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Apocalyptic Vision Dan 10-12: Analysis of Martin Luther's Interpretation

The apocalyptic book of the prophet Daniel attracted the special attention of Christian scholars, both in the early centuries and in the Reformation era. The famous reformer Martin Luther wrote an introduction-commentary to this eschatological book. This article demonstrates Martin Luther's interpretation of the prophetic passage Dan 10-12. In order to better understand why there is such diversity in the interpretations of apocalyptic symbols in Dan 10-12, it is important to pay attention to the history of the interpretation of these chapters, in particular how they were interpreted by the Reformers. Despite the fact that there are many works dedicated to Martin Luther's eschatology and his interpretation of the apocalyptic books, there are still no studies that would deeply analyze the interpretation of Dan 10-12. Therefore, the purpose of this work is a comprehensive analysis of the reformer's interpretation of the apocalyptic passage Dan 10-12. It has been found that Luther used the historicist method in his interpretation of the book of Daniel, but in relation to Dan. 10-12 his approach is more in line with the futurist school of interpretation. It is investigated that Martin Luther considered Dan 8 and Dan 11 parallel sections that talk about the same events. Commenting on Chapter 11, Luther devotes a fairly extensive part of his interpretation to Antiochus IV Epiphanes (215-164 BC), whom he considered a symbol of the papacy. The reformer wrote that the antichrist in Dan 11:36-45 is the papal system. The identification of the papacy as the antichrist was commonplace for many reformers in the context of interpreting apocalyptic symbols. It is found that the presence of Antiochus in the prophecy of Dan. 11, as presented by the theologian, does not find an exegetical basis. Arguments are shown that the prophet Daniel did not mean King Antiochus IV in Dan. 11: 21-45. It has been studied that Luther interpreted the king of the south as the kingdom of Egypt, where the Ptolemaic dynasty ruled, and the king of the north as the Syrian kingdom, where the Seleucid dynasty ruled. The Reformer used the books of the Maccabees in his interpretation. Martin Luther believed that he was living in the last days provided by the prophecies of the book of Daniel, when at the time of the Second Coming of Christ all the righteous will be saved. It was found that the theologian emphasized that the book of Daniel strengthens the faith of Christians and is important for spiritual growth.

Keywords: *Martin Luther, Interpretatio, Apocalyptic, Vision, Daniel, Book of Daniel, Dan 10-12*

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Апокаліптичне видіння Дан 10-12: аналіз інтерпретації Мартіна Лютера

Апокаліптична книга пророка Даниїла привертала особливу увагу християнських дослідників, як в ранні століття, так і в епоху Реформації. Відомий реформатор Мартін Лютер написав вступ-коментар до цієї есхатологічної книги. У цій статті продемонстрована інтерпретація Мартіна Лютера пророчого уривку Дан 10-12. Для того, щоб краще розуміти, чому сьогодні існує таке різноманіття в тлумаченнях апокаліптичних символів у Дан 10-12, важливо звернути увагу на історію інтерпретації цих розділів, зокрема на те, як їх тлумачили реформатори. Не дивлячись на те, що існує багато праць присвячених есхатології Мартіна Лютера та його інтерпретації апокаліптичних книг, досі відсутні дослідження в яких було б глибоко проаналізовано тлумачення уривку Дан 10-12. Тому метою цієї статті є комплексний аналіз інтерпретації реформатора апокаліптичного уривку Дан 10-12. З'ясовано, що Лютер у своїй інтерпретації книги Даниїла використовував істористський метод, але по відношенню до Дан 10-12 його підхід більше відповідає футуристській школі інтерпретації. Досліджено, що Мартін Лютер вважав Дан 8 і Дан 11 паралельними розділами, які говорять про ті самі події. Коментуючи 11 розділ, Лютер досить об'ємну частину тлумачення присвячує Антіоху IV Єліфану (215-164 до н.е.), якого він вважав символом папства. Реформатор писав, що антихристом у Дан 11:36-45 є папська система. Ідентифікація папства як антихриста було звичайним явищем для багатьох реформаторів в контексті інтерпретації апокаліптичних символів. З'ясовано, що присутність Антіоха в пророцтві Дан. 11, як це представлено теологом, не знаходить екзегетичної підстави. Продемонстровані аргументи, які підтверджують, що пророк Даниїл не мав на увазі царя Антіоха IV у Дан. 11:21-45. Досліджено, що Лютер інтерпретує південного царя як єгипетське царство, де правила династія птолеміїв, а царя північного як сирійське царство, де правила династія селевкідів. Реформатор у своїй інтерпретації використовував книги Маккавеїв. Мартін



Лютер вважав, що живе в останній час, передбачений пророцтвами книги Даниїла, коли в час Другого приходу Христа всі праведні будуть спасенні. Вияснено, що теолог підкреслював, що книга Даниїла зміцняє віру християн і є важливою для духовного зростання.

Keywords: Мартін Лютер, реформатор, інтерпретація, апокаліптичні пророцтва, видіння, Даниїл, Книга Даниїла, Дан 10-12

Introduction

The book of Daniel contains many vivid apocalyptic prophecies that attract the attention of both Christian and non-Christian scholars. During the nearly two thousand years of Christianity, many different interpretations of the symbols and images of this book have emerged. One of the most difficult prophetic passages of the book of Daniel is chapter 11. Theologian Zdravko Stefanovic writes: "Students of the Bible consider this chapter to be one of the most difficult chapters in the Bible, one that has defied interpreters through centuries" (Stefanovic, 2007, p. 395). Almost the whole chapter describes the struggle between the southern and northern king. Most researchers believe that Dan 10-12 is one whole, where chapter 10 is an introduction to 11, and 12 is the conclusion of the vision and the entire book (Collins, 1993, p. 371; Doukhan, 2000, p. 157; Goldingay, 1989, p. 281; Pfandl, 2004, p. 103; Shea, 1996, p. 167; Stefanovic, 2007, p. 377; Walvoord, 2012).

Recently, increasing attention among the some theologians is being given to this prophetic passage (Gane, 2016, p. 294; Rodríguez, 2015, p. 3). Despite this, there are still questions that remain open. For example, the question of methods of interpretation, the nature of the struggle between the north and south king and their identification, the historical use of the symbols of Dan 10-12, and so on. This situation makes the study of this problem relevant. Also, to better understand why there is such a diversity in interpretations of apocalyptic symbols in Dan 10-12, it is important to pay attention to the history of interpretation of these chapters, in particular how they were interpreted by the Reformers. Martin Luther is considered to be one of the most famous reformers, so this study will analyze his interpretation of Dan 10-12.

It seems that at the beginning of the Reformation Martin Luther did not pay much attention to the apocalyptic books¹ of the

Bible, but later his interest in these books grew (Vogel, 1987, p. 183). Theologian Winfried Vogel writes about the factors that influenced this change: "Factors involved in this were his practical-mindedness in seeing prophetic fulfillments in events and entities of his own day and his growing emphasis on the pope as the antichrist (or, as the main antichrist)" (Vogel, 1987, p. 183-184). Vogel also claims that the Turkish invasion, which threatened Western Europe, led to Martin Luther speeding up his translation of the book of Daniel into German, which was published in 1530 (Vogel, 1987, p. 184). In it, the Reformer attached a preface where the comment was made on each chapter of the apocalyptic book. At the beginning of the preface, Martin Luther substantiates its purpose: "I desire to provide a short instruction on this book of St. Daniel in order that the simple people and those who do not know and cannot read the histories may nevertheless get the gist of its meaning" (Luther, 1960, p. 294). The purpose of this preface seems to be the desire to help ordinary people understand complex apocalyptic symbols.

Martin Luther's eschatology and his interpretation of the book of Daniel were largely studied in the twentieth century². Jane Elizabeth Strohl in her dissertation "Luther's Eschatology: The Last Times and the Last Things" writes about the Reformer's interpretation of the biblical apocalyptic (Strohl, 1989, p. 22-47). There is another important dissertation – "The Breath of Christ's Mouth: Apocalypse and Prophecy in Early Reformation Ideology", in which Thomas Arthur Dughi also analyzes Luther's interpretation of the symbols of the book of Daniel (Dughi, 1990). It is also worth mentioning the theologian Winfried Vogel, who wrote a study analyzing Martin Luther's interpretation of the book of Daniel and Revelation (Vogel, 1986, 1987). Here the author says that although the reformer's interpretation was not free from

¹An English translation of the preface to the book of Daniel can be found in (Beckwith, 2012; Luther, 1960). In this study, we will use a translation published in Luther's Works using the abbreviation LW.

²Theologian John T. Baldwin provides the list of research on this topic: (Baldwin, 1995, p. 185)

the influence of traditional views and other theologians, it shows “remarkable creativity and freshness of thought, especially when dealing with the central eschatological concern of the book of Daniel” (Vogel, 1987, p. 189). Another work was written by Ronald Rojas, who presented at the Symposium “The Heritage of the Reformation” the paper “Luther’s and Calvin’s Interpretation of Daniel’s Prophetic Visions in Comparison to the Major Schools of Prophetic Interpretation” (Rojas, 2017). Here the author analyzes the reformer’s interpretation of each section of Daniel’s book and compares it with the major schools of prophetic interpretation. Interesting work is the article “Martin Luther’s Views on the Antichrist”, written by Dennis L. Pettibone (Pettibone, 2007). It illustrates the reformer’s view of the antichrist and shows how Luther used the apocalyptic texts of Daniel’s book to identify him. Although there are many works devoted to Martin Luther’s eschatology and his interpretation of the apocalyptic books, there is still no research in which the interpretation of the passage in Dan 10-12 would be deeply analyzed. Therefore, the purpose of this work is a comprehensive analysis of the reformer’s interpretation of the apocalyptic passage Dan 10-12. In the beginning, we will analyze the interpretation of chapter 10, then 11, and at the end, chapter 12.

Dan 10 Interpretation

Commenting on chapter 10 Martin Luther begins with the statement that it is the introduction to chapter 11 (Luther, 1960, p. 305). As mentioned above, this is the opinion of most researchers, and there are several reasons for this. First, all three chapters (Dan 10-12) are dated at one time – the third year of Cyrus (Dan 10:1), which corresponds to 536/535 BC (Doukhan, 2000, p. 157). Second, from the literary point of view they represent one whole part (Doukhan, 2000, p. 157). Third, unity is confirmed by the repetition of the elements of chapter 10 in chapter 12 (Shea, 1996, p. 167). Therefore, it is safe to say that Luther makes a valid statement.

Afterwards, the reformer notes that Daniel “writes something special about the angels, the like of which we find nowhere else in the Scriptures, namely, that the good angels do battle with the evil angels in defense of men” (Luther, 1960, p. 305). In our view, Luther’s

words are deeply relevant, because chapter 10 is really special for the opening of the picture of spiritual struggle (Nichol, 1977, p. 860). At the beginning of the chapter, Daniel writes that he has been in mourning for three weeks (Dan 10:2), and although he does not speak about the causes of his grief, the prophet most likely suffered for his people who returned to the land of Israel and encountered resistance (Ezra 1-4) (Nichol, 1977, p. 857). The Samaritans tried to set up rulers of Medo-Persia against the Jews (Ezra 4) (Doukhan, 2000, p. 158). And at this time the Lord reveals to Daniel a spiritual battle in which the good angels are fighting with evil to help the people of God (Nichol, 1977, p. 859).

Luther aptly states that the evil angels in Dan 10 are called princes (Luther, 1960, p. 305). The Hebrew word **רֹאשׁ** (chief, ruler, prince, commander) can refer to both human leaders and supernatural beings (Nichol, 1977, p. 859). William H. Shea states that most theologians interpret Prince of Persia in Dan 10 as a symbol of evil angels (Shea, 1996, p. 175). Reformer says Dan 10 explains the cause of so much evil in the kings’ courts, and these are the evil spiritual forces that are fighting against good (Luther, 1960, p. 305). Luther recalls the exodus of the Jews from Babylon and admits that for this to happen, the angels of God needed to fight (Luther, 1960, p. 306). Theologian concludes commenting on chapter 10 by thinking that it is enough to speak on this topic since it takes more time and space (Luther, 1960, p. 306). Thus, the study shows that the reformer’s comment is concise but meaningful.

Dan 11 Interpretation

Martin Luther believed that chapter 11 was written mostly for Jews, like chapter 8 (Luther, 1960, p. 306). These words have strong arguments. The book of Daniel is known to be written in Aramaic (Dan 2:4b-7:28) and Hebrew (Dan 1:1-2:4a; 8:1-12:13). It is believed that the evidence of two languages testifies about two audiences targeted by the prophetic book: the Aramaic part is written for all the inhabitants of the empire, and the Jewish part – mainly for the Jews (Doukhan, 2000, p. 11; Stefanovic, 2007, p. 30). Luther’s position is also confirmed by the words in Dan 10:14, where an angel tells the prophet that he came “to make you understand what is to happen to your people in the latter days”³.

³ In this study we use English Standard Version (ESV).



The fact that the reformer refers to chapter 8 indicates that he saw a connection between the two chapters (8 and 11) (Luther, 1960, p. 306). Some theologians also see this connection and draw parallels between these chapters (Doukhan, 2000, p. 168-169; Hardy, 1983, p. 188-208; Probstle, 2005, p. 701-733; Shea, 1986, p. 53-66). Then Luther writes that chapters 8 and 11 describe the Greek Empire, the two kingdoms of Syria and Egypt, mainly to show the activities of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (215–164 BC) who persecuted the Jews (Luther, 1960, p. 306).

The Reformer confidently states that Daniel describes Antiochus as a symbol of antichrist (Luther, 1960, p. 306). According to the theologian, Daniel, in fact, wrote about the last time before the Last Day⁴. Martin Luther emphasizes that “all teachers are unanimously agreed that these prophecies about Antiochus point to the Antichrist” (Luther, 1960, p. 306). Thus, the above data indicate that Martin Luther clearly stated that Antiochus IV Epiphany who Daniel writes about in chapters 8 and 11, is a symbol of the antichrist of the last times.

The theologian William Shea, in his study “Early Development of the Antiochus Epiphanes Interpretation” traces the development of the interpretation of Antiochus IV Epiphany in Jewish and Christian writings and states that none of the early Christian writers linked Antiochus IV Epiphany to the antichrist “to the time of Hippolytus of Rome in the third century AD” (Holbrook, 1986b, p. 274). Hippolytus of Rome divided Dan 11 into two parts: the first part (Dan 11:1-34) he applied to Antiochus IV Epiphany, and the second part (Dan 11:36-45) applied to the future antichrist (Holbrook, 1986b, p. 288). He was the first to make such a division, and the first to apply the prophecies of Daniel to Antiochus IV Epiphany (Holbrook, 1986b, p. 288). Hippolytus of Rome had a great influence on the following interpreters of the book of Daniel, and Martin Luther also came under this influence.

Although most scholars see Antiochus IV Epiphany as fulfilling much of the prophecy of Dan 11, some scholars limit his activity to only verses 14 and 15 (Nichol, 1977, p. 868-870). Some theologians completely disprove the presence of the Seleucid and Ptolemaic kings in chapter 11 (Doukhan, 2000, p. 168).

For example, Jacques B. Doukhan writes: “The events introduced in verse 5 come chronologically after Rome and do not apply to the Hellenistic kingdoms of the Ptolemies and the Seleucids, as the traditional line of interpretation infers” (Doukhan, 2000, p. 168). Shea also argues in his study “Why Antiochus IV Is Not the Little Horn of Daniel 8” that Antiochus IV Epiphany cannot be a little horn in Dan 8 and the northern king in Dan 11 (Shea, 1986, p. 31-66).

After writing the introduction to chapter 11, Martin Luther moves on to a direct interpretation of the text. Referring to Dan 11:2, which states that “three more kings shall arise in Persia, and a fourth shall be far richer than all of them”, he writes that this text does not mean that there were so few kings in Persia since there were at least 10 kings in Persia (Luther, 1960, p. 306). The Reformer claims that Daniel most likely singles them out because of their importance, and the four were Cyrus, Cambyses, Darius and Xerxes (Luther, 1960, p. 306). Luther writes that Xerxes was the richest of them, but when he came up with a huge army against the Greeks, he was shamefully defeated (Luther, 1960, p. 306).

The analysis shows what Luther sees only four kings in Dan 11:2. But due to the fact that the vision was given in the third year of King Cyrus (Dan 10:1), the next three kings after him were “Cambyses (530–522 BC), the False Smerdis (Gaumata, whose Babylonian name was Bardiya), a usurper (522 BC), and Darius I (522–486 BC)” (Nichol, 1977, p. 864). The characteristics in Dan 11:2 make it possible to accurately identify the fourth king, who was Xerxes I (486–465 BC). This king was indeed very rich (Esth 1:4, 6, 7) (Nichol, 1977, p. 864), and the Greeks defeated him “in the battles of Salamis (480 BC) and Plataea (479 BC)” (Stefanovic, 2007, p. 417). Thus, including Cyrus there are 5 kings. Although Martin Luther also believes that the last king was Xerxes I, he includes Cyrus in the top three, overlooking the False Smerdis.

The brave king of Dan 11:3 Martin Luther identifies with Alexander the Great, who will rule after the Persian kings but his kingdom will be divided and his four successors rule, although they will not be his descendants

⁴ See (Strohl, 1989, p. 19-22)

(Luther, 1960, p. 307). Almost all theologians, like the Reformer, believe that Dan 11:3, 4 refers to Alexander the Great and his successors. It is believed that after the power struggle, except small fragments, four independent kingdoms remained: "Ptolemy had Egypt, also Palestine and part of Syria; Cassander had Macedonia, with nominal sovereignty over Greece; Lysimachus had Thrace and a large part of Asia Minor; and Seleucus had the bulk of what had been the Persian Empire – part of Asia Minor, northern Syria, Mesopotamia, and the east" (Nichol, 1977, p. 822)⁵. Luther claims that then Dan 11 describes two kingdoms out of these four – Syria and Egypt, between which there is a struggle (Luther, 1960, p. 307).

The theologian lists in the table a list of the descendants of Alexander the Great and the kings of Syria and Egypt, believing that this will help to avoid confusion and clarify the situation (Luther, 1960, p. 307). In our opinion, this is a great way to help the reader see the whole picture clearly so as not to get confused by a lot of kings described in Dan 11. After this table, Luther begins to examine in details the relations between Syria and Egypt: "The first war took place between Antiochus [II] Theos and Ptolemy [II] Philadelphus; after prolonged campaigning they finally reached an accord. Ptolemy [II] Philadelphus was an especially fine king, for he sought peace and patronized the arts. He supported many learned men and gathered a splendid library from all parts of the world. He also did many fine things for the Jews, gloriously adorning the temple and worship in Jerusalem. In fact, I would even count him among the saintly kings. In order to make the peace more secure, he gave his only daughter, Berenice, in marriage to Antiochus Theos; and then he died" (Luther, 1960, p. 308).

Martin Luther favorably comments on Ptolemy [II] of Philadelphia and even assumes the opportunity to call him the Holy King. The reformer identifies daughter of the southern king (Dan 11:6) as Berenice, who was a daughter of the Egyptian king, Ptolemy II Philadelphus (Luther, 1960, p. 308). Although Ptolemy [II] Philadelphus gave his daughter in marriage to Syrian king Antiochus II Theos, the union was not long. Berenice and her son were killed by former Queen of Antiochus II Theos – Laodice (Nichol, 1977, p. 866).

The phrase from verse 7 "And from a branch from her roots one shall arise in his place" is interpreted by Luther as referring to Berenice's brother Ptolemy [III] Euergetes, who takes revenge on his sister and invades the northern kingdom (Luther, 1960, p. 309). The Reformer believes that after the death of Ptolemy [III] Euergetes, two sons "Seleucus [III] Keraunos and Antiochus the Great, sons of the deceased Seleucus [II] Kallinikos, prepared for war" (Luther, 1960, p. 309). But at this time Seleucus [III] Keraunos died, and now Antiochus [III] had to return hastily from Babylon and send an army against Ptolemy [IV] Philopator, the son of Ptolemy Euergetes (Luther, 1960, p. 309). However, Luther states that Ptolemy [IV] Philopator wins and Antiochus [III] is defeated (Luther, 1960, p. 309).

The theologian says that after the death of Ptolemy [IV] Philopator, Antiochus [III] is armed against the son of Ptolemy [IV], whose name was Ptolemy [V] Epiphanes (Luther, 1960, p. 309). Luther continues: "Now, as often happens when [infant] monarchs must have guardians, other kings – such as Philip of Greece – conspired against him along with Antiochus and were eager to divide among themselves the land of the boy-king, Epiphanes. Moreover, there was also dissension in the country itself, and the Jews too defected from Epiphanes to Antiochus. For this reason Daniel says here (11:13-16) that King Antiochus shall come again and that many shall turn against the child, Epiphanes, that the forces of the south – that is, the picked troops of Epiphanes which he had in the lands of Phoenicia and Judea, and at Jerusalem – could not stand before him. Instead Antiochus conquered all these lands, entering also the glorious land of Jerusalem. It was there that the Jews helped him to rout completely the picked troops of Epiphanes. In return for this help, Antiochus highly honored the Jews, giving them ample goods and much freedom" (Luther, 1960, p. 309-310).

The analysis shows that Martin Luther consistently, text by text, explains Dan 11. The Reformer identifies the king of the south with the kingdom of Egypt, where the Ptolemy dynasty ruled, and the king of the north with the Syrian kingdom, where the Seleucid dynasty ruled.

⁵ See also (Stefanovic, 2007, p. 280)



Luther continues and goes on to describe the activities of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, stating that this is the last king Daniel writes about (Luther, 1960, p. 311). The analysis shows that the theologian considered beginning with Dan 11:21 up to the end of the chapter, it was Antiochus IV Epiphanes (Luther, 1960, p. 311). He writes that this king “did everything with stealth and craftiness, with lies and deceit, as befits not a king but a wanton scoundrel” (Luther, 1960, p. 311). Such an interpretation was not new at the time of Reformation, since, as stated above, long before Luther theologians began to refer the prophecies of Dan 11 to Antiochus IV Epiphanes (Holbrook, 1986b, p. 256-330). In our opinion, Daniel did not mean Antiochus IV Epiphany in Dan 11:21-45. There are several valid arguments to support it.

First, in verse 22, the “prince of the covenant” is mentioned, and basing on the prophecy of Dan 9:24-27, he can be identified as the Messiah, that is, Jesus Christ (Holbrook, 1986a, p. 75-118; Shea, 1986, p. 31-66). It follows that the events described in Dan 11:1-22 occur from the time of Medo-Persia (Dan 11:2) to the time of Christ (Dan 11:22), who was crucified by the Romans. This tells us that all the events described after verse 22 must be interpreted from the time of Christ (Roman Empire) to the end of the world when the resurrection occurs (Dan 12:2).

Second, Jesus attributed the abomination of desolation (Matt 24:15) to the future, not to the past. The study of the phrase “the abomination that makes desolate” is made by Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, who proves that “the abomination that makes desolate” in Dan. 11:31 refers to the work of the papacy during the Middle Ages (Rodríguez).

Third, the characteristics of the northern king (Dan 11:29-45) are parallel to the characteristics of the little horn in Dan 7 and Dan 8 (Shea, 1986, p. 31-66). In these chapters, the little horn symbolizes a Christian church that has receded from the truth, not Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Therefore, the northern king in Dan 11 also cannot be applied to Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

Fourth, the activities of Antiochus IV Epiphanes do not meet the characteristics and scope of little horn activity in Dan 8 and Dan 11 (Shea, 1986, p. 31-66). Therefore, Antiochus IV Epiphanes cannot be a symbol of antichrist and thus Martin Luther's statement is based not on the Bible but on tradition.

The Reformer, in his interpretation, refers to the first book of the Maccabees, claiming that when Antiochus IV Epiphanes returned from Egypt, he was admitted to Jerusalem using cunning and deception (Luther, 1960, p. 312). Luther writes that this king had plundered the city and the temple, and after a while, when he came to Jerusalem for the second time, he poured out his fury on the Jews (Luther, 1960, p. 313). The theologian says that a lot of scoundrels among the Jews joined Antiochus IV Epiphanes, but God encouraged Judas Maccabaeus and his brothers to rebel against him (Luther, 1960, p. 313). The above data suggests that Luther interprets Dan. 11 through the lens of the Maccabees, and believes that the uprising of Judas Maccabaeus was inspired by God Himself.

Dan. 11:36-45 texts Luther applies to the Antichrist, stating that the name Antiochus refers to the antichrist and the last time he (the reformer) lived (Luther, 1960, p. 313). Jane Elizabeth Strohl writes that “Luther also used the visions of Daniel 11 and 12 to expound his conviction that the Antichrist of the last times had revealed itself in the papacy” (Strohl, 1989, p. 41). Strohl claims that Luther shows in details how “the pope satisfies the description of the tyrannous king whose reign was foretold by Daniel” (Strohl, 1989, p. 41). Ronald Rojas mentions two quotations of the reformer in the footnotes, where he claims that the antichrist in Dan 11:36-45 is a papacy (Rojas, 2017, p. 18). Luther also believed that in Dan 11:37, which states that the northern king would not pay attention to women, the refusal of Catholic priests to marry was implied (Luther, 1960, p. 313; Vogel, 1987, p. 188). In our view, in fact, Dan 11:36-45 really speaks of the papacy as a blasphemous system that rebelled against God (Doukhan, 2000, p. 169; Nichol, 1977, p. 875; Pfandl, 2004, p. 106-108; Rodríguez, 2015; Stefanovic, 2007, p. 416-421).

Ronald Rojas believes that “The fact that he allows for a big gap of time from the time of Antiochus Epiphanes (second century B.C.) to the ‘last day’ reveals that Luther does not see the historical continuum principle in Dan 11-12” (Rojas, 2017, p. 18). Afterwards, Ronald Rojas writes that when comparing Luther's interpretation of Daniel 11-12 “with the schools of prophetic interpretations, it resembles more closely that of the futurists” (Rojas, 2017, p. 18).

Indeed, although Luther believed that the book of Daniel speaks of historical events from the time of the prophet to the last time⁶ (historicist approach), nevertheless, Luther's interpretation Dan. 10-12 is closest to the futurist school of interpretation.

Dan 12 Interpretation

Luther wrote that immediately after the activity of Antiochus, spiritually symbolizing the papacy, there was a resurrection of the dead and true salvation (Luther, 1960, p. 313). These words help us to understand that Luther believed that he was living in the last time, and in the near future he expected the culmination of the prophecies of the book of Daniel, the Second Coming of Christ, when the righteous will be saved (Luther, 1960, p. 316).

The Reformer wrote that Daniel was ordering the world kingdoms one by one in the correct order to the time of Jesus Christ in such way "that one cannot miss the coming of Christ unless one does it willfully, as do the Jews" (Luther, 1960, p. 314). Luther continues and states: "In addition, from that point on until the Last Day, Daniel also depicts the condition and state of the Roman Empire and the affairs of the world in such an ordered way that one cannot miss the Last Day or have it come upon him unawares, unless one does this too willfully, as our Epicureans are doing just now" (Luther, 1960, p. 314). The examples above show that Luther adhered to historicist interpretive methods, as did most reformers⁷.

Commenting on chapter 12, Luther concludes the whole book. He writes that the faithful fulfilment of Daniel's prophecies strengthens our Christian faith and gives confidence to our conscience (Luther, 1960, p. 314). The theologian says: "For Daniel freely prophesies and plainly declares that the coming of Christ and the beginning of his kingdom (that is, Christ's baptism and preaching ministry) is to happen five hundred and ten years after King Cyrus (Daniel 9), – when the empire of the Persians and of the Greeks is at an end, and the Roman Empire in force (Daniel 7 and 9) – and that therefore Christ assuredly had to come at the time of the Roman Empire, when it was at its height, the empire which was also to destroy Jerusalem and the Temple, since after Rome

there is to be no other empire but only the end of the world as Daniel 2 and 7 clearly state" (Luther, 1960, p. 314-315).

It follows that Martin Luther considered the Roman Empire to be the last, as it is depicted in Dan 2 and 7. In our opinion, Dan 2, 7 really indicate the succession of empires that follow one after another, and the Roman one out of all is the last. Chapters 2 and 7 also reveal to us that the Roman Empire was divided into 10 kingdoms (this took place in about the 5th century), blasphemous authority came to power (the papacy that Europe from AD 538 to AD 1798), and then comes judgment, and only after that at the end of the world, the righteous inherit the kingdom of God (Doukhan, 2000, p. 100-120).

Luther writes that if viewed from a secular point of view, Daniel could be considered a great man, and "though Daniel was never a king, and never had great wealth or honor out of it, nevertheless, he did possess and perform the functions, duties, and offices of a king" (Luther, 1960, p. 315). The Reformer even claims that the prophet was the true king of Babylon and Medo-Persia, and among all Abraham's children "none was so highly exalted in the world as Daniel" (Luther, 1960, p. 315). The theologian encourages everyone to read the book of Daniel because it gives hope, encouragement and faith: "For here the righteous see and hear that their misery shall have an end, that they are to be freed from sins, death, the devil, and all evil – a freedom for which they yearn – and be brought into heaven, to Christ, into his blessed, everlasting kingdom. This is how Christ too, in Luke 21, comforts his own by means of the terrible news, saying, "When you shall see these things, look up and raise your heads, because your redemption is near," etc. For this reason we see that here too Daniel always ends all his visions and dreams, however terrible, with joy, namely, with Christ's kingdom and advent. It is on account of this advent, the last and most important thing, that these visions and dreams were given, interpreted, and written" (Luther, 1960, p. 315).

Therefore, in chapter 12, Luther summarizes the entire book, claiming that its prophecies are important to Christians. The Reformer focuses

⁶ Luther generally used the historical approach to interpretation in the book of Daniel (Luther, 1960, p. 314).

⁷ Theologian Ronald Rojas provides the list of research on this topic: (Rojas, 2017, p. 1).



on the spiritual lessons we can take from this book and explains how fulfilling prophecy strengthens our faith.

Conclusion

Therefore, this study provides a comprehensive analysis of Martin Luther's interpretation of the apocalyptic passage Dan 10-12. It is found that the reformer interprets chapter 10 as an introduction to chapter 11. Luther argued that chapter 10 reveals to us the spiritual struggle that is waged between evil and good angels. The theologian considers this chapter in the context of the Jewish exodus from the Babylonian captivity.

It is revealed that Martin Luther believed that chapters 8 and 11 were written for the Jews, they are parallel and refer to the same events. The theologian interprets chapter 11 as a historical period of time, beginning in the time of Medo-Persia and lasting until the end of the world. This suggests that Luther, like most of the reformers, adhered to the historicist interpretation of Daniel's book.

Luther wrote that the four Persian kings, who are described at the beginning of chapter 11, were Cyrus, Cambyses, Darius, and Xerxes. Then after the Medo-Persia came the Greek Empire, led by Alexander the Great, which after his death was divided into four main parts. The theologian claimed that in Dan 11,

Daniel describes only two of these kingdoms – Syria and Egypt. Luther devotes much of his commentary to chapter 11 to the activities of King Antiochus IV Epiphanes, whom he regarded as the symbol of the papacy. The Reformer wrote that Dan 11:36-45 points to the antichrist, who is the papacy, which is a blasphemous authority that rebelled against God. It is investigated that it was Hippolytus of Rome who began to apply the prophecies of Daniel to Antiochus IV Epiphanes and this influenced the following interpreters, including Martin Luther. Strong arguments are made that allow us to conclude that the prophet Daniel did not mean Antiochus IV Epiphanes in Dan 11:21-45. Therefore, Martin Luther's interpretation of this issue is not entirely accurate and does not find exegetical grounds.

It is revealed that by commenting on chapter 12, Luther summarizes the entire book. He particularly drew the attention of his readers to the greatness of Daniel and believed that he was the real king of the Babylonian and Medo-Persian empires. The theologian emphasized that the book of Daniel strengthens the faith of Christians and is important for spiritual growth. Consequently, Martin Luther's interpretation of Dan 10-12, though is not free from mistakes, is meaningful enough, contains spiritual lessons and is useful to study.

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