11. THE FINAL REVELATION DANIEL 10:1 –12:13

¹In the third year of King Cyrus of Persia a word was revealed to Daniel, who was named Belteshazzar. The word was true, and his task was great. He paid attention to the word, having received understanding in the revelation.

²At that time I, Daniel, had been mourning for three weeks. ³I had eaten no rich food, no meat or wine had entered my mouth, and I had not anointed myself at all, for the full three weeks.

⁴On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, I was standing on the bank of the great river (that is, the Tigris). ⁵I looked up and saw a man clothed in linen, with a belt of gold of Ophir around his waist. ⁶His body was like beryl, his face like lightning, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and the sound of his words like the roar of a multitude.

⁷I, Daniel, alone saw the vision; the people who were with me did not see the vision, though a great trembling fell upon them, and they fled and hid themselves. ⁸So I was left alone to see this great vision. My strength left me, and my complexion grew deathly pale, and I retained no strength. ⁹Then I heard the sound of his words; and when I heard the sound of his words, I fell into a trance, face to the ground.

¹⁰But then a hand touched me and raised me to my hands and knees. ¹¹He said to me, "Daniel, greatly beloved, pay attention to the words that I am going to speak to you. Stand on your feet, for I have now been sent to you." When he said this to me, I stood up trembling.

The Prologue (10:1 - 11:1)

Cyrus was mentioned in the Introduction (1:21) and in one of the stories that make up the first part of the Book of Daniel (6:28). For Daniel being called 'Belteshazzar' see 1:7.

Fasting (verses 2-3) is a normal preparation for revelation.

The 'first month' is Nisan, when the Passover and the festival of Unleavened Bread were celebrated.

In every other text, the great river (verse 4) is the Euphrates. Identifying it here as the Tigris is unexpected.

Daniel's vision (verses 5-6) is of a heavenly being (seemingly superior to an 'angel') in human form. It draws on Ezekiel (see 9:2; 10:2). Priestly vestments were made from 'linen' (see Leviticus 6:10; compare Revelation 15:6; 19:8, 14). The description of the risen and glorified Jesus in the Book of Revelation (1:13-16) draws on this text. A number of the details draw on Ezekiel's initial vision (Ezekiel 1).

Verses 9-11 are modelled on 8:16-18 and 9:21-23. For 'greatly beloved' (verse 11, 19) see 9:23.

Daniel is in dialogue with the celestial being (10:10–11:1). The celestial being has been 'sent' by God.

The 'twenty-one days' (verse 13) is the period during which Daniel was fasting (see 10:2). The 'prince of the kingdom of Persia' (verse 13) is Persia's heavenly (angelic) patron.

Israel's powerful protector in the heavenly court is Michael מֵּיכָאֵל]. This is the first time he is mentioned in the Older Testament. In the Newer Testament Michael is called an 'archangel' (see Jude 9). Revelation 12:7-9 draws on this passage.

In the ancient polytheistic world each nation was thought to have a patron god (see Deuteronomy 32:18; Joshua 24:15; Psalm 82). In late monotheistic Judaism these were thought of as angels (Sirach 17:17).

'One in human likeness' (verse 16) is the Hebrew equivalent of the Aramaic in 7:13.

The celestial being has to return to heaven (verse 20), so offers Daniel a quick summary of what is in 'the book of truth' (verse 21): the book that contains God's predetermined plan for history. The kingdom of Persia will be replaced by a kingdom of Greece. The prince of Israel, Michael, will fight against every prince who supports Israel's enemies.

Once again the unhistorical 'Darius the Mede' is mentioned (see 5:31; 9:1).

¹²He said to me, "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and this is why I have come.

¹³But the prince of the kingdom of Persia opposed me for twenty-one days until Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, and I left him there with the prince of the kingdom of Persia, ¹⁴and have come to help you understand what is to happen to your people at the end of days. For there is a further vision for those days." ¹⁵While he was speaking these words to me, I turned my face toward the ground and was speechless.

¹⁶Behold, one in human likeness touched my lips, and I opened my mouth to speak, and said to the one who stood before me, "My lord, because of the vision such pains have come upon me that I retain no strength. ¹7How can my lord's servant talk with my lord? For I am shaking, no strength remains in me, and no breath is left in me." 18 Once more the one who had the appearance of a man touched me and strengthened me. 19He said, "Do not fear, greatly beloved, you are safe. Be strong and courageous!" When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, "Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me." 20Then he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? Now I must return to fight against the prince of Persia, and when I am through with him, the prince of Greece will come. 21 But I am to tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth. There is no one with me who contends against these princes except Michael, your prince. 11:1 In fact, since the first year of Darius the Mede, I have been standing by to support and strengthen him.

²"Now I will announce the truth to you. Three more kings will arise in Persia. The fourth will be far richer than all of them, and when he has become strong through his riches, he will stir up the whole kingdom of Greece. ³Then a warrior king will arise, who will rule with great dominion and take action as he pleases. ⁴And while still rising in power, his kingdom will be broken and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not to his posterity, nor according to the dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom will be uprooted and go to others rather than to these.

5"Then the king of the south will grow strong, but one of his officers will grow stronger than he and will rule a realm greater than his own realm. 6After some years they will make an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the south will enter into marriage with the king of the north to ensure peace. But she will not retain her power, and his offspring will not endure. She will be given up, she and her attendants and her child and husband.

"Later⁷a branch from her roots will rise up in his place. He will come against the army and enter the fortress of the king of the north, and he will take action against them and prevail.

⁸Even their gods, with their idols and with their precious vessels of silver and gold, he will carry off to Egypt as spoils of war. For some years he will refrain from attacking the king of the north; ⁹then the latter will invade the realm of the king of the south, but will have to return to his own land.

Historical Survey (11:2 -12:4)

The author is offering a survey of history from the end of the Babylonian exile up to his own time. His focus is on the kingdoms that have had a direct influence on Judah. He presents it as a revelation given nearly four centuries earlier to Daniel. As with earlier sections of the Book, he does so in order to remind his contemporaries that their God is the Lord of history, who is about to liberate them.

The fourth Persian ruler (compare 7:6) will stir up the whole of Greece (verse 2). Alexander the Great will rise to power (compare 8:5-8, 21), but his empire will break up and be governed by rulers that are not from his family (verses 3-4).

Verses 5-20 speak of the struggles between the Ptolemies of Egypt (the south) and the Seleucids of Syria and Asia Minor (the north) for the control of Palestine and Phoenicia.

Verse 5 refers to Ptolemy I Soter (323-285) and Seleucus I Nicator (312-280). Verse 6 refers to the marriage of Antiochus II Theos (261-246) and Berenice, the daughter of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-246), who was subsequently murdered.

Verses 7-9 recount the revenge of Ptolemy III Euergetes (246-221) for the death of his sister, Berenice, and his successful campaign against the kingdom of Seleucus II Callinicus (246-226).

The Seleucid army retaliated by attacking Egypt (242-240), but was forced to withdraw (verse 9).

Verses 10-19 focus on the reign of Antiochus III (223-187). In 217 he recaptured Seleucia, the port for Antioch in northern Syria. He swept through Palestine as far as Raphia on the border of Palestine and Egypt (the fortress of verse 10). There the army of Antiochus suffered a major defeat (verse 11), but the Egyptian army did not take advantage of its victory (verse 12).

In 200 at Paneas (the Caesarea Philippi of the Gospels) Antiochus, with the help of Philip V of Macedon defeated the Egyptian army. Some of the Jews took part, keen to see the overthrow of their Egyptian overlords. The author states that 'they will fail' (verse 14). He sees these Jews as helping to bring about the terrible rule of the Seleucids!

In 199 Antiochus besieged and captured Sidon (verse 15). 'The beautiful land' (verse 16) is Palestine (see 8:9). In 198 he wrested southern Asia Minor from Egyptian control, but, through fear of Rome, he did not attack Egypt. In 197 he made peace with Ptolemy V by promising him his daughter, Cleopatra, in marriage (verse 17). Antiochus's plan failed because his daughter sided with her husband, urging an alliance between Egypt and Rome.

The 'coastlands' (verse 18) refers to the coasts of western Asia Minor and Thrace. Antiochus invaded Greece in 192, but was defeated by Rome at Thermopylae. In 190 the Romans, under Scipio (verse 18) drove Antiochus out of Asia Minor and imposed a huge tribute. In 187 he died attempting to sack a temple to help pay his tribute to Rome.

¹⁰"His sons will wage war and assemble a multitude of great forces, which will advance like a flood and pass through, and again will carry the war as far as his fortress. ¹¹Moved with rage, the king of the south will go out and do battle against the king of the north, who will muster a great multitude, which will, however, be defeated by his enemy.

¹²When the multitude has been carried off, his heart will be exalted, and he will overthrow tens of thousands, but he will not prevail. ¹³For the king of the north will again raise a multitude, larger than the former, and after some years he will advance with a great army and abundant supplies.

¹⁴"In those times many will rise against the king of the south. The lawless among your own people will lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision, but they will fail. 15When the king of the north comes he will throw up siegeworks, and capture a well-fortified city. And the forces of the south will not stand, not even his picked troops, for there will be no strength to resist. 16But he who comes against him will take the actions he pleases, and no one will withstand him. He will take a position in the beautiful land, and all of it will be in his power. 17He will set his mind to come with the strength of his whole kingdom, and he will bring terms of peace and perform them. In order to destroy the kingdom, he will give him a woman in marriage; but it will not succeed or be to his advantage.

¹⁸Afterward he will turn to the coastlands, and will capture many. But a commander will put an end to his insolence; indeed, he will turn his insolence back upon him. ¹⁹Then he will turn back toward the fortresses of his own land, but he will stumble and fall, and disappear.

²⁰"Then will arise in his place one who will send an official for the glory of the kingdom; but within a few days he will be broken, though not in anger or in battle. ²¹In his place will arise a contemptible person on whom royal majesty had not been conferred; he will come in without warning and obtain the kingdom through intrigue. ²²Armies will be utterly swept away and broken before him, and the prince of the covenant as well. ²³ After an alliance is made with him, he will act deceitfully and become strong with a small party. ²⁴Without warning he will invade the richest parts of the province and do what none of his predecessors had ever done, lavishing plunder, spoil, and wealth on them.

He will devise plans against strongholds, but only for a time. ²⁵He will stir up his power and determination against the king of the south with a great army, and the king of the south will wage war with a much greater and stronger army. But he will not succeed, for plots will be devised against him²⁶by those who eat of the royal rations. They will break him, his army will be swept away, and many will fall slain.

²⁷The two kings, their minds bent on evil, will sit at one table and exchange lies. But their alliance will not succeed, for there is still a final phase for the appointed period. ²⁸He will return to his land with great wealth, but his heart will be set against the holy covenant. He will work his will, and return to his own land. 29" At the time appointed he will return and come into the south, but this time it will not be as it was before. ³⁰For ships of Kittim will come against him, and he will lose heart and withdraw. He will be enraged and take action against the holy covenant. He will turn back and pay heed to those who forsake the holy covenant.

Verse 20 refers to Seleucus IV Philopator (187-175). He was burdened by having to find the money to pay Rome. 2Maccabees 3:1-20 recounts his pillaging of the temple in Jerusalem as part of his attempt to raise money. He was assassinated in 175.

The 'contemptible person' (verse 21) is Antiochus IV Epiphanes. After the defeat of his father by the Romans, he was taken as a hostage to Rome where he lived in luxury for fourteen years (190-176). In verses 21-24 the author writes of Antiochus's usurping the throne and his early rule.

The 'prince of the covenant' (verse 22) refers to the high priest of the Jerusalem temple, Onias III, whom Antiochus replaced by Jason who paid a large bribe for the office (see 2Maccabees 4:8).

From the final sentence in verse 24 through to verse 28, he writes of Antiochus's first invasion of Egypt in 170 (compare 1Maccabees 1:16-19). The two kings of verse 27 are Antiochus and the boy, Ptolemy Philometor, whom he had taken prisoner. We are reminded that God is the Lord of history who alone arranges who rules and for how long. Verse 28 alludes to Antiochus's looting of Jerusalem on his way back from the Egyptian campaign (see 1Maccabees 1:20; compare 2Maccabees 5:5-21).

In verses 29-30 we have a brief account of Antiochus's second invasion of Egypt in 168. Originally the 'Kittim' referred to the people of Cyprus (Genesis 10:4; Isaiah 23:1). Here it refers to the Romans who sided with Egypt.

On his way from his humiliating retreat from Egypt back to Antioch, Antiochus took out his anger on Jerusalem. Apollonius was put in charge and he waited till the sabbath, knowing that the pious Jews would not take up arms on that day. 2Maccabees 5:23-26 and 1Maccabees 1:29-35 describe the massacre. For the translation 'pious ones' (verse 31) see 8:10 (and 1Maccabees 1:46). 1Maccabees 1:44-50 details the anti-Jewish regulations imposed on Judah by Antiochus.

The author of these chapters would appear to belong to the group he calls here 'the wise among his people' (verse 33). He admits that the resistance by Mattathias and his son, Judas (the Maccabee = 'hammer), did provide 'a little help' (verse 34). His own option is to leave things to God. He sees the suffering as purifying (verse 35).

In verses 36-39 the author writes of Antiochus's blasphemous behaviour.

'The one beloved of women' (verse 37) is the fertility god Tammuz (Adonis; see Ezekiel 8:14). Antiochus erected a statue of Zeus over the altar of sacrifice in the temple sanctuary, This is the appalling abomination mentioned in verse 31 (compare 8:30-31). In this way he despised 'the God of the pious ones' (verse 38). Verse 39 appears to allude to his establishing a colony of Syrian soldiers in Jerusalem.

³¹Forces sent by him will occupy and profane the temple and the pious ones. They will abolish the regular burnt offering and set up the appalling abomination. 32He will seduce with intrigue those who violate the covenant; but the people who are loyal to their God will stand firm and take action. 33The wise among the people will give understanding to many; for some days, however, they will fall by sword and flame, and suffer captivity and plunder. 34When they fall victim, they will receive a little help, and many will join them insincerely. 35 Some of the wise will fall, so that they may be refined, purified, and cleansed, until the time of the end, for there is still an interval until the time appointed.

³⁶"The king will act as he pleases. He will exalt himself and consider himself greater than any god, and will speak horrendous things against the God of gods. He will succeed until the period of wrath is completed, for what is determined will be done. ³⁷He will pay no respect to the gods of his ancestors, or to the one beloved by women; he will pay no respect to any other god, for he will consider himself greater than all. 38 Even the God of the strongholds he will despise, and a god whom his ancestors did not know he will honour with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts. 39Into the fortresses of the pious ones he bring soldiers of a foreign god. Those who acknowledge him he will make more wealthy, and will appoint them as rulers over many, and will distribute the land for a price.

⁴⁰"At the time of the end the king of the south will attack him. But the king of the north will rush upon him like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen, and with many ships. He will advance against countries and pass through like a flood. ⁴¹He will come into the beautiful land, and tens of thousands will fall victim, but Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites will escape from his power. 42He will stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt will not escape. 43He will become ruler of the treasures of gold and of silver, and all the riches of Egypt; and the Libyans and the Ethiopians will follow in his train. 44But reports from the east and the north will alarm him, and he will go out with great fury to bring ruin and complete destruction to many. 45He will pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the beautiful holy mountain. Yet he will come to his end, with no one to help him.

Verses 40-45 give the author's hopes for what would happen in the final days of Antiochus. The fact that he does not mention the eastern campaign of Antiochus IV in 165, or his death in 164, or the reconsecration of the temple the same year, points to this, the last of the revelations, being composed in late 165 or early 164 when the persecution was still raging.

The details do not always correspond with what we know from other sources, but they witness to the author's faith in God as the Lord of history. In verse 40 the end phase (see 11:27, 35) has finally come. The author mistakenly predicts another Egyptian campaign.

According to 1Maccabees 4:61 and 5:1-8, the Edomites and Ammonites sided with Antiochus and so were spared (verse 41). Verse 43 predicts that Antiochus will subdue the whole of Egypt. Verse 44 correctly predicts his final campaign in the north and east, against the Parthians and Armenians.

He predicts that Antiochus will meet his end in Judah. The 'beautiful holy mountain' (verse 45) is Mount Zion. In fact he died in Persia, attempting to pillage the temple of Artemis. Verses 1-3 speak of the victory of those Jews who remained faithful even when it meant death. The author expresses his faith that they would be rewarded beyond the grave. 'At that time' in verse 1 refers back to the time of Antiochus's death that the author predicts (see 11:40). The author's description of 'that time' as a time of 'anguish such as has never occurred since nations first came into existence' is traditional (see Jeremiah 30:7; Exodus 9:18; Joel 2:1-2; and in the Newer Testament: Mark 13:19; Matthew 24:29-31; Revelation 16:18).

God has made Michael the guardian angel of Israel (see 10:21). In ancient Canaanite mythology each nation had its own protecting god (see 10:13).

The 'book' (verse 1) is the book of life (see the books of judgment in 7:10, and the book of truth in 10:21; also Ezekiel 2:9-10; 3:1-3; Zechariah 5:1; Psalm 41:8; 139:16).

'Those who sleep' (verse 2) expresses the idea that the faithful ones who have died will awaken to a new life (see Psalm 22:30; and throughout the Newer Testament; see John 11:1; 1Corinthians 15:20). The author is commenting on Isaiah 26:19.

Your dead shall live, their corpses shall rise. O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy!

The word 'many' in verse 2 is an Aramaism. Many is distinguished, not from all, but from few. However, our author is not concerned with the dead who are not Jews. Rather he is concerned with his faithful and unfaithful contemporaries. The faithful ones will awake from the land of the dead and will receive their reward; the unfaithful will awaken to experience their disgrace. The righteous will be shining examples for all to follow (verse 3; see Exodus 24:10; Wisdom 3:7; Matthew 13:43; Philippians 21:15; Revelation 2:28; 22:16). The 'stars' (verse 3) are God's heavenly (visible) host.

See the following two pages for a brief summary of the idea of resurrection from the dead in the Writings of the Older Testament.

Verse 4 continues the literary device of presenting this material as foreseen and revealed to Daniel, to be revealed only at the time of publication during the persecution.

1"At that time Michael, the great prince, the protector of your people, will arise. There will be a time of anguish, such as has never occurred since nations first came into existence. But at that time your people will be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book.

²Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake; some will live for ever, while others will become everlasting objects of contempt and abhorrence.

³Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to right-eousness, like the stars forever and ever.

⁴But you, Daniel, keep the words secret and the book sealed until the time of the end. Many will apostasize, and evil will increase."

Rising from death

Traditionally, the Jews, like their Gentile neighbours, assumed that human life, which depended on the life-breath given by God, ended with death when, as he writes in his conclusion: 'the life-breath returns to God who gave it'(12:7). The dead go down into the shadowy and lifeless existence of She'ol (Greek: Hades).

My soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near to Sheol.

I am counted among those who go down to the Pit;

I am like those who have no help,

like those forsaken among the dead,

like the slain that lie in the grave,

like those whom you remember no more,

for they are cut off from your hand.

- Psalm 88:3-5

The dead do not praise the Lord, nor do any that go down into silence.

- Psalm 115:17

Sheol cannot thank you, death cannot praise you; those who go down to the Pit cannot hope for your faithfulness. The living, the living, they thank you, as I do this day; fathers make known to children your faithfulness.

- Isaiah 38:18-19

Who will sing praises to the Most High in Hades in place of the living who give thanks? From the dead, as from one who does not exist, thanksgiving has ceased; those who are alive and well sing the Lord's praises.

- Sirach 17:27-28

At the same time, they longed for an enduring relationship with God, who would somehow, and against all the evidence, preserve them from death and the underworld:

My heart is glad, and my soul rejoices; my body also rests secure. For you do not give me up to Sheol, or let your faithful one see the Pit. You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

- Psalm 16:9-11

God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me.

- Psalm 49:15

I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me with honour. Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire other than you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

- Psalm 73:23-26

The notion of resurrection from the dead, which includes the notion of a continuance of communion with God (and therefore a continuance of life) beyond the grave emerges at the time of the publication of the Book of Daniel, and continued to be disputed into the first century AD (see Mark 12:18; Acts 23:8).

This idea grew out of faith in the fidelity of God. The historical situation that brought about this conviction was the martyrdom of many pious Jews at the time of the persecutions instigated by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (167-165BC). It seemed impossible for God not to reward with life those who gave their lives so heroically for their faith. The first explicit statements concerning the resurrection from the dead belong to this period:

At that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

- Daniel 12:1-2

Our brothers after enduring a brief suffering have drunk of ever-flowing life, under God's covenant; but you, by the judgment of God, will receive just punishment for your arrogance.

- 2Maccabees 7:36

Another possible witness to a belief that physical death is not the end of life, at least for those who have proved faithful to the covenant, is the following text that was included in the Isaiah scroll. On the other hand it may, like Ezekiel 37, be referring to God's restoring the nation. We read:

The dead do not live; shades do not rise — because you have punished and destroyed them, and wiped out all memory of them.

- Isaiah 26:14

This fits with the tradition. However, the text goes on to say something that cuts right across the tradition:

Your dead shall live, their corpses shall rise. O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a radiant dew, and the earth will give birth to those long dead.

- Isaiah 26:19

Though the situation of the heroic death of the Jewish martyrs during the persecution under Antiochus greatly influenced the notion of individual resurrection, we must also consider the influence of Egypt and of Persia where belief in the afterlife was integral to their religious consciousness.

⁵As I, Daniel, looked, and two others appeared, one standing on this bank of the stream and one on the other. ⁶One of them said to the man clothed in linen, who was upstream, "How long will it be until the end of these wonders?"

The man clothed in linen, who was upstream, raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven. And I heard him swear by the one who lives forever that it would be for a year, two years, and half a year, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end, all these things would be accomplished.

⁸I heard but could not understand; so I said, "My lord, what will be the outcome of these things?" ⁹He said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are to remain secret and sealed until the time of the end. ¹⁰Many will be purified, cleansed, and refined, but the wicked will continue to act wickedly. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand.

¹¹From the time that the regular burnt offering is taken away and the abomination that desolates is set up, there will be one thousand two hundred ninety days.

¹²Blessed are those who have patience and persevere during the thousand three hundred thirty-five days.

¹³But you, go your way, and rest; you will rise for your reward at the end of the days."

The Epilogue (12:5-13)

These final verses were composed, it seems, by the author who was responsible for the final organisation of the Book of Daniel. These two extra angels (verse 5) are required as witnesses of the oath (verse 7; see Deuteronomy 19:15). The stream (verse 5) is that first mentioned in 10:4. The 'man clothed in linen' is the celestial being of 10:5.

The question 'How long?(verse 6 was raised in 8:13.

For the three and a half years (verse 7) see 7:25 and 9:27.

For Israel as the holy people see Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:2; Exodus 19:6 (see Daniel 7:27).

Daniel's inability to understand emphasises the mysterious nature of the revelation (compare 8:27). In response to Daniel's request the revealing angel instructs him to keep the revelation secret (verse 9; see 12:4).

Verses 11 and 12 appear to be successive attempts to give precision to the prediction of the end. As one calculation proved inexact, another took its place.

Daniel will enjoy the reward promised to the righteous (verse 13).