

# "The One Desired by Women" in Dan 11:37

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## Introduction

The primary purpose of this paper is to develop a context for interpreting Dan 11:37. The two words *hemdat našim* "the one desired by women" (literally, "desire of women") offer few clues to the exegete, but the ones they do offer are of great value. To begin with, the phrase is grammatically singular. It is not "the ones desired" but "the one." I return to this point in a moment.

The opening line of vs. 38 ("Instead of them, he will honor a god of fortresses") is mistranslated in NIV. What the text says is, *w<sup>e</sup>le<sup>e</sup>lô<sup>h</sup> mā<sup>u</sup>zz<sup>im</sup> al kannô y<sup>k</sup>kabbêd* (literally, "and a god of fortresses in his place he will honor"), i.e., "Instead of him, he will honor a god of fortresses" (vs. 38)--not "Instead of them." The antecedent of *al kannô* must be singular.

When the angel says, "Instead of him, he will honor a god of fortresses," he is not making one statement but two. On the one hand he is telling us who the king will honor. But on the other hand he is telling us who the king might reasonably be expected to honor--and these two entities are not the same. The second piece of information does not lie on the surface, but is not far below it either. The deity that we would expect the king to honor is the antecedent of the words, "Instead of him," whoever that might be. When we learn who it is, we will know who the king claims to honor and this is vitally important information.

When we go to vs. 37 for the singular antecedent of *al kannô* the task is materially aided by the fact that there is only one to choose from. It cannot be "the gods of his fathers" or "them all" (clauses 1 and 4 respectively) because these terms are clearly plural. Nor can it be "any god" (clause 3) because collectives in Hebrew are most often interpreted as plurals. This leaves *hemdat našim* "the one desired by women" (clause 2). Here is the antecedent we are looking for--the only one that is grammatically allowable. Thus, the king would normally be expected to honor "the one desired by women"; that is his claim. The fact that he honors a "god of fortresses" is considered noteworthy in part for this reason. The angel does not merely say, "He will honor a god of fortresses," but, "Instead of him, he will honor a god of fortresses" (vs. 38, clause 1, literal gloss).

Up to this point we have learned (1) that "the one desired by women" is the deity that the king claims to honor and (2) that his claims in this regard are misleading. We have not yet determined who this deity is.

## The Commentaries

The commentaries on Dan 11 fall within three categories: preterist, futurist, and historicist (or Seventh-day Adventist). I do not propose doing an exhaustive review of the literature here, but certain overall currents of opinion can be noted. See tables 1, 2, and 3.

Table 1  
Preterist Interpretations  
Of Dan 11:37

Commentary	Year	Page	Interpretation
Bevan	1892	315-16	Nanaia (=Astarte)
Charles	1929	315-16	Tammuz (=Adonis)
Driver	1922	194	Tammuz (=Adonis)
Hartman & DiLella	1978	302	Tammuz (=Adonis)
Montgomery	1927	462	Concupiscence re. women

Table 2  
Futurist Interpretations  
Of Dan 11:37

Commentary	Year	Page	Interpretation
Baldwin . . . . .	1978	197	Tammuz (=Adonis)
Johnson . . . . .	1964	91	Human sexual attraction
Keil . . . . .	n.d.	464-65	Austerity re. women
Leupold . . . . .	1949	515	Loyalties to womankind
Talbot . . . . .	1940	204	Jesus Christ
Walvoord . . . . .	1971	274	Jesus Christ
Wood . . . . .	1974	137	Mercy, gentleness, kindness

Table 3  
Historicist Interpretations  
Of Dan 11:37

Commentary	Year	Page	Interpretation
Brinsmead . . . . .	1970	63	Jesus Christ
Price . . . . .	1955	309	Celebacy
Smith . . . . .	1873	285	Licentiousness
Thiele . . . . .	n.d.	156	Celebacy

It is clear from the above tables that wide areas of disagreement remain among scholars commenting on Dan 11:37. One position, held by Jerome, is that *hemdat našim* (literally, "desire of women") implies that the king "shall be engrossed in lust for women."<sup>1</sup> Montgomery concurs in this opinion (it is "a highly colored picture of Ant[iochus]'s concupiscence").<sup>2</sup> Smith has "licentiousness" in view but sets his application in a later period of history.<sup>3</sup> Others give the words an opposite sense. Keil suggests that the king would have an austere attitude toward women, i.e., that he would be devoid of "all the tender affections of the love of men and of God"

(see also Johnson, Leupold, and Wood).<sup>4</sup> A third position takes the second as its starting point. The king's austerity would not be confined to himself. He would forbid others to marry, i.e., he would require celibacy (Price, Thiele).<sup>5</sup> Within the present sample the first view is held by a noted preterist, the second by futurists, and the third by historicists. Smith takes an independent historicist position in which none have followed him. A problem with all of the above suggestions is that "the one desired by women" is mentioned, along with the "gods of his fathers," "any god," and "them all" (vs. 37), in a list of deities.

If we apply the above passage to a deity, as context requires, rather than to an impersonal attitude or set of practices, there are two main possibilities. "The one desired by women" is either a female deity (objective genitive, someone desires women) or a male deity (subjective genitive, women desire someone). The former view has been largely abandoned in this century. Bevan, writing in 1892, suggests applying the term to Nanaia (=the Iranian Anahita or Assyrian Mylitta, a fertility goddess), whose temple in Elymais Antiochus attempted to raid (1 Macc 6:1-4).<sup>6</sup> Most commentators who think a pagan deity is portrayed in vs. 37, however, suggest the male god Tammuz (=Adonis) (Charles, Driver, Hartman and DiLella, Baldwin).<sup>7</sup> Both of these views are, or were, predominantly held by preterists.

Of those who prefer a nonpagan deity, some futurists speak of Jesus here but only in the sense that a Jewish mother would wish to bear the Messiah (Talbot, Walvoord).<sup>8</sup> Thus, it is His Jewishness that qualifies the Messiah to be mentioned here. The only commentator I know of from any school of interpretation who applies "the one desired by women" to Christ on the basis of a spiritual relationship to His people, both past and present, is Brinsmead.<sup>9</sup> This state of affairs ought not to be. The "one desired by women" in Dan 11:37 is indeed Christ--the Jewish Messiah, the supreme Object of the church's regard, "the desired of all nations" (Hag 2:7). I do not adopt this position because Brinsmead once said it was so any more than I reject it because others before and after him say it is not so. The proposed interpretation bears scrutiny on its own merits.

## Woman Symbolism in Scripture

If the church's desire for Christ is somehow comparable to women's desire for a man, we should discuss woman symbolism next. The foremost example of womanliness in all the Bible is the Song of Songs. There is a question whether the Song has symbolic intent or should be taken merely at face value. But in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea there can be no doubt. Rebellious Israel and Judah are both explicitly described as an adulterous wife. In the New Testament there are bridegroom passages referring to Christ, there is counsel for married couples by Paul, who places his remarks in a spiritual context, and there are three passages in Revelation where John uses woman symbolism to describe the relationship of Christ to His church.

### Song of Songs

The following remarks on the Song of Songs have to do first with the Song itself and then with the uses that other inspired writers have made of it in the New Testament. In doing so my purpose is to establish a broad biblical context for Daniel's use of woman symbolism in Dan 11:37.

*The sexuality of the Song.* In a recent paper Richard M. Davidson argues that the Song of Songs is primarily a celebration of human sexual love.<sup>10</sup> It has been interpreted allegorically by both Jewish and Christian scholars in the past, but Davidson views this tendency as a mistake. The purpose for allegorizing the Song is to remove the human element of sexual attraction and fulfillment and this takes away the book's most obvious meaning.

A whole book taken up with celebrating the wholesome beauty and enjoyment of human sexual love! How can the inclusion of such a book be justified in the sacred canon? No further justification is needed. Those who have resorted to an allegorical interpretation to legitimize the existence of Canticles in Scripture have missed the crucial point--the Song of Songs in its plain and *literal* sense is *not* just a "secular" love song, but is fraught with deep spiritual, theological significance. From the OT Hebrew perspective God is not absent from the Song, nor are his love and concern for his creatures lacking in it. Rather, they are clearly shown in the enjoyment and pleasure (given by God to man in the creation) which the lovers find in each other and in their surroundings.<sup>11</sup>

Davidson thus allows a broader meaning in the Song, but it is not his emphasis and he is careful to distinguish between allegory and typology as a means of justifying any such extended meanings.<sup>12</sup> Only the latter is acceptable.

In the final analysis, therefore, the allegorical interpretation of the Song may be correct in its *conclusion* that the Song shows God's love for man, but incorrect in the way in which the conclusion is reached. The love relationship between Solomon and the Shulamite is not a worthless "husk," to be stripped away *allegorically* to find the Song's kernel or the "true" meaning--the love between God and his people. Rather, the love relationship between husband and wife, described in the Song, has independent meaning and value of its own that is affirmed and extolled. At the same time this human love is given even greater significance as it *typologically* points beyond itself to the divine Lover in the Song's climax (8:6). Rather than an *allegorical* understanding (with its fanciful, externally-and-arbitrarily-imposed meaning that is alien to the plain and literal sense), the Song itself calls for a *typological* approach, which remains faithful to, and even enhances, the literal sense of the Song by recognizing what the text indicates--that human love typifies the divine.<sup>13</sup>

Davidson is probably right in saying that the Song is a celebration of human sexual love. My concern is not to remove the sexual element by replacing it with something more wholesome, as though the emotions described in the Song are unwholesome, but rather to avoid taking away the spiritual significance of what is said. In the context of other examples of woman symbolism in the Old Testament the wealth of attraction between the two lovers in the Song becomes a vitally important element to retain. And yet I think there is more to say than Davidson has said and that when we have said it an overall shift in emphasis is warranted.<sup>14</sup>

One of Davidson's major contributions to exegesis of the Song is the fact that he relates that book to the creation narratives of Gen 1-3.<sup>15</sup> I would now like to extend this approach and point out four New Testament allusions to the Song.<sup>16</sup>

*First allusion: Song 4:7 / Eph 5:27.* The first New Testament use of the Song of Songs is by Paul:

All beautiful you are, my darling;  
 there is no flaw [*mûm*] in you.  
 (Song 4:7)

(25) Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her (26) to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, (27) and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle [*spilon ē rutida*] or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. (Eph 5:27)

I do not claim that a future church was in the mind of the author of the Song as he wrote about the Shulamite, but rather that Song 4:7 might well have been in Paul's mind as he wrote Eph 5:27. On the one hand we have a woman who is spotless as regards her relationship to her lover and on the other hand a body of saints on earth presented to Christ faultless and entire.

Notice two additional facts. First, Peter uses a plural form (*spiloi* "blots") of Paul's word in a similar context and shows what is meant by these "blots" or "stains" within the church.

They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes [*spiloi kai mōmoi*], reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you. (2 Pet 2:13)<sup>17</sup>

The second fact to notice is that Paul amplifies his thought as he goes on. He does not stop at vs. 27. Here is the rest of what he says.

(28) In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. (29) After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church--(30) for we are members of his body. (31) "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." (32) This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about Christ and the church. (33) However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. (Eph 5:28-33)

Notice that Paul quotes from the Genesis creation narrative (Gen 2:24) in vs. 31, which is especially interesting in view of Davidson's argument that the Song of Songs is closely related to Gen 1-3. And the verse Paul quotes is one that deals specifically with married sexual love.

*Second allusion: Song 5:2 / Rev 3:20.* The second proposed allusion to the Song of Songs in the New Testament is by John in the book of Revelation:

I slept but my heart was awake.  
 Listen! My lover is knocking:  
 "Open to me, my sister, my darling,  
 my dove, my flawless one." (Song 5:2)

"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will go in and eat with him, and he with me." (Rev 3:20)

This use of the Song, and its context within the Song, must be grasped by anyone who wishes to understand the Laodicean message well. Notice three points. First, the Septuagint of the above passage says, "The voice of my kinsman knocks [*krouei*] at the door [*epi tēn thuran*]." Thus, Christ's words, "'I stand at the door [*epi tēn thuran*] and knock [*krouō*]," are a direct quotation from the Septuagint of Song 5:2.<sup>16</sup> (The word *krouō* literally means "call" rather than "knock.") Second, Christ presents Himself to the faulty, lukewarm Laodiceans as a Lover to His loved one. They are the object of His supreme regard. And third, it is significant in view of the New Testament sequel that, if the woman rather than the man is speaking in vs. 3, she is inconvenienced by her lover's sudden appearance.

"I have taken off my robe--  
 must I put it on again?  
 I have washed my feet--  
 must I soil them again?" (Song 5:3)

The lover would hardly say these lines as he stands outside in the darkness and asks to come in. He is not the one who has retired for the night. The obvious connection between Song 5:2 and Rev 3:20 provides a context for studying the message to Laodicea that illuminates the attitudes of both Christ and His church as He confronts them with Himself at this inopportune time in their history. He is their Lover rather than their Judge. They have settled down to rest and do not wish to be disturbed.

*Third allusion: Song 6:4 / Rev 6:2.* The third allusion, also in Revelation, is found in the first of the seven seals:

You are beautiful, my darling, as Tirzah,  
 lovely as Jerusalem,  
 majestic as troops with banners.  
 (Song 6:4)

I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest. (Rev 6:2)

As the first seal is broken John sees the church early in its history sallying forth with a pure gospel in the face of violent persecution. Its conquests are spiritual in nature. As an aside let me point out that the church's success at any given time or place is best judged by the way its witness is given, not by the way its witness is received. It is a hard lesson to remember. Adversity always feels like failure but it forces the church to its knees and produces a faithful witness by those who stay by. Unfortunately the reverse also seems to be true. So, while in the end paganism was not strong enough to contain the church's advance and Christianity became the official religion of the Empire, it was not an unmixed blessing. When the first seal is broken the horse that John sees is white, the next horse is red, the next one black, and the last pale--the color of death (see Rev 6:1-8). In any event, the military analogy linking Rev 6:2 with Song 6:4 is appropriate.

Notice that the process of decline, which follows the series of four colors in the first four seals, parallels the decline from the woman of Rev 12 to that of Rev 17. In both cases the church is in view, a change occurs within it, and a good deal of time is necessary to account for these facts.

*Fourth allusion: Song 6:10 / Rev 12:1.* The fourth allusion to the Song of Songs in the New Testament is too broad to miss. I submit that John had Song 6:10 specifically in mind as he wrote Rev 12:1. Nowhere else in the Old Testament do we find the sun, moon, and stars brought together in a context of woman symbolism.

Who is this that appears like the dawn,  
fair as the moon, bright as the sun,  
majestic as the stars in procession?  
(Song 6:10)

A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. (Rev 12:1)

The connection between Song 6:10 and Rev 12:1 is clear and the application of what John says to the Christian church is in no doubt. The pure woman of Rev 12 is the spiritual body of Christ under the new covenant at a time early in her history.

*Discussion.* Notice that in each of the above examples the type of woman symbolism that the Song is called upon to support is one with spiritual intent. In Eph 5:27 Paul is not drawing on marriage to illustrate what God's relationship is with His people, but the reverse. He is placing the common relationships of everyday life in a spiritual context. In Rev 3:20 Christ describes Himself as confronting an inattentive church, not as a Guest but as a Lover. In Rev 6:2 the church bears an aggressive witness to Christ and this reminds John of a passage from the Song. In Rev 12:1 he sees a symbol of the church in resplendent purity. In no case is the spiritual element added after the fact. That is the writers' starting point. What is added is the memory that the Song speaks in a similar vein.

### Other Old Testament passages

The uses of woman symbolism in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea can be discussed together. The one passage from Isaiah that we should mention stands slightly apart. But all four writers share a similar historical context in which either Israel (Hosea) or Judah (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel) has turned away from God. The people have been unfaithful to their Lord in the same way that an adulterous wife is unfaithful to her husband.

In this sense the passages to be discussed below are the opposite counterpart of what we find in the Song of Songs. There we saw two lovers attracted to each other in mutual commitment. Here we see a loss of commitment, whereby one party to a marriage covenant is attracted to anyone else but her husband. All the good things in the Song are now played back to us in reverse as a description of how first Israel and then Judah leave their spiritual Husband and rightful Lord to pursue a succession of idol lovers. Passages that draw on the metaphor of an unfaithful wife in this way include Jer 2:1-4:4; Ezek 16: 1-63; 23:1-49; 24:15-27; and Hos 2:1-23. Isa 4:1 draws on the same symbolism but does so in a different manner.

*Isaiah.* In Isa 3 the scene alternates between the causes and the effects of threatened exile. The haughtiness of the women of Zion falls within the former category (see Isa 3:16). In the latter we have the following oracle:

In that day seven women will take hold of one man and say, "We will eat our own food and provide our own clothes; only let us be called by your name. Take away our disgrace!" (Isa 4:1)

It may be that Isaiah had in mind a contemporary fulfillment of these words. If he did, they can be typologically extended to describe an eschatological situation. Otherwise they already have eschatological intent. In a contemporary fulfillment the "one man" could be hypothetical, mentioned only for purposes of illustration, but in an eschatological sense the prophet's words would have to have spiritual meaning.

A reasonable spiritual interpretation is that the "man" is Christ and that every kind of Christian wants to be called by His name. It is by virtue of that fact that the name "Christian" applies. In some cases the relationship goes no farther than this. There is no special desire to receive anything from Him, but merely to be called by His name. Thus, the motives might be wrong but the Man is at least not being deserted by an adulterous wife. On the contrary, He is surrounded by people who wish to be associated with Him, if only superficially.

*Jeremiah.* The next stage in the above progression is one of outright rejection. In the woman symbolism that runs throughout Jer 2 and 3, carrying over as far as 4:4, the rejection motif is prominent. Judah has turned from God. The Lord deserves His people's undivided loyalty and receives none of it. Consider the following examples:

"I remember the devotion of your youth,  
how as a bride you loved me  
and followed me through the desert,  
through a land not sown. (Jer 2:2)

"Have I been a desert to Israel  
or a land of great darkness?  
Why do my people say, 'We are free to roam;  
we will come to you no more'?  
(32) Does a maiden forget her jewelry,  
a bride her wedding ornaments?  
Yet my people have forgotten me,  
days without number. (Jer 2:31-32)

"If a man divorces his wife  
and she leaves him and marries another man,  
should he return to her again?  
Would not the land be completely defiled?  
But you have lived as a prostitute with many  
lovers--



would you now return to me?"  
declares the Lord. (Jer 3:1)

"I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries. Yet I saw that her unfaithful sister Judah had no fear; she also went out and committed adultery." (Jer 3:8)

"Return, faithless people," declares the Lord, "for I am your husband. I will choose one of you from every town and two from every clan and bring you to Zion." (Jer 3:14)

*Ezekiel.* Ezekiel makes much more extensive use of woman symbolism than any other Old Testament prophet as regards the absolute number of verses he devotes to it (112 verses out of 1272, or 8.81%). As a proportion of verses Hosea uses it more than twice as much (39 out of 197 verses, or 19.8%). I return to Hosea below. Ezekiel devotes two entire chapters to woman symbolism (16:1-63; 23:1-49).

I make no attempt here to quote my way through Ezek 16 and 23 in order to illustrate the prophet's theme. We are not talking about a quotable passage here or there. Woman symbolism provides the whole substance of both chapters, as the reader can easily verify. But let me single out one especially interesting verse.

The Lord promises to bring Judah's lovers from every direction and to humiliate her in their presence. ""Then my wrath against you will subside and my jealous anger [*qin'âtî*] will turn away from you; I will be calm and no longer angry"" (Ezek 16:42). The word *qin'âtî* does not describe the anger of malice but the anger of jealousy. Here, then, we have an appropriate context for all the other passages in the Old Testament which speak of God's "jealous anger," just as in Jer 4:1 we have a context for all of God's invitations for His people to "return."

In the above passages God is the offended lover or husband of His people. He invites them to return because they have left. He is jealous over them because their loyalties have been diverted to others. The whole doctrine of the atonement is built around this theme. When Paul cries out to those in Corinth, "We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God" (2 Cor 5:20), here is the context for his remarks. We must be reconciled because we have been estranged. The problem is not confined to Jews or Christians. All of Adam's children have gone their own way--except one. And His example was so different from anything else people had seen that they could not tolerate it for more than a few years and so had Him put to death. The crucifixion of Christ is at once the best illustration of man's alienation from God and of God's willingness to spare no means in winning us back to Himself. But it is not the only illustration.

*Hosea.* The unfortunate prophet Hosea was commanded to go and marry a prostitute, by whom he would have three children. That is chap. 1. In chap. 3 he returns to the story of his wayward wife, and how he is forced to go looking for her in the slave market where he buys her back "for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley" (Hos 3:2).

None of this should be seen as a biographical aside. It is an object lesson by which God tries to make Israel understand their behavior toward Him and His feelings toward them. The real thrust of what is being said occurs in chap. 2, where God says:

"Rebuke your mother, rebuke her,  
 for she is not my wife,  
 and I am not her husband.  
 Let her remove the adulterous look from her face  
 and the unfaithfulness from between her  
 breasts." (Hos 1:2)

"She said, 'I will go after my lovers,  
 who give me my food and my water,  
 my wool and my linen, my oil and my drink.'  
 (Hos 1:5)

"She has not acknowledged that I was the one  
 who gave her the grain, the new wine and oil,  
 who lavished on her the silver and gold--  
 which they used for Baal." (Hos 1:8)

In a later chapter the imagery of marriage is set aside altogether and God speaks of His relationship to Israel without aid of symbols:

"When I found Israel,  
 it was like finding grapes in the desert;  
 when I saw your fathers,  
 it was like seeing the early fruit on the  
 fig tree.  
 But when they came to Baal Peor,  
 they consecrated themselves to that  
 shameful idol  
 and became as vile as the thing they loved.  
 (Hos 9:10)

"How can I give you up, Ephraim?  
 How can I hand you over, Israel?  
 How can I treat you like Admah?  
 How can I make you like Zeboiim?  
 My heart is changed within me;  
 all my compassion is aroused. (How 11:8)

We will never know the full depth of God's emotions as He reflects on how lightly Israel regards His warnings and how grave their situation actually is, with all its implications down through the future. But we cannot read such expressions of heart rending grief without sharing at least some of what He feels. These are moving passages. The God of all the universe is here placed in a position of reduced alternatives. One could say that the infinite Helper is helpless in the face of His people's perverse will. What can even the God of Israel do for Israel if they refuse all His appeals? And so we read the frightful declaration, "Ephraim is joined to idols; leave him alone!" (Hos 4:17). The help rejected is withdrawn and Israel is given over to the mercy of its enemies. But this was not God's plan; it is not what He had in mind.

## New Testament

The history of the northern kingdom of Israel was largely repeated by the southern kingdom of Judah ("I saw that she too defiled herself; both of them went the same way" [Ezek 23:13]). Judah, like Israel, went into exile. But Judah returned and for more than 500 years Jerusalem was inhabited until the coming of Christ, who came to bring in person the same appeal that He had presented so often through His prophets before. But the stronger appeal was only met with a stronger rejection--stronger because it was now intelligent and purposeful. It was not only the frustration of wanting to do much for His people and being able to do little, but the prospect of having His corporate relationship with them severed altogether that pierced Christ's heart as He wept over Jerusalem in the following passage:

(37) "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. (38) Look, your house is left to you desolate. (39) For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'" (Matt 23:37-39)

A short time later the Jews' "desolate house" was torn down altogether and the blessings they had disdained were offered to whoever wanted them--freely, without reference to national origin (see Matt 22:8-10). In Christ all such distinctions are themselves torn down. Any Gentile can come to God through Christ and--what is also important to remember--any Jew can come to God through Christ. But we cannot come to God without Christ. That is not one of our options. "If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen" (1 John 4:20). We cannot love God, whom we have not seen, while disdaining our elder Brother, "which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched" (1 John 1:1).

*Bridegroom passages.* If the covenant blessings are available in the New Testament on a wider basis than they were in the Old, the metaphor of marriage is extended in the same way. It is an easy point to miss. Christ on one occasion speaks of Himself as the Bridegroom. John the Baptist applies the same figure to Him. And in the parable of the ten virgins Christ is again clearly the Bridegroom. But the saints on earth in all three cases are guests at the wedding. They are no longer the bride.

A bridegroom passage is found early in Christ's ministry in all four gospels. In the synoptics it appears as a response to a question about fasting and Christ is the one speaking.

Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast." (Matt 9:15)

(19) Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. (20) But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast." (Mark 2:19-20)

(34) Jesus answered, "Can you make the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? (35) But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast." (Luke 5:34-35)

In the gospel of John the context is one of how Christ's work relates to that of John the Baptist and John the Baptist is speaking.

(29) The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. (30) He must become greater; I must become less. (John 3:29-30)

The third bridegroom passage, the one which occurs toward the end of Christ's ministry, is the parable of the ten virgins, recorded only by Matthew (25:1-13). There the ten virgins--some wise, some foolish--represent two different classes of people. The bridegroom in the story represents Christ. But the ten virgins are not the bride. They are guests at the wedding.

Why does the imagery change? And if God's people are no longer represented as being linked to Him in a marriage relationship, who is? Who is the bride? To answer this question we must go on to ask whose loyalties Christ receives as a result of what He accomplished for us on the cross. Those individuals, whoever they might be, are the bride because by its nature a wedding is an exchange of mutual commitments. Are we on this planet the only beneficiaries of Christ's sacrifice? How widely would sin have spread in the universe if He had not met the problem at its source? How widely is He acclaimed in the end? How widely is His authority accepted?

The loyalties of the universe have been courted by Satan. His defeat is total and irreversible. At the cross his proposed system of government is revealed for what it really is and not one shred of sympathy for him remains outside our own planet. The loyalties of the entire universe are given to Christ, who has saved not only us but them from untold misery. This exchange of mutual commitments and loyalties is the wedding supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:6-8; 21:2, 9). In this context the saints on earth are guests instead of the bride because so much more is involved than just what touches us. In the end all creation acknowledges Christ as Sovereign Lord (see Phil 2:9-11).

Here, incidentally, the great themes of love and obedience are brought together. The analogy of marriage captures the relationship between them perfectly. The pledge of mutual love and of mutual loyalty is not two pledges, but one. It is true, as Christ points out, "If you love me, you will obey what I command" (John 14:15).

*Ephesians.* In Eph 5:22-33 Paul discusses what is involved in the marriage relationship. He says, "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord" (vs. 22) and "Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (vs. 25). This is practical counsel for everyday living. But then he goes on to show what concept he is drawing on in saying these things. Paul is not filling his epistle here with axioms drawn from common sense or human experience; he was writing by the Holy Spirit about spiritual as well as practical things.

He who loves his wife loves himself. (29) After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds it and cares for it, just as Christ does the church--(30) for we are members of his body. (31) "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." (32) This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about Christ and the church. (33) However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. (Eph 5:28-33)

Paul is not drawing on marriage to illustrate what God's relationship is with His people, but the reverse. He is drawing on the larger relationship to supply perspective and vivify our understanding of the one which is more common and mundane. He is making his theology practical.

*Revelation.* It was suggested that when John speaks of "a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head" (Rev 12:1) he is reflecting on the following words from the Song of Songs:

Who is this that appears like the dawn,  
fair as the moon, bright as the sun,  
majestic as the stars in procession? (Song 6:10)

By the same token John could have been thinking of any one of a number of Old Testament passages as he describes the fallen woman of Rev 17, notably Ezek 16 or 23. But enough has been said on this matter.

## Woman Symbolism in Daniel 11

Notice carefully that there are two uses of woman symbolism in Dan 11 and not just one. The reference in vs. 37, under review here, is the second to occur. The first is in vs. 17.

"He will determine to come with the might of his entire kingdom and will make an alliance with the king of the South. And he will give him a daughter in marriage in order to overthrow the kingdom, but his plans will not succeed or help him." (Dan 11:17)

NIV badly garbles this verse. The Hebrew says: *ūbat hannāšîm yitten lô* ("and he will give him the daughter of women") *l'hašhîtāh* ("to ruin her") *w<sup>ē</sup>lō<sup>?</sup> ta<sup>a</sup>mōd* ("and she will not stand") *w<sup>ē</sup>lō<sup>?</sup> lô tihyeh* ("and she will not be his").

The question in vs. 17b is how to interpret the reference to a "daughter of women" and also the "ruin" that would befall her. The woman could be literal and the ruin figurative, or the woman could be figurative and the ruin literal. It is not possible to take both literally or necessary to take both figuratively. I suggest that the woman is a symbol for the Jewish people. Her ruin is the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and the events that would follow that during the next century under Hadrian. . . . He will stand (vs. 16b), but she will not stand (vs. 17b). He will take her (vs. 17a), but she will not be his (vs. 17b). Judea would not allow God to possess her (Matt 23:37-39; Luke 13:34-35; 19:41-44) and she

would not allow Rome to do so either. Rather than belong to anyone she would cease to exist. And this is what happened, as the history of the period so tragically demonstrates.<sup>18</sup>

If in vs. 17 we have a woman serving as a figure for God's people, in vs. 37 we have the opposite counterpart of this--the Object of women's desire, which is Christ. There is no contradiction here. The woman in vs. 17 was distant and aloof, not wishing to be possessed by anyone but living wholly to herself. In vs. 37 the reference is plural. It does not say "woman" but "women." By speaking of "the one desired by women" (vs. 37) as he does, the angel indicates that these women's desire has not been stifled or diverted. It is healthy and alive. But the one reference, according to the historicist model proposed here, is pre-Christian while the other comes after the cross. The one reference is to unresponsive literal Israel, the other to spiritual Israel--the body of those, from every nation, who worship God "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24; see also vs. 21-23).

## Discussion

There is one other Old Testament passage which must be brought into the discussion. It is parallel to Dan 11:37 not because of the word *nāšîm* ("women"), but because of the word *hemdat* ("desire of"). A messianic interpretation of Hag 2:7 is not without textual problems, but the context before us is the one in which those problems must be viewed.<sup>19</sup> Dan 11:37 and Hag 2:7 are closely related sister passages.

(6) "This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. (7) I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the Lord Almighty. (8) 'The silver is mine and the gold is mine,' declares the Lord Almighty. (9) 'The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,' says the Lord Almighty. 'And in this place I will grant peace,' declares the Lord Almighty." (Hag 2:6-9)

Peace was granted to Israel in the restored temple but it was not ultimately accepted there. Christ personally walked and taught in the second temple, having never honored the temple of Solomon in this way. "He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him" (John 1:11). On the contrary, they knowingly rejected Him, transferring their loyalties from the One who loved them to a foreign and bitterly hated enemy. "'Shall I crucify your king?' Pilate asked. 'We have no king but Caesar,' the chief priests answered" (John 19:15). And so, with all possible means of winning back His people exhausted, the Son of an infinite God turned elsewhere with His gracious offer of peace. And we can be glad that He did. Because in doing so He embraced all mankind, including the Gentiles, which will include most of my readers.

## Conclusion

There is an immense breadth of perspective in Dan 11--heaven and earth, the present and the distant future (from Daniel's point of view), good and evil, Christ and Satan. These are the hallmarks of apocalyptic writing.

A neglected dimension of this prophecy, which might be included as an added dimension of Daniel's apocalypticism, is the mutual attraction between Christ and His people. If they are unresponsive in one era (11:17), in another they are not (11:37). The "one desired by women" in vs. 37 is not Tammuz, it is Christ. And those who desire Him are His people under the "new covenant" (1 Cor 11:25). It is true that not all would remain loyal. The woman who is pure in Rev 12:1 does not remain so. The church itself comes under a charge of adultery and prostitution (Rev 17:1, 2, 5) just as Israel did before (Ezek 16 and 23). The parallel is exact. In any given age only a remnant keeps itself pure and receives the promised blessings.<sup>20</sup> And this fact in turn should be allowed to shape our concept of the remnant.<sup>21</sup>

One final way in which the passage before us is instructive is that, though surrounded by references to a very conspicuous power (Dan 7:8, 11, 20, 25), which, if permitted, would attract all attention to itself, Christ is still there to be seen if we will open our hearts to see Him. In the text of Dan 11:36-39, as in the period of history that it documents, Christ is all but lost from view. The times are ones of spiritual leanness (Rev 6:6). But He does not withdraw Himself from those who love Him at the very time when they need His presence most. Christ's promise to them, as well as to us, is:

"And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt 28:20).

NOTE: All Scripture quotations in this paper, except when noted otherwise, are from the Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright (c) 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society.

<sup>1</sup>Gleason L. Archer, trans., *Jerome's Commentary of Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), p. 137.

<sup>2</sup>James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, International Critical Commentary (New York: Scribner's, 1927), p. 462.

<sup>3</sup>Uriah Smith, *The Prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1944), p. 283.

<sup>4</sup>C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), vol. 9: *Ezekiel, Daniel*, p. 464-65; Philip C. Johnson, *The Book of Daniel: A Study Manual* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1964), p. 91; H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1949), p. 515; Leon J. Wood, *Daniel: A Study Guide* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), p. 137.

<sup>5</sup>George McCready Price, *The Greatest of the Prophets: A New Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1955), p. 309; Edwin R. Thiele, *Outline Studies in Daniel* (Angwin, CA: Pacific Union College, n.d.), p. 156.

<sup>6</sup>For Anahita (also spelled Anaitis) see F. E. Peters, *The Harvest of Hellenism: A History of the Near East from Alexander the Great to the Triumph of Christianity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), pp. 239 (Iranian origin), 346 (popular in Anatolia), 476 (goddess of fertility), 565 (associated with Mithra the sun god). Antiochus IV was not the first Greek-Syrian king to raid a temple of Anahita. His father Antiochus III financed his war against Parthia with bullion stored in the temple of Anahita in Ecbatana (*ibid.*, pp. 243-44).

<sup>7</sup>R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), p. 315-16; S. R. Driver, *The Book of Daniel*, Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), p. 194; Louis F. Hartman and Alexander A. DiLella, *The Book of Daniel*, Anchor Bible, vol. 23 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1978), p. 302; Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1978), p. 197.

<sup>8</sup>Louis T. Talbot, *The Prophecies of Daniel in Light of Past, Present, and Future Events* (Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen Press, 1940), p. 204; John F. Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), p. 274.

<sup>9</sup>Robert D. Brinsmead, *The Vision by the Hiddekel: A Verse by Verse Commentary on Daniel Eleven* (Denver: International Health Institute, 1970), p. 63.

<sup>10</sup>Davidson, "Theology of Sexuality in the Song of Songs: Return to Eden," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 27 (1989): 1-19. More recently Davidson has returned to the topic of sexuality with an almost 900-page book entitled, *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007). See Gerrie Snyman, review of Richard M. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament*, *Review of Biblical Literature* [<http://www.bookreviews.org>] (2008).

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 17

<sup>12</sup>See Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical Typus Structures* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1981), pp. 20, 81, 100-101.

<sup>13</sup>Davidson, "Sexuality in the Song of Songs," pp. 18-19.

<sup>14</sup>I have thought for some time that one reason for the incarnation was God's need to be close to His people. Christ was sent into the world on assignment, it is true. He had a task to do and He did it. But that is not all there is to say about why He came. Geographical space is not the main issue here. By taking human flesh Christ entered more than our physical environment; he entered our thought world and our feelings and took on Himself our infirmities (Heb 5:1-10). In an earlier paper I wrote concerning the departure of God's glory from the temple in Ezekiel's time as follows: "Thus, the Lord deserts His temple and goes off toward the East--the direction the captives had taken--and eventually, when they return, He returns with them to bless His people in their own land again. Here we see one of the most tender portraits of God as a loving Father that can be found anywhere in all the Bible. If His people are in Babylon, then God wants to be there too. And He does not return to Judea, in Ezekiel's visions, until they do" ("The Problem of the First Apartment in Seventh-day Adventist Sanctuary Theology," *Historicism* No. 17/Jan 89, p. 7). In all of this we are speaking in human terms. And yet there is a need in God's heart to be near--stronger than we have realized--and the gospel can be seen as an invitation to share this need, making it mutual once again. There is deep meaning in the words, "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Gen 2:18). The need not to be alone was implanted in us by the Creator. It is part of the image of God (Gen 1:26). What I am suggesting in this note is that the above need is one factor among many that can help us to understand however much we will ever understand about the incarnation.

<sup>15</sup>See Richard M. Davidson, "The Theology of Sexuality in the Beginning: Genesis 1-2," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 26 (1988): 5-24; "The Theology of Sexuality in the Beginning: Genesis 3," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 26 (1988): 121-131.

<sup>16</sup>I owe this insight to Robert J. Wieland, who mentioned it in a lecture at Atholton, MD on September 30, 1989.

<sup>17</sup>As a philological aside, the Greek word *mōmos* ("blemish" in 2 Pet 2:13) is the same as the Hebrew word *mûm* ("flaw" in Song 4:7). For the equivalence of these two words see G. Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*, 3rd ed. (New York: Scribners, [1936]), s.v. *mōmos*. Abbott-Smith is modest in size but especially valuable as a lexical tool (1) because it makes a practice of citing supporting examples from the Septuagint in explaining New Testament words and (2) because it frequently gives Hebrew equivalences for any Septuagint forms cited. In the present case Song 4:7 is not cited, nor should one press the proposed linguistic facts too far in making an exegetical point about 2 Pet 2:13. I merely point out that the words are similar and that the Greeks probably borrowed *mûm* from the Phoenicians, Hellenizing it to *mōmos* in the process. When we recall that the Phoenicians also gave the Greeks their alphabet this sort of cross-cultural borrowing becomes entirely plausible.



<sup>18</sup>Hardy, "Historical Overview of Dan 11:16-22," *Historicism* No. 14/Apr 88, pp. 12, 13.

<sup>19</sup>See Hardy, "'The Desired of all Nations'" in Hag 2:7," *Historicism* No. 12/Oct 87, pp. 2-21.

<sup>20</sup>See Gerhard Hasel, *The Remnant: The History of the Remnant Idea from Genesis to Isaiah*, 3rd ed., Studies in Religion, vol. 5 (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1980), pp. 393-94

<sup>21</sup>What the church awaits is not the conversion of the world, but the coming of the Lord. The world will never be converted. If that is what we are waiting for, we will be here a long time. In the same way, if we are waiting for a majority of the church to be pure and spiritual and warm in their response to Christ, there is a question whether that will happen either. But Christ will come. He has promised and He is faithful.