

# On Daniel

## Fragments\*

### Preface and the Interpretation of Daniel's Visions of the Ram & Goat and the Seventy Weeks

As I wish to give an accurate account of the times of the captivity of the children of Israel in Babylon and to discuss the prophecies contained in the visions of the blessed Daniel [and] his manner of life from his boyhood in Babylon, I too shall proceed to bear my testimony to that holy and righteous man, a prophet and witness of Christ, who not only declared the visions of Nebuchadnezzar the king in those times but also trained youths of like mind with himself and raised up faithful witnesses in the world.

He is born, then, in the time of the prophetic ministry of the blessed Jeremiah and in the reign of Jehoiakim (or Eliakim). Along with the other captives, he is carried off a prisoner to Babylon.

Now there are born to the blessed Josiah these five sons: Jehoahaz, Eliakim, Johanan, Zedekiah (or Jeconiah), and Sadum.<sup>1</sup> And on his father's death, Jehoahaz is anointed as king by the people at the age of twenty-three years. Against him comes up Pharaoh Necho, in the third month of his reign; and he takes [Jehoahaz] prisoner and carries him into Egypt and imposes tribute on the land to the extent of one hundred talents of silver and ten talents of gold.

And in his stead he sets up his brother Eliakim as king over the land, whose name also he changed to Jehoiakim and who was then eleven years old. Against him came up Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon<sup>2</sup> [who] carries him off prisoner to Babylon, taking with him also some of the vessels of the House in

Jerusalem. (Thrown into prison as a friend of Pharaoh and as one set up by him over the kingdom,<sup>3</sup> he is released at length in the thirty-seventh year by Evil-Merodach king of Babylon; and [Jehoiakim] cut his hair short, and was counselor to [Evil-Merodach] and ate at his table until the day that he died.)

On his removal, his son Jehoiakim<sup>4</sup> reigns three years.<sup>5</sup> And against him came up Nebuchadnezzar [who] transports him and ten thousand of the men of his people to Babylon and sets up in his stead his father's brother [Jeconiah], whose name he changed also to Zedekiah. And after making agreement with him by oath and treaty, he returns to Babylon. This [Zedekiah], after a reign of eleven years, revolted against him and went over to Pharaoh king of Egypt. And in the tenth year Nebuchadnezzar came against him from the land of the Chaldeans and surrounded the city with a stockade and environed it all round and completely shut it up. In this way the larger number of them perished by famine, and others perished by the sword, and some were taken prisoners, and the city was burned with fire, and the Temple and the wall were destroyed. And the army of the Chaldeans seized all the treasure that was found in the House of the Lord and all the vessels of gold and silver. And all the brass, Nebuzaradan, chief of the slaughterers, stripped off, and he carried it to Babylon. And the army of the Chaldeans pursued Zedekiah himself, as he fled by night along with seven hundred men, and surprised him in Jericho and brought him to the king of Babylon at Reblatha. And the king pronounced judgment upon him in wrath, because he had

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\*All of the known fragments can be read here:

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf05.iii.iv.i.x.html>

<sup>1</sup> See 1 Ch 3:15.

<sup>2</sup> See 2 Ki 24:10.

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<sup>3</sup> See 2 Ki 25:27.

<sup>4</sup> His son's name was actually Jehoiachin.

<sup>5</sup> Some manuscripts read "three months".

violated the oath of the Lord and the agreement he had made with him. So he slew his sons before his face and put out Zedekiah's eyes. Then he cast him into chains of iron and carried him to Babylon; and there he remained grinding at the mill until the day of his death. And when he died, they took his body and cast it behind the wall of Nineveh. In his case is fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah, saying, "[As] I live,' says the Lord, 'though Jeconiah son of Jehoiakim king of Judah should become the signet upon my right hand, yet will I pluck you from there; and I will give you into the hands of them that seek your life, of them whose face you fear, even into the hands of the Chaldeans. And I will cast you out — and your mother who bore you — into a country where you were not born. And there you shall die. But to the land that they desire in their souls, I will not send you back. Dishonored is Jeconiah, like an unserviceable vessel, for which there is no use, since he is cast out and expelled into a land that he did not know. O earth, hear the word of the Lord. Write this man as a man excommunicate; for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, ruling any more in Judah.'"<sup>6</sup>

Thus, the captivity in Babylon befell them — after the Exodus from Egypt — when the whole people, then, was transported, and the city made desolate and the sanctuary destroyed, that the word of the Lord might be fulfilled which He spoke by the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah, saying, "The sanctuary shall be desolate seventy years."<sup>7</sup>

Then we find that the blessed Daniel prophesied in Babylon and appeared as the vindicator of Susanna.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See Jer 22.

<sup>7</sup> Jer 25:11.

<sup>8</sup> The story of Susanna is found in the Septuagint, which the Church still was using in the third century.

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The prophet, having thus<sup>10</sup> instructed us with all exactness as to the certainty of the things that are to be, broke off from his present subject and passed again to the kingdom of the Persians and Greeks, recounting to us another vision<sup>11</sup> which took place and was fulfilled in its proper time, in order that, by establishing our belief in this, he might be able to present us to God as readier believers in the things that are to be. Accordingly, what he had narrated in the first vision, he again recounts in detail for the edification of the faithful. For by the "ram pushing westward and northward and southward," he means Darius, the king of the Persians, who overcame all the nations; "for," says he, "these beasts shall not stand before him." And by the "he-goat that came from the west," he means Alexander the Macedonian, the king of the Greeks; and in that he "came against that very ram and was moved with wrath and smote him upon the face and shivered him and cast him upon the ground and stamped upon him," this expresses just what has happened.

For Alexander waged war against Darius and overcame him and made himself master of the whole sovereignty, after routing and destroying his camp. Then, after the exaltation of the he-goat, his horn — the great one, namely — was broken; and there arose four horns under it, toward the four winds of heaven. For when Alexander had made himself master of all the land of Persia and had reduced its people into subjection, he thereupon died, after dividing his kingdom into four principalities, as has been shown above. And from that time "one horn was exalted and waxed great, even to the power of heaven; and

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<sup>9</sup> The order of the book is not known for certain, but there are fragments of verse-by-verse commentary as well as a thorough interpretation of Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar's visions, of which only a portion is included here. We also have further fragments that include commentary on "The Song of the Three Children" and "Susanna", both portions of Daniel found in the Septuagint.

<sup>10</sup> In the discussion of the prophecy of the four beasts being the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans.

<sup>11</sup> See Dan 8 & 9.

by him the sacrifice," he says, "was disturbed, and righteousness cast down to the ground."

For Antiochus arose, surnamed Epiphanes, who was of the line of Alexander. And after he had reigned in Syria and brought under him all Egypt, he went up to Jerusalem and entered the sanctuary and seized all the treasures in the house of the Lord and the golden candlestick and the table and the altar and made a great slaughter in the land; even as it is written: "And the sanctuary shall be trodden under foot, unto evening and unto morning, a thousand and three hundred days." For it happened that the sanctuary remained desolate during that period, three and a half years, that the thousand and three hundred days might be fulfilled — until Judas Maccabaeus arose after the death of his father Matthias, and withstood him and destroyed the encampment of Antiochus and delivered the city and recovered the sanctuary and restored it in strict accordance with the Law.

Since, then, the angel Gabriel also recounted these things to the prophet, as they have been understood by us, as they have also taken place, and as they have been all clearly described in the books of the Maccabees<sup>12</sup>, let us see further what he says on the other weeks. For when [Daniel] read the book of Jeremiah the prophet, in which it was written that the sanctuary would be desolate seventy years, he made confession with fastings and supplications and prayed that the people might return sooner from their captivity to the city Jerusalem. Thus, then, he speaks in his account: "In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, who was king over the realm of the Chaldeans, I, Daniel, understood in the books the number of the years, as the word of the Lord had come to Jeremiah the prophet, for the accomplishment of the desolation of Jerusalem in seventy years," and so on.

After his confession and supplication, the angel says to him..., "Seventy weeks are determined upon your people and upon the

Holy City, to seal up sins and to blot out transgressions and to seal up vision and prophet and to anoint the Most Holy. And you shall know and understand, that from the going forth of words for the answer and for the building of Jerusalem unto Christ the Prince shall be seven weeks and threescore and two weeks."

Having mentioned, therefore, seventy weeks and having divided them into two parts, in order that what was spoken by him to the prophet might be better understood, he proceeds thus: "Unto Christ the Prince shall be seven weeks," which make forty-nine years. It was in the twenty-first year that Daniel saw these things in Babylon. Hence, the forty-nine years added to the twenty-one, make up the seventy years, of which the blessed Jeremiah spoke: "The sanctuary shall be desolate seventy years from the captivity that befell them under Nebuchadnezzar. And after these things the people will return and sacrifice and offering will be presented, when Christ is their Prince."<sup>13</sup>

Now of what christ<sup>14</sup> does he speak, but of Jesus<sup>15</sup> the son of Josedech, who returned at that time along with the people and offered sacrifice according to the law in the seventieth year when the sanctuary was built? For all the kings and priests were styled christs, because they were anointed with the holy oil, which Moses of old prepared. These, then, bore the name of the Lord in their own persons, showing ahead of time the type and presenting the image until the perfect King and Priest appeared from heaven, who alone did the will of the Father, as also it is written in Kings: "And I will raise me up a faithful priest, who shall do all things according to my heart."<sup>16</sup>

In order, then, to show the time when He is to come whom the blessed Daniel desired to see, he says, "And after seven weeks there are other threescore and two weeks," which period embraces the space of 434 years. For after the

<sup>12</sup>found in the Septuagint

<sup>13</sup>Jer 25:11 & Dan 9:25

<sup>14</sup>Christ means "anointed one".

<sup>15</sup>that is, the priest Jeshua or Joshua of Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, and Zechariah

<sup>16</sup>1 Sam 2:35

return of the people from Babylon under the leadership of Jesus the son of Josedech and Ezra the scribe and Zerubbabel the son of Salathiel, of the tribe of David, there were 434 years unto the coming of Christ, in order that the Priest of priests might be manifested in the world, and that He who takes away the sins of the world might be evidently set forth, as John speaks concerning Him: "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"<sup>17</sup> And in like manner Gabriel says, "To blot out transgressions and make reconciliation for sins." But who has blotted out our transgressions? Paul the apostle teaches us, saying, "He is our peace who made both one,"<sup>18</sup> and then, "Blotting out the handwriting of sins that was against us."<sup>19</sup>

[The fact] that transgressions, therefore, are blotted out and that reconciliation is made for sins is shown by this: but who are they who have reconciliation made for their sins but they who believe on His name and propitiate His countenance by good works? And also, [the fact] that after the return of the people from Babylon there was a space of 434 years until the time of the birth of Christ may be easily understood. For, since the first covenant was given to the children of Israel after a period of 434 years, it follows that the second covenant also should be defined by the same space of time, in order that it might be expected by the people and easily recognized by the faithful.

And for this reason Gabriel says, "...and to anoint the Most Holy." And the Most Holy is none else but the Son of God alone, who, when He came and manifested Himself, said to them, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me,"<sup>20</sup> and so forth. Whosoever, therefore, believed on the heavenly Priest were cleansed by that same Priest, and their sins were blotted out. And whosoever believed not on Him, despising Him as a man, had their sins sealed, as those that could not be taken away.

So the angel, foreseeing that not all should believe on Him, said, "...to finish sins and to seal up sins." For as many as continued to disbelieve Him, even to the end, had their sins not finished but sealed to be kept for judgment. But as many as will believe on Him as One able to remit sins have their sins blotted out. Therefore he says, "...and to seal up the vision and prophet."

For when He came who is the fulfilling of the Law and of the Prophets (for the Law and the Prophets were till John), it was necessary that the things spoken by them should be confirmed (sealed), in order that at the coming of the Lord all things loosed should be brought to light and that things bound of old should now be loosed by Him....

And that the things spoken of old by the Law and the Prophets were all sealed and that they were unknown to men, Isaiah declares when he says, "And they will deliver the book that is sealed to one that is learned and will say to him, 'Read this,' and he will say, 'I cannot read it, for it is sealed.'"<sup>21</sup> It was meet and necessary that the things spoken of old by the prophets should be sealed to the unbelieving Pharisees, who thought that they understood the letter of the Law, and be opened to the believing. The things, therefore, that of old were sealed, are now by the grace of God the Lord all open to the saints.

For He was Himself the perfect Seal, and the Church is the key — "He who opens, and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens,"<sup>22</sup> as John says. And again, the same says: "And I saw, on the right hand of Him that sat on the throne, a book written within and without, sealed with seven seals; and I saw an angel proclaiming with a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?'" and so forth. "And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts a Lamb standing slain...."<sup>23</sup> He took the book, therefore, and loosed it, in order that the things spoken concerning Him of old in

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<sup>17</sup>Jn 1:29

<sup>18</sup>Eph 2:14

<sup>19</sup>Col 2:14

<sup>20</sup>Lk 4:18

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<sup>21</sup>Is 29:11

<sup>22</sup>Rev 3:7

<sup>23</sup>See Rev 5.

secret might now be proclaimed with boldness upon the house-tops.<sup>24</sup>

For this reason, then, the angel says to Daniel, "Seal the words, for the vision is until the end of the time." But to Christ it was not said "seal" but "loose" the things bound of old; in order that, by His grace, we might know the will of the Father and believe upon Him whom He has sent for the salvation of men, Jesus our Lord. He says, therefore, "They shall return, and the street shall be built and the wall," which in reality took place. For the people returned and built the city and the Temple and the wall round about. Then he says, "After threescore and two weeks the times will be fulfilled, and one week will make a covenant with many. And in the midst of the week sacrifice and oblation will be removed, and in the Temple will be the abomination of desolations."

For when the threescore and two weeks are fulfilled and Christ is come and the Gospel is preached in every place, the times being then accomplished, there will remain only one week, the last, in which Elijah will appear and Enoch, and in the midst of it the abomination of desolation will be manifested the Antichrist, announcing desolation to the world. And when he comes, the sacrifice and oblation will be removed, which now are offered to God in every place by the nations....

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<sup>24</sup>See Mt 10:27.