

time, one of the most interesting, and one of the most perplexing, books in the Old Testament collection.

Daniel is represented in the book as among the earliest to be taken to Babylon, when a mere lad, in order that he might be trained for the public service. He rose rapidly in favor and filled various prominent positions at the court of successive kings, throughout a long career, which lasted until the restoration. Amid all changes and at no small risk to himself, he remained faithful to God and to his religion.

The book which bears his name consists mainly of visions seen by the king, or by himself, of an apocalyptic character, outlining the history of the great world empires from his own time down to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes and the Maccabees, about 160 B.C. The rise and triumph of the Kingdom of God is also predicted, as a Kingdom which is to last for ever.

The authorship of this book is now much disputed. Formerly it was generally attributed to Daniel himself, although the book nowhere makes such a claim. Many scholars now place it at 167 or 168 B.C., and take it as being intended to support the faith of the Jews under the dreadful persecution which they were then suffering from Antiochus Epiphanes, the king of Syria.

LESSON XXIV.

THE LEVITICAL SACRIFICES

The Levitical system of sacrifices was somewhat complicated, and our information is too limited to make it possible to explain satisfactorily all the points connected with it. We may classify these sacrifices, (1) According to the material used; (2) according to the occasion when they were offered; (3) according to the ideas they were intended to express.

THE MATERIAL

1. The great majority were animal sacrifices—oxen, sheep, goats, turtle-doves or young pigeons. They were generally to be males without blemish, and were either burnt whole upon the altar, or a part burnt and the rest eaten.

2. Vegetable offerings, called meal offer-

ings in the Revised Version, the product of the tilled field or of the vineyard, not of garden herbs* or the fruits of the orchard. These were sometimes an accompaniment of the animal sacrifices, and sometimes independent of them. A portion was burned and the rest eaten.

3. Wine or oil poured out as libations or drink offerings. These were never offered alone, but only as accompanying some other kind of offering.

4. Incense, always used in connection with some other offering.

THE OCCASIONS

1. Ordinary. These were, (a) the public daily burnt offering, presented morning and evening for the whole people. It combined all the materials—a lamb, flour, oil, incense. This sacrifice was doubled on the Sabbath. (b) Offerings by private individuals, as they felt disposed. These might be at any time and of any kind, according to their ability.

2. Extraordinary. These were sacrifices offered, (a) on the great festivals—passover, pentecost, etc.; (b) on the day of atonement; (c) at the consecration of priests; (d) at the cleansing of lepers; (e) at the purification from ceremonial uncleanness.

THE IDEAS EXPRESSED

1. The expiation of sin. This is by far the most prominent and the most frequent idea, both in the public sacrifices and in those offered by private individuals. The great majority were accompanied by a formal confession of sin, either general or special, which sin is supposed to be laid by the hand of the priest on the head of the victim, and to be expiated by its blood. On the annual day of atonement a second victim was led away, with the burden of the people's sin, into the wilderness, and there set free. In the case of private individuals, they were often presented for sins unwittingly committed.

2. The removal of ceremonial uncleanness.

3. Consecration to a sacred use, whether of persons, places or things.

4. Thanksgiving for mercies received or expected.

Sometimes two or more of these ideas appear in the same sacrifice.