

Dr. Elaine Phillips, OT History, Lit., and Theology, Lecture 34

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This is Doctor Elaine Philips in her Old Testament, History, Literature, and Theology course. Lecture 34.

Whatever score you get. If 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 seventy-five. If on this essay retake if you get an eighty-five that replaces the seventy-five. If you get a sixty on the retake, it was just an exercise. It does not 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 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 its not only bands on the quad that are fun. Its orchestras in A.J that are also fun. So let me encourage you to do that. Not that I have anything against bands on the quad. And we have our own musical offering this morning... It's that God continues to make peace, peace in the heavens and peace with us. Lets 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. God we are 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 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.

Alright we are 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, splendid. Both of them, remember 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 will pick up and ask ourselves some questions about Daniel.

Is that a question? Yes. [student question]

Response: Well, Ezekiel is a very unusual prophetic character. And this I think is woven into the whole apocalyptic nature of it. He's in Babylon. But in some ways it's hard to understand, he gets transported to Jerusalem so he sees what's going on there. It is a visionary experience or something of that sort. Yes.

I would suggest that the symbolic actions are done for the Jewish community that is already in Babylon, because they are just as concerned, great question, they are just as concerned with God's presence in 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 know exactly where he is. It's a great question.

Daniel is indeed in Babylon. Okay. Now, a couple 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 the coming back. Who's the other one? Jeremiah, good, and then Ezekiel, and Daniel. Last time as we talked about Ezekiel, we talked about some of the characteristics of this unusual genre which was apocalyptic literature. Again you've been introduced to it when you took New Testament and studied the Revelation of Saint 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.[student response]

Okay let me hold that first one first. Looking forward to a time when good would 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, oppression, and so they are looking forward to sometime in the future when God's promises are going to come true.

Now, go ahead. [student response]

Great. Dreams, visions, and of course you see a whole plethora of those in the book of Daniel and 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, a symbolic use of numbers is really what I meant to say at that point.

What else do you have there? [student response]

Right. In Daniel is really where we see the fantastic imagery. For example, as you read chapter 7 and we're reading about those beasts. Those are not things you see even when you go to the zoo. They're just not. They are 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.

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 its attributed falsely to some named creature or author. One of the things we are 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 is a major issue here.

Well, here is 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 Old Testament at the end of this year and think about 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 Old Testament are with illustrations of God's sovereignty. Over and over again, working in the history of his people. And we see it again in the book of Daniel.

What are some of the illustrations, these are some of the stories you had when you were a kid in Sunday school? What are the illustrations of God's sovereignty?

[student response] Yes, keeping the mouths of the lions shut--that's fairly significant. And where do Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego end up? In the fiery furnace that doesn't devour them. And there is actually a fourth figure that looks like the Son of Man that is walking with them in that context. What else? Any other illustrations of God's sovereignty in these particular chapters? Sarah.

[student response] Yes, 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 but also to know exactly what it was. So we see God's sovereignty effected in the realm of knowledge, in the realm of preservation of people, very clearly, over wild animals in terms of the lions den and all those kinds of things. Lucky, is that a question, a hand up? [student response]

Absolutely, yes definitely over kings and parts of kings and in chapter 4 we are going to see how that unfolds particularly. Excellent.

Well let's carry on just a little bit. We've got a lot of background to do with Daniel by the way in order to understand how this is working, so bare with me on this.

Daniel is one of the few books of the First Testament where a large portion of it is written in Aramaic. Now what's Aramaic, besides being the *lingua franca* of the day, which I will talk about in a moment? Does anyone know what Aramaic is? It's a language related to Hebrew. Okay? It is related to Hebrew and it was as I note for you the language commonly spoken widely spoken throughout the empire in that point in time. Let me use a contemporary counterpart. Today if you go most anywhere in the world, you can get by speaking English. In some ways that's a blessing, because we don't have to learn fifty languages if we're traveling. In other ways it's a curse because we don't have to learn fifty languages and we really should. I have 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 visiting. 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 of Daniel was Aramaic. It's a sister language to Hebrew. Lots of relationship, 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, perhaps, I guess we'll just write this part in Aramaic," there is 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 very beautifully structured. It's got a framework that's Hebrew. Chapter one starts out with Hebrew. Because obviously this is God's prophet to God's people and therefore it starts out that way and will end that way. Starting with chapter eight. Chapters eight through twelve 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 are there as they are going to experience continued oppression in fact probably growing oppression. These chapters are designed to let them know, “God knows about your situation and in fact he is looking ahead and knowing about your situation. Here is 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, in chapters two through seven. 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 two and seven are visions and we’ll unpack those a little bit later on. But they are 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 is going to be four of them. And we are going to look at each one of them.

Chapter 2 and chapter 7 kind of mirror each other. They are talking about the same nations. But it’s a much more universal--global focus. And therefore the *lingua franca* is what is used to communicate this. It is not in Hebrew, in Aramaic. Then as you move inward, notice 2, 7, 3, 6, 4, 5 a nice little patterning there as well.

Chapter 3 and chapter 6 are stories about persecution. In chapter 3: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; or Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, if you want to use 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.

Then when you move right in to our sort of center piece 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, we’ll look at the sequence from chapters two, three, and four in a moment but in chapter 4 he is pretty proud and arrogant about the things that he has accomplished. And of

course, in that context after being warned in a dream he will actually experience a remarkable, horrible change in 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 are all sitting there feasting and drinking and worshiping the gods of silver and gold and so forth.

Then what do they see, that scares the living daylights out of them? It's being hinted by my hand up here. 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.

Then we have the Persian Empire coming in. So think of this in terms of some nice literary framework constructs in addition to the messages that we're going to look at in the visions themselves. Any questions on that before we move on?

There is 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 chapters, does he remind you of anybody that we've already studied? Joseph, right. Because he is a statesman, he's going to rise to a high position in a foreign court. He's very much reminiscent of Joseph. In addition, he is a prophet. I have just noted here for you that he has both Israelite-Jewish-Hebrew, I suppose, and Babylonian names. We know him as Daniel, but he is also referred to because the king gives him the name, Belteshazzar. You will see that at several points in the text, the same person. Chapter one 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 take the deans and presidential lists folks, because he wants them. And so Daniel is one of these people of nobility, brilliant, no physical defects, I mean everything is going for him. And he is one of this wave

of exiles and Nebuchadnezzar doesn't just let them rot somewhere. Here is the next deal, when he moves into exile there is a very interesting program that is taking place. And let me read for you a little bit about this:

“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 the literature of the Babylonians.”

They were at eat of 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 and note for you here, language and literature are culture if you stop and think about it. They are the bearers of culture, and what was going on is an intentional attempt to reshape the worldviews of these young folks. Don’t think for a moment that 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 hold on to your convictions, have them well-enough established that you can pose questions and ask questions. Daniel is a perfect example of somebody who went to graduate school, in Babylonia. And he could easily have caved into all the stuff that he was learning. He’s given a name that has one of the deity names in it. “Bel” was one of their 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 are 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 will 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 don’t think that 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 is not being a vegetarian for the sake of being a vegetarian. There is something bigger going on here. So read chapter 1 as an important introduction to Daniel’s character and its something that is consistent throughout.

We’re not going to spend a lot of time looking at the narrative portions. They are the ones you grew up with in Sunday school, if you grew up in Sunday school. They are 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. 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 cow towing and bowing to the image of Nebuchadnezzar.

Alright, that’s just sort of my little sermon for today. I wanted you to stay awake through that at least. There is always a sermon in these prophets. Next thing we need to do is take a little tangent now into history. And this is the foundation for dealing with this question: Is Daniel written by Daniel? Or was Daniel written by somebody else writing about three hundred years later? It’s an issue; it’s an issue.

And “perspectives” is a plural on purpose because in Daniel we read about things that take place during Daniel’s lifetime. That’s the set right here and I’ve got the broad range of the years in which we know Daniel was living and prophesying and working in the court. As I said earlier Nebuchadnezzar takes him into exile in 605, that’s the starting point. He’s a young man then, about your age, maybe even younger. Notice the length of his service. That’s kind of long that’s more than sixty

years. 539 is when Cyrus the Great comes through and we know that Daniel is prophesying into at least the third year of Cyrus' reign. Okay so he's moving for a long time during the transition from Babylonian to Persian domination--lots of trauma and upheaval, tumultuous times. Daniel continues as a solid force throughout that.

So he is 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 down on the line, I should say the 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 things non-governmental. In fact, he was quite intent on sort of going off into Arabia and worshipping the moon god. 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 hold onto that for a moment.

And finally, as the Babylonian empire falls, we have two names that show up in the book of Daniel and if you have read them you know. Both chapters 9 and 6 and then 10 through 12. 10 through 12 is 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 elect. Big turnover with lots of

tumultuous things at that point in time. That's when Daniel is alive.

However here is 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 over-archingly 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 B.C. 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 twenty years, you've got four of his generals pretty much taking over various parts of his kingdom. Alright so when it says that 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 anyone know where he ends up? Its 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, what we know as Old Testament Aram or Syria, expanded, alright, but that's the area he's going to take.

Why are they important? Well just think geographically. Think back to our lectures way back when, sometime in January. Israel is the land in between. Little resettled community is in between these two powers. And of course, as usual they are not content to stay in their own turf. And so there is always going to be battling back and forth and that's what's going to impact Israel. And that is why, I would suggest to you, as Daniel was 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. It is reassuring to them to know that the Lord knew all of this ahead of time and told them through Daniel. Now there is another way to look at that. But we will get to that in a moment. A very critical event that is part of this back and forth and back and forth is a guy named Antiochus Ephiphanes, he happens to be Antiochus IV in a whole dynastic succession from this particular ruler here, it's the Seleucus dynasty and a number of those guys are named Antiochuses.

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 very seriously, coming in and just whole sale 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, and when 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. Okay, he doesn't say that Antiochus came along, he did this, but the way he describes it, it's really clear that that's what he is talking about.

Well and then finally in terms of empires. The Romans come along. They are going to specifically conquer Palestine, Israel in 63 B.C. a guy named Pompey will do it. Now they have been on the march already. In fact, Antiochus Epiphanes is 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 he's miffed and so he heads back and takes his wrath out on the Jews

and the Jew's temple. So there is a whole lot of interesting politics going on here and the Romans are slowly making their way across. Got the picture? The important point is to know that Daniel is looking way ahead in these visions, and I'll just repeat myself so that you're sure to get it. Chapters 2 and 7 lay out all four kingdoms: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. And then chapters 8 and 11 are going to focus in on details of that third one: Greece.

Yes Trevor. [student question] So when they return from exile is there any time of sort of peace? I thought the prophets like Jeremiah was saying it's really bad down here in the exile but when we get back it'll be great.

Response: Yes, it's a good question, when they return from exile is there any time of peace whatsoever? When they come back, we're going to do this on Monday, to a greater degree, they face opposition from the people who are in the land. But they don't have wholesale war. As a matter of fact when the Ptolemies of Egypt are in control of this land until 198 B.C. When the Ptolemies are controlling it things are going pretty well. They don't try and make the Jews be something else, they don't try and Hellenize the Jews. So the Jews do have a fairly decent time its 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 second century B.C. Yes, good question. Is this clear? It's really important to understand how Daniel unfolds. To the land, they're sent back under Cyrus in 539 B.C. We're going to do more with that on Monday, that's a good question.

Well let's carry on just a little bit, couple of photographs; dying to write all this down, this is just so I remember what I want to say about these things. Those of you who are going to Oxford program sometime, 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, he was this descendant of Nebuchadnezzar that just wasn't real keen on governing and so he's off in

the Arabia worshipping the moon god, etc. etc. etc. 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 that next position is given to Daniel, and its third in the kingdom, kind of an interesting little historical collaboration here. Another chronicle that's very interesting, and this is the one that really does describe the events of his reign, and goes on beyond that if you look at the end here, talks about the conquest of Media by Persia. So we're seeing a bigger geo-political picture in this context. Here's our 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're read in *Old Testament Parallels*. Nabonidus is not in 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's the book written? When's the book written? Well, the traditional date is going to be some time 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. 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 these events between the Ptolemies in Egypt and the Seleucids of 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 this direction, are going to say it's got to be written in the 2nd century B.C.

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 predictive prophecy that's specific, and therefore they cave in and say, "Oh, well, must be written after the fact," or when it's all happening. So somebody is just talking about what is happening.

Let me suggest to you that you don't have to go that route, particularly when believing in a God who is omniscient, and who knows the beginning from the end as Isaiah chapters 40 through 45 emphasizes 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 twenty 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 to 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 to 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, and we do have texts in Aramaic that come from 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 Park Street Church, this is not my own but I affirm his scholarship over and over again. He says, "when you read over 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 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 is 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 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. Those of you who are biblical studies majors will the rest of you might if you’re sitting in church sometime, you 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, and one of the things I do want you to note is that the vision as is described and then interpreted by Daniel uses the word “idol,” or “statue.” Same word, the Aramaic is the same word. What he’s seeing is described as a “statue.” It’s the same word for “idol,” and of course, that’s fascinating, because Nebuchadnezzar hasn’t really gotten it.

When Daniel gives the interpretation, he’s says, “You, O king, are the head of gold.” And what does “O king, head of gold” do? He makes himself a whole statue, an idol, and everybody is supposed to bow down and worship it. By the way, chapter 3 I would suggest to you, which is Nebuchadnezzar making that idol and forces them 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 and etc. etc. sound and everyone bows down and it goes through the rigmarole that litany several times? It’s rhetoric. It’s the rhetoric of the court. But of course, what’s really interesting is that Hananiah, Mishael, and Azaria just cut that right off with their answer. They refuse to do this, but any rate, here is the vision.

Let’s go back to chapter 2; head of pure gold, is Babylon; chest of silver and arms,

Medo-Persia; stomach and thighs of bronze, Greece; legs of iron feet of iron and clay, Rome. Okay 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 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 is being talked about in this context.

Now, the other interesting thing we have is that in chapter 4, and again I am 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 builds the whole idol. He sees Daniel's friends rescued from the fire and, as I said earlier, there is one like the Son of Man the fourth figure walking in that fire walking with them as well. But he still doesn't get it, and so he has this arrogance, 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 is seeing, because his mind is wrapped up with idolatry. Daniel's vision is posed in terms of predators, because he's seeing 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 the 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 does lift him back up and restores him. 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 as leopards we see in the zoo. And they're not too bad, they're not too big, they're not too frightening. Leopards are really tenacious. As I understand, leopards, from watching Nova, can take on lions. So leopards are not mean creatures, they are mean creatures but they are not small, they are scary and they move fast, which is a good representation of Greece, because came through very quickly. "On its back it had four wings like those of bird, it had four heads." Of course this is an odd fantastic cartoon-like creature, and the foreignness is going to represent the persons who took over after Alexander the Great's death. That gets zeroed in on chapter 8 and 11 as well.

Then we have in verse 7, a fourth beast. Terrifying, frightening very powerful again not as 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 10 horns, all these. By the way, horns are images of power, okay, a horn is representative of some kind of political power. So somehow that is going to be taking over after that.

Now, the next aspect of the vision is fascinating. And here we want to spend some extra time. "As I looked," 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 that crushes everything else. Here we are 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, of course, is representative of God. His clothing is white as snow, hair of his head white like wool, throne flaming with fire, 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 the second phase of this vision he is now seeing into the very courtyards of heaven, the court of heaven. River

of fire was following coming out from before and thousands upon thousands attended him 10,000 times 10,000, and thousands 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 is going to be judgment coming on all these kingdoms that have oppressed God's people for centuries. There is 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 the 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 have one witness 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 command you under oath, are you the Son of God?" And what does Jesus respond with? This is Matthew do I have it up here?--26:64. 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 is 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? Screams blasphemy and rents his garments. Does Jesus has called himself God by making that illusion back to Daniel? Let's look a little bit more, he approached the Ancient of Days led into his presence, verse 14 is what I'm saying, "there at the top he was a given authority, glory, sovereign power, all peoples and nations in every peoples' nations and people of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away. His kingdom is one of that will never be destroyed." There are all the attributes of God and the functions of God and things that God does; that is the Son of Man here. He is given all of 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."

And what's interesting, we have to remind ourselves of something I told you last

time. 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? Yeah, it's God's constant term of reference for Ezekiel himself. "You, son of man, do this, do that." And Ezekiel is the representative person who's receiving God's words at that point, the prophet. Daniel has a big 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, fully human. Both of those are wound together. I know that 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.

While 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 20 minutes ago, these chapters focus in on what's going to happen to God's people, specifically in the third and second centuries BC when Greece is ruling here. That's the key, right? So first he sees a ram and that's Medo-Persia, in chapter 8, very short. It doesn't say a lot about it but then it talks about suddenly, chapter 8 verse 5, a goat that had 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 to the beautiful land, which of course, was referring to the land of Israel.

Now that is chapter 8 and it's very short. In chapter 11, go back and read it but let me just hit a couple 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, and then it says at the appointed time he, and this is our Antiochus Epiphanes, figure. He will invade the South again. And this time the outcome will be different. Ships of the western coastlands will oppose him. Who's that? Think back to what I said a moment ago. What major force is to

the west? Starts with an “R”--Rome. They're coming, and when it says they opposed him, it's referring to the incident where Antiochus Epiphanes was indeed challenged by the Roman general. All 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 anyone 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 of Daniel. So we see it fulfilled initially with Antiochus Epiphanes but it's got a further range in terms of what it's talking about, and it goes on but we don't have time to read this whole thing, but kind of look at those foreshadowings of some major things that are of forthcoming.

In between those chapters, one was 8 the other was 11, we have chapter 9. And I need just to say a couple things about chapter 9, again worthy of much, much, much more exploration here. Daniel's been praying and this is after the Empire has turned from Babylonian to Medo-Persian, and as I told you tumultuous times. Daniel is in prayer. He's in fasting sackcloth and ashes and he's praying earnestly on behalf of his people, but he's wondering what on earth is going 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 does not 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 prayers in response to it, and he says, “I've come to give you an answer your prayer.” Verse 24, we'll start reading. “Seventy sevens are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, put an end to sin, atone for wickedness, bring in everlasting righteousness, seal up vision and prophecy, and anoint the most holy.” Do you notice what was going get done here?

Now how do we understand these seventy sevens? Well it's talking about 70 periods of seven years and when you do your mathematics its 490 years. “No one 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 seventy sevens and

sixty-two sevens.” In other words, sixty-nine of those seventy are going to be unfolding from the time there is a decree to rebuild Jerusalem until a Messiah comes, the anointed one, Messiah.

I may have said this before but I'll just reminding you a little, not to think for a moment that the people and Jesus's 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 are Messiahs. Josephus tells us, if I remember correctly, that there are 10,000 messianic pretenders. He exaggerates right but has the knowledge in the fact that during this time there was 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, and because it's hard to know just when to date the decree and how to unpack this sixty-two plus the seven, but nevertheless there is 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 here is that they don't expect the right kind of Messiah. They're expecting someone who's going to be military and throw off Rome and that sort of stuff. That isn't what is happening. In fact, we have here being cut off “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. That seven, he is 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, but 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 a starting point, ending point. How does Jesus ministries fit in? What are 62? What are 69? When is the 70th week? Is it yet to come? How does it work? Those are all challenging issues. Take a course in the prophets.

We say one more thing. Chapter 12, fitting in with the pattern of all the prophetic writings we have wonderful chapter 12, which is posed in difficult challenging terms

because some of this, Daniel has 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 is the thing I want you to walk away with. Verse one 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.” By the way, that Hebrew word for “awake” is not just awake, it’s move. 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.

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