

CHAPTER IV

Analysis and Outline of the Book of Daniel

The writer gave much time to study of the Book of Daniel over a period of several years without discerning the crucial importance of the structure of the book to an accurate interpretation of it. I am now quite convinced that the almost indispensable key to the book is the structure. This structure is at once the most obvious and elusive feature of the book.

Although the book contains much history and is accurate in its historical statements, an outline according to historical sequence of the events described is out of the question. The oracles are not in chronological order. Even if rearranged in chronological order, they would not admit of logical arrangement or analysis in such position.

There are two possible outlines--one according to the languages used (and I believe according to the argument of the book), another according to some more mechanical features of the book, namely, the standpoint of the writer, the character of the contents, and the agency of revelation. Though the author held to the second for several years, he was led to part with it through reading the writings of Carl August Auberlen (*The Prophecies of Daniel and the Revelations of St. John*). He is now convinced that this treatment which divides the book in two parts, at the end of chapter six, has bases that are only obvious, not real--that it really obscures the marvelous development of the thought of the prophecy. Because of the prevalence of this treatment, however, I shall now present it and then present the one which in my own opinion should replace it.

1. *Outline According to the Standpoint of the Author, the Character of the Contents, and the Agency of the Revelation.*

(1) The standpoint of the author.

In all of chapters one through six, and in verse one of chapter seven, the writer of Daniel speaks in the third person. Not once therein does Daniel refer to himself in the first person, even though he represents others as referring to themselves in the first person (*vide.* 4:4,13,18, *et al.*). Even when it appears that it might have been convenient to present himself in the first person (*e.g.* 2:14,16; 4:8,19), he does not do so. Beginning with chapter seven verse two, and throughout the remainder of the book, Daniel almost always speaks in the first person (*vide.* 7:2,8,9,15; 8:1,3; 9:2,3,4; 10:2; 12:5). (An exception is found in 10:1.) On this principle, the book divides at the end of chapter six.

(2) The character of the contents.

The same first six chapters which are written in the third person with reference to the author are quite uniformly historical in character. There are

predictions (chapter 2), but prediction is secondary and presented almost incidentally to the narrative. On the other hand, chapters 7 through 12, all written in the first person, are uniformly predictive. There are brief historical statements, but these are subordinate to the predictive element, and used chiefly for the dating of the oracles.

(3) The agency of revelation

In the first six chapters the only¹ agency of prophecy is the writer himself, empowered, of course, by the Holy Spirit. No divine beings appear as purveyors of divine revelation. But in the last six chapters the agency is supernatural. The revelator appears to be the angel Gabriel throughout. In chapter seven (v.16) he is introduced only as "one of them that stood by" and he is a part of the vision itself. In chapter eight (v. 16) Gabriel is introduced by name, not this time, apparently, as a part of the vision, and from there on Gabriel is clearly the agent of revelation and the interpreter of Daniel's vision (cf. 9:21).

Thus, the outline, by this system, appears to be (1) Daniel's historical record, revealed by Daniel and written in the third person, chapters one to six; (2) Daniel's predictive record, written in the first person, and revealed by Gabriel, chapters seven to twelve.

In spite of these striking facts, observe that the seeming symmetry of the division into two portions of exactly six chapters each is only palpable, not real. Each of the first six chapters is, indeed, a distinct portion, but the last six chapters consist of only four distinct portion, viz., 7, 8, 9, and 10-13. Observe also that the three phenomena on which the divisions are based do not concern the meaning of the passages involved at all. I think that these phenomena are *incidental*, perhaps even accidental, not related to the argument of the book.

As I think of the many commentators on Daniel whose works I have read, I do not recall that one of them based any important aspect of his interpretation on this widely accepted analysis. Evidently the advocates of this analysis do not attach great importance to it. Its chief usefulness has been as a convenient framework on which to hang the twelve chapters, that is, chiefly as an aid to the memory. As such, I have no objection to it.

There is another phenomenon of the book, however, which cannot be accidental, and which this writer thinks is not incidental. He believes it was intended by the divine Author as the key to the interpretation. I refer to the languages of the book.

2. *Outline According to the Languages of the Book*

Chapter one (and to verse 4 of chapter 2, where a change comes at a very natural break) and chapters eight through twelve are written in Hebrew. Hebrew

¹ Nebuchadnezzar, even though he saw a dream which Daniel interpreted, was not an agent of prophecy. Actually, both the dream and the interpretation were given to Daniel. See chapter two of Daniel.

was the language of Daniel's people, the language in which the oracles of God were made known to the covenant people, Israel. Chapters two through seven are written in Aramaic. Aramaic was not at the time of Daniel the language of Israel. We now know that it was then, had been for some time, and continued to be for several centuries the lingua franca of the ancient world. What *koine* Greek was to the nations of earth during the Greek age, what Latin has been among most of the nations of the Western world up to modern times, what French is to international diplomacy now, Aramaic was to the Neo-Babylonian empire in some respects and in almost every respect during the Persian period. It is not only possible, but entirely probable, that Daniel's book was not issued to the reading public in the Babylonian era at all, but during the Persian era.

It will be seen, then, that chapter one and chapters eight to twelve are in Hebrew, appropriate for a message concerning and addressed to the Hebrew people. Chapters two to seven are in Aramaic, appropriate for a message concerning Gentile people and kings, and though addressed to God's people, is instructive also for those same Gentile peoples and kings.

The most ingenious current higher critical explanation of the phenomenon of the languages (originated by C. C. Torrey) is that chapters one to six are earlier in composition than the last six chapters, and originally were written in Aramaic; that later, about 165 B.C., another author wrote chapters seven to twelve in the Hebrew language; that these two portions were issued to the public by this second author as one work, and that the two parts were joined and the joint covered by translating chapter seven into Aramaic and chapter one into Hebrew. This, it is said, was to give the whole an appearance of unity. The chief lack of this theory is one shred of evidence in its favor.

The explanation which I wish to offer is that the author of Daniel had two related but distinct kinds of messages to deliver. One was a message of judgment and final defeat to the Gentile world, of whom the chief representatives of the time were Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus. The other was a message of hope and deliverance for God's oppressed but precious holy people, the Hebrews. The appropriate language for the first was Aramaic, the appropriate language for the second was Hebrew.

The *first section*, then, is chapter one (and a very brief portion of chapter 2) written in Hebrew. Chapter one is obviously an introduction to the whole book explaining (1) the circumstances giving rise to the history of the book, (2) the identity of the author and his associates, and (3) the events which placed the author in the position he holds in the history of the book. These facts, in themselves, are sufficient reason for making the chapter a separate division of the book. It is separated from the portion immediately following by the change in language. The use of the Hebrew language is justified fully by the fact that the events told have no connection or meaning with the future of Gentile history--rather with an heroic episode in Hebrew history.

The *second section*, chapters two through seven, forms a distinct section in subject matter. Every portion of the section primarily concerns a Gentile nation *per se* and its rulers, relations, and history. Israel *per se* does not

once clearly enter the picture till the very last, and then in rather oblique and enigmatic references (7:18,21,25,27). As might be expected, the entire portion is in the common language of the Gentile nations of that area--Aramaic, the *koine* of the Middle East till long after the conquests of Alexander and the prevalence of his Greek.

The *third section*, chapters eight through twelve, which constitute the final section of the book, is another distinct portion in subject matter. It has primary reference to Israel's future, a future which is intimately connected with the destruction of all Gentile powers, and in conflict with those powers to the end. This is appropriately in the Hebrews' own language.

By this analysis Daniel falls in logical order as follows:

Title: "Daniel's Prophecies Concerning the Nations of the World and the Future of Israel in Relation to Them"

- I. Historical Introduction to the Book (chapter 1)
- II. The Nations of the World--their Character, Relation, Succession, Destiny, etc. (chapters 2-7)
- III. The Nation of Israel--its Relation to Gentile Dominion and its Future in the Plan of God (chapters 8-12)

It should be added that several Premillenarians have taken cognizance of this structure of the book without seeing also the distinctive features of it. On reading Tregelles (*Remarks on the Prophetic Visions in the Book of Daniel*) again, I observe that he has not only seen the Gentile and the Jewish sections as such, but also traced some of their special significance (*vide. pp.7-9*).

My reasons, in summary, are chiefly (1) the languages of the book and (2) the subject matter, which need no further explanation, and (3) the progress of doctrine. This third reason I now wish to treat at somewhat more length.

Chapter two is clearly a Gentile dream for Gentiles. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon was, in fact, the one to whom God gave the dream of the future. It concerned the future of Gentile dominion and was presented as a Gentile king would like to see it--glittering, strong, majestic, and quite human in its outward aspect. Tregelles says (*op.cit.*, p. 11): "Here all is presented as set before the king according to *his* ability of apprehension---the external and visible things being shown as man might regard them." The consummation of these kingdoms in a complete destruction and replacement by a divine kingdom contains no single hint of any heroic or important role by God's people Israel. They do not once enter the scene. Chapter three, chapter four, and likewise chapters five and six concern chiefly events in historical kingdoms of the past. The treatment of certain Israelites is prominent but mainly as revelation of the obdurate unbelief and spiritual ignorance of the Gentile kings. These kings learn something of the rule of the Most High God in the history of these chapters. Chapter five concerns the historical close of the Babylonian dominion.

This same Gentile-centered thought prevails through chapter seven also,

except that near the end of this chapter, the end of the Gentile portion of Daniel, a shading off which leaves Israel, Israel's God, and Israel's future in the center of the scene of interest, takes place. Between verses 18 and 28 of this chapter, a people known as "saints" or "the people of the saints of the Most High," appear no less than five times--chiefly in conflict with the final representative of and consummate form of Gentile dominion. On any principle of *historical* exegesis, these saints can be no other than God's ancient people Israel. No worthy exegete claims that Daniel could have had any other primary understanding of the reference. In the opinion of this writer, it is simple *eisegesis*, or reading into the passage what one wants it to mean, to find "the church" or "the whole body of the redeemed" in this prophecy. That later prophets may have elaborated prophecy so that some things here affirmed of Israel (*e.g.*, reigning with Christ) are likewise affirmed of other people of God may well be true, but the simple fact remains that in Daniel, the saints are Israelite.

Now, the significant thing is, that here at the end of the Aramaic section, precisely where one might expect the most detailed description of the consummation of Gentile dominion (as it is in the treatment of the fourth beast, the ten horns, and the little horn), the future of Israel is first woven into the story. From thence to the close of the book, Israel remains the cynosure. The importance of this division to a careful Premillennial treatment is as yet only partially apparent. That it gives proper place to the future of God's elect nation is the most obvious advantage.

Of even greater importance is the fact that certain differences in *prophetic method* and *divine chronological method* are to be discerned prevailing in the two sections. The progress of Gentile dominion is given in continuous succession in chapters two and seven, the two predictive portions of the Aramaic section. I mean to say that there are no breaks or gaps in the prophecy hinted or suggested. And so long as it is seen that here God is giving an Old Testament prophecy of the Gentile rulership of world government down to, and including, the present age, the principles of the most strict Premillennial and Dispensational interpretation of Scripture are not violated and need not be brought to bear to insert a gap which the facts of the prophecy do not show. On the other hand, in chapters eight to twelve, in which three distinct oracles concerning Israel appear, there are at least two in which it is clear that Israel's prophetic future is not seen in complete perspective. The beginning, in conflict with the nations but in covenant union with Jehovah, is clearly seen. But an unlimited period of time when Israel's history is run out of covenant union with Jehovah is completely unrevealed. That there is such a gap or blank is clear. The future of Israel during that blank is entirely unknown. In due season these features will be developed in the dissertation. For the present, let it be said only that they do exist.

And since they do exist, let it be added that only a Premillennial theology can give any satisfactory explanation of the strange but natural division of the book and these strange features of the divisions. It is precisely at this point that the Premillennial theology first demonstrates its superiority as a method of interpreting the Book of Daniel.

An Amillennialism which joins itself to the notion that all the promises of the Old Testament to Israel as a nation are now transferred to the church, and which supposes that God is now through with Israel as a nation, must face the fact that Daniel does not regard the nation so. Indeed, having traced the future of the nations of earth down to the coming of Christ in His kingdom, the same Book of Daniel reveals the existence of Israel as a nation at the time of the consummation of Gentile history and predicts a glorious future for Israel as a nation in the kingdom of God which will be established at the coming of Messiah in power and glory.

A Postmillennialism which in another day regarded the Bible as the Word of God could not explain this future of Israel either, even though some Postmillennialists (e.g., Hodge) did believe in a future conversion of the nation. There is no place in Postmillennialism for an Israel restored to a position of national favor (as set forth in Romans 11) nor for Christ ruling over the world from the Jewish throne of the ancient dynasty of David. Recent Postmillennialism is also usually *modernistic*, that is, infidel with reference to the doctrines of the deity of Christ and the inspiration of Scripture, etc., so quite naturally has no satisfactory explanation for these prophecies which is in harmony with the faith of the saints. But Premillennialism recognizes the futurity of Christ's Millennial Kingdom and expects the restoration of Israel to national favor. Therefore a satisfactory explanation for the strange division of the Book of Daniel and of these other features is possible. Premillennialists believe that even though in salvation there is now no difference between men with respect to the favor of God, with reference to the future government of this world the situation is different. God is expected to restore Israel to his land and to a position of national favor. The present age is a hiatus or gap in Israel's special relationship with God. Thus the Premillennial interpretation has an explanation for the continuity of Gentile development seen in the Aramaic, or Gentile section of Daniel, and for the hiatus in Israel's development as set forth in the Hebrew section.

It may be asked, Why, if there is no gap in the predictions of Gentile dominion, is the whole present age passed over almost without a single identifiable event--especially when this has been the age of the supremacy of Gentile power?

The answer lies in the purpose of God and the method of God in revelation.

The history of the Babylonian period is passed over quite as silently, except for reference to Nebuchadnezzar as its king. In fact, except for the mere notices of the rule passing from one to another of the succession of kingdoms, there are few identifiable events in any of the prophecies. It is only as the Gentile power comes into conflict with Israel and to termination in the reign of Messiah that its detailed history appears to be of any interest to the Spirit of prophecy.

Further discussion of this aspect of the prophecies of Daniel will be given in connection with the prophecy of the great metallic image of chapter two.