# Exegetical Notes on Daniel 12: 1-3

Douglas MacCallum Lindsay Judisch

The reading from the Old Testament which is appointed to the Twenty-Fourth Sunday afterPentecost in Series B of Lutheran Worship consists in the initial three verses of Daniel 12. (Theexegesis of these verses below is, in answer to several enquiries, in no way designed to promotethe use in the main service of the week of the three-year series provided in Lutheran Worship norof any other modern selections from the gospels and epistles in such a context. This exegete, onthe contrary, would continue to urge, on various grounds, fidelity to the pericopal traditioninherited from the ancient church by the church of the reformation and modified only slightly bythe Blessed Reformer of the Church, if one is speaking specifically of the gospels and epistles tobe read in the main (Eucharistic) service of the week. No comparable series of readings, on theother hand, from the Old Testament was either handed down from the ancient church orbestowed on us by the Blessed Reformer; nor, indeed, is there such a program of readings fromthe New Testament to be used in all the possible additional offices of any given week. In suchcases, therefore, even such a traditionalist as this exegete is able, with consistency, to make useof any pericope drawn from the region of Holy Scripture desired.)

## THE HISTORICAL AND LITERARY SETTING

The historical and literary observations which follow assume the auctorial integrity of the Bookof Daniel which this exegete has defended elsewhere (especially in The Prophetic Books of theBabylonian Exile and the Persian Empire). The various events recorded in the Book of Daniel;and the various prophecies contained therein were uttered between 605 B.C. and 536 B.C., andthe record of each was probably written down immediately. Chapters 10-12, in particular, derivefrom the spring of 536 B.C., since Daniel specifies the twenty-fourth day of the first month(10:4) of the third regnal year of Cyrus, the King of Persia, in Babylon (101).

The purpose of Daniel in writing the book known by his name was to encourage the people ofGod in the midst of all possible opposition. The theme, correspondingly, of the Book of Danielmay be stated thus: The God of Israel is in complete control of history. The Book of Daniel isthe archetypal exemplar in the Old Testament -- and, indeed, in the Bible as a whole -- of thegenre of literature known as apocalyptic. Even the Book of Revelation assumes a priorfamiliarity with Daniel and builds on the foundation laid there. The apocalyptic genre may bedefined as a variety of prophecy will reveals to human view the whole future course of humanhistory on the basis of the plan of God.

While each of the first nine chapters of the Book of Daniel forms a distinct unit of material, thefinal unit embraces all three of the chapters into which the book has come to be customarilydivided since medieval times. The two main parts of the volume are the historical corpuscomprising the first six chapters and the visionary corpus comprising the last six chapters. Thefour visions found in chapters 7-12 stand in the chronological order in which they were receivedby the prophet Daniel. Thus, as already stated above, the vision recorded in chapters 10-12 wasmediated by the "Man in Linen" in the spring of 536 B.C. The final vision of Daniel falls intothree main parts in accordance with the following outline:

The pericope now before us, then, consists in the final three verses of the body of the final visionof Daniel. The ensuing conclusion to the vision (12: 4-14) serves, as well, as the conclusion tothe book as a whole. In contains, indeed, the specific command to Daniel to complete now andpublish the volume which he had been gradually writing during the course of seven decades(12:4, noting also verses 9 and 13).A LITERAL TRANSLATION AND COMMENTS

1a. But in that time will Michael continue to stand, the great prince who stands over the sons ofthy people.

The initial "but" in the translation above assumes the most common significance of a wawprefixed to a noun beginning a new clause. In such a position the standard conjunction is alwaysdisjunctive in some way, and the first variety of such disjunction is, logically, the adversative use,when the clause which follows contrasts strongly with the clause which precedes (IV.D.1.a. inCHEL). Here, certainly, the reassurance of the protection of the church in the first clause ofDaniel 12 contrasts sharply with the prophecy in the second half of the preceding verse of theinevitable end of the pseudo-monarchy in the church described in verses 36-45: "yet he willcome to his end, even while he will have none to help him" (11:45b).

The demonstrative adjective hi' ("that"), modifying the feminine noun 'eth("time"), refers back inthis case to the period of history which would embrace the developments depicted in thepreceding ten and a half verses of the vision (Daniel 11: 35b-45). The phrase "that time" is,therefore, equivalent to the 'eth-qetz ("the time of the end") which appears as a terminustechnicus in both verses 35 and 40. The reference, then, is to the era of the New Testamentwhich lasts from the first coming of the Messiah to His second coming and so includes theascendancy of the papacy in the visible church which is predicted in verses 36-45 of Daniel 11.

Both of the verbs in verse 1a are forms of 'md (beginning with ayin). The qal imperfect thirdmasculine singular displays the most common use of the imperfect, which is to say the

future(II.B.2.a.1.a. in CHEL). The specific variety of the future is the durative rather than the particular(or even the progressive or frequentative), since both the introduction to the vision and theensuing participle speak of Michael already serving in the same capacity as he would continue toserve in the future. For not only does the Messiah imply the role of "Michael, one of the chiefprinces" as His prime angelic aide in 10:13, but He also speaks explicitly of his unique assistancein a struggle of grave importance with two demonic enemies of the church in verse 21: "there isno one using his strength with Me against these but Michael, your prince" (Daniel 10: 21). Thesame conception, again, appears here in the definite qal participle (masculine singular) of 'mdwhich serves, effectively, as an attributive adjective beginning a relative clause: "who standsover the sons of thy people" (II.B.5.B.2. in CHEL).

The verb 'md is a common one, occurring some five hundred and twenty times in the OldTestament (BDB, 763b-765a). Aside from two or three examples of the hophal, the only uses ofthe kbhedim are the eighty-three instances of the hiphil (BDB, 764b-765a). By far the mostcommon binyan, then, of 'md is the qal, with some four hundred and thirty-five occurrences(BDB, 763b-764b). All five of the nouns derived from this root relate in some way to standing,even in the case of ma'amadh, with its significance of "station" in the sense of place or office. The only common derivative is 'ammudh, which is found a hundred and ten times in the TaNaKand means "pillar" or "column" -- something standing in a literal or figurative sense (BDB,765a). The basic meaning of the verb is "stand" in the sense of being in a standing position andthen taking or keeping one's stand (Brown-Driver-Briggs being slightly misleading by placing"take one's stand" even before "stand" per se [BDB, 763a]).

Brown-Driver-Briggs, to be sure, assigns to at least one of the instances of 'md in this verse asignificance of "arise, appear, come on the scene" which is described as a "late" equation of 'mdwith qywem (BDB, 764a-b). The same meaning is supposed in the preceding chapters 8 (twicein verse 22 and once in 23) and 11 (in verses 2, 3, 4, 7, 20, and 21) of Daniel (BDB, 764b). Thelexicon then proceeds to define 'md followed by 'al in Daniel 8:25 and 11:14 as "rise up as foe ...against" (as also the verb followed by lnegdi in 10:13), again seeing this usage as one which"earlier" belonged to qwm (BDB, 764b).

In actuality, however, there is no cause to prescind here or anywhere else in the book from thebasic significance of 'md. The idea here, specifically, is that Michael was already standing overthe church as its special angelic guardian in the days of Daniel and that he would continue thisspecial service also in the days of the church of the New Testament.

1b. Yea, a time of straits shall come to be such as will not have been allowed to be from comingto be a nation until that time.

The initial "yea" in the translation above assumes an explicative use of the standard conjunctionintroducing the new clause. The specific species of waw explicativum here is the emphaticepexegetical use, which is quite common, especially in poetry, by virtue of the repetition of thesame or closely related ideas. For verse 1b epitomizes pithily all the many sufferings of thechurch of the New Testament which have already been depicted literally and figuratively in thefinal ten and a half verses of the preceding chapter (Daniel 11: 35b-45).

The absolute noun tzarah belongs to a lexical family in which all the members relate in some way to the idea of restriction (BDB, 864b-865b). Thus, the verbal root itself, tzrr, means "bind" or "be bound" and so "be narrow" and "be in straits" literally or figuratively (BDB, 864b). The most common of its six derivatives is the feminine noun tzarah, which is found some seventy-two times in the Old Testament, always with the significance of "straits" or, to say the same thing less graphically, "distress" (BDB, 865a). The English words, actually, "strait" and "distress" both derive ultimately (as also "strict") from the same Latin root stringere (with strictus as the perfect passive participle) (COD, 1272, 1275, and 356).

Three different forms of the verb hyh appear in the middle third of the verse before us. The verb is, of course, extremely common, occurring some 3570 times in the TaNaK (BDB, 224a, in224a-228a). Almost all these occurrences are instances of the qal, as are the first and third forms in this verse. The initial perfect is a feminine singular of the third person by reason of the gender and number of 'eth as its subject. The specific use here is the prophetic perfect, which is rendered, therefore, as "shall come to be" to emphasize the idea of completeness which always resides in the perfective aspect of the Hebrew verb (as opposed to the simple future which would be indicated by the imperfect: "will come to be") (the perfectum propheticum, II.B.1.b.(2.) in CHEL).

The second form of hyh is the niphal perfect, which again assumes the feminine singular of the third person so as to agree with eth. In this case the specific use is clearly the future perfect (II.B.1.A.2.c. in CHEL). The niphal is, in fact, the only binyan in which hyh is found outside the qal, and the number of its occurrences therein make up no more than twenty-one of the aforesaid thousands of instances in toto. Here, then, the niphal implies the will of an all-wise and all-powerful God to allow the purification of His people through suffering, as opposed to the way in which Brown-Driver-Briggs excepts Daniel 12:1 (with several other passages) from the general principle that "personal agency is clearly implied" or even "expressed" in connection with the niphal of hyh (BDB, 227b).

The third form of hyh is the qal infinitive construct with a prefixed mem which is being used temporally. The absolute noun which is bound to mihyoth as its genitive is goi. The commentators consulted imagine a reference here to any and all nations in general. According, therefore, to H. C. Leupold, the expression takes us "back to the time of the existence of the first nation" 528). The genesis, however, of nationalism in general has no obvious relevance to the tribulation of the church. In Exodus 9, moreover, goi is similarly conjoined with hyh (the difference in aspect notwithstanding) to speak of Egypt in particular: "there was hail and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation" (verse 24, comparing therewith the prior warning of God in verse 18: "I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt since the foundation thereof even until now").

Contextually, then, the goi of Daniel 12:1b can only be equated with 'ammekha ("thy people") in the preceding portion of the verse. The reference , therefore, is to the people of Daniel, which is to say the people of God. Now the people of God were constituted as a "nation" in the fifteenth century B.C. at Mount Sinai. Under the terms of the Sinaitic Berith, Israel was assured of

political security and economic prosperity so long as she should be faithful to God as the true visible church.

There was, therefore, in the history of Israel as a nation no suffering of the people of God of the kind and duration which the church of the New Testament would be called to endure. For the church today has the assurance that she will suffer persecution precisely on account of her faithfulness to the Lord. Our Lord Himself, indeed, stated the principle as clearly as could possibly be done: "because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you... If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" (John15: 19-20). The true church of God, indeed, will even suffer at the hands of unfaithful members of the visible church and, above all, its self-serving leaders.

It is on this account that the Apocalypse of St. John refers to the saints of the New Testament in glory as "those coming out of the great tribulation" (Revelation 7:14). Our Lord, indeed, already builds upon Daniel 12:1 in His discourse on the Mount of Olives, which is often called the Apocalypse of the Gospels by virtue of its inclusion in all three of the synoptics (in Matthew 24,Mark 13, and Luke 21). The Lord Jesus, certainly, refers in the course of His sermon to the prophecy of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem which Daniel relays in the ninth chapter of his book (Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:19; Luke 21:20). The Master then speaks of a time of tribulation: "For then there will be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:21). This tribulation, to be sure, clearly includes the developments already in the days of the apostles which the Lord has theretofore been describing (Matthew 24: 1-20; Mark 13: 1-18; Luke 21:5-24). He then proceeds, nevertheless, to indicate that the time of tribulation already commencing in the first century would continue all the way down to the final day of human history (Matthew 24:29).

1c. But in that time will thy people be delivered, everyone who is found written in My book.

The initial "but" in the translation above assumes the most common significance of a waw prefixed to a noun beginning a new clause. In such a position the standard conjunction is always disjunctive in some way, and the first variety of such disjunction is, logically, the adversative use, when the clause which follows contrasts strongly with the clause which precedes (IV.D.1.a. in CHEL).

The definite article prefixed to sefer ("book") is understood in the translation above according to its use in many places to indicate possession. The speaker of the words, as of the whole prophecy which forms the body of this vision, is the Messiah. He means, therefore, by "My book" the enumeration of all those whom God has elected in Him to eternal salvation through faith in Him. Moses, in addressing the Lord, calls this enumeration in the mind of God "Thy book which Thou hast written" (Exodus 32:32, as similarly Psalm 139:16). The Messiah speaks in the same way of "the book of life" in which the "righteous" are "written" in Psalm 69 (verse 29MT, 28 EV). Malachi refers to the "book of remembrance" "written before Him for the sake of those fearing of the Lord and those esteeming His name" (Malachi 3:16). The New Testament returns to the nomenclature of Psalm 69 with the "book of life" cited in the Letter to the Philippians (4:3) and the Book of Revelation (e.g., 20:12). The Apocalypse emphasizes the significance of this designation by stating the alternative to inclusion therein: "And whosoever was not found written

in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (20:15). Such is the self-chosen end of the unbelievers "whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8).

2. Then many from among those who sleep in the ground of the dust will awaken, these to life unto eternity, but the others to complete disgrace, to contempt unto eternity.

The demonstrative pronoun 'elleh is used in a double way to distinguish some from others within a certain group. Here, specifically, the total group includes all those who sleep in the ground of the dust, which is to say all the dead. The distinction, then, within this group is between the "many" who "will awaken ... to life unto eternity" and those who will awaken "to contempt unto eternity." The first 'elleh, therefore, refers to the believers in the One True God and the second to the unbelievers. The application of the first demonstrative in this way confirms a conclusion which would already seem to follow the reference itself of the preceding construct chain which constitutes the grammatical antecedent of 'elleh. All three words, namely, in this chain are to be understood as definite despite the absence of the definite article or any pronominal suffix on the final word. Such a phenomenon is, of course, by no means uncommon in poetry, which the editors of the Biblia Hebraica have quite rightly taken the verses before us to be (as can be seen from the way in which the lines are printed).

This verse teaches, certainly, beyond any reasonable shadow of doubt, the simultaneous resurrection of both believers and unbelievers as the consummation of the "time" which, as we have seen, is the era of the New Testament. Doubtless, too, our Lord is assuming a common familiarity with this verse and simply appropriating to Himself its common understanding in John 5 when He speaks of God giving the authority of judging all men to the Son of Man: "the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation" (verses 27-29).

3. But those who make sense will shine as the shining of the firmament; even as those who declare the aforesaid many righteous, as the stars to eternity with continuousness. The phrase "even as" in the translation above renders a waw prefixed to a hiphil participle (masculine plural)introducing a new clause. Although in part, admittedly, a verbal form, a participle is at the same time an adjective, which, as any adjective in Hebrew, may then be used as a noun (II.B.5.C.3.,and here, in effect, b.(2.) in CHEL). We see, indeed, in matzdiqei the nominal or substantival use of the participle in such a way that it becomes the construct in a construct chain and thus also becomes definite by virtue of the definite article which is attached to the following noun (or really, again, an adjective used as a substantive) in the absolute state.

To return, however, to the significance of the conjunction introducing the clause, the "distinctive" use is the term which this exegete, at least, has come to apply to the particular variety of the disjunctive waw which is represented here. In this usus distinctivus the clause which follows the waw contrasts in some way with the clause which precedes but less strongly than it would if the waw were fulfilling a completely adversative role (this usage being enumerated as IV.D.1.b. in CHEL, where such translations as "whereas" (on the other hand) and "while" (at the same time)are suggested). Here the contrast is between the believers in the gospel

in general and the believing preachers of the gospel in particular or, to say the same thing in other words, between the members of the church in general and the pastors of the church in particular.

The definite article prefixed to rabbim here is assumed to be serving the most common purpose of the article in Classical Hebrew, which is to say referring back to something already mentioned in the previous context ("the aforesaid many"). The reference here can only be to "those who make sense" of things in the previous half of the verse, who comprise the church of God through the whole of human history. This group includes, therefore, the "many" and "these" (the first 'elleh) of the preceding verse, who are specifically the members of the church of God who die before the final day of history. The word rabbim, to be sure, is sometimes equivalent to "all" in the Old Testament; and, indeed, this usage carries over as a Hebraism or Semitism into the Greek of the New Testament. Thus, when our Lord describes Himself as having come into the world "to give His life as a ransom for many" (in Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45), He is speaking of all human beings. The rationale behind this usage is the absence of any adjective distinctly meaning "all" in Hebrew. The noun kol, to be sure, means "whole" and is commonly used in the construct to indicate "the whole of" something or "all of" whatever follows. This usage fails, however, to convey the idea of many individual entities within a given whole. The prophets, therefore, may employ rabbim to mean "all" when desiring to emphasize the multiplicity of the individuals involved. Such a usage is, indeed, sometimes necessitated by the context (such as a parallel use of kol) or the analogy of faith. Here, however, the reference is, not to all men, but specifically to those who are accounted righteous as individuals through the creation of faith within them in the deliverance from the wrath of God which has been achieved by the Messiah. Here, in other words, the Lord is speaking, not of the justification of mankind in general, but rather of its application to individual men through faith.