

Dr. Elaine Phillips, Old Testament Literature,

Lecture 34, Daniel

© 2024 Elaine Phillips and Ted Hildebrandt

Whatever score you get, for example, let's say that you got a, I'm just guessing, I'm not saying your score, okay, let's say that on the first exam that you want to retake, you got a 75. If, on this essay retake, you get an 85, that replaces the 75. If you get a 60 on the retake, it was just an exercise.

It doesn't detract from what you had before. Did I make that clear? Okay. This is the last day at any rate to let me know.

And then, of course, just a reminder of something I told you on Wednesday. Do take advantage of the fine arts opportunities here at Gordon. They are rich, and it's not only bands on the quad that are fun. It's orchestras in AJ that are also fun.

Let me encourage you to do that. I don't have anything against bands on the quad, and we have our own musical offering this morning.

That God continues to make peace. Peace in the heavens and peace with us. Let's take some time to pray together as we start.

Gracious Father in heaven, thank you that as we approach the end of this week, that you have guided us and protected us and kept us through it. Father, we're thankful for your mercies that are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness.

Our God, as we study the book of Daniel today, we do pray that it would speak to each one of us. We pray that you would help us to be people of conviction in spite of the sometimes raging winds around us that would push us away. We pray for those who are ill, that you would restore them.

We pray for those who struggle with challenges that are just feeling way too big, Lord, by your spirit. Please enable them. Comfort them, strengthen them.

And Lord, we want to give you this hour as we study together. Teach us, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, we're all going to do our second prophet of the exile, which is Daniel. Who was the other one we did last time, prophet of the exile? Ezekiel. Ezekiel, splendid.

Remember, both of them are prophesying from outside of the land of Israel, which is going to be fairly significant. I'm going to do just a little bit of review, and then we'll

pick up and ask ourselves some questions about Daniel. Sarah, is that a question? Yeah.

Well, Ezekiel is this very unusual prophetic character, and this is, I think, woven into the whole apocalyptic nature of it. He's in Babylon, but in some ways, it's kind of hard to understand; he gets transported to Jerusalem, so he sees what's going on there. Visionary experience or something of that sort, yeah.

I would suggest the symbolic actions are done for the Jewish community already in Babylon because they're just as concerned. I mean, it's a great question. They're just as concerned about God's presence, the temple, and the implications of what he's talking about.

But it's a back-and-forth kind of thing, and it's hard to map out because we can't exactly where he is, but it's a great question. Daniel is indeed in Babylon. Okay.

Now, a couple of things by way of introduction. Who are the four major prophets? Isaiah, who, remember, in the second half of Isaiah, is going to talk about Babylon and then come back. Who's the other one? Jeremiah, good, and then Ezekiel, Daniel.

Last time, as we talked about Ezekiel, we talked about some of the characteristics of this unusual genre, which was apocalyptic literature, which, again, you've been introduced to when you took the New Testament and studied the revelation of St. John. But as we think particularly about Daniel, we need to review these characteristics. So, drag out your notes from last time.

What are the primary characteristics of apocalyptic literature? Mary. Okay. Let me hold that first one first.

Looking forward to a time when good will triumph. This is primary, and I think I gave it first because when apocalyptic literature as a genre rises, the people of God are under incredible stress and oppression. And so, they're looking forward to some time in the future when God's promises are going to come true.

Now, go ahead. Great. Dreams, visions, and, of course, you see a whole plethora of those in the book of Daniel.

We're going to look at some of the key ones. What did you say, symbols? And symbolic actions, possibly but symbols. Actually, no, symbols more than anything.

The symbolic use of numbers is really what I meant to say at that point. What else you got on there? Right. In Daniel, we really see the fantastic imagery.

For example, as you read Chapter 7 and were reading about those beasts, those are not things that you see even when you go to the zoo. They're just not. They're cartoon characters in some ways.

I mean, if you want to think about it that way, I'm not trying to denigrate what Scripture is doing, but you might want to think of the depictions of these creatures as cartoon-like because they have features that are really enhanced, exaggerated, to try and get some points across. And then much of the apocalyptic literature, in fact, all of it outside of the biblical text, the canonical text, will be pseudonymous. In other words, it's attributed falsely to some named creature or author.

One of the things we're going to deal with momentarily is whether Daniel is also written under a pseudonym. I have more to say about that in a moment. That's a major issue here.

Well, here's another thing we want to think about. This particular doctrine is not new to you. We've talked about it over and over and over again.

If you have no other sense when you walk out of the Old Testament at the end of this year and want to think of what you want to remember five years from now, I hope you've got a deepened sense of how profoundly knit through the entirety of the First Testament are illustrations of God's sovereignty, over and over and over again, working in the history of his people. And we see it in the book of Daniel. What are some of the illustrations? These are stories you had when you were kids in Sunday school.

What are the illustrations of God's sovereignty? Yeah, keeping the mouths of the lions shut. That's fairly significant. And where do Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego end up? In a fiery furnace that doesn't devour them.

And there's actually a fourth figure that looks like a son of man walking with them in that context. What else? Any other illustrations of God's sovereignty in these particular chapters? Sarah? The king is kind of on a little killing spree. Do all the wise men want to save the wise men? Yeah, the king is ready to wipe out the wise men because he doesn't get his dream spoken and interpreted.

And therefore, what we see is that God is sovereign over the dreams and visions as well because Daniel is given not only to interpret it but also to know exactly what it was. So we see God's sovereignty affected in the realm of knowledge, in the realm of preservation of people, very clearly, over wild animals in terms of the lion's den and all those kinds of things. Lucky, is that a question? A hand up? Absolutely.

Yeah, definitely over kings and over the hearts of kings. In Chapter 4, we're going to see how that unfolds in particular. Excellent.

Well, let's carry on just a little bit in terms of, we've got a lot of background to do with Daniel, by the way, in order to understand how this is working. So, bear with me on this. Daniel is one of the few books of the First Testament, and a large portion of it is written in Aramaic.

Now, what's Aramaic besides being the lingua franca of the day, which I'll talk about in a moment? Does anybody know what Aramaic is? It's a language related to Hebrew, okay, related to Hebrew, and it was, as I note for you, the language commonly spoken, widely spoken throughout the empire at that point in time. Let me use a contemporary counterpart. Today, if you go almost anywhere in the world, you can get by speaking English.

In some ways, that's a blessing because we don't have to learn 50 languages if we're traveling. In other ways, it's a curse because we don't have to learn 50 languages, and we really should. I've got to tell you that when we lived in Israel, I was put to shame by the shopkeepers in the old city of Jerusalem, who knew five and six languages.

They could speak German and Arabic and Hebrew and French and Greek because that's where their business came from, all these folks coming. The lingua franca of today is English. You can get by with it just about anywhere.

The lingua franca in Jesus' day was Greek, and that was really wonderful in terms of the spread of the New Testament and the gospel message. The lingua franca at this point in time was Aramaic. It's a sister language to Hebrew, lots of relationships.

Once you learn Hebrew, you can learn Aramaic. What's fascinating here are the chapters that are in Aramaic, and I'll talk about those a little bit more. It's not just, oh, haphazard, I guess we'll write this part in Aramaic.

There's a real design behind it. When we do the book of Ezra, Lord willing, next week, we'll talk about that again, because parts of Ezra are written in Aramaic as well. Here we go.

The book is structured very beautifully structured. It has a Hebrew framework. Chapter 1 starts out with Hebrew because obviously, this is God's prophet to God's people, and therefore starts out that way and will end that way, starting with Chapter 8. Chapters 8 through 12 are visions that are particularly designed to encourage the people of God as they are going to be back in their land eventually, and once they're there, as they're going to experience continued oppression.

In fact, probably growing oppression. These chapters are designed to let them know, hey, God knows about your situation. In fact, he's looking ahead and knowing about your situation, and here's what's going to happen as a result of that.

So, think of the framework. Hebrew, messages specifically for God's people, and then in the interval, Chapters 2 through 7. These are primarily prophecies of Daniel and incidents that take place when Daniel is ministering in the court there, and they have a much broader focus. As I note for you, Chapters 2 and 7 are visions, and we'll unpack those a little bit later on, but they're visions that have to do with the nations of the world, and primarily the nations of the world that oppressed God's people, and there's going to be four of them, and we're going to look at each one of them.

Chapter 2 and Chapter 7 mirror each other. They're talking about the same nations, but it's a much more universal global focus, and therefore, the lingua franca is what's used to communicate this, not in Hebrew, in Aramaic. Then, as you move inward, notice 2, 7, 3, 6, 4, and 5, nice little patterning there as well.

Chapters 3 and Chapter 6 are stories about the persecution of; in chapter 3, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, or Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, if you want their Hebrew names, and then in Chapter 6, it's going to be Daniel pitched into the lion's den. So, these are God's people, representative samples of God's people being oppressed by the ruler at that given point in time. And then, when you move right into our sort of centerpiece here, Chapters 4 and 5, we have two rulers, and what happens to those two rulers as they have the audacity to set themselves up? Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 4, and we'll look at the sequence from chapters 2, 3, and 4 in a moment, but in chapter 4, he's pretty proud and arrogant about the things that he has accomplished, and of course, in that context, after being mourned in a dream, he will actually experience a remarkable, horrible change of his person for a while.

Chapter 5, likewise, Belshazzar, the descendant of Nebuchadnezzar, the last ruler of the Babylonian Empire, is audaciously using the temple vessels, and they're all sitting there feasting and drinking and worshiping the gods of silver and gold and so forth, and then what do they see that scares the living daylights out of them? It's being hinted by my hand up here. Right, it's the handwriting on the wall, isn't it? And, of course, the king turns ashen, and at the end of that chapter, he dies, and then we have the Persian Empire coming in. So, think of this in terms of some really nice literary framework stuff in addition to the messages that we're going to look at and the visions themselves.

Do you have any questions on that before we move on? Still, some background stuff we need to do. Okay, let's carry it out. Daniel himself, as you think of what Daniel is doing in these books, chapters, sorry, does he remind you of anybody that we've already studied? Joseph, right, because he's a statesman.

He's going to rise to a high position in a foreign court, very much reminiscent of Joseph. In addition, he is a prophet. I've just noted here for you that he has both Israelite, Jewish, Hebrew, I suppose, and Babylonian names.

We know him as Daniel, but he's also referred to because the king gives him the name Belteshazzar, and you'll see that at several points in the text, the same person. Chapter 1 tells us something, and you can go back and read this if you haven't already. Daniel was taken in the first wave of exiles.

I'll say more about that in a moment, but as Nebuchadnezzar came into the land of Israel for the first time, this is going to be 605 B.C., what he does is to take the best people that he can see. You know, he comes to Gordon College and takes the deans and presidential list folks because he wants them. He wants them, and so Daniel is one of these people, nobility, brilliant, no physical defects.

I mean, everything's going for him, and he's one of these waves of exiles, and Nebuchadnezzar doesn't just let them rot somewhere. Here's the next deal. When he moves into exile, there's a very interesting program taking place, and let me read a little bit about this for you.

Young men, chapter 1, verse 4, without physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He, the royal steward, was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians, and they were to eat from the king's table. Now, just stop and think for a moment.

They didn't just sit there and have language and literature, but as I try to note for you here, language and literature are culture if you stop and think about it. They're the bearers of culture, and what was going on is an intentional attempt to reshape the worldviews of these young folks. Okay? Don't think for a moment there aren't some interesting issues that we can kind of carry over into our own context.

As some of you go on to graduate school, you're probably not going to be studying in a Christian context with Christian worldviews. Always hang on to your convictions; have them well enough established that you can pose questions and ask questions. Daniel's a perfect example of somebody who went to graduate school in Babylonia, and he could easily have caved into all the stuff he was learning.

He's given a name that has one of the deity names in it, and Bel is one of the deities. You know, that name is imposed on him. He's taught language and literature, and again, I can't tell you, you know as well as I do, because you're taking language and lit classes.

Those are the things that embody a culture, and so presumably, Daniel and the minds of these others are being reshaped so that they'll kind of forget their Jewish heritage and their Jewish convictions and be good, politically correct citizens of the empire. Daniel doesn't fall for it. In fact, he even refuses to eat from the king's table and doesn't think eating from the king's table is just, oh, you know, we get to enjoy the wine and the good meat and all that.

If you ate from the king's table in that context, you were demonstrating allegiance to the king. So he's not just being a vegetarian for the sake of being a vegetarian. There's something bigger going on here.

So, you know, read chapter one as an important introduction to Daniel's character, and it's something that's consistent throughout. We're not going to spend a lot of time looking at the narrative portions. They're the ones you grew up with in Sunday school if you grew up in Sunday school.

They're the ones that are easy to read, but as you read them, notice that those convictions are repeatedly demonstrated. Daniel doesn't cave Daniel's three friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. I prefer to use their Hebrew names, even though we all know them as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

You know, they don't cave either, even to the point of saying, we're willing to die, but we're not going to deny God and bow down in this whole interesting scheme of kowtowing and bowing to the image of Nebuchadnezzar. All right, that's just sort of my little sermon for today. Wanted you to stay awake through that, at least.

There's always a sermon in these prophets. The next thing we need to do is sort of take a little tangent now into history, and this is the foundation for dealing with the question, is Daniel written by Daniel, or was Daniel written by somebody else about 300 years later? It's an issue. It's an issue 400 years later.

And perspectives is a plural on purpose because in Daniel, we read about things that take place during Daniel's lifetime. That's this set right here, and I've got the broad range of the years during which we know Daniel was living and prophesying and working in the court. As I said earlier, if Nebuchadnezzar takes him into exile in 605, that's the starting point.

He's a young man then. He's about your age, maybe even younger. Notice the length of his service.

That's kind of long. That's more than 60 years. 539 is when Cyrus the Great comes through, and we know that Daniel's prophesying into at least the third year of Cyrus's reign.

So, he's moving for a long time. Transition from Babylonian to Persian domination, lots of trauma and upheaval, tumultuous times. Daniel continues as a solid force throughout that.

So, he's going to survive the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, chapters 1 through 4. Again, we'll look at those a little bit later on in a little more detail. Nabonidus and Belshazzar are two successors, a little farther on down the line, I should say descendants of Nebuchadnezzar. Nabonidus was an interesting character.

He's somebody who kind of got so wound up. Perhaps if you've had your ancient history class, you know this already, but he was so interested in non-governmental things. In fact, he was quite intent on going off into Arabia and worshipping the moon god. Didn't go over very well.

It didn't go over very well in Babylon because their main deity was Marduk. But that's what he's doing. And in the interval, his son, Belshazzar, will co-reign with him.

That's going to be important. Hang on to that for a moment. And then, finally, as the Babylonian Empire falls, we have two names that show up in the Book of Daniel.

And if you've read them, you know, both chapters 9 and 6 and then 10 through 12. 10 through 12, that's during the reign of Cyrus the Persian, who's the major figure here. But then we've got this odd individual called Darius the Mede.

Lots and lots and lots of ink has been spilled on how to identify Darius the Mede. I would suggest to you, although I'm not hard and fast on this, that Darius the Mede may be another name for Cyrus the Persian. It's one possibility.

But again, I'm not clinging to that. Otherwise, there are other suggestions that are possibilities. But at any rate, this is right when the Persian Empire takes over.

Again, this doesn't happen easily. It's not just this smooth transition of power from one presidential candidate to a president that's elected. You know, big turnover, lots of awful things, tumultuous things at that point in time.

That's when Daniel's alive. However, here's what gets interesting. Daniel also looks way ahead.

And therefore, we've got to look way ahead. Beyond the close of the First Testament, we've got the following. Future times of which Daniel prophesied.

The four kingdoms, which are visions particularly overarching in chapters 2 and 7 and then focused in on in great detail in chapters 8 and 11. Now, the first one is obviously Babylon. And we're going to come back to that in a moment.

But you've got, after Babylon, Persia. We've just seen that in these two up here. And then along comes Greece.

Obviously, Daniel doesn't live that long because Alexander the Great conquers this whole area in 333. That's long after Daniel's time. Interestingly enough, upon the rather untimely death of Alexander the Great, after some upheaval and so forth for about 20 years, you've got four of his generals pretty much taking over various parts of his kingdom.

All right, so when it says Alexander the Great's empire divided into four parts, there are four separate guys. The two that you need to know. Not that I'm going to test you on this, but just for your own understanding.

The two that we want to be concerned about are a guy named Ptolemy. Does anybody know where he lands up? It's Egypt, right? The Ptolemaic dynasty is going to rule in Egypt for the next three centuries and beyond.

A guy named Seleucus is going to control pretty much Syria, which is what we know of as Old Testament Aram or Syria. Expanded, all right? But that's the area he's going to take. Why are they important? Well, just think geographically.

Think back to our lectures from a long time ago, sometime in January. Israel's in between. Israel's in between.

Little, resettled community is in between these two powers. And of course, as usual, they're not content to stay on their own turf, and so there's always going to be battling back and forth, and that's what's going to impact Israel. And that's why I would suggest to you as Daniel is looking ahead in his prophetic messages, he's giving some specific details about how that time period is going to unfold because it's going to be a hideous time for God's people and it's reassuring to them to know that the Lord knew all this ahead of time and told them through Daniel.

Now, there's another way to look at that, but we'll get to that in a moment. Very critical event as part of this back and forth and back and forth is a guy named Antiochus Epiphanes. He happens to be Antiochus IV in a whole dynastic succession from this particular ruler here.

It's the Seleucid dynasty, and a number of those guys are named Antiochus. And in 167 B.C., Antiochus, in a sort of wide-ranging, empire-wide attempt to Hellenize his subjects, is going to start a major attempt to prevent circumcision for the Jews, to make them sacrifice in ways they shouldn't sacrifice, and in 167, he'll desecrate the temple. Use your imagination.

It's like somebody coming in and taking a sanctuary. Now, we don't have a very good idea of sanctuary. You've heard me harp on that before.

But a sanctuary of, let's just say, a major Greek Orthodox church because they take their sanctuaries really seriously, coming in and just wholesale desecrating that, breaking down the veil, taking the icons, throwing them away, breaking them and shattering them. That's the mentality or the sense that the Jews would have had when the temple was broken into, and Antiochus went into the Holy of Holies. This is a horrifying event.

It's a major event. Daniel will allude to that in chapter 11. He doesn't say Antiochus Epiphanes came along and did this, but the way he describes it is really clear, and that's what he's talking about.

And then, finally, in terms of empires, the Romans came along. They're going to specifically conquer Palestine and Israel in 63 B.C. A guy named Pompey will do it. Now, they've been on the march already.

In fact, Antiochus Epiphanes, one of the reasons that he went through this rampage with the temple is because the Romans had actually stopped him on his way to Egypt and said, you turn around. And so, he's miffed, and so he heads back, and he takes out his wrath on the Jews and the Jews' temple. So, there's a whole lot of interesting politics going on here, and the Romans are slowly making their way across.

Got the picture? Got the picture? The important thing is to know that Daniel is looking way ahead in these visions, and I just repeat myself, so you're sure to get it. Chapters 2 and 7 lay out all four kingdoms, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and then chapters 8 and 11 are going to focus in on details of that third one, Greece. Yeah, Trevor.

So, like, when they return from exile, is there any sort of period of peace? Like, I thought that was some sort of promise, like, from, like, Jeremiah was saying, you know, it's really bad now you're in exile, but when you get back, it'll be great, you know, it's just... Yeah, it's a good question. When they return from exile, is there any time of peace whatsoever? When they come back, and we're going to do this on Monday to a little bit, a greater degree, they face opposition from the people who are in the land, but they don't have wholesale war, and as a matter of fact, when the Ptolemies aren't controlling this, Egypt has this land for until 198, and when the Ptolemies are controlling it, things are going pretty well. You know, they don't try and make the Jews be something else; they don't try and Hellenize the Jews, and so the Jews do have a fairly decent time.

It's only when the Seleucid dynasty from Syria wins a very significant battle and pushes the Ptolemaic types out that things start getting messy in the 2nd century BC.

Yeah, good question. Is this clear? It's really important to understand how Daniel unfolds.

Yeah, Kaylin. What year did they actually return to the land? To the land? They're sent back under Cyrus in 539. Okay, and we're going to do more with that on Monday.

It's a good question. Well, let's carry on just a little bit. A couple of photographs.

You don't need to write all this down. This is just so I remember what I want to say about these things. Okay?

For those of you who are going to the Oxford program some time, here's another British Museum artifact that you must see when you go. This is the Nabonidus Cylinder and one of the things it does is give us a little window into what Nabonidus was doing. Remember I told you, you know, he was this descendant of Nebuchadnezzar that just wasn't real keen on governing, and so he's off in Arabia worshiping the moon god, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

He also, and this is important to understand, the question is often raised: why was Daniel in chapter 5 made third in the kingdom? Why not second? Well, it's because you have Nabonidus and Belshazzar co-reigning, and so the next position is given to Daniel, and it's third in the kingdom. It's kind of an interesting little historical corroboration here. Another chronicle that's very interesting is the one that really describes the events of his reign and goes on beyond that.

If you look at the end here, it talks about the conquest of Media by Persia, so we're seeing a bigger geopolitical picture in this context. Here's the point that we want to make a note of. He's in Arabia for a good amount of time, and this leads to a lot of unrest among his peoples because they, as I said a moment ago, have as their chief deity Marduk, about whom you've read in Old Testament parallels, and Nabonidus isn't particularly interested in that.

All right, all the stuff that I was just doing before we had those Nabonidus picture interruptions was leading up to this. When was the book written? When's the book written? Well, the traditional date, the traditional date is going to be sometime in Daniel's lifetime, right? So, it's going to be 6th century, sometime in the 500s. That's the traditional date.

But, of course, the problem that people see with that, it's the same kind of thing we had with Isaiah. Do you remember the problem with Isaiah? Isaiah has the temerity to mention somebody named Cyrus more than a century ahead of time. How could he ever do that? Well, Daniel is viewed the same way.

In chapters 8 and 11, Daniel is talking about things that we know from extra-biblical sources, particularly Josephus, our Jewish historian Josephus, about whom we're going to talk more on Monday. He gives us the unfolding of the events between the Ptolemies in Egypt and those Seleucids up north and northeast. Josephus talks about all this stuff.

And guess what? It matches up specifically with chapter 11. Now, chapter 11 is presented cryptically: the King of the North, the King of the South, the King of the North, the King of the South. They're not named, but you watch it unfold, and it fits.

All that to say that most scholars of Daniel, in fact, even a fair number of evangelicals have gone in this direction, are going to say it's got to be written in the 2nd century. How on earth could somebody talk about what Antiochus Epiphanes did when he desecrated the temple unless he'd seen it happen already? Now, that's a particular worldview, isn't it? Go back to what I said in the beginning. That means that people's minds have been shaped to presume that you can't have a predictive prophecy that's specific.

And therefore, they cave in and say, oh, well, it must be written after the fact or when it's all happening, and so somebody's just talking about what's happening. Let me suggest to you that you don't have to go that route, particularly if we're believing in a God who is omniscient and who knows the beginning from the end as Isaiah chapters 40 through 45 emphasize over and over and over again. If that's true, then why can't God talk in great detail specifically for the purpose that I mentioned about 20 minutes ago? He knows his people are going to be under hideous stress, particularly when this very evil dynasty, the Seleucid dynasty, starts trying to chip away at their own convictions and their religion and force them to do things they shouldn't do.

He knows that and so he looks ahead and talks about what's going to be happening but then goes beyond and gives some fairly profound promises, notably in chapter 12 of Daniel. So, at any rate, I'm going to hold for the traditional date. You'll find me a troglodyte in that regard.

Not too many people do, but I think there are good reasons to hold for the traditional date. I've given you just a few right here. It's interesting that this text describes Babylonian stuff in great detail as if it knows it.

Surprise, surprise. The first four chapters are spent that way, and there's a lot of very clear detail on court protocol—we'll talk about that in a moment—and things like that. Secondly, language is always a little fuzzy issue in terms of how you date examples of language, but the suggestions are that in four centuries, there would be some major changes. We do have texts in Aramaic that come from the 2nd century BC, and this is clearly not the same.

The Hebrew, particularly the Aramaic, seems like it's earlier. Another major point here, and I have stolen this directly from Gordon Hugenberger at Park Street Church, is not my own, but I affirm his scholarship over and over again. He says when you read the wider cultural stuff, and he refers particularly to books that are actually in the Apocrypha, the Old Testament Apocrypha, like Judith and Tobit and those things, no hero, no hero, Jewish hero, would be presented, if this was being written at that time, as someone who was a member of the court and a favored member of the court.

Judith, instead, what's she doing? If you've read it, it's a great story. What's she doing? She's conniving in order to assassinate a major person, chops his head off and takes it away in her basket. Heroes were people who countered the influences, the political influences.

They were insurgents. You don't have that with Daniel. He's working with the court, in the court, and he's the hero of the story.

Now, there are other reasons as well, but I'm just posing this to you at least so that you have some basis for thinking about an evaluation of this material, should you ever encounter it. For those of you who are biblical majors, biblical studies majors will. The rest of you might if you're sitting in church sometime.

Never know. Are we ready to go on? All right. As I said, we're not going to spend a lot of time with the narrative portions of this book.

I'm going to count on you to know those stories. We want to talk about the visions, first of all. The second one, this is the dream that Nebuchadnezzar himself has.

One of the things I want you to note is that the vision, as it's described and interpreted by Daniel, uses the word idle. Statue. Same word.

The Aramaic is the same word. What he's seeing is described as a statue, but it's the same word for idle. And, of course, that's fascinating because Nebuchadnezzar hasn't really got it.

When Daniel gives the interpretation, he says, you, O king, are the head of gold. And what does O king, head of gold, do? He goes and makes himself a whole statue, an idol, and everybody's supposed to bow down and worship it. By the way, chapter 3 I would suggest to you, which is Nebuchadnezzar making that idol, and everybody's supposed to bow down and worship it.

Chapter 3 is poking fun at the Persian court. Did you catch that? That list of stuff? When all the lyres and harps, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera sound, then

everybody bows down, and it goes through that rigmarole, that litany, several times. It's rhetoric.

It's the rhetoric of the court. And, of course, what's really interesting is that Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah just cut that right off with their answer. They refused to do this.

Well, at any rate, here's the vision. Sorry, let's go back to chapter 2. Head of pure gold, Babylon. Chest of silver and arms, Medo-Persia.

Stomach and thighs of bronze, Greece. Legs of iron, feet of iron and clay, Rome. That's going to be Rome coming along.

Now, there are other ways that people put this together. I need to tell you that. But this seems to make the most sense because it's the way we have it very systematically laid out.

You don't have to twist a whole lot of things. And then, of course, you have a rock coming in here. And we learn, as the interpretation unfolds, in verse 45 of chapter 2, this is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain but not by human hands.

The great god has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true. The rock, of course, is going to shatter all these other kingdoms, and it will indeed become a huge mountain and fill the entire earth.

Of course, the kingdom of God is what's being talked about in this context. Now, the other interesting thing that we have is that in chapter 4, and again, I'm not going to go at that at length, but just notice Nebuchadnezzar still hasn't gotten it. He didn't get it from chapter 2 to chapter 3, so he built the whole idol.

He sees Daniel's friends rescued from the fire, and as I said earlier, there's one like the son of man, a fourth figure, walking in that fire with them as well, but he still doesn't get it. And so, he has this arrogance in chapter 4, and then once God brings to bear on him the fact that he becomes a wild creature, and then he gets it, and he gets it. Well, that leads us to Daniel's vision, which, as I said earlier, pretty much parallels Nebuchadnezzar's, but notice the difference in terms of how it's portrayed.

Nebuchadnezzar has a statue and an idol that he sees because his mind is wrapped up in idolatry. Daniel's vision is posed in terms of predators because he's seeing it from a Jewish perspective, and these are the wild creatures that represent those predatory forces that are oppressing his people. And, of course, chapter 7 is going to lead us right on to chapter 8, which then focuses back on Hebrew and what happens to the Jews.

But these predatory beasts are representing kingdoms that would go on oppressing God's people, and it's a fascinating thing. First of all, we have a lion. This is kind of like Nebuchadnezzar, isn't it? Chapter 7, verse 4, I watched until its wings were torn off.

It was lifted from the ground, so it stood on two feet like a man, and the heart of a man was given to it. After Nebuchadnezzar's degradation to being a beast for a while, like an animal, then God lifts him back up and restores him, and we may see that a little bit in this particular vision. It goes on.

The second beast, chapter 7, verse 5, looks like a bear raised on one of its sides, intimating that one of these of Medo-Persia is probably stronger than the other, right? And it's the Persians who did come to dominate. And after that, verse 6, I saw another beast that looked like a leopard. You know, we probably think of leopards that we see in the zoo, and they're not too bad, and they're not too big, and they're not too frightening.

Leopards are really tenacious, as I understand leopards from watching Nova, all right? They can take on lions. So, leopards are not mean creatures. They are mean creatures, but they're not small.

They're to be, and they're scary. And they move fast, which is a good representation of Greece because it came through very quickly. On its back, it had four wings like those of a bird.

It had four heads. And, of course, this is this odd, fantastic cartoon-like creature, and the fourness is going to represent the persons who took over after Alexander the Great's death. That gets zeroed in on in chapters 8 and 11 as well.

Then we have verse 7, a fourth beast. Terrifying, frightening, very powerful. Again, not a specific, but representative clearly of what Rome would do as it came through this area.

Large iron teeth crushed and devoured its victims, trampled underfoot whatever was left. It had ten horns. All of these, by the way, horns are images of power, okay? A horn is representative of some kind of political power.

So, somehow, that's going to take over after that. Now, the next aspect of the vision is fascinating, and here, we want to spend a little extra time.

As I looked at verse 9, thrones were set in place. Do you remember in chapter 2 Nebuchadnezzar's vision saw a rock? And that was going to represent the coming kingdom of God. It crushes everything else.

Here, we're going to see more specificity, and it's going to be really remarkable, all right? Thrones were set in place. The Ancient of Days took his seat. This is, of course, representative of God.

His clothing is white as snow, the hair of his head white like wool, his throne is flaming with fire, and his wheels are all ablaze. Are you catching some reverberations of Ezekiel? Ezekiel chapter 1, the throne vision, the wheels, the fire. Daniel's vision does the same thing.

This is the second phase of this vision, and he's now seeing into the very courtyards of heaven, court of heaven. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him.

Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened. This is, as I note for you, a judgment scene.

The Ancient of Days is the great judge, and Daniel is allowed to see this because there's going to be judgment coming on all these kingdoms that have oppressed God's people for centuries. There's a judgment coming. Now, we have some things to say about the beast being slain and so forth and so on, but then we have verses 13 and 14.

Here's your chance to wake back up again because I want you to catch this too. In my vision at night, I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. Does that sound like something you know? What happens when Jesus is on trial before Caiaphas? You get one witness, and that says one thing and another witness says another thing, and they can't agree, and Caiaphas is getting frustrated, and finally he says, I take you under oath.

Are you the son of God? And what does Jesus respond with? This is Matthew. Do I have it up here? Yes, 2664. What does Jesus respond with? This passage, this passage mixed in with Psalm 110, which is a Messianic Psalm as well.

One like the son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. That's what Jesus says. You will see the son of man coming on the clouds of heaven.

And, of course, Caiaphas knows his Bible. What does he do? He screams blasphemy and rinses his garments because Jesus has called himself God by making that allusion back to Daniel. Let's look at it a little bit more.

He approached the Ancient of Days and led into his presence. Verse 14 is what I'm saying up there at the top. He was given authority, glory, and sovereign power.

All people's nations and people of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away. His kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

These are all the attributes of God, the functions of God, and the things that God does. That's the son of man here. He's given all that.

And so, when Jesus, in front of the Sanhedrin and Caiaphas, cites this passage and then winds it together, as I said, with that allusion from Psalm 110, he's saying, I'm God. Now, what's interesting is that we have to remind ourselves of something I told you last time, and I suggested you keep it on your back burner, and that was Ezekiel's use of the term. How did Ezekiel use the term? How does the book of Ezekiel use the term? Trevor? Yeah, it's God's constant term of reference for Ezekiel himself.

You, son of man, do this, do that, that. And Ezekiel's, you know, the representative person who's receiving God's words at that point, the prophet. Daniel has it being God, fully God.

And so, my suggestion to you is that Jesus chooses this name for himself very specifically, very carefully, very intentionally to indicate that he is fully God and fully human. Both of those are wound together. I know if you've grown up in the church, that's a doctrine that you know, but here you see where it's coming from.

As you read through the rest of chapter 7, which we don't have time to do, but if you read through the rest of chapter 7, you'll see that the saints themselves are given dominion and power in the end times. We reign with Christ, but he's our representative person there. Well, that's kind of neat to know.

Let's go on because we need to do a few more things. Chapters 8 and 11, eventually. As I said a moment ago, 20 minutes ago, these chapters focus in on what's going to happen to God's people, specifically in the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C., when Greece is ruling here.

That's the key, right? So first, he sees a ram, and that's Medo-Persia, chapter 8. Very short, doesn't say a whole lot about it. But then it talks about suddenly, chapter 8, verse 5, a goat with a prominent horn between his eyes comes from the west. He attacks the ram.

He himself gets broken off, and there are four prominent horns that grow up to the four winds of heaven. Out of one of them came another horn, which started small but grew in power to the south and the east and towards the beautiful land, which is, of course, I was referring to the land of Israel. Now, that's chapter 8, and it's very short.

In chapter 11, go back and read it, but let me just hit a couple of high points here. King of the South, King of the North, King of the South, King of the North, back and forth and back and forth. But then it says, at the appointed time, he, and this is our Antiochus Epiphanes figure, will invade the south again, but this time, the outcome will be different.

Ships of the western coastlands will oppose him. Who's that? Think back on what I said a moment ago. What major forces to the west? It starts with R. Rome.

They're coming. And when it says they oppose him, it's referring to that incident where Antiochus Epiphanes was indeed challenged by the Roman general, right? Ships of the western hills will oppose him. He'll lose heart.

He'll turn back and vent his fury against the holy covenant. He will return and show favor to those who forsake the holy covenant. His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice.

They will set up the abomination that causes desolation. Have you heard anybody say that in the gospels? It's Jesus, isn't it? When he's talking about the signs that are yet to come in his day, he's going to use this expression out of Daniel. So we see it fulfilled initially in Antiochus Epiphanes, but it's got a further range in terms of what it's talking about.

And it goes on. Don't have time to read this whole thing. But kind of look at these foreshadowings of some major things that are forthcoming.

In between those chapters, one was 8, the other was 11, we have chapter 9. And I need just to say a couple of things about chapter 9. Again, worthy of much, much, much more exploration here. Daniel's been praying. This was after the empire had turned from Babylonian to Medo-Persian.

And I told you, tumultuous times. Daniel's in prayer. He's in fasting, sackcloth and ashes.

And he's praying earnestly on behalf of his people because he's wondering what on earth is going to happen. And as he prays, interestingly enough, verse 21 of chapter 9, while I was still in prayer, Gabriel came in swift flight. You know, Gabriel just doesn't kind of saunter on in and say, well, here I am to answer your question.

The text says, in swift flight, coming to Daniel's prayer in response to it. And he says I've come to give you an answer to your prayer. Verse 24, I'll start reading.

Seventy-sevens are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish the transgression, put an end to sin, atone for wickedness, bring in everlasting

righteousness, seal up vision and prophecy, and anoint the holiest. Wow. Do you notice what's going to get done here? Now, how do we understand these 77s? Well, it's talking about 70 periods of seven years.

And when you do your mathematics, that's 490 years. Know and understand verse 25, from the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Messiah, the anointed one. The ruler comes.

There will be seven sevens and 62 sevens. In other words, 69 of those 70 are going to be unfolding from the time there's a decree to rebuild Jerusalem until a Messiah comes, the anointed one, Messiah. I may have said this before, but I'll just remind you of it.

Don't think for a moment that the people in Jesus' day didn't know their Bibles. They did. And that century before Jesus, and as a matter of fact, the century after, there is a host, an absolute host of people cropping up saying they're Messiahs.

Josephus tells us, if I remember correctly, that there are 10,000 Messianic pretenders. He exaggerates, right? But he's acknowledging the fact that during this time, there's a real bump up in people who are pretending to be Messiahs. Why? They've read this prophecy.

They know that something is going to unfold at that point. They don't know exactly when because it's hard to know just when to date the decree and how to unpack the 62 plus the seven. But nevertheless, there's a real sense that something is forthcoming here, and therefore, Jesus is coming into a time period when people are really expecting a Messiah.

Of course, the problem is they don't expect the right kind of Messiah. They're expecting someone that's going to be military and throw off Rome and all that sort of stuff. That isn't what's happening.

In fact, we have been cut off here. The anointed one, verse 26, will be cut off. That's going to be a shock to their system.

And then it talks about the end coming. He will confirm a covenant with many for one seven. In the middle of that seven, he's going to put an end to the sacrifice and offering, and the one who causes desolation will place abominations on the wing of the temple.

Again, that same idea about something horrible happening in the context of the temple. How to unpack all this is really a challenge. I told you lots of ink had been spilt on the identity of Darius the Mede.

Lots more ink has been spilt on how to figure out starting point, ending point. How does Jesus' ministry fit in? What are 62? What are 69? When's the 70th week? Is it yet to come? How does it work? Those are all challenging issues. Take a course in prophets.

We've got to say one more thing. Chapter 12. Fitting in with the pattern of all of our prophetic writings, we have wonderful chapter 12, which is posed in difficult, challenging terms because some of this, Daniel's told, is going to be sealed up until the time of the end and we have some mention of days and this number of days.

But here's the thing I want you to walk away with. Verse 1, midway through it. There will be a time of distress, but at that time, your people, everyone whose name is found written in the Book of Life, your people will be delivered.

Verse 2. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. And by the way, that Hebrew word for awake is not just awake. It's really move right up there.

Step right up. Wake right up. Those who are wise, verse 3, will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, catch the challenge there? Those who lead many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.

That's the promise that closes the book of Daniel. That's the promise that closes us for this week and this day. See you on Monday.

Shabbat shalom. Go hear some good music this weekend.