. 8:25, 11:45).

The relation of Daniel to the Revelation is a wide subject; but this may briefly be said: as Daniel reveals the results of the failure of the earthly people Israel, so Revelation presents the consequences of the failure of the heavenly testimony throughout Christendom and the world at large. What the former was

to the Jew, the latter is to the Church.

Supplementary Notes

Short entries from Part Six: Miscellaneous Texts and Subjects, preserved word-for-word.

The Antichrist: Daniel 11:36

Miscellaneous Texts and Subjects, p. 381

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The relation of Daniel to the Revelation is a wide subject; but this I may briefly say, that, as Daniel reveals the results of the failure of the earthly people Israel, so Revelation presents the consequences of the failure of the heavenly testimony throughout Christendom and the world at large. This remark may help to show the analogy and the difference between the two prophecies. What the former was to the Jew, the latter is to the Church.

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