

God's Man for a Time of Crisis, Part 1

Scripture: Daniel 1:1-2

Code: 27-01

Daniel...the last in the books known as the major prophets and just before the minor prophets in the Old Testament. I really believe that tonight as we begin our study of the book of Daniel, we embark upon a great adventure. This is one of the most fascinating and intriguing books in all of holy Scripture. It's a book that I have longed to pursue through all the years of my ministry and been anxious to come to this very moment that I share with you tonight.

Daniel, I guess, is to the Old Testament what Revelation is to the New Testament. Daniel is the book in the Old Testament that sweeps from a time of crisis in Judah's history to the Second Coming of Messiah and touches events all the way along. Daniel gives us a panorama of the history of the world. And really in saying that I...I have to add that at the same time it's an intensely practical book. You know, Peter had an important word for us. Peter said in 2 Peter, "Seeing that you know all these things shall come to pass, what manner of persons ought you to be?" Having insight into the future that has no bearing on the present is useless. Speculation about something that's going to happen that has no effect on what is happening is meaningless. Peter was saying that if you know what is coming to pass, it will change the way you live now. And I think that's a great truth for the book of Daniel for Daniel gives us the panorama of the history of the world to its consummation and in that very panorama lies the motivation to living for this very moment. And I think that if there was anything that solidified Daniel's commitment, if there was anything that drove his roots deep, if there was anything that made him stay faithful through 80 years of lifetime in a pagan society, I think it was the fact that the more visions he had and the more revelations he had of the future, the greater impact it had on his present life. In fact, John says in 1 John 3 that if we have this hope in us, we purify ourselves. If we really believe that this is going to come to pass, it changes the way we live.

So Daniel has two parts and tonight we're just going to give you a basic introduction to the book. And it's...it's going to be somewhat detailed and I don't really know how far we're going to get but this is a foundation upon which you'll build your whole comprehension of Daniel's prophecy. Daniel has two parts: the prophet and the prophecies, the man and his message. You might say in connection with the man it is here and now, in connection with the message it is then and there. And so Daniel is really two parts. Chapters 1 through 6 deal with the man and 7 through 12 deal with his message: 1 through 6, the prophet, 7 through 12, the prophecies. Although there is overlap in all of the book those seem to be the major thrusts. There is in the beginning of Daniel's book and also throughout the book a look at spiritual truth that is drawn from the uncompromising lifestyle of Daniel as he, a Jew in exile, withstood the onslaughts of pagan, heathen, Babylonian society. At the same time

Daniel has visions, interprets dreams that lay at our feet, an incredible comprehension of the future of the world until Jesus comes. And so Daniel is a book for every today and for all tomorrows. Daniel sweeps through all of our lives to give us insight into God's standards. It tells me how to live for God in this evil age and it tells me what it will be like when I live with God in that golden age. Daniel has his feet on the ground, you might say, and his head in the clouds. With Daniel it is dreams and then it is daily living. It's all here. It shows how a man who sees the future can live to the glory of God in the present.

Now generally speaking, let me give you the setting of Daniel in the Old Testament. The Old Testament, at least in the Jewish mind, was divided into three parts. There were the books known as the law, the five books of Moses; Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, the law, the Torah. Then there was the prophets and the prophets summed up everything from Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel being omitted, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel and then all the minor prophets, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. All of that was the Minor prophets.

There was a third element of the Hebrew text known as the Hagiographa, or the Holy Writings. The Holy Writings were everything that was left. And it was interesting that in the Jewish text Daniel was not included with the prophets but he was included with the Holy Writings because specifically Daniel is never called a prophet, at least in terms of the same word which is used for Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and the rest. But whether or not the Jewish people put Daniel in the list of the prophets or not, believe me, he is a prophet. And that's why in your Bible you'll find him listed with the prophets. He has been traditionally classed as what is known as a Major Prophet, and that's only a designation of the length of his book, not its importance.

But Daniel finds himself associated with some pretty great men, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel are the four known as the Major prophets, Jeremiah having written also the book of Lamentations. These four men stand out as great prophets of God.

Now we need to understand how Daniel fits in to those four so I want to share that with you for just a brief moment. Isaiah ministered more than a hundred years before the Babylonian exile. He ministered to the same people, basically, but he ministered in Judah and Judah was the Southern Kingdom. Remember that after Solomon the kingdom was divided into the north known as Israel and the south known as Judah. The north was ten tribes, the south was two...Benjamin and Judah. Isaiah mainly ministered, of course, in Judah and Isaiah was ministering a hundred years before the Babylonian exile and so he was ministering in a time of prosperity in Israel when the...or in Judah, rather, when the people thought everything was going very well. They were confident that everything was fine and yet Isaiah could see the spiritual state of apostasy. And so Isaiah was proclaiming the fact that judgment was coming if something didn't change dramatically.

Then there was Jeremiah. Jeremiah came some time after Isaiah. Jeremiah wasn't a hundred years before the end of everything, Jeremiah was during the last five kings of Judah's history. He was the prophet right at the end. And he saw the things that Isaiah began to see coming to full fruition. Jeremiah saw the captivity as very imminent.

Then there was Ezekiel. What about Ezekiel? Ezekiel prophesied to a group of exiles in Babylon. So moving along a time line it's Isaiah a hundred years before the captivity. It's Jeremiah imminent at the captivity. It's Ezekiel during the captivity ministering to a group of exiles captive in Babylon. I guess maybe that's why Ezekiel's message tends to be hopeful and the closing part of his book presents the glories of the kingdom to come, giving hope to that sad and exiled people.

And then there's Daniel. Daniel ministered during the exile also but not from the vantage point of moving among his people, but from the vantage point of being a great ruler in Babylonian society. He was a Jew in the midst of the world powers of Babylon and Medo-Persia. As we'll see when we study the book, there were four great world powers: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. Daniel's lifetime spanned the first two. He was there through the great period of the Babylonian Empire even to Cyrus who was the great monarch of the Medo-Persian Empire. His position was as a ruler in the pagan world. And from that vantage point he was God's man in a pagan society. So we see the distinction between the placing of these major prophets.

Something else you might note is that there is a thrust to their books that's unique. Each is different. Isaiah enunciates the principles of divine government. Jeremiah demands the practices, commensurate with divine government. Ezekiel portrays the person of the glorious Governor and His government to come. And Daniel speaks about the fact that that coming government is a permanent persevering and forever government. So they each have a special focus.

Now Daniel really zeroes in on the sweep of human history. He particularly speaks of a time called "the times of the Gentiles." The Bible says that there was a time when Gentiles would dominate Israel. That time began at the captivity when Israel was taken out of the land and removed to Babylon, and we'll see more about that in a minute. That time will end when Jesus comes back and gives the land back to His people. From the time of the captivity to the time Christ comes and restores Israel to its rightful place is known as the times of the nations, or the times of the Gentiles for it is the time when the Gentiles dominate God's land.

Now as I said, the book falls into two parts. You might say in 1 to 6 you have the historic night and in 7 to 12 you have the prophetic light. I believe there are four main purposes in the book, and I'm just covering some basic thoughts, don't try to put them all together in your mind, just probably you ought to get this tape and mull it over about every three or four weeks so you'll keep keeping yourself alerted to where we are in Daniel. There are four main purposes in the book. I want you to just get the

general flow of it.

First of all, Daniel focuses on what true dedication to God means. You can't help but see this in the book of Daniel. Daniel makes this tremendous commitment to God and nothing changes it. He is never a victim of his circumstances. He never bails out no matter how tough it gets. He makes a commitment and he holds to that commitment and he is living proof of how God blesses committed people. I mean, you can't believe what happens to Daniel because he's committed to God. God just pours out blessing on him. And so it's a tremendous message of dedication to God.

Secondly, Daniel is a book about God's care for Israel. Some people think that when Israel went into captivity, God turned His back on them. Not so. When Israel went into captivity, God made sure that they had a representative right in the middle of a Babylonian government and He picked Daniel and Daniel was Israel's man in the White House. Daniel was there always to defend his people because God cared even in punishment. Jewish interest was always in the heart of God. And so even though they were captives in a foreign land, even though they lost their existence as a national entity God still loved them, cared for them, in fact only 70 years of captivity is all God allowed and then He took them back. And even during the captivity He allowed them to live in peace and have a very special man in a very high place to care for their needs and to give them hope. And through that man, Daniel, He gave tremendous prophecies of what it was going to be like in the future for God's people when their captivity was turned into glorious liberty.

And that leads us to the third element in the book of Daniel and that is a tremendous message of comfort for the Jews. Daniel is a book of comfort. It was terrible being punished in a pagan land and they would easily have forgotten that God cared except that God continued to give them the message through Daniel that He cared, also through Ezekiel.

And then finally, Daniel is given to us to lay out the story of how the world is going to end. What a tremendous book. It is a book that tells us about dedication to God and how God rewards that with blessing. It is a book that tells us about the love of God for His people Israel. It is a book that tells us about the hope for the future for those who are in captivity. And it is a book that tells us how the world is going to end. Tremendous, tremendous book! And so, as we look at it we're going to see the great eternal secrets of the future and yet we're going to learn how to live life right now. And you're going to see how marvelously blended these things are.

Now let me say this. Some people believe Daniel is the most important book in the Old Testament. I know why they believe that. They believe it because it gives us these four things that I just told you. They believe it because it lays out the panorama of human history. They believe it because it shows us what godly character is like. They believe it because it takes a crisis point in human history when there could have been a total abandoning of all that was holy and hopeful in God's people and it turns it around to a great story of hope and confidence.

And if Daniel is important, and I believe it is, whether or not it's the most important book in the Old Testament I wouldn't say, but if it is important then you can believe one thing about it, it will be attacked by the enemy, right? Because whatever is meaningful to the heart and soul of Christianity is exactly what Satan will attack. We know today that when a cult comes along and invariably will attack the truthfulness of the Bible and the deity of Jesus Christ because those are the cardinal things we hold to. And Satan attacks the book of Daniel because it upholds the truthfulness of the Word of God.

I want to show you what I mean. For quite a while in our society I suppose over a century now, well over a century, the book of Daniel has been attacked. And I mean it has been attacked constantly and viciously. What is being said about Daniel is simply that Daniel is a forgery. Daniel is not true. Daniel was not written by some sixth-century Jewish prophet predicting the future, Daniel is a forgery by some Jew who lived in 165 B.C. and wanted to pawn this thing off as if it were written by Daniel. And what the critics want to do, you see, is they want to say, "Well all of Daniel's prophecies were fulfilled in a certain man named Antiochus. And after Antiochus had lived and fulfilled all these prophecies, then Daniel wrote them...or whoever this man is...wrote them down under the name of Daniel as if he were living in the past and predicting it. And the whole thing is a ruse, it's a fake, it's a fraud." In fact, Doctor Crisswell in his commentary on Daniel says, "There is not a liberal theologian in the world, past or present, who accepts the authenticity of the book of Daniel. They all deny its integrity declaring the book to be a blatant, patent forgery. They define its contents as pure unadulterated fiction," end quote.

I took a course in one of the colleges that I attended in the prophets of the Old Testament. The professor told us that all of this is really not what it appears to be, they never predicted the future. They all really lived after their prophecies came to pass and then wrote them down as if they were still in the future so we'd believe they could tell the future. I went through a whole semester of that blood-curdling experience, listening to that.

Now you say, "Well why do they do this? Why won't they allow somebody to predict the future? Why do they get upset that the lions didn't eat Daniel? Why do they...and by the way, he suffered a lot more from the critics than he ever has from the lion...Why do they say you can't have people in a fiery furnace that don't get burned up? Why is it that they will not allow the miracles and the prophecies of Daniel to stand? And in order to get rid of them they say the miracles were just lies and forgeries and the prophecies were really written long after they happened, why do they do this?"

Basically it is because of this, it is because of what is known as modern rationalism. There is at the bottom of humanistic philosophy the idea that man's mind is ultimate and if I can't conceive of it and if I can't understand it by my rational mind, then it can't be true. And the rational mind cannot tolerate miracles because they violate reason and cannot tolerate predictions of the future because they do to and so if the mind is ultimate and I can't conceive of those things, then those things aren't true

because my mind is ultimate. That's what rationalism says. It must be reasonable to the human mind. And if it isn't...deny it, label it fiction, get rid of it.

Now one thing that we want you to understand is that rationalism will never tolerate two things...miracles and prophecies. Because if there are miracles and predictions of the future, then there's something beyond the human mind. There's a God somewhere who can violate the norms of human existence and predict the future.

So in their attack on Daniel, the real issue...and I want you to remember this...is that they're trying to deny the miracles and prophecies of the book because miracles and prophecies, mark it, are signs of supernatural power. And rationalism, humanism, liberalism wants to get rid of the supernatural. Why? Because it wants to live its own sinful way without the fear of a God who will punish. You see? And so in the need to live your own life and not fear the consequences, you eliminate God in your thinking so that anytime somebody comes along and talks miracles and prophecies you deny it because if there are miracles and there are prophecies, then there is the supernatural and you don't want to allow for that. So Satan is inevitably trying to undermine the integrity of Scripture by deleting the miracles and the prophecies.

Now I really believe, people, that miracles and prophecies are the two greatest proofs of the validity of the Bible as God's Word. In studying apologetics, or the defense of Scripture, it's always been interesting to me that the two key things that Jesus banked His entire credibility on were miracles and prophecies. For example, in John's gospel Jesus repeatedly says this, "Believe Me for the works' sake." In other words, you ought to know I am God by what I do. And what did He do? He raised the dead, He gave sight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf, and all of these things. He fed the five thousand creating loaves and fish out of His hand. He walked on water. You see, He was saying, "Look at the miracles that I do. Do not they speak of My supernatural life?" Secondly He said, "Believe Me for the words that I speak." And just to show you how very specific that became, in John 14 and verse 29, listen to this, "And now I have told you before it comes to pass that when it is come to pass you might believe."

In other words, Jesus says I have two credentials to prove that I'm God. One, My miracle works; two, My prophetic words, they then become the epitome of defense for the deity of Christ. And, beloved, as you pick up the Bible, the greatest proofs in the Bible of its truthfulness are its miracles and its prophecy. If that's true, then believe me Satan will attack at that point. And Daniel is a book of miracles and Daniel is a book of prophecies so Daniel is an attacked book.

Now basically speaking we usually say there are five categories in which we defend the truth of Scripture. And I'll just show you these real quick. Number one is experience. If somebody says to me, "How do you know the Bible is true?" I might say, "Well I've experienced it." Right? I've experienced it, I believe what it says and it works. And that's wonderful. And you have people stand up and give

testimony and they say, "Christ came into my life and He changed my life and where there was sorrow there's joy, and where there was confusion there is confidence, and where there was unrest there is peace and Christ has changed my life." You might say, "I have studied the passage and I put them to...the principles into application in my life and my life was changed and my experience says that the Bible is true." And you want to know something? It does, doesn't it? But that's not always very convincing because lots of people have experiences. There are people who think they see pink elephants, but they don't. And there are people who go around in funny robes saying "Hare Krishna" who must have some kind of experience but it isn't the right one. And there are people who talk to little green men who crawl out of flying saucers and they have very vivid experiences, but I'm not sure they really have those experiences. Experience is fine but it doesn't really go far enough and we don't want to base the validity on the...of the Bible on our experience.

So let's move up the ladder to a second way we defend the Bible and that is through science. People say, "Well, is the Bible scientific?" You better believe it. The Bible says way back in the Old Testament, "The life of the flesh is in the blood," and it wasn't till the eighteenth century that William Harvey discovered the necessity of life coming...or the actuality of life coming from the circulatory system. The Bible says in the oldest book written that, "He hangeth the world on nothing," and I...I've read a lot of places in history where people thought it was on the backs of elephants who made earthquakes when they shook. Pliny, the Roman elder, says that, "The earth is on seven stages of honey, butter and syrup and stuff all mixed up." He's wrong. The Bible doesn't make dumb statements like that. It says, "He hangeth the earth on nothing." It says, "He turneth the earth like the clay to the seal." And they would roll it on a stick just like turning the earth on the axis. The Bible makes statements that are amazing.

Herbert Spencer died in 1903, he was given many awards in his life. The major thrust of his life was that he discovered five categories of knowable truth. He said, "All truth can be classified into five things: time, force, action, space and matter." And those five categories truly can encompass everything that exists...time, force, action, space and matter. And they hailed him as a brilliant scientist. The first verse in the Bible said that. "In the beginning (time), God (force) created (action) the heavens (space) and the earth (matter)." So we can say we can defend the Bible on the basis of its scientific accuracy.

But there's even something better than that. We move to a third defensive scripture and I like to think that the third one is the person of Christ. I think one of the great proofs of the truth of Christianity is Jesus Christ. You want to know something? Because of Jesus Christ I know men didn't write this Bible. I know this Bible isn't phony because men could never conceive of a person like Christ. And men would never write a book about a man who came into the world to condemn the whole world and tell all men how evil and sinful and hell-bound they were. Men don't write books like that. And Christ rose from the dead, and if you're having a problem believing it, His tomb has been empty for 2,000 years. Buddha's is occupied. So is the tomb of every other religious leader that ever lived, at least

whatever what may be remaining.

But then we come to the final two defenses of Scripture and I think they're the greatest two: miracles and prophecy. You know, the German rationalists said, "If we can just get the miracles out of the Bible." And one German theologian finally got it all reduced down to 27 verses that were valid. Got all of them out of there. They used to talk about de-mythologizing the Bible, get all the miracles out. And you know, one day a man named Karl Bart woke up and said to himself, "You know, we've got all the miracles out of the Bible, you know what we have? We don't have religion anymore, we have philosophy." And he tried real hard to stuff the miracles back in but he didn't get them all the way in, he only got them half-way in and he invented a system called "neoorthodoxy," which isn't neoorthodox, it's not new or orthodox. It's like Grape Nuts, they're not grapes or nuts, or Christian Science, which isn't Christian or scientific. But he tried and he said, "We've got to have miracles." And so he wanted to get the miracles in but he didn't have the understanding to put them all the way in and so he said, "Yes I believe in them but they didn't really happen here, they happened in super-duper history." And you say, "Karl, what is that?" And he says, "I don't know." But, you see, at least he grappled with the fact that if you have a Bible with no miracles you don't have God, you've just got man. And if all we've got to get out of this mess is to turn to each other, we're in bad shape. Even the rationalists, some of them, realize the hopelessness of a Bible without miracles. Why? Because miracles simply mean God is active, that's all. Miracles are saying God is alive, God is operating. There's something beyond us, something outside us. And the fact that the Bible is full of miracles is not reason to deny it, but is reason to affirm that God wrote it.

And then there are prophecies, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of them. Some hundreds already fulfilled. God predicted that Tyre would be destroyed, it was. God predicted Israel would go captive, they did. God predicted the destruction of Egypt and its society, and it came to pass. God predicted the destruction of many places, and they collapsed just as He had said. God promised a Messiah and He came. And did you know that when Jesus came at least 300 prophecies were fulfilled concerning Him, all of them given in the Old Testament? Listen, the miracles and prophecies of the Old Testament are the heart of its defense of its divine origination.

Now when you come to Daniel, and you're going to get thrilled as we go through this, you will see miracle after miracle and prophecy after prophecy. That is why this book is so very important, and that is why it is so constantly attacked and maligned. If you're going to destroy the validity of the Bible, Daniel has to go. And that's why the attack is so relentless on Daniel.

Now by the way, Daniel is important then for our time because liberal theology is constantly attacking. I mean, there are books coming out all the time by liberal people attacking Daniel. We need to defend that. We don't need to defend it philosophically, or apologetically. Listen, when we get into the study of the book it will do a good job just for itself. You won't have any questions by the time we're done. But it was the same in Daniel's time. Daniel needed credentials in his time that people might know he

was the man of God, and so God filled his life with prophecies and miracles so even the pagan Babylonians would know he was the man of God. And, you know, I think they got the message, as we'll see. They tried to find a fault with him and they couldn't find one except that he was so committed to his God. And Nebuchadnezzar finally said, "Your God is THE God, I agree, Daniel." Why? Because of the miracles in Daniel's life.

So Daniel becomes then a defense for God in this age. Daniel was a defense for God to the pagan Babylonian society, and also for the very Jews in captivity. So this has been a constant message for God's people. Miracles and prophecies mean God is alive and active.

Now, beloved, if we didn't have a supernatural revelation, if God didn't give us His Word, we wouldn't know anything. Job, I think, put it very well in Job 11:7 and 8 it says, "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find the Almighty to perfection? It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? Deeper than Sheol, what canst thou know?" In other words, what Job 11 is saying is on your own can you find God? On your own can you comprehend God? On your own can you gain understanding of the Almighty unto perfection? And the answer is obviously no. I'll tell you something, beloved, if this Bible isn't God's holy Word to us, then we don't have any information from God and we don't have any answers. On the other hand, and believe me, men don't want to live like that, that's why I believe it's all energized by Satan. But if it is the Word of God, it is the Word of God because it's proven to be so through the marvel and the wonder of its miracles and prophecies.

So Isaac Newton said, "To reject Daniel is to reject the Christian religion." And I think that's right. First of all, then, let's affirm that we're going to believe Daniel. We're going to accept what he says as God's Word. And when we see a miracle we don't want to deny that miracle, we want to affirm it because it proves that God is the author and God is at work. And when we hear a prophecy, we want to affirm that prophecy as that which is the evidence of the Word of God for only God can tell the future. So Daniel becomes for us a home base for the affirmation of the authenticity of Scripture.

Let me go just a little further. Some of you might say, "Where did this attack all start?" Well, you can go back to 233 A.D., a man named Porphyry who started it all, he was a heretic, an antagonist, hated God, Christ and the Bible and he tried to do everything he could to destroy it. So he felt that the place he could attack the Bible best would be at Daniel, and so he just blistered his way through Daniel. He wrote a series of 15 books under the total title of "Against Christianity," or "Against the Christians." And he was a rabid, wicked enemy of God and he focused on Daniel and just did everything he could to destroy Daniel. And what's interesting to me is that for years, centuries, the work of Porphyry lied...was lying dormant until modern rationalism picked it up and all they're doing is rehashing all that old stuff by Porphyry which was answered in his own day and for which he was kicked out of all churches as a heretic. And here modern rationalistic liberals have picked up the same thing again.

One final word on this particular problem and that is this, and this is enough for me. Jesus believed in the book of Daniel. Isn't that good? And if Jesus believed it, then I believe in it. You say, "How do you know He believed in it?" Well, all you have to do is read what He said about it. He referred to the book of Daniel many times...many times. He refers five, six, seven, eight times in the gospels to the book of Daniel. In Matthew alone there must be four or five references to Daniel. And he even refers to Daniel as a prophet.

And then the Apostle Paul, the Apostle Paul believed in Daniel. In 1 Corinthians 6:2 he refers to Daniel. In 2 Thessalonians 2:3 he refers to Daniel. In 2 Timothy 4:17 he refers to Daniel. The author of Hebrews in Hebrews 11:33 refers to Daniel. And even Simon Peter, bless his heart, in 1 Peter 1:10 refers to Daniel. And so, and by those I mean not necessarily using the name of Daniel but either using his name or quoting from his book. And do you think John the Apostle believed in the book of Daniel? All you have to do is read Revelation to find out how much he got from Daniel. He must have written Revelation with a remembrance of Daniel. And by the way, I might add this, that Ezekiel refers to Daniel no less than three times. They believed in him, so should we.

And you see the stupidity of saying it's a forgery written by some Jewish person way later than really claimed, forging it under the name of Daniel is ridiculous because why would anybody forge something under the name of Daniel when the only thing ever written by that guy is the book of Daniel? And if he didn't write that, he's nobody. Somebody says, "Well they wanted to pass it off as if it was Daniel." Well if Daniel isn't the guy in the book, there is no Daniel. I don't know if you understand that, I do. I mean, you can understand them forging a book supposedly written by Moses, or Isaiah or somebody who wrote another one, but if this is all...by the way, all we know about Daniel is this book. There are two other Daniels named in the Bible, they're both different, just rather a common name. The only thing we know about this man is in the book and the reference of Ezekiel. And if he didn't write this, then what's the use of forging something under his name? It wouldn't make any sense.

Now, that was the introduction to my introduction. Now I'm going to have a little fun, so hang with me. I want to give you just a few thoughts as we look at this opening two verses. All right? "In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god." Now stop there.

Now that's the introduction to the book. Now you just see names and places and so forth and let's see if we could talk about them for a minute. The places, first of all, all right? Two places are mentioned, Judah and Babylon. You have Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. Now what you have in these two places, beloved, is an infinite contrast. Where did all false human religion begin? Babylon. Where, according to Revelation 17, will all false human religion consummate?

Babylon, the final form of evil. And where, may I ask, is the seat of God's throne? Judah. So at the very beginning we see these two very antithetical, very opposite things. One is Satan's place and one is God's place. One is the promised land from where the blessing flows, the other is the cursed land from where flows all of evil spawned out of the terrible evil of Babylon society originating in the Tower of Babel. One is the place of true worship, the other the place where idolatry was born. One is the house of God's people, the other is the house of pagans. And so they are infinitely contrasted. How ironic it is that when God needed to punish His people Israel to purge them from their sin, He chose the most despicable and despised place on all the face of the earth, the place where evil idolatry originated, Babel, to be the place where they became captive.

Now let's look at Judah for just a moment. Judah was the Southern Kingdom after Solomon. It was comprised, as I said, of two tribes: Judah and Benjamin. You remember that among the people of Israel there were twelve tribes...twelve tribes. The twelve tribes when they were given the promised land, they came into the land of Canaan after leaving in Egypt, they were told to take the land and divide it among the twelve tribes so that each tribe had territory. And after Solomon...Solomon succeeded in ripping the land in half, as it were, dividing the kingdom, it split...ten tribes took the north and two, Judah and Benjamin, the south. And these two tribes continued faithful to God, didn't they? For a while, faithful to Jerusalem, at least, faithful to the family of David. And so the Southern Kingdom existed until its captivity. By the way, Judah, the Southern Kingdom, had nineteen kings over a period of nearly 350 years. So after Solomon came the splitting of the kingdom, Jeroboam and Rehoboam, and for 350 years Judah existed with 19 kings. And the Bible says eight were good and eleven were wicked. The Northern Kingdom, by the way, of ten tribes never had one good king...not one. They were all evil. And that's why the Northern Kingdom went into captivity before the Southern Kingdom and the Northern Kingdom never returned...never returned. So Judah has reference to the Southern Kingdom, the southern division of Israel.

Now look at Babylon. What is Babylon? It's also called the land of Shinar you notice down in verse 2...the land of Shinar. That is simply the ancient name of Babylonia. That's just the way it's designated for example in Genesis 10 and Genesis 11, it's called the land of Shinar. That's its old name. We know it as Babylon, or Babylonia. And I think he uses the old name in verse 2 to point up its ancient heritage of wickedness.

Now I want you to stay with me, a little geography, okay? Babylonian territory, or Babylonia proper, I want you to see this now, covered the lower part of Mesopotamia. Now I'll give you a little idea. If you go east from Israel you get into all that Arab territory, right? And you remember the Tigris, the Euphrates river and so forth, that whole territory going east, Iran, Iraq, and all of those countries that are there, Arabic countries today, there was pretty much a dividing line down the middle going east and west and the southern part was known as Babylon and the northern part was known as Assyria. Okay? When the Babylonian Empire came, it swept to the north and gobbled up everything. But originally it had to do with lower part of Mesopotamia. But by the time we arrive in Daniel's day, it has

swept north, wiped out everything, come all the way west to the north of Israel all the way down the coast and taken over all that territory and really rules the known world.

Now in the area of the whole Babylonian Empire was this special area of Babylonia and in the middle of Babylonia was Babylon. Babylon was a capital city located on the Euphrates River approximately 50 miles south of modern Baghdad. And by the way, within the city of Babylon there were 50, at least they know of from archaeology, 50 different temples to 50 different gods. But the number one god was a god named Marduk and Marduk was the principle god and it's most likely when Nebuchadnezzar in verse 2 took all the vessels of gold out of the house of the Lord and took them to his treasure house of his god that he took them to the god Marduk. So that's Judah and Babylon.

From the places I want to talk about the period for a moment, and I think this is fascinating. Look at verse 1, "In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim," now we'll stop there. Now we know when it takes place. In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, that's a very specific time reference and immediately the critics pull up their red flag, "Aha, you see, Jeremiah said in the fourth year of the reign of Jehoiakim, that proves the Bible contradicts. Jeremiah says the fourth year and Daniel says the third year and if they can't even get that straight...how could they ever be trusted in anything else?"

But you know something? Critics say what they want to say for their own purposes. The fact of the matter is this, Jeremiah used Hebrew dating, Daniel used Babylon dating. The Babylonians never assumed that the first year of any king was to be considered in his reign, it was isolated from every other year and according to Babylonian chronology, that was his accession to the throne year and it was not counted among the years of his reign. And here is Daniel, and we know that from archaeology, Daniel living in a Babylonian society would use Babylonian chronology. This doesn't disprove the authenticity of the Bible, it simply reinforces its absolute accuracy. Daniel would never contradict Jeremiah anyway because in Daniel 9:2 he indicates that he's got Jeremiah's prophecies in his mind while he's writing. It would be pretty dumb if he contradicted him. Daniel simply writes in a Babylonian context.

Now let's look back and see something of the history. We say the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, big deal. Who's he? I'm glad you asked. The events of Daniel take place at a tragic time in Israel's history. And this is going to be some history, so you're going to have to screw your brain on and think along with this, I'm not going to just waltz you along with lots of funny things and happy thoughts, we're going to dig a little bit and I want you to think it through because it will give you some basis for your understanding of the book. The events of Daniel's time took place in a tragic hour in Israel's history. This was the day of severe punishment. Israel had deteriorated in its relation to God and now God was finally going to punish.

Just to give you the background very briefly. When the tribes came into the land, you'll remember, God said, "I'm going to bless you," Deuteronomy 28. But I'm going to bless you if you are..two

words...faithful and obedient. If you're faithful and obedient, I'll bless you. Then He said also in Deuteronomy 28, "If you're unfaithful and disobedient, I will punish you." You know something? They were unfaithful and disobedient and finally the punishment came. Really it had been trickling along all the while. They got punished even during the time of the Judges. All you have to do is read Judges 3 to 16 and find that out. In the time of David there was a temporary reprieve from the chastening of the Lord because David was a faithful leader. But after Solomon the whole thing got chaotic again because they had turned away from the Lord, the Bible says, the Lord brought trouble and separation into the kingdom. The Lord then began to send prophets to speak to them through the several hundred years after the kingdom was divided and they sunk deeper and deeper into sin. Finally in 722 B.C. the Northern Kingdom was taken captive by Assyria; the whole thing fell to Assyria, 2 Kings 17. They were gone and only Judah remained. Just over a century later, just over a century after the Northern Kingdom went into captivity, the Southern Kingdom went too to the hands of the Babylonians. And the crushing blow was in 586 or 587 B.C., Jerusalem was destroyed, the country was turned into a province of Babylonia, it lost its identity, 2 Kings 25 tells us about it.

But I want you to know something. We usually use the date 586 for the captivity, but eleven years before that in 597 there was another group taken captive and even eight years before that in 605 there was another group taken captive. So in the captivity there were three periods, 605, 597 and 586. You say, "Well what's that mean?" Well just this, Daniel went in the first captivity in 605. By the time the second group got there he had been there eight years. By the time the third group was there he had been there 19 years and was well established as a leader in the land who could come to the aid of his people. So God had set it all up in advance. He lived through that whole captivity, even the return, and he still stayed there.

Now the capture of Jerusalem in the deportation of Jews to Babylon, including Daniel and his friends, was the fulfillment of many, many prophecies. Isaiah had talked about the fact that this was inevitable. Jeremiah had talked about it. They all said it's coming, it's coming, it's coming, terrible moral apostasy is going to pay...is going to bring a price. In fact, in Isaiah 1, I'll just read you a few verses, 4 to 6, "Ah sinful nation, says Isaiah, people laden with iniquity, a sea of evil doers, children that are corrupters. They have forsaken the Lord. They have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger. They are gone away backward. Why should you be stricken anymore? You will revolt more and more." In other words, we can't spank you anymore, you just get angry and revolt. It doesn't work. "Your whole head is sick. Your whole heart is faint. From the sole of your foot to the head there's no soundness, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores." You're a mess, he says. Apostate, immoral, they had descended into degeneracy.

Well that's what's going on in Judah. And by the time you get to 605, 597 and 586 God is going to move against them. But before He takes the whole nation captive, He makes sure He has a few key men. And in the first deportation went Daniel and his three friends.

Now what's going on in Babylon at this time? "In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon." Now Nebuchadnezzar is a familiar name to anybody who studies the Bible. And he's from the other side. Let's balance it off a little bit. What's going on over there? Well back in Genesis 10:10 we learn that Nimrod was the builder of the city of Babel. And Babel or Babylon became the seat of idolatry. Now watch this. As centuries went by, more and more false religion grew up in Babylon. There were mystery religions and mystery cults that just began to proliferate. And from Babel they spread over the world. Babylon had some famous kings. Do you recognize the name Hammurabi? If you've ever studied history you know that the first or the most ancient code of human law was a code supposedly written by Hammurabi. Hammurabi was an ancient king of Babylon.

The Empire reached its zenith apparently around the time of Hammurabi and speculation about how long ago it was, some say 1500 years before Christ or more. That was the great apex of the early Babylonian Empire. But after Hammurabi the whole thing fell apart and the Babylonian Empire as such disintegrated into absolute nothingness and disappeared. But hundreds of years later rose from the ashes of the old Babylonian Empire what is known as the Neo Babylonian Empire. This is the one we meet in the book of Daniel. It has just moved to its ascendancy. It has just reached the point of power in the world. It is called the Neo Babylonian and the key guy in its development is this man Nebuchadnezzar.

And he was quite a fellow. He was a statesman, politician, tremendous soldier and an amazing architect. He designed, as I understand it, all of the wonders of Babylon, including the Hanging Gardens which were air-conditioned...if you can imagine that, and many other wonderful and startling things. I read a book not a month ago about all the wonders of the buildings of the city of Babylon that was absolutely hard to believe that in a primitive society as we think that was somebody could do what they did. But believe me, it wasn't primitive. And if anything today we have more information but we're not any smarter than they were, in fact we've probably gotten worse because of the constant deterioration that sin brings to the human heart and mind. But this man was amazing and brilliant, a genius in many areas. And he built this incredible city of Babylon and he developed the Empire.

Now let me give you a little bit of an idea of how it all happened. After the old Babylonian Empire which had dominated the east under Hammurabi and some other contemporaries faded away, the Assyrians...and the Assyrians were a group of people who occupied the northern part of that part of the world, and they ruled there, the Assyrians. And you read about them in the Bible, don't you? A-s-s-y-r-i-a-n-s And they had a capital city by the name of Nineveh. Remember Nineveh? Famous story of Jonah. The Assyrians were wild and just ruthless, wicked, slaughtering type of maniacal people and went around just blasting away at their enemies.

Now the last great ruler was a man named Ashurbanipal. You're not going to remember all these names, don't worry about it. But this guy named Ashurbanipal, for you that are interested, he was the last great ruler of Assyria and his son couldn't hold the Empire together so around 625 when he died, the thing began to disintegrate.

Well there was an interesting fellow who worked for Ashurbanipal by the name of Nabopolassar. How would you like to write out the name tags for that group? But anyway, Ashurbanipal had this guy that he had appointed as his vice-regent because the Assyrians ruled all that area and the Babylonian segment he had given to Nabopolassar. And when Ashurbanipal died and his son took over, Nabopolassar said, "Now is my moment, I'm going to take over this whole deal." So from his little territory of Babylon in the south, he pulled a coup and he had a revolt and he literally took his Babylon army and they swept through the whole thing. They took all of Assyria. They went to Nineveh, the capital city, and obliterated it. And they chased all of the Assyrians as far as they could chase them to mop them up. Ashurbanipal died in 625 and Nabopolassar had taken the whole thing over by 610. So in fifteen years he just took the whole thing over.

Well this is how it ended. There was a remnant of Assyrians and they ran for their life to make a last-ditch defense at a city called Carchemish. And at Carchemish was one of the greatest battles in the history of the world, the Battle of Carchemish on the banks of the Euphrates River. They were going to make what we would know as Custer's Last Stand. The Assyrians to defend themselves against Nabopolassar and the battle of Carchemish was one of the most decisive battles in all the annals of human history.

Down in the south was a group of Egyptians. They had a ruler by the name of Pharaoh Necho. That also will be on the quiz. Now Pharaoh Necho looks up and he says, "Aha, the Assyrians have had it and the Babylonians are going to be fighting the Assyrians and if I'm smart I'll take my whole army up there, we'll knock them all off after they've knocked off the Assyrians and we'll rule the world." Now it is getting interesting.

In Israel there's a wonderful little king by the name of Josiah, a good king. Pharaoh Necho says, "Here's my opportunity." Pharaoh takes his troops and starts to march to Carchemish. Josiah's had a good reign and things have gotten good so he's filling his oats. So he decides to stop Pharaoh Necho. You remember what happened? They killed Josiah, slaughtered him, and went on to the battle. But you know what happened? Nabopolassar was old, by now, and he...the Egyptians were coming and the Assyrians were holding fort and the Babylonians, if they were going to hold their Empire, had to get over there and do the whole job, but he was too old to do it and too sick, so he called his son. He had three but the one that we know is Nebuchadnezzar. He said, "Neb...I guess, I don't think he said Boo...you're my man, take the troops, wipe out Assyria, wipe out Egypt, chase them back and while you're going through Israel wipe them out on the way." And you know what happened? That's exactly what he did. In 605 at the famous battle of Carchemish the Babylon troops under Nebuchadnezzar

destroyed the Assyrians and that was the end of that Empire. There wasn't a vestige left. In fact, Alexander the Great tromped right over Nineveh and never even knew he was walking on it. They wiped out the Egyptians and believe it, folks, Egypt never rose from the dust of the battle of Carchemish yet. It was the end of that great civilization. Assyria was finished. Egypt was finished. And they even chased the Egyptians all the way back to Egypt and on the way engulfed Israel, took the first group of captives which included Daniel, and the captivity began.

So now you understand where Babylon is. Now you understand what's going on in Judah and the world. At this point Babylon rules the world. And Babylon like a voracious lion wants to take everything captive. And so it's only a matter of time before Nebuchadnezzar comes back again to Israel and takes the whole of that people captive. That's a fascinating story and that's for next week. We really just got started tonight and the best part is next time. I want to tell you about the captivity, how and why. Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, thank You for this group of people that have come tonight, it just thrills my heart that they have a desire to know Your Word. And, Lord, these are hard things sometimes to hear, to sit patiently and listen for an hour and I'm thankful, Father, that they're willing and eager to do that because it's Your Word. This is the story that You've given us. This is Your history. Father, as we look back we see that You're the God of history, the Lord of history, the places and the period that we've studied tonight were not in the whimsy of men. You raised up Nebuchadnezzar as You raised up his father, Nabopolassar. You brought them all into the scheme of history to bring Your own people to a captivity that was both a place of judgment and a place of purging. Thank You for being the Lord of history. Thank You for the authenticity of the book of Daniel. Thank You that as we study it we'll be affirmed in our hearts that this holy book is Your book because it's filled with miracles and prophecies that only You could do and say. So bless our study, Lord. We're excited already about next time about learning about Daniel and his three friends and why Nebuchadnezzar picked them and how it was that a nation so blessed of God could lose itself in disobedience and go out of existence as a national entity. We want to learn the lessons, Father. The history of Israel teaches us and so with excitement we await what You have to teach us. Lord, help us to be defenders of Your Word. Help us to hold the banner high for the truth of this sacred revelation that in an evil day when the Bible is attacked and men are substituting it with human philosophy we may affirm to the world that we believe it as the very truth. We praise You, Lord, for this treasure. What a treasure it is, the Word from You and we thank You in Christ's name. Amen.

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