



The second coming of Christ as the golden key to unlock the Book of Daniel: an analysis of a Pentecostal interpretation of the dream in Daniel 2

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Abstract

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Pentecostals regard the doctrine of the second coming of Christ as very important. All passages in the Bible deemed to be “prophetical” are interpreted in premillennialist terms. Bennie Kleynhans’ interpretation of the dream in Daniel 2 is used to demonstrate how an endeavour to find relevance through a contemporary interpretation of a Biblical passage, easily becomes outdated. He was of the opinion that communism, the Council on Foreign Relations and the European Economic Community with its ten members would introduce the Antichrist as the leader of a one-world government, eventually leading to the second coming of Christ. Daniel 2 is read as “prophecy”, describing the global situation at the latter half of the twentieth century. This demonstrates that the differences in interpreting the dream in Daniel 2 reflect different ways of viewing and treating the Bible. A fundamentalist perspective sees the Bible as a blueprint of what God is going to do in future and how he is going to do this. The “future” – the “last days” just before the second coming of Christ – is inevitably linked to the present day.

Opsomming

Die tweede koms van Christus as die goue sleutel om die Boek van Daniël te ontsluit: 'n analise van 'n Pinksterinterpretasie van die droom in Daniël 2

Pinkstergelowiges heg groot waarde aan die wederkoms van Christus en interpreteer alle Skrifgedeeltes wat “profeties” mag klink in premillennialistiese terme. In hierdie artikel word Bennie Kleynhans se interpretasie van die droom in Daniël 2 gebruik om te demonstreer hoe 'n kontemporêre interpretasie van 'n Skrifgedeelte gedateer kan raak. Kleynhans het geglo dat kommunisme, die Raad vir Buitelandse Verhoudings en die Europese Ekonomiese Gemeenskap met sy tien lede die Antichris sal voorstel as die leier van 'n eenwêreldregering en dat dit die wederkoms direk sal voorafgaan. Hy lees Daniël 2 as “profesie” wat die globale situasie in die tweede helfte van die twintigste eeu beskryf. So demonstreer Kleynhans hoe sy siening van die Bybel hom lei om Daniël 2 te interpreteer as 'n fundamentalistiese perspektief van die Bybel, as 'n bloudruk van wat God in ons tyd gaan doen. Die “laaste dae” net voor die tweede koms van Christus word direk aan die hede verbind.

1. Introduction

Dayton (1987:21) offers a theological analysis of Pentecostalism which is widely accepted within the Pentecostal movement itself. This analysis is based on the so-called Foursquare Gospel of Aimee Semple McPherson (controversial founder of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel) whose message is:

Jesus saves us according to John 3:16. He baptises us with the Holy Spirit according to Acts 2:4. He heals our bodies according to James 5:14-15. And Jesus is coming again to receive us unto Himself according to 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.

In some branches of Pentecostalism sanctification, as a residue of the holiness movement – one of the originating factors of the Pentecostal movement – is also emphasised (Dayton, 1987:20). The Book of Daniel is widely seen in Pentecostal circles as containing prominent information about eschatological matters. In this article, Bennie Kleynhans' interpretation of the dream of king Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2 is described and analysed.

B.J.P. Kleynhans was a prominent leader and pastor in the Apostolic Faith Mission of South Africa (AFM). He was born in 1929, ministered in assemblies of the AFM in Roodepoort, Koster, Messina, Brits and Durban before becoming a missionary in 1970. For

30 years he preached and published exclusively about eschatological themes, including the Book of Daniel.¹ He died in a car accident in January 2002. His rendering of eschatology, pre-millennialism with the attendant doctrine of the rapture, is concomitant with the eschatology acceptable to classical Pentecostalism.

Kleynhans' arguments are dated, i.e. they refer to certain dates. It is because of this dating that they are analysed, to show how one's hermeneutics can lead to an interpretation that is misleading and factually wrong: communism faded away with the fall of the wall of Berlin in 1989, and the European Economic Community eventually led to the European Union – not with ten member states, but 27 as in 2007.²

1 Kleynhans wrote several books, all of them undated: *Die Koning kom*; *Die Koning kom II*; *Die eindtyd in perspektief*; *Die dag van die Here is naby*; “*Die laaste uur*” en die merk van die dier; *Die laaste waarskuwing*; *Die môre kom! En ook die nag*; *Oorwinning in die laaste dae*; *Profetiese psalms*; *Tussen 7 goue kandelare*; *Wie is die ware Israel?*; *Eskatologie: die toekomsleer*, and *Daniël en die eindtyd*.

2 As of 1950, the European Coal and Steel Community begins to unite European countries economically and politically in order to secure lasting peace. The six founders are Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. The 1950s are dominated by a cold war between East and West. In 1957, the Treaty of Rome creates the European Economic Community (EEC), or *Common Market*. Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom join the European Union on 1 January 1973, raising the number of member states to nine. In 1981, Greece becomes the tenth member of the EU and Spain and Portugal follow five years later. In 1987 the Single European Act is signed. This is a treaty which provides the basis for a vast six-year programme aimed at sorting out the problems with the free-flow of trade across EU borders and thus creates the *Single Market*. There is major political upheaval when, on 9 November 1989, the Berlin Wall is pulled down and the border between East and West Germany is opened for the first time in 28 years. This leads to the reunification of Germany when both East and West Germany are united in October 1990. With the collapse of communism across Central and Eastern Europe, Europeans become closer neighbours. In 1993 the Single Market is completed with the “four freedoms” of movement of goods, services, people and money. In 1995 the EU gains three more new members: Austria, Finland and Sweden. The euro is the new currency for many Europeans. The political divisions between East and West Europe are finally declared healed when no fewer than ten new countries join the EU in 2004. Many people think that it is time for Europe to have a constitution, but what sort of constitution is by no means easy to agree, so the debate on the future of Europe rages on (Anon., 2007).

Hal Lindsey's *The late great planet earth* is similarly dated.³ In this best-selling work of non-fiction the author argues that it is possible to know when the second coming of Christ will occur. He states that Jesus' parable of the fig tree (Matt. 24:32-34) answers the enigma by using the fig tree as an image of the nation of Israel. The fig tree that puts forth its leaves indicates that the nation, after lying dormant for a season, would come back to life. This happened in 1948, when Israel once again became a sovereign nation. Jesus indicated that the end would come within the very same generation that that was to occur. In Biblical terms a generation is 40 years, and hence the end of the world, an apocalyptic crisis of catastrophic proportions, would come sometime before 1988, 40 years after the resurgence of Israel (Lindsey, 1972:164-165; Ehrman, 2005:12-13). Lindsey "proves" his "speculations" with proof texts from the Book of Daniel (e.g. from Dan. 12 in Lindsey, 1972:166-167).

2. The dream in Daniel 2

Kleynhans (s.a.a:9) acknowledges the problem of dating posed by Daniel 2:1, which is that the king dreamed in the second year of his reign, opposed to the information given in the first chapter that Daniel and his three friends were initially trained for three years before they gained their position among the king's wise men. The solution Kleynhans offers is that the dating does not refer to the king's second year of reign, but to the second year after the destruction of Jerusalem. The reason for this is that before this incident, Jerusalem still had its own king. To give an interpretation directly contrary to the information provided in the text and unsupported by textual variants, is unacceptable. According to the chronology Kleynhans uses, Daniel was 22 years old at the time of the destruction.⁴

Another remark of Kleynhans (s.a.a:9) needs to be mentioned: The use of the Hebrew language in the first and the last five chapters of the Book of Daniel is due to its contents being concerned with Jerusalem and the nation of YHWH, while the other chapters (2-7) in Aramaic are about the behaviour and judgment of heathen kings

3 The Afrikaans version of the book (Lindsey, 1972) claims on its cover that eight million copies of the work have been sold in English.

4 See also the different ages Kleynhans (s.a.a:viii) provides for Daniel when "he" wrote the different chapters of his book. Where and how Kleynhans gets these dates, he does not disclose.

and kingdoms. This solution for the problem of the two languages has been given in the *Forschungsgeschichte* of the book (e.g., by Baldwin, 1978:31, 59 in following A. Lenglet).⁵

The subject matter of chapters 2 to 7 is arranged in concentric circles, with the extremities – chapters 2 and 7 – presenting four earthly (“heathen”) kingdoms, chapters 3 and 6 narratives that demonstrate God’s power to deliver his servants, and the middle two chapters God’s judgment on proud rulers. The central section is the climax of the message, for the God of heaven wants to be acknowledged as such by the princes of the world.⁶ These six chapters form a theology of history, “addressed to the kings of the earth and therefore written in the international language” (Baldwin, 1978:60). The supposition is that Persians, and specifically Persian rulers, would want to read this Jewish text, which is not a very realistic expectation. Researchers offer several other solutions to the problem of two languages. Most researchers would probably rather see the issue of the two languages as an unsolvable problem.

2.1 Contents of the dream

The meaning of the dream is supposedly connected (by the narrator) to the psalm that Daniel sings when he receives the “mystery” of the contents of the dream and its interpretation in a vision. In his song of praise Daniel says:

Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever // for wisdom
and might are his // And he changeth the times and the seasons
// he removeth kings, and setteth up kings // he giveth wisdom
unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding
// He revealeth the deep and secret things // he knoweth what *is*

5 Hartman and Di Lella (1978:73) show that “in Aramaic” is omitted in 1QDan^a, and from this suppose that the words come from a later date and that the original text was in Hebrew. The scroll is damaged, as Lucas (2002:63) reasons, and there would be enough room for the word followed by a space, as is actually the case in MT.

6 “The God of heaven” is the term with which the Persians prefer to refer to the God of the Jews. It is found for the first time in post-exilic literature (Jonah 1:9; Ezra 1:2; 2 Chron. 36:23; Neh. 1:4, as well as Dan. 2:28), with the exception of Genesis 24:7. This form of address originated under Persian influence (Schmidt, 1997:123). That God lives in heaven was known to Israel from early (cf. Mic. 6:6), but the Persians used the term to refer to Israel’s God.

in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him. (Dan. 2:20-22; KJV.)⁷

The psalm verbalises the idea that the dream demonstrates God's sovereign rule over the earth, including all kings and kingdoms, and that He knows the future, the deep and secret things that are in the darkness.

This theme is repeated when Daniel appears before the king with the promise that he would be able to interpret the dream: nobody else can reveal the contents of the king's dream or explain its meaning, except the God in heaven who has chosen to reveal the secrets of what shall be in the latter days (Dan. 2:27-28).

In his dream the king sees a large statue, a great, bright image, awesome in appearance. The head of the statue is of fine gold, its breast and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of brass, its legs of iron, and its feet part of iron and part of clay. In the next part of the dream the king sees a stone (or a rock), cut without hands, striking the image and breaking it to pieces. Every part of the image is destroyed, the iron and the clay, the brass and the silver, and the gold, "and [become] like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind [carries] them away, that no place [is] found for them" (Dan. 2:35; KJV). The rock becomes a great mountain, and fills the whole earth.

2.2 Interpretation of the dream

The interpretation is given in verses 37-45. In typical eastern way Daniel shows his respect for the king:

Thou, O king, *art* a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever 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. 2:38-39.)

The breast and arms of silver indicate another, inferior kingdom and the belly and thighs of bronze a third kingdom of brass. These kingdoms will rule over all the earth. A fourth kingdom shall be

7 The KJV is intentionally used, because the Pentecostal movement as a rule chooses the oldest, most literal translations, as also happens in Afrikaans Pentecostal churches who use the 1953 revised edition almost exclusively.

strong as iron, breaking and crushing all the others. The feet and toes, partly of clay and partly of iron, indicate a divided kingdom, partly strong and partly brittle. The people in this kingdom will be a mixture and will not remain united. In the time of the last kingdom the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, crushing all kingdoms and bringing them to an end while it will stand forever.

2.3 Kleynhans' interpretation of the dream

When he appears before the king, Daniel states that nobody else but he is able to reveal the contents of the king's dream or explain its meaning, because the God in heaven has chosen to reveal the secrets of what shall be in the latter days to him (Daniel) (v. 27-28). Kleynhans interprets the term "the latter days" (literally, "the latter part or end of the day") as referring to the eschatological end of times, without considering that the dream's interpretation might relate to the end of Nebuchadnezzar's reign and the future of the Babylonian kingdom.

The head of the image represents the Babylonian kingdom with Nebuchadnezzar as its representative, as explained by Daniel. It is important to note that this mighty king receives his power and might and glory to rule over mankind, the beasts of the field and the birds of the air from the God of heaven (v. 38).

The succeeding kingdom, one of lesser worth and prominence than the Babylonian, refers to the Persian kingdom, according to Daniel 5:28 in Kleynhans' (s.a.a:13) argumentation. Kleynhans finds the reason for its inferiority in the power the Persian king had decentralised to the provinces, demonstrated for instance by the powerlessness of king Darius to save Daniel in Daniel 6:15,⁸ as opposed to what Daniel 5:19 states of Nebuchadnezzar: "Those the king wanted to put to death, he put to death; those he wanted to spare, he spared; those he wanted to promote, he promoted; and those he wanted to humble, he humbled."

The Persian kingdom is followed by a third, represented by the belly and thighs of brass (v. 39b). Kleynhans (s.a.a:13) deduces from Daniel 8:20-21 and 11:2-4 that this refers to the Greek kingdom of

8 According to the text it was the administrators and the satraps who wanted Daniel out of the way and formulate charges against him in his conduct of governmental affairs.

Alexander the Great. The words: “which shall bear rule over all the earth”, indicate the extent of Alexander’s kingdom, which includes nearly the whole known world of his time. Kleynhans quotes Josephus’ tale of the rabbis of Jerusalem’s welcoming Alexander with the words that they have read about him in the Book of Daniel and therefore they have expected him.⁹ Alexander’s purpose was to unite all people in one state as part of the Greek civilisation.

Not much information about the second and third kingdoms is given, because the prophet wants to emphasise the fourth, which, in Kleynhans’ (s.a.a:14) view, is the Roman Empire. This kingdom is the culmination of human reign. The first three kingdoms destroyed Jerusalem, the temple and the Jewish nation, culminating in the Greek/Syrian Antiochus Epiphanes’ prohibition of circumcision, possession of the Torah and keeping of the Sabbath. He also appointed a high priest from the tribe of Benjamin, as the Antichrist would do in the last days (Kleynhans, s.a.a:14). Antiochus IV was a forerunner and prototype of the Antichrist.¹⁰ The fourth kingdom would “break in pieces and bruise” (Dan. 2:40), as happened in 70 CE when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and persecuted the early Christians. The Romans built an empire encompassing the world with Octavian or Augustus in the West and Antony in the East, which comprised the two legs of the statue.

The twentieth century saw the revival of the Roman Empire. The “feet and toes, part of potter’s clay, and part of iron” (Dan. 2:41) refer to the European Economic Community existing of ten nations (feet with ten toes) as predicted by Daniel 2 and 7, and Revelations 13 and 17 (Kleynhans, s.a.a:15; s.a.b:212-213). These ten nations are descendants of the Roman Empire, form the Community Market of the United States of Europe and consist of the socialism of iron and democracy of clay. In the end the Antichrist will head the EEC with

9 Kleynhans misquotes Josephus (*Ant.* XI. VIII. 5). “And when the book of Daniel was shewed him (Alexander), wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that he himself was the person intended; and as he was then glad, he dismissed the multitude for the present, but the next day he called them to him, and bade them ask what favours they pleased of him; whereupon the high priest desired that they might enjoy the laws of their forefathers, and might pay no tribute on the seventh year. He granted all they desired ...”.

10 At one stage, during the middle of the twentieth century, the study of prototypes in the Old Testament of New Testament figures was very popular among Pentecostal preachers and writers.

NATO as its military backing and a super-computer in Brussels controlling the world's economy and exterminating the need for money. All living persons will receive a number on the forehead and hand as identification and their movements will be monitored and controlled via satellite by the computer (Kleynhans, s.a.b:18-20). The revived Roman Empire will be a major commercial power leading to worldwide prosperity under the leadership of the Antichrist.¹¹

At the same time the Trilateral Commission will endeavour to unite the rest of the world and create a new world order with a worldwide federal reserve system, an international wheat council, and a new world monetary system to replace gold. The Trilateral Commission was founded by the super-rich to sidestep the United Nations, which had become too large to be controlled by the rich individuals of the world (Kleynhans, s.a.b:38). The Antichrist will be the chairperson of both bodies, the EEC and the Trilateral Commission, uniting the ten horns and the seven heads of the beast of Revelation 13:1.

The American, Jacob Schiff, financed the Bolshevist revolution. His ultimate purpose as leader of the Illuminati was to get control of the American monetary system and to sow discord among Americans in order to ensure the establishment of one government for the whole world. He divested his power in Colonel House and Bernard Baruch when he established the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), the new face of the Illuminati (Kleynhans, s.a.b:38). The CFR consists of a thousand members, encompassing the heads of industrial empires such as the Rockefellers in the USA. The aim of the CFR is to control the mass media in order to shape world opinion and enhance a one-world government and one-world religion. This is done by describing American isolationism as the cause of world wars, and anti-communism as anti-Semitism and racism. Through the powerful families of the Lehmans, Goldmans, Sacks, Kuhn Loeb and the Warburgs the CFR controls Hollywood, radio, television and newspapers. This is an international conspiracy to corrupt the generation of young people, also through immorality and the sex revolution, in order to break down all defences against the control needed to form a one-world government (Kleynhans, s.a.b:40).

“In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom” (Dan. 2:44). “The days of these kings” refers to “what shall

11 Much speculation of this order has been published with many variations. For one example, see Lindsey (1972), especially chapters 9-12.

come to pass hereafter”, the end of days (Kleynhans, s.a.a:31). Nebuchadnezzar sees in his dream the “times of the nations” referred to in Luke 21:24, the period until the revival of the Roman Empire in the twentieth century CE and the rapture of believers shortly afterwards. The rest of what will happen during the last days, the second coming of Christ, the decisive battle of Armageddon and the destruction of all governments, is not revealed to the Old Testament prophet Daniel, but to the New Testament replica of Daniel, the prophet John, on the island of Patmos (Rev. 19:11-21).

When will the fifth kingdom arise? At the end of our dispensation when God will establish a kingdom that will exist forever. The kingdom is represented by a stone, which, according to Kleynhans (s.a.a:32), refers to the stone described in Exodus 17:6 and Psalm 118:22 and made applicable by Jesus to himself in Matthew 21:44. All kingdoms will be destroyed by this stone. This will happen at the second coming of Christ.

In this way the second coming of Christ is the golden key which allows the modern reader to unlock the secrets contained in the Book of Daniel (Kleynhans, s.a.a:34). The world will know no lasting peace until Christ comes back and lifts the curse resting on nature and mankind, leading to peace without end and the fulfilment of the prophecies contained in Isaiah 2:4, 9:5-6, 11:6, et cetera (Kleynhans, s.a.a:34).

3. An analysis of Kleynhans' interpretation

3.1 A contemporary reading of prophecy

From Kleynhans' interpretation it is clear that he regards the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream as of contemporary value for his own day and world.¹² Kleynhans (s.a.a:13) quotes:

Statesman (sic) would do well to study and search the sacred scriptures (sic). Important decisions could then be made in direct harmony with the Divine decrees. Daniël (sic) wrote the history of the Gentile nations as accurately as a historian could describe it today. He foresaw the end of the great Babylonian

12 In the course of 1977 Kleynhans preached that the second coming of Christ would occur with the planets lining up with the sun, an event that would occur during October of that year. He even went so far as to claim that if it did not happen, he would come back and apologise to his listeners.

empire, the rise and fall of the Medo-Persian Empire, the coming and crashing of all Grecian greatness as well as the rise and ruin of the Empire of Rome. *The Bible holds the key to the present world situation.*¹³

This trait, to regard prophecy as applicable to contemporary times, is characteristic of the way classical Pentecostals as well as neo-Pentecostals treat (what they view as) prophecies and predictions in the Old and New Testaments. The fact that the prophecy was a word of God – meant for the listeners – is never taken into account, nor even that the prophecy's first meaning was for the original listeners, with possible applications for later generations. Prophecies are viewed as having only contemporary value for modern readers with the implication that their application was withheld for all the millennia until our day.

The “predictions” in different “prophecies” are also seen as being on exactly the same level so that Kleynhans could use the images in Revelation to explain and further elucidate the images in the Book of Daniel and vice versa. The intra-textuality between these passages is not denied and this forms an important ingredient in trying to understand the imagery and language. But this is not the sense in which it is explained by Kleynhans. He uses the different passages to interpret and apply his modern explanation of a timetable for the last events.

It must be emphasised that the Bible is made relevant for modern believers in this way in that they see their own circumstances and world events in Biblical passages. The relevancy of Biblical prophecy for modern-day believers leads to religious fervour, but in the end also to disappointment with the Bible and even God for not keeping to his word (when the disappointment should rather be in the self-proclaimed messenger).

In the early Christian Church, one of the foundation stones of Christian witness was the fulfilment of prophecies: “If the prophecies are not true, Christianity is not true. To destroy the prophets is to destroy Christ” (Criswell, 1968:23). When Porphyry, an Eastern philosopher, posed a Maccabean time of origin for the Book of Daniel in the third century, Jerome had no choice but to declare him a heretic who had

13 Kleynhans gives as the source of the quote the author's name, W.G. Heslop, without adding any more information. The sentence in italics is the emphasis of Kleynhans.

left Christianity.¹⁴ Porphyry verbalised the viewpoint of Eastern church fathers like Ephraem Syrus, Polychronius, Cosmos Indicopleuster, Theodore bar Koni, Isho bar Nun, and Isho 'dad (Casey, 1976:23). In the seventeenth century, Uriel Costa, a Jewish rationalist, and in the eighteenth century Anthony Collins also argued for an interpretation of the book in terms of the Maccabean hypothesis.¹⁵

3.2 Two ways of interpreting the dream

The dream has traditionally been interpreted in two ways: the *Exilsthese* or Roman view, and the *Makkabärthese* or Greek view (Koch, 1980:9). The Roman view was held by the rabbis and the Talmud.¹⁶ According to this view, the four metals indicate the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman kingdoms, with the Roman kingdom enduring in one form or another until modern times. This view is popular for the relevancy it offers to modern readers.

The Greek view was initially described by Porphyry (Braverman, 1978:21-24), although it is likely that he was the spokesperson for a larger group of Syrian church fathers (see above). According to this view, the four metals represent Babylonia, Media, Persia and the Greek kingdom. The fact that Media had ceased to exist as an independent kingdom eleven years before the fall of Babylon, is an indication that the narrator of the Book of Daniel was confused about historical events, as occurs at several other places in the Book of Daniel as well.¹⁷ According to this way of interpreting the account, the narrator's interest in historical events is limited to the concerns of his own time and he/she uses historical material eclectically to serve only to describe what is relevant for the Jewish nation oppressed by a Syro-Hellenistic king, and then from a theological perspective (Caragounis, 1993:395).

14 By edict of Theodosius II all the books of Porphyry were destroyed around 488 CE after the church had excommunicated him. The only rendering of his thought is contained in Jerome's commentary on Daniel and this reflects Jerome's subjective interpretation thereof.

15 Cf. Koch (1980:XI-XVI) and Zenger (1998:461-462) for reasons for this hypothesis.

16 Medieval Jewish commentaries by Rabbi Saadiah Gaon, Moshe ben Maimon and Moshe ben Nachman established the Roman view as the one accepted until today in traditional Judaism.

17 In Daniel 8 the two kingdoms of Persia and Media are also seen as two separate entities ruling the one after the other.

The Roman view is founded on the words: “what shall be in the latter days” (Dan. 2:28), indicating that the dream is a prediction pointing to the first and/or second coming of Christ. The Aramaic words: “in the last days”, literally mean “later, in future, the last, behind or on the western side” (Jenni, 1997:84). Verhoef (1994:227) translates this correctly as *in die agterkant-dae*, in the days beyond these, the days lying hidden behind the veil of the future. From this it is clear that the narrator is talking about events in the future, according to the Jewish belief to look at the future as behind one, because it cannot be seen.¹⁸ The interpretation of the dream is not eschatological *per se* in that it does not need to reveal what would happen at the end of times. It makes sense to look at it in terms of the narrator’s day and times, as a relevant word for his/her readers (Porteous, 1979:44).¹⁹

An important question is whether the feet are part of the fourth kingdom or refer to a fifth. Most researchers are of the opinion that the feet form part of the fourth kingdom, with the legs and feet mentioned in the same sentence and without the introductory words for a fifth kingdom. If this is so, the Greek or Maccabean thesis makes sense, as the legs represent the establishment of the Greek kingdom. After Alexander’s death his kingdom was divided among four generals, but for all practical purposes, the Jews saw the division only in terms of the Ptolemaic and Seleucid kingdoms. The two feet then are the Seleucids ruling over Egypt and the Ptolemaists ruling over Syria. These two kingdoms were at war and the country of the Jews served as prize for the winner.

Kleynhans does not explain verse 43: “just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay” (NIV). This points to intermarriage, a strange concept when one considers the prohibition in Leviticus 19:19. In 252 BCE Antiochus II and Bernice married in an attempt to unite the Seleucid and Ptolemaic kingdoms, but the alliance did not survive and Bernice’s brother, Ptolemy III, subjected Syria in 246 BCE. The verse indicates the instability of relations between the two kingdoms. The reference might, however,

18 The past is then before one because one can look at it.

19 The reference to “the last days” in Genesis 49:1, Numbers 24:14, and Deuteronomy 4:30; 31:29 is to events that now form part of history. The reference in Jeremiah 23:20, 30:24, 48:7 and 49:39 is to a climax in one or other form.

also be to intermarriage between hellenised Jews and people of other races, as part of hellenisation policies. It is probable that Antiochus IV would have encouraged Jews to intermarry in order to create a loyal hellenised race, as the Assyrians did in the eighth century with exiles.

The fact that the worth of the metals in the dream decreases, might have to do with a pessimistic view of history, a view that is found in many other second century historical works. The supposition is that the past held the good times and that everything gets worse as the modern-day approaches.²⁰

The narrative was written by the powerless and read by and for the powerless. This can be seen from the distinction between the determination of value and power. The indication of value decreases at the same time as power increases, with the exception of the fourth kingdom – which is partly strong and partly weak. Because the Jews were at the losing end and the power of the victor is at the cost of their independence, the narrator evaluates it negatively. The increasing power is also contrasted to the last kingdom, which will destroy all the other kingdoms when it is established.

The succeeding kingdoms probably represent human efforts at divinisation of human power, and for this reason these kingdoms are doomed to be destroyed by a power from outside the world. The implied readers, who were the victims of the abuse of political power, would have seen the contrast between the human element in the kingdoms and the eternal kingdom in the image of the statue.

Why the narrator refers to the toes is not clear and the text mentions it just in passing. No contemporary application for the toes is known. Baldwin (1978:94) warns that the narrator does not stipulate *two* legs and *ten* toes, implying that no more should be read into the text than what the narrator means. The Roman view is to a large extent built on this missing detail by interpreting the ten toes as a reference to a union of states, for example Kleynhans' EEC with its ten member states.²¹

20 Cf. Hesiod's *Works and days*, in the period shortly after Homer – his own day is the iron period, and before that were the bronze, silver and golden periods, a time of heroes and innocence (Baldwin, 1978:97).

21 Other options include the League of Nations, the United Nations, the Commonwealth, the European Union, and even the World Council of Churches.

In the Greek view the division within the fourth kingdom (Dan. 2:42), depicted by the clay and iron that cannot mix, proves that the Ptolemaists and Seleucids cannot be united. The reference in verse 44 to “those kings” is vague and probably refers to the kings of the kingdom that is discussed at the end, the divided kingdom of the Ptolemaists and Seleucids.²²

According to the Roman view, the rock refers to the Messiah.²³ According to the Greek view, the stone refers to the rise of the Jewish people who will rule themselves and will extend their power to rule over the whole earth in the place of their oppressors.²⁴ They will break all the kingdoms in pieces and pulverise them (literal translation of Dan. 2:40).²⁵ The implication of the kingdom established by God is that Israel, as God’s people, would rule over the whole earth – as developed further in Daniel 7. This is the encouraging message for the oppressed Jew.

Daniel 7 serves as a revised edition of Daniel 2 made necessary by the cruel persecution of Antiochus IV (Ginsberg, 1948:20). The narrator’s purpose in Daniel 7 is seemingly to show prominently that the destruction of the incarnation of evil is near. From a Greek viewpoint Antiochus was an efficient, popular and effective administrator and strategist, but from the viewpoint of the narrator he is the embodiment of all that is evil. This is driven by the apocalyptic dualistic evaluation of reality where Antiochus represents the oppression of God’s people – this is why he is godless.

Nebuchadnezzar’s dream has both synchronic and diachronic value when the relation between the dream and the events it refers to, moves beyond the time that the tale is about. The dream both

22 Perhaps it is the residue of different traditions combined by the narrator in his/her tale without dubbing out all seams. The original tale might have discussed the kings of one kingdom, the Babylonian.

23 For the Jewish rabbis the stone refers to the kingdom of Israel. The Commentary of R. Saadia Gaon (Alobaidi, 2006:453-454) quotes Isaiah 28:16, 23:13, Psalm 118:22, Ezra 3:10, Psalm 72:8-11 and Daniel 8:25 to support his argument that from the kingdom of Israel “the messiah’s kingship in the whole world” would grow.

24 Cf. Daniel 7:18: “the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever”.

25 Second century Jews might have seen the stone in terms of Zion, as symbol for the immediate restoration of the Jewish people as an independent political state becoming in time the centre of the earth (LaCocque, 1979:49; Davies, 1985:48).

reflects the story world and transcends it temporally. The dream is introduced as the future that the God of heaven wants Nebuchadnezzar to see. This future consists of a confrontation between human and divine power. The God of the heaven wants the king to recognise the sovereignty of divine power (Fewell, 1991:33). This happens in verse 47 when the king confesses that God rules over all kings, a theme that is taken up again in Daniel 4.²⁶

3.3 Prophecy and Bible as Word of God

Walvoord (1971:67) remarks that the only problem “liberal” critics can have with Daniel 2’s referring to the Roman empire as the fourth kingdom, is that they would then have to acknowledge that the chapter contains an authentic prophecy that is fulfilled literally. This view concurs with Bultema’s (1988:86) statement that the whole history of the world is explained and predicted within seven verses, i.e. verses 37-43. Walvoord (1971:68) emphasises that those who criticise the Bible as “Word of God” would never acknowledge that anything like an authentic prophecy could be found in the Bible, because it does not suit their argument that the Bible is a document containing exclusive human words. Such an argument reflects on the credibility of a large group of researchers and does not consider the reasons for viewing the fourth kingdom as the Macedonian.

Pentecostal people, like some of the others who use the Roman view to explain the dream, believe that the Bible is absolutely inerrant in its very words to the extent that you can know God in absolute terms, and know what he wants you to do and believe and what he plans for your life in detail. The Bible even reveals to you what God is planning to do in the future and how he is going to do it. The apocalyptic crisis of catastrophic proportions that will signal the end of the world is described in the Bible and the time of this event is also given to those who understand “prophecy”.

Witness the current craze for the Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins series *Left behind*, another apocalyptic vision of our future based on a literalistic reading of the Bible, a series that has sold more than *sixty million* copies in our own day. (Ehrman, 2005:13).

26 The dream was originally probably told in another context, in Babylon, with another application. For suggestions of this application, cf. Eissfeldt (1974:519), Baldwin (1978:92), Anderson (1984:21), Fröhlich (1993:267) and Polak (1993:264).

This view holds the Bible as “an inerrant blueprint for our faith, life, and future” (Ehrman, 2005:13). Anybody that does not agree with the Roman view is usually deemed as an enemy, someone who does not hold the Bible as the Word of God. But is it correct to place somebody reading the dream of Daniel as of historical relevance for the first readers on par with a person who does not recognise the authority of Scriptures?

The correct question(s) might rather be: How did the narrative contained in Daniel 2 operate when its first listeners or readers heard or read it? What did they hear? When they heard about “the last days”, did they think about the twenty first century CE, or did the Jews hear a message of hope in their desperate situation, i.e. that God decides about foreign rulers oppressing his people?

The question of deciding between a Greek or a Roman view is linked to the question of the dating of the final compilation of tales and visions in the Book of Daniel. Choosing the Greek view necessitates that the book originated around the Antiochean persecution and the crisis it posed for some Jews who were more rigorously faithful to their religion. The Roman view with its dating in the sixth century exilic situation leaves room for the book to be interpreted in terms of modern-day expectations.

The conclusion is that, when choosing the Maccabean thesis, a researcher may in fact be more true to the intentions of the Book of Daniel because the Biblical book is then read in the context in which it originated.

4. Synthesis

Pentecostals view the doctrine of the second coming of Christ as an essential part of the gospel. Their eschatology is premillennialist with the attendant doctrine of the rapture, and passages in the Bible seen to be “prophetical” in nature are interpreted in these terms. In Pentecostal circles “prophecy” is in many cases equated with “predictions”, while in Biblical terms “prophecy” is explained as “the word of YHWH” in and for a specific situation, a word of encouragement or warning.

Bennie Kleynhans’ writings about the interpretation of the dream in Daniel 2 are chosen for analysis to demonstrate how an endeavour to find relevance through a contemporary interpretation of a Biblical passage easily becomes outdated. Kleynhans published his work while the European Economic Community, which eventually dis-

solved into the European Union, still existed. Kleynhans functions with the Roman thesis, a viewpoint that has been often abused to ventriloquise the text for the situation of the modern reader.

The premise of Kleynhans is that Daniel 2 should be interpreted as a “prophecy”, written to describe the global situation at the latter half of the twentieth century, without considering the obvious fact that in such a case it would have had no message or encouragement for the first readers. The text is read on face value, as it stands, without taking into account that it functioned in an original context. Kleynhans also accepts that the text originated in the sixth century BCE in the course of the exile. Although the text functions on different levels, it requires an act of imagination to state that it provides prediction about the current day.

Ultimately the differences in interpreting the dream in Daniel 2 reflect different ways of viewing and treating the Bible. A fundamentalist viewpoint, which requires that the Bible is seen as inerrant, authoritative and directly linked to the Word of God, views the Bible as a blueprint of what God is going to do in future and how He is going to do it. The future is inevitably linked to the present day and the “last days” just before the second coming of Christ is the present day. This is used as an evangelistic tool to invite people to accept Christ as it is “the last of the last days”.

The difference between the Roman and Greek theses is also linked to the choice for a date of the writing or compilation of the book. The Roman view sees the sixth century as the date of origin and the address of the book the current situation of the reader, while the Greek thesis sees the second century BCE as the date, the period when the Greek oppression of Jews threatened to extinguish the Jews’ religion.

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