

"The Four Beasts" **Daniel 7**

This chapter contains a prophetic vision, and its interpretation given to the prophet, in which the objects are presented not merely according to their external aspect (as had been the case in the second chapter, in the vision seen by the king), but according to the mind of God concerning them.

In this vision we not only have again four successive kingdoms upon earth, and an everlasting kingdom set up by God on the destruction of the last of these, but we find also distinct details as to moral features, as regards God and those who belong to Him.

This vision was seen in the first year of King Belshazzar, when the power of Babylon, which had risen to its height under Nebuchadnezzar, was about to pass away, the warnings given by God to that king having been wholly disregarded by his successor.

In speaking of the origin of these four kingdoms we read (verse 2) of "the great sea" as the scene from which the four symbolic beasts arise. This is not, I believe, an expression which we should overlook, for the "great sea" is always used in every other passage of Scripture in which the phrase occurs as meaning distinctively the Mediterranean Sea. This, I believe, presents that sea before us as the centre territorially of the scene of this vision.

Four beasts arise out of this sea (verse 3), and these are interpreted to be "four kings which shall arise out of the earth" (verse 17). From the words of verse 23, "The fourth beast shall be the fourth *kingdom* upon earth," it is clear that the words "king" and "kingdom" are used, in passages of this kind, almost in an interchangeable sense. A kingdom is sometimes looked at as headed up in its sovereign, whose name is used; at other times the name of the kingdom is used in speaking of the power, designs, etc., of the sovereign. This must be borne in mind just as much in reading prophetic narrations as in the common language of life.

We may thus, interchangeably, speak of the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Grecian, and Roman empires, or of those of Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Alexander, and Augustus.

The distinct scriptural proof of what these four kingdoms thus succeeding each other must be has been given in Remarks on the Great Image, chap. 2, pp. 12, 15. It is needless to repeat it here. But it may not be amiss to add that the four individuals regarded by God as the heads of these several monarchies are all of them definitely brought before us in Scripture, either in historical account or else in distinct prophecy as to their persons, or both. Of the four personal heads, Alexander alone is not a subject of Scripture *history*, as well as of prophecy.

Now while I believe it to be most important for us to remember that, for the real spiritual understanding of the word of God and for its use as bearing on our consciences, we need no knowledge but that which the Spirit has given us in the word, yet we may often find truths intimated in the prophetic Scripture which throw much light upon what we learn as facts from other sources. This is a very different thing from using history in a manner for which God has given us no warrant, as though the world could be illuminated by any such doubtful, defective, and glimmering light of man's kindling.

Now in looking at "the great sea" as the territorial scene of the vision, we must also remember that the time to which the visions in Daniel belong is that of Gentile power ruling over Jerusalem and the Jews, and also that the powers are defined (verse 17) to be monarchies. We thus find that each of these beasts symbolizes a monarchy bordering on the Mediterranean and having Jerusalem under its dominion. Now, in point of fact, we find that this was the case with regard to these powers. Each stood as symbolized by a beast; and it superseded the one that had gone before it when these three particulars were true of it, and not before.

Babylon had existed as a monarchy originally under Nimrod, and again afterwards in the days of Hezekiah. But it did not border on the Mediterranean nor bear rule over Jerusalem until the time of Nebuchadnezzar, and then both of these things took place simultaneously; its empire extended along the eastern coasts of that sea.

Persia had been a monarchy previously; but so soon as the empire of Cyrus reached the Mediterranean, the empire of Babylon passed into his hands and became part of his dominions. This empire encircled more of the Mediterranean, from the Hellespont to Cyrene.

Greece, although locally situated on the Mediterranean Sea, had not been a monarchy previous to the time of Alexander, but so soon as this took place the power of Persia passed away before it and Jerusalem became a part of the new empire. The Grecian monarchy surrounded yet more of the Mediterranean, for it added all the coasts of Greece to that part which had been held by Persia.

Rome, too, was locally a Mediterranean power, but not a monarchy. Three things took place, however, at the same time: the last of the four parts of Alexander's empire (symbolized even in this vision by the four heads of the third beast) passed into the hand of the Romans, Jerusalem became a mere dependency, and Rome became a monarchy under Augustus--this fourth empire surrounding all the coasts of the Mediterranean Sea.

This, as it appears to me, is what we have presented before us in the territorial allotment of the sphere of this vision.

The brief interpretation of the vision is given in verses 17, 18: "These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. But the saints of the most high [places] shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever." This gives us the general outline of the truths here taught us--the succession of the monarchies, and a kingdom which should arise in contrast to the earthly empires.

The first of these four kingdoms is here symbolized by a lion (verse 4) with eagles' wings. The prophet beheld it until the wings were plucked, until (I suppose) its ability for widespread conquest had passed away. It was made to stand on its feet as a man, and a man's heart was given unto it. These words seem to me an intimation of what had taken place with regard to Nebuchadnezzar, who was taught by the remarkable discipline of God that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men.

The second monarchy was symbolized by a bear. This beast made for itself "one dominion" (for so I believe we should render the expression which stands in our version "one side"). The Medes were an ancient people, and the Persians were a comparatively modern tribe. Neither of these could be looked on as likely to overturn the power of Babylon. But by the expression "one

dominion" there seems to be a hint of the second kingdom being a *united* power, so that the one dominion should be a combination; and thus it stands in contrast to the third and fourth monarchies which were at first united and afterwards were divided. The three ribs seen in the mouth of the bear seem to indicate the conquests which it was devouring, according to what was said to it, "Arise, devour much flesh."

The four-headed winged leopard, which symbolized the third kingdom, seems to indicate the rapidity of the conquests of that power and the fourfold division which was its after condition.

But it is impossible to read this vision without seeing that the fourth kingdom is the principal topic brought before us, and that the other three simply appear as introductory. We see from verse 19 that this was the impression made upon Daniel's mind by that which was exhibited to him in symbol. But not only was the fourth beast the most conspicuous object, but it was while in a certain condition that the details concerning it are given. We look, in fact, rather at the *crisis* than the *course* of its history. The description of the beast is given in verse 7: "After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly. And it had great iron teeth; it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it. And it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it." This is the general description. And then there is added, "and it had ten horns," and then another horn is spoken of as springing up among the former ten. Now it is clear that it is the actings of the beast when possessed of this horn, or rather perhaps of this horn as concentrating the power of the beast, with which in this vision we have to do.

In the statement which was made to Daniel we find a very distinct explanation of these things. It was said to him (verse 23), "The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and tread it down, and break it in pieces. And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise." Thus we see that the horns symbolize what this kingdom would become at a particular point of time, namely, when that empire which was once united as a monarchy under the power of the Caesars should be divided into ten kingdoms. An intimation of this had been given in the number of the toes of the image in chap. 2; and the same thing is found both in symbol and in direct statement in the book of Revelation (see, for instance, chap. 13:1 and 17:12).

This, then, must be the state of the Roman earth at the time when another king, whose actings are here detailed, arises in the midst of the other kings.

This king is at first symbolized by "a *little* horn." This is not his designation when acting in blasphemy and persecution, for then the symbolic horn had become very great--"his look was more stout than his fellows." But at first he rises like "a *little* horn" in the midst of the other horns, and then so increases in power as far to surpass them all.

The rise of this last horn was thus shown in the symbol. "I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots. And, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things" (verse 8). This is explained in verse 24 to be another king rising after the first ten, "and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings"; and then his persecution and blasphemy are mentioned.

As spoken of at first we meet with nothing but his blasphemy against God, and then (verse 11)

judgment from God falling upon the beast because of this blasphemy. But when Daniel is making inquiry as to what all this might mean, some further particulars are brought before us: "I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the Ancient of Days came," [as had been shown in the previous vision, verse 9], "and judgment was given to the saints of the most high [places]; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom" (verses 21, 22). This is explained (verse 25): "And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most high [places], and think to change times and laws. And they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time."

Thus, we see this king using his power in a twofold form of opposition to God--in open and direct blasphemy against Him, and in the persecution of his saints. We also find that this opposition continues to the end of his reign, and that this is consummated by the direct judgment of God.

While the scene presented on earth is the beast energized by this last horn, wearing out the saints and blaspheming the name of God, we have also the veil so withdrawn as to unfold to us what at the same time takes place in heaven. In verses 9 and 10 we have this displayed to us. A court of judicature is set in heaven, where God judges; and, in consequence of His judgment, the sentence which is pronounced above (unseen by any eye save that of faith) is executed upon the earth. "I beheld till the thrones were cast down" [or rather *were set*], "and the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire; . . . the judgment was set, and the books were opened." And then the effect on earth of the judgment in heaven is thus spoken of: "I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spoke; I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame." Verse 12 must be regarded, I think, as a kind of parenthetical statement of the manner in which the dominion of the three former beasts had passed away--not by any destroying judgments from God, but by each being superseded by its successor. But here there is the direct judgment of God upon the fourth beast, because of the matured evil of its last horn.

There is a particular and interesting portion of the heavenly scene in verses 13, 14. There we find "one like the Son of Man" coming to the Ancient of Days in the place of judicature, and there receiving investiture of a certain kingdom:

I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.¹

This is in fact very similar to what we read in Psalm 110, where it is said, "Jehovah shall send the rod of thy strength" [Messiah's strength] "out of Zion. Rule thou in the midst of thy enemies." We must avoid regarding the events of these two verses, namely 13 and 14, as being actually subsequent to the destruction of the fourth beast, because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake. It is rather a part of the heavenly scene coinciding in point of time with the secret judgment which had been just before mentioned; the delivery of the kingdom into the hand of the Son of Man in heaven being in fact the immediate introduction to His coming forth to

1 **Note:** Tregelles did not insert this scripture into his text. We thought it helpful to the reader to do so.

execute that vengeance in which the last horn is destroyed.

It is impossible for us not to call to mind the various passages in the New Testament which speak of the Lord Jesus coming "with clouds," even as when He ascended "a cloud received Him out of their sight." To instance one of these places--when our Lord stood before the high priest, He said, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matt. 26:64). Now in the expression, "sitting on the right hand of power," he clearly referred to Psalm 110:1 (see also Psalm 80:17); but in speaking of the clouds of heaven he as manifestly alluded to this place in Daniel. The one passage of the Old Testament brings before us the place into which He who has thus been rejected by men is received by God; the other brings before us the glory which shall be manifested in His coming and taking the rule into His own hands.

But there is this difference between the mention made of "the clouds of heaven" in Daniel from that in the New Testament, that here we have not the coming forth of Christ spoken of, but that which immediately precedes it. I say advisedly *immediately precedes*, because He sits at the right hand of Jehovah *until* His enemies are made His footstool. And when God has accomplished that, then this kingdom is given in actual investiture to the Son, and He comes forth to crush His so prepared footstool beneath his feet.

But though this scene in which the clouds of heaven are mentioned is not identical with the actual *coming forth* of Christ, yet even this passage might be taken as intimating the very close connection between the two things; for the court of judicature set in heaven is, so to speak, the intermediate point between His seat in glory, where He now is, and the manifestation of His person, when "every eye shall see him." He has with Him the same adjuncts that He will have when He returns to this earth.

We have, then, as the parties before us in the crisis of this chapter:

Upon earth,

1. The last horn of the fourth beast, persecuting the saints and blaspheming God.
2. The beast itself with ten horns (three plucked up before the last horn), so connected with the horn of blasphemy that it is involved in the judgment on that horn and is in several important senses responsible for its acts.
3. The saints worn out and warred against by the horn of blasphemy.

In heaven,

1. The Ancient of Days taking the place of judicature and condemning the fourth beast because of the words spoken by the horn.
2. The Son of Man brought before Him with adjuncts of heavenly glory, and receiving above a kingdom which He will exercise in government upon earth.

If we learn simply from Scripture, I think that there can be no question as to who or what the fourth beast symbolizes (that has been considered already); but with regard to the horn of

blasphemy it is very important for us distinctly to see from the word of God whether this be a power past, present, or future. One thing is clear--that his dominion and actings in blasphemy and persecution continue up to the coming of the Lord, because it is then the saints take the kingdom and not before; and *till* they take the kingdom he wears them out.

Thus, if he be a power whose rise is past, he must also be present, and some of his actings must be future. And, further, if his wearing out of the saints has begun, it must also be now going on and must still continue until the judgment of verse 10. It might also be left to the consciences of Christians to say whether they are now at this time enduring active persecutions of this kind, or whether they are in most places permitted to dwell in external rest and tranquility.

We cannot, then, possibly speak of this horn of blasphemy as already past; just as manifest is it that his dominion is entirely future. The considerations just stated appear to prove this point.

But, further, it is said (verse 25), "And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High [places], and think to change times and laws. And they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time." Here then we have a chronological statement to which we shall do well to take heed. It is true that this is a period reckoned backward, and thus we can form no calculation of our own upon it as to times or seasons; but for the purpose for which God has revealed it, it is so stated as fully to meet the object. It is a period which runs on to the coming of the Lord Jesus, and must be reckoned backward from that time. This then gives the limit of the distinct actings of this horn in blasphemy and persecution. It commences at the beginning of the "time, times, and a half" and runs on to the coming of Christ without any intermission.

This period has been commonly taken (and I have no doubt rightly so) as signifying three years and a half. Now, we know that it must mean a period exactly defined, and not *about* such or such a time, for had it been merely an indefinite statement the mention of "half a time" would be useless. It is impossible to be definite and indefinite at one and the same time. The word rendered "time" is that which denotes either a stated period or else a set feast, or else an idea blended, as it were, of the two; namely, the interval from one of the great set feasts to its recurrence, i.e. a year. Thus then we find a *time*, i.e. one year; *times* (the smallest plural, as the statement is *definite*), two years; and half a year; i.e. three years and a half.

The word "time" is similarly used in chap. 4, where it was foretold to Nebuchadnezzar that he should be driven from men until "seven *times*" should pass over him, i.e. seven years; also in Lev. 23 where the feasts are mentioned; the Hebrew word which corresponds to the Chaldee word here used (and which itself is found in chap. 12:7) is employed in the sense of denoting a set feast, or the period from one recurrence to another.

Thus, then, the period at which the especial blasphemy and persecutions of this horn begin is three years and a half before the coming of the Lord Jesus--a short time during which evil will be allowed greatly to prevail; but then in consequence of its full development, the judgment of God will come in.

This then is briefly his history as given in this vision: The Roman earth is found divided into ten kingdoms; another king arises who destroys three of the former kings; for three years and a half he acts in open defiance of God and in persecution of his saints; the whole Roman earth is so connected with his deeds as to share in the judgment which comes from the hand of God upon

him, and this occurs at the very time when the kingdom is given into the hand of the Son of Man and when the saints take it with Him.

But many may object, Is not the horn here spoken of the Papacy? Does not history warrant us in charging these blasphemies and persecutions upon that power?

To this I reply, no appeal to history can be of any avail in opposition to direct testimony in the word of God. Thus unless this power be wearing out the saints continuously up to the coming of the Lord, the chief point in supposed resemblance is lost. And even further, if any one chooses openly and fairly to appeal to history he will find discrepancies at every point. For instance, the tenfold division of the Roman earth of which mention is here made has never yet taken place, and therefore of course the horn which was to arise after the others has not yet come into existence. It is quite true that many have given lists of kingdoms which arose in the fifth and sixth centuries out of the broken parts of the Roman empire, but these have all been sought merely in the west as though the eastern half were not to be considered, when in fact the existence of the eastern empire was protracted for a thousand years after that period.² And further, whatever lists have been made out of ten kingdoms, they have all varied widely both as to the kingdoms themselves and also as to which were the three which the Papacy overcame. It has also been entirely forgotten that the Papacy existed *before* the breaking up of even the *western* empire instead of being a horn springing up *after* the other ten.

But it has been said that this horn must be a power existing through a long period of time and not a single king, because it is alleged that in prophetic language a day is used as a symbol of a year, and therefore a year as that of three hundred and sixty days (twelve months of thirty days each), and thus the whole time of the persecution of this horn is twelve hundred and sixty years. This question is one into which, in its full statement, I cannot enter in this place; but the reader will find it examined elsewhere more fully.³ I will only here remark that if this canon of interpretation were sound, the period of Nebuchadnezzar's madness ("seven times") would be still continuing. And not only should we be left in utter uncertainty in every prophecy in which time was mentioned, but in some we should even find inextricable incongruities and contradictions. What, for instance, could we make of the three days during which our Lord was to lie in the grave? But the comparison of the "seven times" which should pass over Nebuchadnezzar is sufficient in this place. The dominion of this horn is half of that time. Both are prophetic statements. And thus the allegation is utterly groundless that we have here a period predicted of 1,260 years. The accomplished prediction of chap. 4 is authority to us for understanding the expressions of chap. 7. Let us take it simply as being what it states, three years and a half--a short period immediately followed by the coming of the Lord Himself.

The same considerations which show the non-applicability of this horn to the Papacy will equally evince that it cannot be any other power whatever which has as yet come into existence. We have yet to see the tenfold division of the Roman earth before it can arise.

If we look on corrupted Christianity as the worst form of evil, we should fail greatly in estimating aright those things of which the Spirit teaches us in the word. Corrupt Christianity--the introduction of other things as the ground of peace with God besides faith in the one sacrifice of Christ once offered, the admixture of idolatry with the worship of God even as the mixed multitude did in the cities of Samaria (2 Kings 17)--these are indeed abominations; but our eyes

² Till May 29, 1453, when the Turks took Constantinople and the last fell.

³ See Note on the Year-day System, after Remarks on The Seventy Heptads (Daniel 9).

are directed to see "greater abominations than these." The consequence of the non-reception of the truth will be the solemn act of God in sending upon men "strong delusion" so that they will receive, own, and honour, in the place of God, that person "whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders." God will act in this manner to prepare the foes of Christ to be crushed by His feet (see Psalm 92:7). Corrupt Christianity may obscure every fundamental truth of God's revelation, but it would cease to be Christianity at all (whether in substance, form, or name) if the God whom we own should be denied and counselledly rejected both in heart and also in word. And yet this will be done; he will "deny the Father and the Son".

Let then our thoughts of the evil of corrupt Christianity be what they may, let us form as just an estimate of its awfulness from its contrast to that which God reveals as His truth. *Here* is something which goes beyond it. It is true that it issues out of it, but still it is not to be measured by its precursors. If then we apply these solemn truths to things past or present, we lose the true purpose for which God has revealed them and blunt (so to speak) the edge of His truth.

There is one point in the vision and interpretation which must not be overlooked. In the vision (verse 13, 14) the Son of Man takes the kingdom. In the interpretation (verse 18) it is said, "the saints of the most high [places] take the kingdom." How simply does the light of New Testament truth explain to us that which at first sight might seem a contrast instead of a connection. This is one of the passages of the Old Testament Scripture which may be taken as an intimation of that union which was afterwards to be declared as existing between Christ and His people--the union which was brought out in His death and resurrection. That which had been said of Him in the vision is said of them in the interpretation.

In verse 27 it is said that the kingdom, etc., "*under* the whole heaven shall be given to the *people* of the saints of the most high [places]." This appears to me to be a different statement, informing us that a certain kingdom not co-extensive with that of the Son of Man will be given to a certain nation. Who then can this nation be? Now, it is clear from many Scriptures that Israel will, after they are set in grace and their blindness and consequent rejection are ended, be the head of the nations and bear rule over the earth. In chap. 8:24 we find the expression "the mighty and the holy people," or more literally "people of the holy ones" or "people of the saints," this Hebrew phrase answering pretty accurately to the Chaldee used in the passage before us. Now as in chap. 8 the Jews are clearly the nation denoted, so do I consider that they are intended here. But it may be asked, Why are they so called in this place? And why are the saints of the most high [places] thus connected with them? To give a complete answer to these inquiries in all their branches would involve the consideration of very many portions of Scripture. Reference to a few passages may suffice to guide the mind aright.

In Rom. 9:24 we read concerning the saints of God, "us whom he has called, *not of the Jews only*, but also of the Gentiles." In Rom. 11:24 we read of "their own olive tree" (Israel's) as being that into which Gentile believers are grafted. Now, I believe that if we would give a Scriptural definition of the Church of God, we should say that they are *Abraham's seed*. If we would define the Church as it now exists upon this earth, from the time of Christ's first coming, resurrection, and ascension to His second coming, we should say that they are a body "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3), including believing Jews, during the time that the nation at large is under blindness, with whom God in sovereign and marvelous grace has associated believing Gentiles, making all one body, joint heirs, etc. Thus, although on every side we see many Gentiles professing or holding the faith of Jesus, and very few Jews, we

must not forget that at Pentecost the gathered company was entirely Jewish as to nation. Hopes, thoughts, and glory were opened to them *beyond* those of their nation. They were instructed to look upwards to a risen Messiah, waiting at God's right hand till His foes should have been made His footstool (Acts 2:33-35). They were told of blessing while their nation was in blindness (verse 40), and they heard of judgment as necessarily preceding Israel's earthly blessing. But still they were Jews; and most gradual was the opening to them of the possibility of Gentiles sharing in the new fellowship, hopes, and glory, which they learned to be their true portion. Gentiles were one by one brought into this believing body; and thus we see the meaning of the words "us whom he has called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles." Whatever the Church on earth may seem to us now to be, it is still, as to its constituent parts, a company comprising Jews, partakers of grace, with whom God has brought in certain Gentiles, setting them on the same ground as to essential blessings, even as all the redeemed of every age are essentially one in the relations in which they are set.

In Isaiah 8:18 Christ speaks of His brethren--God's children given into His hand to be redeemed: "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me, are for signs and wonders *in Israel*." This can only be from their having that connection with Israel of which I have been speaking. God's faithfulness to the Church is the pledge and security of His faithfulness in His promises to Israel, but it is also more. His continuing faithful to His Church is actually the continuance of His faithfulness to Israel. It is thus that the Apostle Paul argues in Rom. 11:1, 6. God had not cast off His people, for Paul was not cast off; the believing branches yet remained in "their own olive tree." And as the branches grafted in with them were made one body, so His faithfulness to this one body was actually His faithfulness to Israel (exemplified yet more than had been the case in the days of Elias), and also the pledge of their future national blessing, as had been promised of old (verses 26-29).

Thus, then, may we understand how in this chapter of Daniel we find the expression "people of the saints of the most high [places]"--that nation to which the saints stand in some peculiar relation, although they themselves may, for the most part, be of other origin according to the flesh. But it may be thought that Daniel could have no apprehension of saints who were not Jews. Let this be granted, but what then? The meaning of the statements in God's revelation must not be limited by the thoughts of those to whom they were addressed. For if we were to interpret Scripture in this manner, we should be continually bounding the truth of God by the finite apprehension of man. The oneness of the body, jointness of the inheritance of those who are made partakers of grace, whether Jews or Gentiles, was a truth which God purposed in after times to reveal. But while this is fully admitted, we must avoid the dangerous error of excluding from Old Testament statements those whom we learn from the New Testament to have been included in the mind of God in the promised blessings. If we had to look at any of those things according to Daniel's apprehension of them, what, we might ask, could he have known of the Son of Man taking the kingdom in the vision, the saints taking it in the interpretation? What could he have thought of their being designated "saints of the most high [places]"--a name which so clearly refers to the position above, which belongs to those who have a portion in Christ. Christ was not yet risen and ascended, and therefore the saints (see Eph. 1) were not risen and ascended *in Him*; and yet the Holy Ghost could beforehand make use of such terms as these.

The chapter concludes by telling us, "As for me, Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart." This seems to intimate that the mind of the prophet was as yet enabled but little to apprehend intelligently the things which he saw and heard. Their significance therefore must most assuredly not be limited by the

thoughts which occupied Daniel's mind.

We have then "the people of the saints of the most high [places]" as one of the parties to partake in the blessing to which this chapter leads us on.

I believe that it was intended that our minds should rest very particularly upon the brief interpretation given in verses 17, 18.

There we have in contrast "four kings which shall arise out of the earth" on the one hand, and "the saints of the most high [places]" who "shall take the kingdom", etc., on the other. The issue of earthly power is told us here. To what does it all lead? To greater and greater opposition to God, so that the last state of the fourth beast (the period when earthly power has had before it the light of Christ's gospel and has rejected it) is found to be of the most malignant character of evil against God and His saints. But all this ends in "the burning flame"!

On the other hand, we have saints whose portion is found to be one of deepest suffering during this very period, and God allows them to suffer. But they belong to the most high places, not to the earth from which the four beasts have arisen; and the end of the whole matter to them is reigning with Christ--with Him whose precious blood is their title to glory, for whom they have been allowed to testify in suffering and by whose continuous grace they have been sustained.

This chapter of Daniel teaches us some of the *characteristics* of our own dispensation: Jerusalem under Gentile power; the fourth beast bearing rule; the saints called to a place of testimony. The *characteristics* of such a period as the present must not be confounded with its *blessings* and *privileges*. We have to look at that which stands in contrast to other periods.

Now is it possible to be identified with the actings of this fourth beast and yet to be one of these saints? The question might seem needless; but, practically, men have said that the two things are compatible and consistent.

Again, is it possible that it could be according to the pleasure of God that those who now bear earthly rule should also take the superintendence of His Church? In other words, can authority in the Church rightly spring from the fourth beast--the throne of the Caesars? If this can be so, then let the wolves be the shepherds instead of their being the adversaries into whose midst the sheep are sent forth. Also, let us remember that the horn of persecution and blasphemy will be the last holder of the power of the fourth beast. Can he be the source of power in the Church? And if not, can his predecessors? Could Tiberius and Nero be this? The present state of the fourth beast lies between these two points.

How rarely do men make such confusion as this in natural things. Then, should real Christians make them in the things of God? In matters of civil government it is our place to *obey* the powers that be, to own them as set of God, but never to forget the Supreme Lordship of Christ over us. And for the right discerning of these things it is our place to take heed to the word, doctrinal, preceptive, and prophetic, knowing that it is thus the Spirit of God instructs us.

As believing in Christ we ought to esteem it a high and wondrous blessing that we are not only cleansed in His precious blood and made heirs of glory with Him, but that we are instructed *now* as to things around us and before us, that we may judge of them according to His mind.

May we be taught, as one part of our Christian walk and discipleship, to understand how opposite is earthly authority in its course and issue to all that to which we are called, and especially to see the Church so contrasted with the power of the world that the one cannot possibly be the source of office or authority in the other!

We see grievous confusion around us. The word of God teaches us that it will increase. How blessed and cheering it is to our souls to look on the coming of Christ as beyond it all--our point of hope and joyful expectation! What though the wearing out of the saints will intervene? It is only until the judgment of the Ancient of Days, when the Son of Man takes the kingdom, and we take it with Him. "Sorrow may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning."