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"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Peter 1:21.

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream and Its Interpretation

The Gospel of the Kingdom Proclaimed in Babylon

By W. W. Prescott

In what notable respect do the Holy Scriptures differ from the so-called sacred writings of the false religious systems?—In this respect,—they foretell future events. There are predictions recorded in the Bible which were made many centuries before the events occurred. This is one of the proofs of the divine origin of the Scriptures.

A Statement and a Challenge

In establishing his claim to be the one true God, Jehovah himself, through his prophet, has stated that he declares the end from the beginning, and challenges the false gods to do the same.—
 "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." Isa. 46:9, 10.

"I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them show unto them." Isa. 44:6, 7.

"Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the Lord? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me" Isa. 45:21.

"Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and show us what shall happen: let them show the former things, and know they be, that we may consider them, and wot the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods." Isa. 41:21-23.

The heathen oracles framed their utterances in such ambiguous language that, whatever the event might be, it could be twisted into a fulfillment of the prediction, but not so with the prophecies of the Scriptures. Many of them are put into simple form, and where symbols are employed they are in most cases either interpreted in direct connection with the prophecy, or in some other portions of the Bible.

Prophecies Interpreted and Fulfilled

It is a striking fact that the leading prophecies of the Bible are accompanied by divine interpretations which can be readily compared with the facts of history, and thus the truthfulness of predictions already fulfilled can be established. A few of these interpreted prophecies are noted here: Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image, recorded in the second chapter of Daniel; Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the tree, recorded in the fourth chapter of Daniel; Daniel's vision of the four beasts, found in the seventh chapter of his book; his later vision, found in the eighth chapter; and John's vision of the woman sitting upon the scarlet-colored beast, recorded in the seventeenth chapter of Revelation. Some of the most minute prophecies, such as those found in the eleventh and twelfth chapters of Daniel and the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, are announced in plain terms without the use of any

The records of many centuries of history have borne unimpeachable testimony to the reliability of divine prophecy as shown in its fulfillment. An outline picture of the world's history has been made by the prophetic pencil, and the rise and fall of kingdoms, the fortunes of empires, and some of the most striking natural phenomena have all occurred in harmony with this outline. With great definiteness the first advent of our Lord was foretold. Isaiah prophesied the fact of his birth of a virgin (Isa. 7:14); Daniel foretold the time (Dan. 9:25); Micah spoke of the place (Micah 5:2); Hosea predicted his visit to Egypt (Hosea 11:1); Isaiah described his ministry to the sick (Isa. 53:4); Zechariah named the price of his betrayal (Zech. 11:12, 13); the psalmist David described the disposition which would be made of his garments at the crucifixion, and his expiring cries of agony (Ps. 22:18, 1); the same writer spoke of his resurrection (Ps. 16:10), and described his reception to the holy city when he returned from earth (Ps. 24:7-10). So completely are the earthly experiences of our Lord set forth in the prophecies that his life could almost be written in the words of the prophets.

The Sure Word of Prophecy

There is, therefore, great force in the climax of the apostle Peter's argument concerning the certainty of his teaching about Christ and his work:—

"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place." 2 Peter 1:16-19.

This testimony to the certainty of the prophetic word is both divine and human. It is divine in that it is inspired by the Holy Spirit, and is, therefore, God's own assurance to man that what he declares will come to pass. It is human in that it indicates that fulfilled prophecy strengthens the conviction in the certainty of unfulfilled prophecy. As the result of sin, darkness has settled upon the earth and gross darkness upon many of the people, but the light of prophecy will, with absolute certainty, indicate the path of God's providences, and will enable the believer to understand the times and the seasons.

Simple in its outline of earthly history, and most positive in its declaration of the outcome, is the prophetic dream of Nebuchadnezzar and its authoritative interpretation found in the second chapter of the book of Daniel. The circumstances which led up to this fundamental prophecy will enable the reader to grasp more fully its real meaning.

Jerusalem and Babylon

After a long course of apostasy, during which the prophets had uttered many warnings to the children of Judah, and had predicted with much definiteness both the fact and the length of that apostasy which would result from their failure to

maintain the right relation with the God of heaven, "came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand." If we seek for the fundamental reason of this downfall of Jerusalem, we shall find it in the fact that those to whom God had committed his oracles, and whom he designed to make his messengers to the nations, refused to proclaim his gospel of salvation to the world. They shut themselves within a wall of exclusiveness as difficult to break through as were the walls of their capital city, and attempted to make themselves the only beneficiaries of Heaven's love and mercy. But God's purpose was not to be thwarted, and the message which might have been proclaimed to Babylon by the free citizens of Jerusalem was announced by the captives taken in a successful campaign.

The Gospel of the Kingdom

The essence of the gospel message for all times and all places is very simple. It is the announcement of God's purpose to establish his kingdom in the earth, and the revelation of the means by which this will be accomplished. From the time that the promise was made that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15), with constantly increasing clearness was it revealed in the types and in the definite utterances of the prophets that the kingdom of this world which was given to the first Adam and lost through disobedience, would be given to the Son of man, the second Adam. In carrying out this plan the eternal Son of God would humble himself, take the flesh, and as a man win back the kingdom for the human family. This was the gospel story which was to be told to all nations.

God's Message to Babylon

When, through the providence of God, Daniel, loyal to the God of his fathers, and faithful to the light which had come to him, was among the captives of Babylon, and, having been selected to stand before the king, had successfully passed the test, and was reckoned among the wise men of Babylon, the way was fully prepared for him to deliver God's message to Nebuchadnezzar, and through him to the heathen world. Then it was that God gave to Nebuchadnezzar a dream which he was not permitted to recall later. Following his usual custom, he sought the aid of those wise men who professed to have access to sources of information not vouchsafed to ordinary mortals.

The Collapse of Worldly Wisdom

With them the following dialogue was held:—
 "And the king said unto them, I have dreamed

and answered and said, I know of certainty that ye would gain the time, because ye see the thing is gone from me. But if ye will not make known unto me the dream, there is but one decree for you: for ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, till the time be changed: therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that ye can show me the interpretation thereof. The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can show the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can show it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh." Dan. 2:3-11.

Circumstances were so ordered that the failure of human wisdom should be fully demonstrated and the way prepared so that a revelation from heaven would be recognized and accepted. The decrees of death pronounced upon the wise men of Babylon as the result of their inability to comply with the king's command, conveys the lesson that confidence in the flesh will end in disappointment and final overthrow. In contrast with this is the course of Daniel and his companions, who sought that wisdom which is from above, and without which they would perish in common with the wise men. "Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision." Dan. 2:19. That which saved these men, and which saves all men, was not arrived at through human philosophy or speculative reasoning, but came as a revelation from heaven. The gospel is not discovered through scientific investigation; it is the direct message of God to man.

God in History

The dream of Nebuchadnezzar, as we shall see later, was a revelation of the overruling providence of God in the affairs of men, and the proclamation of the gospel of his own kingdom, to be established by the final overthrow of all earthly kingdoms. To give authority to this message, Daniel declared to Nebuchadnezzar:—
 "The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, show unto the king; but there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days." Dan. 2:27, 28.
 Again and again it is emphasized that both the dream and its interpretation were a revelation from him who knows what would come to pass hereafter. Then Daniel relates the dream:—
 "Thou, O king, sawest, and beheld a great image. This great image, whose brightness was



DANIEL IN BABYLON

a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream. Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriack, O king, live forever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation. The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill. But if ye show the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honor: therefore show me the dream, and the interpretation thereof. They answered again and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation thereof. The king

excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." Dan. 2:31-35.

With a directness and an assurance growing out of his confidence in the revelation which had been made to him, Daniel proceeds to interpret to the king the dream which had troubled him:—

"Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And whosoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold." Dan. 2:37, 38.

Babylon's Greatness Not Enduring

Since its successful revolt against the king of Assyria about twenty years before the events occurred which are here recorded, the kingdom of Babylon had grown in power until now it was the mightiest of the earthly kingdoms. The use of gold to represent this kingdom is in harmony with the phraseology already employed more than a century before this time by the prophet Isaiah, who spoke of Babylon as "the golden city," or "the exactress of gold."

While Daniel ascribed greatness to the king of Babylon, he did not fail to declare that Nebuchadnezzar was indebted to the God of heaven for his exaltation to kingly power; and, furthermore, although he was a captive from a conquered city, he hesitated not to foretell the downfall of Babylon:—

"And after these shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth." Dan. 2:39.

It is among the simplest facts of history that the two kingdoms which successively followed Babylon were Medo-Persia and Greece. As silver is inferior to gold, so was Medo-Persia inferior to Babylon, not in power but in character. Both in mythology and in history the metal brass has been used with the description of the Greeks and their empire in a way which directly harmonizes with the symbolism of this dream.

"The Iron Monarchy of Rome"

But the transfer of empire does not end with the third kingdom; a fourth is to follow:—

"And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potter's clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay." Dan. 2:40-43.

The historian Gibbon, who will hardly be accused of writing for the purpose of establishing the fulfillment of prophecy, uses language quite in harmony with the imagery employed by Daniel when he says: "The images of gold, or silver, or brass, that might serve to represent the nations of kings, were successively broken by the iron monarchy of Rome."

This suggests, what every reader of history knows, that the fourth universal kingdom, reckoning from Babylon, was Rome. The extent of this empire and the measure of its power are well described by the language of Gibbon:—

"There was not an inch of ground then known exempt from its scepter. The modern tyrant who should find no resistance in his own breast, or in his people, would soon experience a gentle restraint from the example of his equals, the dread of censure, the apprehension of enemies. The object of his displeasure escaping the narrow limits of his dominion, would easily obtain in a happier climate, a secure refuge, freedom of complaint, and, perhaps, means of revenge. But the empire of the Romans filled the hands of a single person; the world became a safe and dreary prison for his enemies. To resist was fatal, and it was impossible to fly. On every side he was encompassed with a vast extent of sea and land, where he could never hope to traverse, without being discovered, seized, and restored to his irritated master. Beyond the frontiers, he could discover nothing except the ocean, inhospitable deserts, and hostile tribes of fierce barbarians."

The Decline of the Fourth Kingdom and the Establishing of the Kingdom of God

But this period of unlimited despotism was not to continue indefinitely, and Daniel foretold the time when "the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken." The mingling of the iron and clay, which was interpreted to mean alliances between the rulers of the divided kingdom, probably by intermarriage, would not serve to bind together permanently the separated portions, "even as iron is not mixed with clay." The fourth kingdom would be the last of earth's universal empires. The kings of the divided

their possessions into one homogeneous power. The fifth kingdom would be of an altogether different character:—

"And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." Dan. 2:44.

The four kingdoms were set up by earthly monarchs, the fifth kingdom would be set up by the God of heaven; the four kingdoms were temporary in their nature, the fifth kingdom is eternal. The four kingdoms are but different phases of the same world power in which the subjects are ruled by force and arms; the fifth kingdom is of altogether a different nature, in which love is the ruling principle. The four kingdoms are the manifested outworking of a power counterworking the purpose of God; the fifth kingdom reveals the triumph of that purpose.

A Chronological Outline

The chronology of this interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream may be briefly stated thus: The siege of Babylon by the army of Cyrus marked the downfall of the kingdom represented by the head of gold, and the sovereignty passed to the Medes and Persians, b. c. 538; the success of the Grecian forces at the battle of Arbela, b. c. 331, sealed the fate of the Medo-Persian Empire and established the undisputed sway of the Greek empire; the defeat of the Macedonian forces at the battle of Pydna, b. c. 168, brought to an end any organized resistance against the rule of Rome, and from that event the sovereignty of the fourth kingdom may be dated. The division of Rome into ten kingdoms was completed A. D. 476, and several of these original ten kingdoms survive in the modern nations of Europe. The world is

furnish an authoritative interpretation of it, there was proclaimed in the most emphatic manner in Babylon both the fact of this coming kingdom of God, and also that distinguishing feature of genuine Christianity—the mystery of the kingdom of God—the soul-saving truth that a direct union has been formed between divinity and humanity, that the dwelling of God is with flesh.

The Kingdoms of the World to Be Destroyed

By what Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream, and by the interpretation Daniel gave to it, it is clearly indicated that the kingdom of God is to be established not by the conversion and absorption of the kingdoms of this world, but by their utter overthrow. When the stone smote the image upon its feet, "then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them." Furthermore, Daniel declared that the fifth kingdom "shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms." This is entirely in harmony with the general trend of Scripture teaching, which furnishes no satisfactory basis for the conversion of the world and a millennium of peace before the coming of Christ to take his kingdom. The rebellion of this world under the leadership of the "god of this world," will be put down only by the setting up of God's everlasting kingdom.

The Assurance of Eternal Life

Of the fifth kingdom it is said that "it shall stand forever." The permanency of the kingdom and the unending life of the citizens of the kingdom are the necessary consequence of the

eternity of the being of the God of heaven, and of the union formed between the King and his subjects through the mediatorial work of the eternal Son. The prophecy of Daniel is the assurance of eternal life, the gift of God through faith in Christ. This is the foreshadowing of the plainer revelations of the New Testament:—

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." 2 Peter 1:4.

"And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." 1 John 2:17.

"The kingdom of God and the people of God will abide "while the years of eternity roll."

The Testimony to All Nations

The gospel of the kingdom was the theme of the preaching of both Christ and the apostles. This is clear from the statements of the Scriptures:—

"Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." Mark 1:14, 15.

"And he (Paul) went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God." Acts 19:8.

"And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ." Acts 28:30, 31.

As the four universal kingdoms have long since passed away, and as other prophecies indicate that the world is now "in the days of these kings," with the signs fulfilled and fulfilling which show that the end of all earthly kingdoms is at hand, it is certainly fitting that the gospel of the soon-coming kingdom should now be proclaimed with compelling power to every nation under heaven. Inasmuch as every specification of Daniel's prophecy, except the last, has already been fulfilled, and the record stands as the history of the world, the assurance is made doubly sure that the last specification will be fulfilled, and that the God of heaven will soon set up his kingdom. The voices in heaven are now saying, "The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ." The prayer which has been repeated through the centuries, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven," is about to be answered. The message to every soul is, "Get right with God," "Prepare to meet thy God,"



DANIEL INTERPRETING NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM

now "in the days of these kings," and the impending event is the setting up of the kingdom of God.

The Gospel of the Kingdom Proclaimed in Babylon

By the dream of Nebuchadnezzar and the divinely revealed interpretation, the gospel of the kingdom was proclaimed in Babylon. That it made a deep impression upon the mind of the king is shown by his declaration to Daniel: "Of a truth it is, that Your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldst reveal this secret." Dan. 2:47. This message, combined with later experiences, resulted in fully humbling the pride of the heathen king and in leading him to a personal acknowledgment of the sovereignty of the King of heaven.

A vital feature of the gospel of the kingdom is the union of divinity and humanity, exemplified in the incarnation of the Son of God; and the essential experience in the acceptance of the gospel message is the union of the divine and the human in the person of each believer; so that he is enabled to say with the apostle Paul, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Gal. 2:20. In this matter of intimate personal fellowship with Deity, Christianity differs from every false system of religion, and this distinguishing feature is variously spoken of as "the mystery of godliness," "the mystery of the gospel," and "the mystery of the kingdom of God." This mystery, or secret, was denied by the wise men of Babylon, who admitted concerning their gods that their "dwelling is not with flesh;" but it was proclaimed by Daniel, not so much in the direct form of words used as in his own experience. The wise men of Babylon had confessed their inability to make known his dream to King Nebuchadnezzar, and had declared that no mortal could do what he required, since, according to their theology, there was no direct union between gods and men. If, therefore, any one should be able to make known his dream to the king, this in itself would be the most convincing proof of a union with the divine, which was denied in the religion of Babylon. When, therefore, the captive Daniel, a believer in the God of heaven, was able to come before

Prophecy, Why Given

A Bible Study

1. Why were the Sacred Writings given?
"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." Rom. 15:4.
2. By what means is all scripture given?
"All scripture is given by inspiration of God." 2 Tim. 3:16, first part.
3. For what is it profitable?
"And is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." Same verse, last part.
4. How was the prophecy given?
"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Peter 1:21.
5. What is the Lord able to do regarding the future?
"Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them." Isa. 42:9.
6. How far-reaching is God's ability to reveal the future?
"Remember the former things of old: for I am God, . . . and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done." Isa. 46:9, 10.
- Notes.—In contrast with this, read the following confession of a noted modern historian as to man's inability to reveal the future:—
"History has yet made so slight progress toward the scientific basis that she is able to foretell nothing that is to be hereafter. As to the future, she is stone-blind. There is not a philosopher in the world who can forecast the historical evolution to the extent of a single day. The historian is as completely dumb before the problems of 1895 as a charlatan weather prophet ought to be with respect to the meteorological conditions of the next season. The year will come and go. It will fulfill its purpose in the great calendar of man life. Its events and issues will be evolved with scientific exactitude out of antecedent conditions. But no man living can predict what the aspect and event will be. The tallest son of the

ture of what is to come in the year that already stands knocking at the door."—John Clark Ridpath, in *Christianity in World*, Dec. 27, 1894.

Knowing all these things, the future is present with God. More perhaps, than any other one thing, the prophecies of the Bible and their fulfillment bear witness to his divine inspiration.

7. To whom does God reveal the secrets of the future?

"Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets." Amos 3:7.

8. To whom do the things which have been revealed belong?

"The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever." Deut. 29:29.

9. What testimony did the apostle Peter bear concerning his experience on the mount of transfiguration?

"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty." 2 Peter 1:16.

10. When did he say he saw the majesty of Christ, and heard the voice from heaven?

"And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount." Verse 18.

11. How does he emphasize the reliability of the prophecy?

"And we have the word of prophecy made more sure." Verse 19, R. V. "Now more confirmed," Boothroyd's translation.

Note.—Every fulfillment of prophecy is a confirmation of the truthfulness and reliability of prophecy.

12. What admonition is therefore given?

"Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts." Verse 19, last part, R. V.

13. What has ever been the theme of God's prophets?

"Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the

prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you." 1 Peter 1: 9, 10.

14. Whose spirit inspired their utterances? "Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." Verse 11.

15. In what prophecy did Christ recognize Daniel as a prophet?

"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand)." Matt. 24: 15.

16. To what time were the prophecies of Daniel, as a whole, to be sealed?

"But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many

shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." Dan. 12: 4.

17. What assurance was given by the angel that these prophecies would be understood in the last days?

"And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand." Verses 9, 10.

18. What is the last book of the Bible called? "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him." Rev. 1: 1.

19. What is said of those who read, hear, and keep the things contained in this book?

"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein." Verse 3.

The Night Feast of Belshazzar

By Daniel March

BELSHAZZAR was the last of the Babylonian kings. The great feast which he made for a thousand of his lords was on the last night of his reign. He belonged to the proud and profligate race of the Chaldeans, whom the Hebrew prophets describe as tender and delicate, given to pleasures, dwelling carelessly and trusting in wickedness. Their young men were showy, sensual, and self-indulgent. They dressed themselves in dyed garments of brilliant colors, curled their hair, used unguents and perfumes, wore jewelry, and carried walking sticks with the beak of a bird or the head of a serpent carved on the handle. They were fond of silver plate and splendid carpets, costly furniture and great suppers. They frequented dramatic entertainments in which female singers and dancers appeared on the stage with little dress and less decency, for the amusement of the audience. They drank wine, sang lewd songs, were out late at night, and did everything else that wild, half-intoxicated young men are most likely to do.

All this can be abundantly shown from the Hebrew prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel; from the Greek historians, Herodotus, Xenophon, and Diodorus, and from inscriptions on monuments that remain to this day. Knowing all this concerning the young men of that great and mighty city of ancient time, we are not surprised that Babylon became a desolation. The day of doom is not far off from any great city when its young men have become "tender and delicate," and given to pleasure; when they have grown effeminate, self-indulgent, fond of amusement, and afraid of work; when they are excited and passionate about trifles and trifles—nervous and spiritless about the nobler demands of effort and duty.

The Germs of Decay

There is no more effectual way to destroy a great and mighty nation than to give its young men all the money they want, provide them with plays and festivities and amusements and dances and wine, and leave them to sweat the life and manhood out of body and soul in the hotbed of pleasure and self-indulgence. That is the way Babylon was ruined. That is the way imperial Rome became an easy prey to northern barbarians. That is the way Christian Constantinople came under the debasing and abominable sway of Mohammedans. That is the way Venice ended a thousand years of independent and glorious history with shame and servitude. And nothing worse could come upon the fairest and most Christian city in the world than to have a generation of tender and delicate young men, without energy, without principle, without conscience, with money enough to support elegant pleasures and costly vices. Let such young men give tone to public opinion, and take the lead in the highest circles of society in any city of our land, and they would soon make it the Sodom of America.

A Character Sketch of Belshazzar

Belshazzar had everything to flatter his pride and indulge his passions. He was an absolute monarch, holding the life and property of his thousand lords and his countless people entirely at his disposal. His servants were princes. His concubines were the daughters of kings. His capital was enriched with the spoils of nations; his provinces were cultivated by captive people. He was hasty and violent in temper, yet effeminate and luxurious in his habits of living. He was gracious and indulgent toward his favorites; and yet when their best efforts to please him did not happen to suit his caprice at the moment, he would be as cruel as the grave. His anger kindled at the slightest provocation, like flax in the flame, and he yielded to the seductions of pleasure and flattery as the early frost melts in the morning sun. In his soft and passive mood he could be molded like wax by those who studied his caprices and played upon his weaknesses; but let him be crossed in his will, let him receive a slight or a sudden provocation, and his effeminate face would darken with the ferocity of a demon.

The Dimensions of Babylon

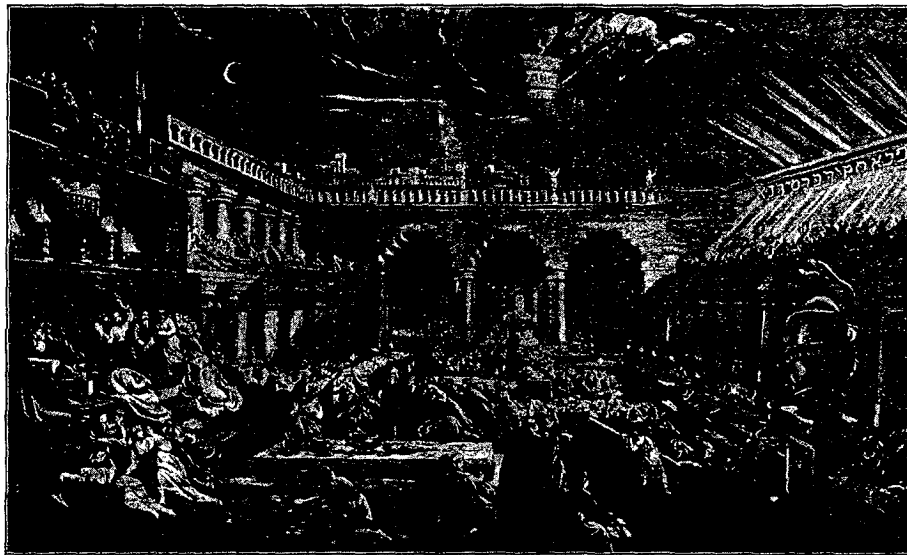
We have several independent statements in regard to the dimensions of Babylon, and although they all seem like immense exaggerations, we shall venture to take them as they stand for the purpose of illustration, without attempting to improve upon them by our conjectures. Let Herodotus, the father of history, be our principal authority.

The front of the great palace of Belshazzar was six times as great as the front of St. Peter's Church at Rome, four times as great as the length of the Capitol at Washington. The whole structure was surrounded by three walls, so high that

lords, the province of Babylon had been overrun and the capital assailed by a great army from the north. But, for some strange and inexplicable reason, the besieging force had apparently withdrawn. No effort appears to have been made to discover what had become of the enemy or what had occasioned their disappearance. It was enough that they could no longer be seen from the towers and walls. It was taken for granted that the siege was abandoned and the war was over. The whole city was immediately given up to rejoicing and every form of riotous excess. Belshazzar set the example, and people and princes were only too ready to imitate their king. The retiring enemy were ridiculed. The guards deserted their posts. The gates in the palace walls and the river banks were left open. No attention was given to the strange and startling fact that the water in the river was beginning to fall, and that when the night of the great feast began the bed of the stream was in many places bare, and that the empty channel left an open pathway for an army to march beneath the walls. There was feasting and dancing everywhere, and the mad revelers thronged the streets and houses, the palaces and pleasure gardens, through all the city. The flames of idolatrous sacrifice rose high into heaven from the lofty tower of Belus. The Hanging Gardens were hung with lanterns and torches, till they seemed like a mountain of fire at midnight. Torchlight processions flowed like rivers through the broad streets. The light of lamps outshone the starlight, and the blue Chaldean heavens looked black above the blaze of the great illumination.

Babylon's Fatal Hour of Revelry

Meanwhile, Belshazzar has entered the hall of banquet—



THE HANDWRITING AT BELSHAZZAR'S FEAST

"And a thousand dark nobles all bend at his board; Fruits glisten, flowers blossom, meats steam, and a flood Of the wine that man loveth runs redder than blood; Wild dancers are there, and a riot of mirth,

And the beauty that maddens the passions of earth; And the crowd all shout, while the vast roofs ring, All praise to Belshazzar, Belshazzar the king!"

"The music and the banquet and the wine; the garlands, the rose odors, and the flowers; the sparkling eyes, the flashing ornaments, the jeweled arms, the raven hair, the braids, the bracelets, the thin robes floating like clouds; the fair forms, the delusion and the false enchantment of the dizzy scene," take away all reason and all reverence from the flushed and crowded revelers.

There is now nothing too sacred for them to profane, and Belshazzar himself takes the lead in the riot and the haphazard. Even the mighty and terrible Nebuchadnezzar, who desolated the sanctuary of Jehovah at Jerusalem, would not use his sacred trophies in the worship of his false gods. But this weak and wicked successor of the great conqueror, excited with wine and carried away with the delusion that no foe can ever capture his great city, is anxious to make some grand display of defiant and blasphemous desecration.

"Bring forth," cries the monarch, 'the vessels of gold

Which my father tore down from the temples of old;

Bring forth, and we'll drink, while the trumpets are blown.

To the gods of bright silver, of gold, and of stone. Bring forth.' And before him the vessels all shine,

And he bows unto Baal, and he drinks the dark wine,

While the trumpets Bray and the cymbals ring, 'Praise, praise to Belshazzar, Belshazzar the king.'

Now what cometh? Look! look! without menace or call,

Who writes with the lightning's bright hand on the wall?

What pierceeth the king like the point of a dart?

What drives the bold blood from his cheek to his heart?

Let the captive of Judah the letters expound.

They are read, and Belshazzar is dead on the ground.

Hark! the Persian has come on the conqueror's wing,

And the Mede's on the throne of Belshazzar the king."

The Last Ceremonial of the Chaldean Kings

The graphic lines of the modern poet do not exaggerate the rapidity with which the ministers of vengeance came upon Belshazzar and his thousand lords on the last night of his impious reign. At the very moment when their sacrilegious revelry was at its height, the bodiless hand came forth and wrote the words of doom upon the wall of the banqueting room; the armies of Cyrus had turned the Euphrates out of its channel and marched into the unguarded city along the bed of the stream beneath the walls; they were already in possession of the palace gates when Belshazzar and his princes were drinking wine from the vessels of Jehovah and praising the gods of gold and silver and stone. That great feast of boasting and of blasphemy was the last ceremonial of the Chaldean kings. "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom." Dan. 5: 30, 31.

The Great Image of Daniel 2

The Kingdoms of the World and the Kingdom of God

A BIBLE STUDY

1. What statement did Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, make to his wise men whom he had assembled?

"And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream." Dan. 2: 3.

2. After being threatened with death if they did not make known the dream and the interpretation, what did the wise men say to the king?

"The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can show the king's matter; therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can show it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh." Verses 10, 11.

3. After the wise men had thus confessed their inability to do what the king required, who offered to interpret the dream?

"Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would show the king the interpretation." Verse 16.

4. After Daniel and his fellows had sought God earnestly, how were the dream and its interpretation revealed to Daniel?

"Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven." Verse 19.

5. When brought before the king, what did Daniel say?

"Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret which the king hath de-

manded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, show unto the king; but there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these." Verses 27, 28.

6. What did Daniel say the king had seen in his dream?

"Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these: . . . Thou, O king, sawest, and beheld a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. Verses 28-31.

7. Of what were the different parts of the image composed?

"This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay." Verses 32, 33.

8. By what means was the image broken to pieces?

"Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces." Verse 34.

9. What became of the various parts of the image?

"Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that

The Universal Kingdom of God

The Fifth Kingdom of Prophecy

By C. M. Snow

smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." Verse 35.

10. With what words did Daniel begin the interpretation of the dream?

"Thou, O king, art a king of kings; for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And whosoever the children of man dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. *Thou art this head of gold.*" Verse 37, 38.

NOTE.—The character of the Babylonian Empire is fittingly indicated by the nature of the material composing that portion of the image by which it was symbolized, the head of gold. It was "the golden kingdom of a golden age." The city of Babylon, its metropolis, according to history towered to a height never equaled by any of its later rivals. "Situated in the garden of the East; laid out in a perfect square sixty miles in circumference, fifteen miles on each side; surrounded by a wall three hundred and fifty feet high and eighty-seven feet thick, with a moat, or ditch, around this, of equal cubic capacity with the wall itself; divided into six hundred and seventy-six squares, laid out in luxuriant pleasure grounds and gardens, interspersed with magnificent dwellings,—this city, containing in itself many things which were themselves wonders of the world, was itself another and still mightier wonder. . . . Such was Babylon, with Nebuchadnezzar, youthful, bold, vigorous, and accomplished, seated upon its throne.

11. What was to be the nature of the next kingdom after Babylon?

"After thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee." Verse 39, first part.

12. Who was the last Babylonian king?

"In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old." Dan. 5:30, 31.

13. To whom was Belshazzar's kingdom given?

"Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." Verse 28.

14. By what is the Medo-Persian Empire represented in the great image?

By the breast and the arms of silver. Dan. 2:32.

15. By what is Grecia, the kingdom succeeding Medo-Persia, represented in the image?

"His belly and his thighs of brass." Verse 32.

"And another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth." Verse 30.

16. What is said of the fourth kingdom?

"And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron; forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things; and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise." Verse 40.

17. What scripture shows that the Roman emperors ruled the world?

"And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed." Luke 2:1.

NOTE.—Describing the Roman conquests, Gibbon uses the very imagery employed in the vision of Daniel 2. He says: "The arms of the republic, sometimes vanquished in battle, always victorious in war, advanced with rapid strides to the Euphrates, the Danube, the Rhine, and the ocean; and the images of gold, or silver, or brass, that might serve to represent the nations and their kings, were successively broken by the iron monarchy of Rome."—"Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," chap. 58, par. 1, under "General Observations," at the close of the chapter.

18. What was indicated by the mixture of clay and iron in the feet of the image?

"And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided." Dan. 2:41.

19. In what prophetic language was the varying strength of the ten kingdoms of the divided empire indicated?

"And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken" (margin, "brittle"). Verse 42.

20. Were any efforts to be made to reunite the divided empire of Rome?

"And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men; but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay." Verse 43.

NOTES.—Charlemaigne, Charles V, Louis XIV, and Napoleon all tried to reunite the broken fragments of the Roman Empire, but failed. By marriage and intermarriage, ties have been formed with a view to strengthening and cementing together the shattered kingdom; but none have succeeded. Many political revolutions and territorial changes have occurred in Europe since the fall of the Roman Empire, in 476 A. D.; but its divided state still remains.

This remarkable dream, as interpreted by Daniel, presents in the briefest form, and yet with unmistakable clearness, the course of world empires from the time of Nebuchadnezzar to the close of earthly history and the setting up of the everlasting kingdom of God. The history confirms the prophecy. The sovereignty of the world was held by Babylon from the time of this

to the Medes and Persians. The victory of the Grecian forces at the battle of Arbela, in 331, marked the downfall of the Medo-Persian Empire, and the Greeks then became the undisputed rulers of the world. The battle of Pydna, in Macedonia, in A. D. 168, was the last organized effort to withstand a world-wide conquest by the Romans, and at that time, therefore, the sovereignty passed from the Greeks to the Romans, and the fourth kingdom was fully established. The division of Rome into ten kingdoms is definitely foretold in the vision recorded in the seventh chapter of Daniel, and occurred between the years 351 A. D. and 476 A. D.

21. What is to take place in the days of these kingdoms.

"And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; . . . but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." Verse 44.

NOTE.—This verse foretells the establishment of another universal kingdom, the kingdom of God. This kingdom is to overthrow and supplant all existing earthly kingdoms, and is to stand forever. The time for the setting up of this kingdom was to be "in the days of these kings." This cannot refer to the four preceding empires, or kingdoms; for they were not contemporaneous, but successive; neither can it refer to an establishment of the kingdom at Christ's first advent, for the ten kingdoms which arose out of the ruins of the Roman Empire were not yet in existence. It must, therefore, be yet future.

22. In what announcement in the New Testament is the establishment of the kingdom of God made known?

"And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever." Rev. 11:15.

WHEN Daniel, under inspiration of God, had caused Nebuchadnezzar to see again the "great image" of his dream, he said, "Thou art this head of gold." He told him of another kingdom inferior to his, a third kingdom represented by the brass of the image, and a fourth kingdom of iron and finally of "iron mixed with miry clay"—the divided state of the Roman Empire, as we see these divisions today. And then the divine record continues:—

"And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." Dan. 2:44.

That was God's kingdom, to be set up after all earthly kingdoms had been broken in pieces and had been scattered to the four winds. That is the kingdom, and its ruler is the ruler referred to in this prophecy of the psalmist:—

"Jehovah said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. . . . His wrath will soon be kindled. Blessed are all they that take refuge in him." Ps. 2:7-12.

It was of that kingdom that Jesus himself was speaking to his disciples when he said: "A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return" (Luke 19:12); and the interest and partnership

the flock" and the "Stronghold" of those who put their trust in him. Of that kingdom there will be no end, and they who are its happy subjects will be the trophies of divine grace, whose sins have been forgiven, whose mortality has been swallowed up in immortality, upon whom death no more can lay its icy grasp. In all the history of the world no other such glorious prospect has ever been held before the human race. Life, eternal life, in a kingdom that shall never pass away, who would not strive for such an inheritance!

In this world, kingdoms have risen and fallen, and others have built upon their ruins; but that restored dominion is a kingdom whose continuance will measure with eternity. Here the greatest rulers perish after a few short years; but there neither Ruler nor subjects will feel the touch of death, and the bloom of eternal youth will be upon the faces of all God's people. Here we have the cripples, the dumb, and the destitute; but there "shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing," and the wealth of a limitless universe will be shared by all the subjects of the realm. Here death and decay, sorrow and crying, sickness and pain, smile the rich and the poor, the young and the old; but there the almighty Ruler, the Prince of Peace, the Reconciler of a rebel race, the loving Father of mankind, "shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away. And he that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new." Rev. 21:4, 5. Then will this scripture also be fulfilled:—

"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." Rev. 21:3.

With this agrees the testimony of the Spirit through the prophet Isaiah:—

"For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people; and the nations shall be heard in her no more the voice of weeping and the voice of crying. . . . And it shall come to pass that, before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." Isa. 65:17-24.

That is God's renewed universe, when the fires of God's judgment and his cleansing shall have burned and purified this breeding place of sin, and the New Jerusalem shall have come down "from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Rev. 21:1, 2. In that kingdom, with sin, sorrow, misery, and death wiped out, with even

the desert places fruitful and blossoming as the rose, with beauty and joy on every hand, and every inhabitant sealed to everlasting life and privileged to enjoy the association of the Father who bore with us and the Christ who redeemed us, the highest hopes of the human heart will be realized, and love and peace and satisfaction will reign forever. What more could man ask? What more could God give?



THE LAND OF PEACE—"I SAW A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH." REV. 21:1

23. For what have we been taught to pray?

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." Matt. 6:10.

24. What event is closely associated with the establishment of God's everlasting kingdom?

"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom." 2 Tim. 4:1.

25. With what prayer do the Scriptures close?

"He which testified these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Rev. 22:20.

Look for the waymarks as you journey on, Look for the waymarks, passing one by one; Down through the ages, past the kingdoms four,— Where are we standing? Look the waymarks o'er.

First, the Assyrian kingdom ruled the world, Then Medo-Persia's banners were unfurled; And after Greece held universal sway, Rome seized the scepter,—where are we today?

Down in the feet of iron and of clay, Weak and divided, soon to pass away; What will the next great, glorious drama be?— Christ and his coming, and eternity.

— F. E. Belden.

The Evidential Value of Fulfilled Prophecy

One of the various lines of Christian evidence none so specially adapted to these last days as that based on fulfilled prophecy. The prophecies of Daniel stand preeminent among all others in their evidential value. It is an astounding fact that not only does his brief book give a fore-view of twenty-five centuries of Jewish and Gentile history, including the first and the second advents of Christ, but that it also fixes the chronology of various episodes of the then unknown future, with a simple certainty which would be audacious if it were not divine.—H. G. Grant.

of the saints of God in that fifth universal kingdom are set forth in these words of Scripture:—

"And the kingdom and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." Dan. 7:27.

That glorious consummation is the climax of prophecy and the end of history. Toward that consummation every loyal intelligence in the universe of God has been laboring with intensity of purpose through the ages that have been made sorrowful by sin.

This is the kingdom lost to man through his disobedience, and usurped by Satan when he brought man into subjection to himself through deception, false hopes, and falsehood. It was promised to man again through the Seed of Abraham:—

"Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. . . . God hath granted it to Abraham by promise. . . . And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise." Gal. 3:16-29.

Of what promise is the sacred writer speaking?— The promise that he should be the "heir of the world." Rom. 4:13. Man had been the heir of the world, the king of the earth; but when he disobeyed God and yielded to Satan, he lost his dominion, and became the subject of the "prince of the power of the air," and of the "spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." The restoration of that dominion to the possession of man comes about through the life and sacrifice of the man Christ Jesus; and that restored dominion is the fifth kingdom. Concerning that restoration we read:—

"And thou, O Tower of the flock, the Stronghold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem." Micah 4:8.

That "first dominion," lost in Adam, is re-

ceived in Christ, and shall be given to the saints of God in that fifth universal kingdom.

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