

The Book of Daniel, as it now stands in the ordinary Hebrew Bibles, is generally divided into two main parts. The first includes a series of narratives which are told in the third person and the second, a series of visions which are described in the first person. From its content it readily appears that the Book of Daniel does not have as its objective a summary historical account of the period of the Babylonian Exile, or of the life of Daniel himself. The contents of the Prophecy of Daniel are of a peculiar kind which has no exact parallel in the Bible, except in the Apocalypse of St. John.

Commentary of the Book of Daniel is by Saint Jerome. St. Jerome, who was born Eusebius Hieronymus Sophronius, and is the most learned of the Fathers of the Western Church. The Church regards him as the greatest of all the doctors in clarifying the Divine Word. While at Rome he made a revision of the current Latin New Testament, and of the Psalms. Then he undertook to translate most of the books of the Old Testament directly from the Hebrew. The only parts of the Latin Bible, now known as the Vulgate, which were not either translated or worked over by him are the Books of Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, and the two Books of the Maccabees. In the sixteenth century the great Council of Trent pronounced Jerome's Vulgate the authentic and authoritative Latin text of the Catholic Church, without, however, thereby implying a preference for it above the original text or above versions in other languages. In 1907 Pope Pius X entrusted to the Benedictine Order the office of restoring as far as possible the correct text of St. Jerome's Vulgate, which during fifteen centuries of use had naturally become altered in many places. The Bible now ordinarily used by English-speaking Catholics is a translation of the Vulgate, made at Rheims and Douay towards the end of the sixteenth century, and revised by Bishop Challoner in the eighteenth century. The Confraternity Edition of the New Testament appearing in 1950 represents a complete revision.

Chapter 12

Verses 1-3. *"But at that time shall Michael rise up, the great prince, who stands for the children of thy people, and a time shall come such as never occurred from the time that nations began to exist even unto that time. And at that time shall thy people be saved, even everyone who shall be found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some unto life everlasting, and others unto reproach, that they may behold it always. But those who are instructed shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that instruct many as to righteousness, as the stars for all eternity."* Up until this point Porphyry somehow managed to maintain his position and impose upon the credulity of the naive reading [*imperitis* for *imperitus*] among our adherents as well as the poorly educated among his own. But what can he say of this chapter, in which is described the resurrection of the dead, with one group being revived for eternal life and the other group for eternal disgrace? He cannot even specify who the people were under Antiochus who shone like the brightness of the firmament, and those others who shone like the stars for all eternity. But what will pigheadedness not resort to? Like

Verse 12. *"Blessed is he that waiteth and cometh unto a thousand three hundred and thirty-five days."* He means that he is blessed who waits for forty-five days beyond the predetermined number, for it is within that period that our Lord and Savior is to come in His glory. But the reason for the forty-five days of inaction after the slaying of the Antichrist is a matter which rests in the knowledge of God; unless, of course, we say that the rule of the saints is delayed in order that their patience may be tested. Porphyry explains this passage in the following way, that the forty-five days beyond the one thousand two hundred and ninety signify the interval of victory over the generals of Antiochus, or the period when Judas Maccabaeus fought with bravery and cleansed the Temple and broke the idol to pieces, offering blood-sacrifices in the Temple of God. He might have been correct in this statement if the Book of Maccabees had recorded that the Temple was polluted over a period of three and a half years instead of just three years (I Mace. 4).

Verse 13. *"But thou, (B) Daniel, go thy way until the time appointed, and take thy rest (Vulgate: thou shalt rest) and thou shalt stand in thy lot unto the end of the days."* Instead of this Theodotion translated it: "But go thy way and take thy rest, and thou shalt rise up again in thy turn at the end of the days." From this remark it is demonstrated that the whole context of the prophecy has to do with the resurrection of all the dead, at the time when the prophet also is to rise. And it is vain for Porphyry to claim that all these things which were spoken concerning the Antichrist under the type of Antiochus actually refer to Antiochus alone. As we have already mentioned, these false claims have been answered at greater length by Eusebius of Caesarea, Apollinarius of Laodicea, and partially also by that very able writer, the martyr Methodius; and anyone who knows of these things can look them up in their writings. Thus far we have been reading Daniel in the Hebrew edition; but the remaining matter to the end of the book has been translated from Theodotion's edition.

End of Chapter 12

"And when the scattering of the band of the holy people shall be accomplished, all these things shall be fulfilled." When it is stated that the people of God shall have been scattered ---- either under the persecution of Antiochus, as Porphyry claims, or of the Antichrist, which we deem to be closer to fact ---- at that time shall all these things be fulfilled.

Verses 8-10. *"And I heard, and understood not. And I said, 'O my lord, what shall happen after these things?' And he said, 'Go, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. Many shall be chosen and made white and shall be tried as fire; and the wicked shall deal wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but the learned shall understand.'"* The prophet wished to comprehend what he had seen, or rather, what he had heard, and he desired to understand the reality of the things to come. For he had heard of the various wars of kings, and of battles between them, and a detailed narrative of events; but he had not heard the names of the individual persons involved. And if the prophet himself heard and did not understand, what will be the case with those men who presumptuously expound a book which has been sealed, and that too unto the time of the end, a book which is shrouded with many obscurities? But he comments that when the end comes, the ungodly will lack comprehension, whereas those who are learned in the teaching of God will be able to understand. "For wisdom will not enter the perverted soul, nor can it impart itself to a body which is subject to sins." [The editors do not cite the source of this quotation.]

Verse 11. *"And from the time that the continual sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination unto desolation shall be set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days."* Porphyry asserts that these one thousand two hundred and ninety days were fulfilled in the desolation of the Temple in the time of Antiochus, and yet both Josephus and the Book of Maccabees, as we have said before, record that it lasted for only three years. From this circumstance it is apparent that the three and a half years are spoken of in connection with the time of the Antichrist, for he is going to persecute the saints for three and a half years, or one thousand two hundred and ninety days, and then he shall meet his fall on the famous, holy mountain. And so from the time of the removal of the *endelekhismos*, which we have translated as "continual sacrifice," i.e., the time when the Antichrist shall obtain possession of the world (variant: the city) and forbid the worship of God, unto the day of his death the three and a half years, or one thousand two hundred and ninety days, shall be fulfilled.

some bruised serpent, he lifts up his head as he is about to die, and pours forth his venom upon those who are themselves at the point of death.

This too, he declares, was written with reference to Antiochus, for after he had invaded Persia, he left his army with Lysias, who was in charge of Antioch and Phoenicia, for the purpose of warring against the Jews and destroying their city of Jerusalem. All these details are related by Josephus, the author of the history of the Hebrews. Porphyry contends that the tribulation was such as had never previously occurred, and that a time came along such as had never been from the time that races began to exist even unto that time. But when victory was bestowed upon them, and the generals of Antiochus had been slain, and Antiochus himself had died in Persia, the people of Israel experienced salvation, even all who had been written down in the book of God, that is, those who defended the law with great bravery. Contrasted with them were those who proved to be transgressors of the Law and sided with the party of Antiochus. Then it was, he asserts, that these guardians of the Law, who had been, as it were, slumbering in the dust of the earth and were cumbered with a load of afflictions, and even hidden away, as it were, in the tombs of wretchedness, rose up once more from the dust of the earth to a victory un-hoped for, and lifted up their heads, rising up to everlasting life, even as the transgressors rose up to everlasting disgrace. But those masters and teachers who possessed a knowledge of the Law shall shine like the heaven, and those who have exhorted the more backward peoples to observe the rites of God shall blaze forth after the fashion of the stars for all eternity. He also adduces the historical account concerning the Maccabees, in which it is said that many Jews under the leadership of Mattathias and Judas Maccabaeus fled to the desert and hid in caves and holes in the rocks, and came forth again after the victory (I Macc. 2.) These things, then, were foretold in metaphorical language as if it concerned a resurrection of the dead. But the more reasonable understanding of the matter is that in the time of the Antichrist there shall occur a tribulation such as there has never been since nations began to exist. For assume that Lysias won the victory instead of being defeated, and that he completely crushed the Jews instead of their conquering; certainly such tribulation would not have been comparable to that of the time when Jerusalem was captured by the Babylonians, the Temple was destroyed, and all the people were led off into captivity. And so after the Antichrist is crushed and destroyed by the breath of the Savior's mouth, the people written in God's book shall be saved; and in accordance with the merits of each, some shall rise up unto eternal life and others unto eternal shame. But the teachers shall resemble the very heavens, and those who have instructed others shall be compared to the brightness of the stars. For it is not enough to know wisdom unless one also instructs others; and the tongue of instruction which remains silent and edifies no one else can receive no reward for labor accomplished. This passage is expressed by Theodotion and the Vulgate edition [of the Septuagint] in the

following fashion: "And those who understand shall shine forth like the radiance of the firmament, and many of the righteous like the stars forever and ever." Many people often ask whether a learned saint and an ordinary saint shall both enjoy the same reward and one and the same dwelling-place in heaven. Well then, the statement is made here, according to Theodotion's rendering, that the learned will resemble the very heavens, whereas the righteous who are without learning are only compared to the brightness of the stars. And so the difference between learned godliness and mere godly rusticity shall be the difference between heaven and the stars.

Verse 4. *"But Thou, O Daniel, shut up the words and seal the book, even to the time appointed. Many shall pass over, and knowledge shall be manifold."* He who had revealed manifold truth to Daniel now signifies that the things he has said are matters of secrecy, and he orders him to roll up the scroll containing his words and set a seal upon the book, with the result that many shall read it and inquire as to its fulfillment in history, differing in their opinions because of its great obscurity. And as for the statement, "Many shall pass over" or "go through," this indicates that it will be read by many people. For it is a familiar expression to say: "I have gone through a book," or, "I have passed through an historical account." Indeed this is the idea which Isaiah also expressed in regard to the obscurity of his own book: "And the sayings of that book shall be like the words of a book that is sealed. And if they shall give it to an illiterate man, saying, 'Read it,' he will reply, 'I do not know how to read.' But if they give it to a man who does know how to read and say, 'Read the book,' he will reply, 'I cannot read it, because it is sealed up'" (Isa. 39:11). Also in the Revelation of John, there is a book seen which is sealed with seven seals inside and outside. And when no one proves able to break its seals, John says, "I wept sore; and a voice came to me, saying, 'Weep not: behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the book and break its seals'" (Rev. 5:4). But that book can be opened by one who has learned the mysteries of Scripture and understands its hidden truths, and its words which seem dark because of the greatness of the secrets they contain. He it is who can interpret the parables and transmute the letter which killeth into the spirit which quickeneth.

Verses 5, 6. *"And I Daniel looked, and behold as it were two other persons were standing, one on this side upon the river-bank, and the other upon that side, on the other bank of the river. And I said to the man that was clothed in linen, that stood upon the waters of the river, 'How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?'"* Daniel saw two angels standing on either side upon the bank of the river of Babylon. Although it is mentioned here without specifying its name, I suppose that in line with the preceding vision it would be the Tigris River, which is called *Eddecel (H-d-q-l)* in Hebrew. Yet Daniel does not address his question to those who were standing upon either bank, but rather to the one whom he had seen at the beginning, who was clothed in vesture of linen or byssus, which is called *baddim (b-d-y-m)* in Hebrew. And this same angel was standing upon the waters of the river of Babylon, treading upon them with his feet. From this fact we understand that the former pair of angels whom he saw standing upon the bank and did not question or deem worthy of interrogation were the angels of the Greeks and Persians. But this first angel was

the gracious one who had presented Daniel's prayers before God during the twenty-one days while the angel of the Persians was opposing him. And Daniel was asking him (variant: asks him) about these wonders spoken of in the present vision, as to the time when they should be accomplished. Porphyry, of course, assigns this time to the period of Antiochus, after his usual fashion, whereas we assign it to the time of the Antichrist.

Verse 7. *"And I heard the man that was clothed in linen, that stood upon the waters of the river: when he had lifted up his right hand and his left hand to heaven and had sworn by Him that liveth forever, that it should be unto a time and times and half a time."* Porphyry interprets a time and times and half a time to mean three and a half years; and we for our part do not deny that this accords with the idiom of Sacred Scripture. For we read in an earlier section that seven times passed over Nebuchadnezzar, that is, the seven years of his existence as a wild beast. The expression was also used in the vision of the four beasts, the lion, the bear, the leopard, and the other beast whose name was not specified but which represented the kingdom of the Romans. Right afterwards the statement is made concerning the Antichrist that he will humble kings and utter speeches against the Exalted One and will crush the saints of the Most High; moreover he will imagine that he can alter times and laws. And the saints shall be turned over to his power unto a time and times and half a time. And the court will sit for judgment, in order that power may be removed and utterly broken and vanish away until the very end. And clearly the reference is to the coming of Christ and the saints when it is said: "But kingdom and power and the greatness of the kingdom which lies beneath the whole heaven shall be bestowed upon the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; and all the kings shall serve and obey Him." If therefore the earlier references which were plainly written concerning the Antichrist are assigned by Porphyry to Antiochus and to the three and a half years during which he asserts the Temple was deserted (cf. Verse 1, above), then he is under obligation to prove that the next statement, "His kingdom is eternal, and all kings shall serve and obey him," likewise pertains to Antiochus, or else (as he himself conjectures) to the people of the Jews. But it is perfectly apparent that such an argument will never stand. We read in the books of Maccabees----and Josephus also concurs in the same opinion (Book 11, chap. 10) ---- that the Temple in Jerusalem lay defiled for three years, and under Antiochus Epiphanes an idol of Jupiter stood within it; that is to say, from Chislew, the ninth month, of the one hundred forty-fifth year of the Macedonian rule until the ninth month of the one hundred forty-eighth year, which amounts to three years. But under the Antichrist it is not stated that the desolation and overthrow of the holy Temple shall endure for three years, but for three years and a half, that is, one thousand two hundred and ninety days.