

Men's Breakfast Message
February 12, 2022
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Held at Country Boy Restaurant

Intro – look outside illustration, dream a week ago, re skunk, etc.

Today we are going to step back into history, then move forward to the future in the book of Daniel. There is so much in this book that we cannot cover due to time constraints, so I have chosen just two topics from the book for today. We're going to look back at one of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and then we will look forward to the future. It's all here in this incredible book.

Let's begin in 2 Kings 24 – Just 5 verses – I'll read them to you.

¹⁰ At that time (that is about 605 BC) the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up to Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. ¹¹ And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to the city while his servants were besieging it, ¹² and Jehoiachin the king of Judah gave himself up to the king of Babylon, himself and his mother and his servants and his officials and his palace officials. The king of Babylon (that's Nebuchadnezzar) took him prisoner in the eighth year of his reign ¹³ and carried off all the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold in the temple of the LORD, which Solomon king of Israel had made, as the LORD had foretold. ¹⁴ He carried away all Jerusalem and all the officials and all the mighty men of valor, 10,000 captives, and all the craftsmen. None remained, except the poorest people of the land. ¹⁵ And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon. The king's mother, the king's wives, his officials, and the chief men of the land he took into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. We'll stop there. This is the start of the Babylonian captivity, what we simply call "the exile." It was decreed to last for 70 years.

Verse 2 says that Nebuchadnezzar did not **take** Jerusalem but that God "**gave it**" into his hands. **It's important to note that** – this was not a war. There was no battle. There was no fight. There was no amassing the troops at the border such as Russia is doing at the Ukraine. No. They simply surrendered. God handed the Israelites over into the hands of an evil empire. This is confirmed in 1 Chronicles 6:15 where it says God gave the Israelites to Babylon! Why would God do that? Why would God take His chosen people and hand them over to evil rulers? It was because of God's judgment upon his people for gross idolatry. The Jews, it seems, would worship anything except the one true God. And this was a devastating time for the Jews. An absolutely devastating time!

One of the great things we see in the book of Daniel is that God is sovereign. He uses nations to judge other nations. And I can add a personal note here that over the last two years I would get so wound up over "politics" and would (regrettably) comment on social media over all things political. It took me a long time to correct that, but I finally figured it out ... **God's got this!** It was tough to learn He does not need my help! I do have the privilege of voting according to my conscience, but I can leave the result in God's hands.

Well, the culture shifted for the Israelites when they were taken into exile – now captive in a foreign land. This might be the place to say that here in Canada, in 2022, our culture has also shifted – and we didn't even have to move. But we are being besieged! Culture has changed all around us. And it seems we are progressively being taken captive. And believers in the

Lord Jesus Christ in Canada and elsewhere, here in 2022 are now in exile, right here at home. We are in exile. Hebrews 11:13b – we are strangers in a foreign land. Not quite as dramatic as the Israelites experienced but our culture change has not stopped. In fact, we should fasten our seatbelts, because there's more to come! A lot more... that's just an opinion.

But among those 10,000 Nebuchadnezzar took captive, in the first deportation were four young men – teenagers, really – who were indoctrinated into Babylonian culture. This indoctrination process involved having their names changed to the names of Babylonian gods and three years of rigorous training in Babylonian language and culture.

Among those taken captive were Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These kids were chosen to serve the government of Babylon.

We lose a lot of kids today when they get indoctrinated in a few years of university, so it is very clear there was something special about these boys. And there was – they apparently were well grounded in the truth of God before being carried off to Babylon. These were certainly what we would call good kids – the cream of the crop.

This should serve as a model for young people today embarking on a college or university career. They should be thoroughly grounded in the Word of God before even considering “higher education.” Liberal academia today is consumed with an anti-God, anti-biblical, pro-evolution, pro-humanist, pro-abortion, pro-global warming agenda and a hostile anti-God position. It is an academic culture totally hostile to Christianity!

And it was this type of culture these young men, these Godly teenagers were dropped into. We encounter Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in chapter 1 and again in chapter 2 where arrogant King Nebuchadnezzar has a troubling dream. One of several dreams, but we are only looking at this one. He calls for an interpretation from his wise men, his astrologers, his prognosticators, the king's (so-called) advisors!

The so-called wise men want to know the dream so they can interpret it – that is a reasonable request. Ch. 2 v. 4 – “O King, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation.”

Let me paraphrase the rest of the dialogue. Nebuchadnezzar speaking – “Oh no you don't” you deceivers. You're just stalling so you can invent some misleading answer.” – Well, the wise men fail, the King orders them all executed including Daniel. Daniel hears about it, goes to the King and pleads for time. Daniel calls his three friends, and what do they do? Do they panic? Do they wring their hands and sweat it out? Is that what they did? No, it's not! They do not panic! They hold a prayer meeting, God gives Daniel the answer; he goes back to the King and interprets the dream.

The King is overjoyed; in fact the text says he worships Daniel. And, for Daniel, here is an opportunity for success. Daniel has the answer to the dream that is confounding the great King Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel at this point could lay it on thick and no one would ever know, but at no point throughout the entire book does Daniel take credit for anything. He always gives credit where credit is due. In those days, to walk into the King's presence and tell him he is wrong is a death sentence. But that's how Daniel begins his report. Ch.2v27 – “No wise man, no enchanter, no magician, no astrologer can show to the King the mystery that the king has

asked.” Daniel tells the King: “What you were asking of your advisers is impossible. No person can do that...” Then comes the little word but ,... don’t you love that word, because a change in direction is coming... But....

There is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries and he has made known to me, Daniel, - NO. He doesn’t say that. Never in this book do we see Daniel promoting himself. **But** – there is a God in heaven and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar – this is a direct message from God to the King.

Then Daniel goes on to downplay his own role and he reveals to the King the interpretation of his dream. And it is a massive revelation – one that includes us today. We won’t spend a lot of time on the dream as the interpretation is well known, but briefly, God reveals to Nebuchadnezzar through Daniel, world history right up to and into the time period in which we are living today.

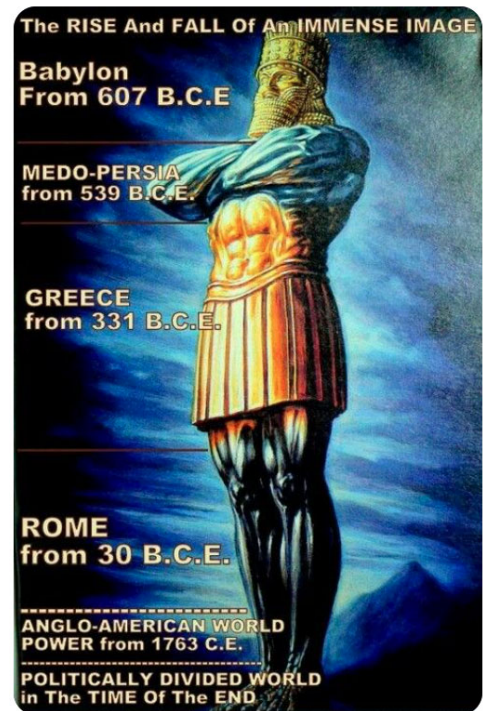
The head of gold was Nebuchadnezzar’s rule, about 605 to 539 BC. It was followed by the Medo-Persian Empire, with the chest and arms of silver then the belly and thighs of brass or bronze representing Greece (331 BC to 146 BC). The legs represented divided Rome from about 146 BC to 476 AD, then the divided nations of Europe represented by the legs of iron, and finally the feet of iron and clay representing a politically divided world in our present day.

But then something happens! Suddenly, without warning, out of nowhere, a Rock falls and smashes the image to pieces, so that nothing is left of world kingdoms, all the dreams and aspirations of man are gone, all the politics is over, the kingdoms of men are destroyed – forever gone - and the God of heaven ushers in his eternal kingdom.

Rev. 11:15 - “The kingdom (singular) of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.” And in Jesus kingdom righteousness dwells. This dream was a dream but it is historically accurate. We are waiting for the Rock to fall. We’re not at that point just yet, but – my opinion – we are very close, very close. I just want to say **Even so, come quickly Lord Jesus.**

Nebuchadnezzar was so enamored by his own self-importance; by his own arrogance, no doubt encouraged to learn he indeed was the head of gold, so he set up a golden image of himself so everyone could worship him. We should note the image Nebuchadnezzar set up is not a replica of his dream, but Nebuchadnezzar’s image is apparently all gold – head, chest, thighs, legs, feet – the whole body. And it is at this image that we first publicly encounter Daniels three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

You know the account... King Nebuchadnezzar sets up a dedication ceremony and invites all the politicians, all of his court, all the “somebodies” are there and maybe others, the text doesn’t say, but Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are there. Because Daniel had put in a



good word for his three friends, by this time they had been promoted in the Babylonian administration – as far as I have been able to research they would be about the equivalent a State Governor in the U.S. or a Premier here, such as Doug Ford. They had a large territory – and they were resented by the Babylonian population because now the Babylonians have foreigners from Judah ruling over them.

So here they are at a dedication ceremony to a foreign god. Three young men totally committed to serving the God of heaven (the same God we worship) and they have been instructed, at the sound of the music to fall down and worship a foreign god.

May I paint the picture for you?

A golden image has been constructed; it is about 90 feet tall and about 10 or 12 feet wide at the base. How high is 90'? About three school buses stacked end on end, or about the height of a 10 story building. It is set up in the Plain of Dura; commentators say a few miles to the south of Babylon. And may I remind us that the Babylonian empire was a truly great empire. It was no Mickey Mouse operation! There were the hanging Gardens of Babylon, at one time one of the original Seven Great Wonders of the world. It was captured by Alexander the Great in 331 BC. It was located not far from present day Baghdad, Iraq.

So there is a 90' tall glistening gold statue standing in the hot Babylonian sun, hundreds, if not thousands of politician's and rulers of the great Babylonian empire are there, including Nebuchadnezzar and his entourage. A massive band is there – the food trucks are there. No, the text doesn't say that, but this is a huge deal. This is a big day for Nebuchadnezzar – all the big shots are there, all the somebodies and who knows how many nobody's – and they are there to dedicate this image to the great and glorious Nebuchadnezzar.

Instructions are given – at the sound of the music – you know the story – everyone should fall down, should prostrate themselves and worship the Golden Image that Nebuchadnezzar has set up. This is idolatry, pure and simple. Well, maybe I shouldn't say pure. Full-blown idol worship!

Now, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego have a problem. Now just imagine for a moment - can you hear their conversation?... There is a huddle – “look guys, let's not rock the boat. Sure, we were dragged out of our country and brought here, but let's face it – we've got it made. Good jobs, good pay, a bright future, let's just bow down – God knows our heart, He knows we love him and we can be more influence if we just keep our jobs than we are here. So let's just...”

Is that how the conversation went. Not on your life! The very thought of denying their God was repulsive. It was horrendous. It was unthinkable. They would rather die than deny their God. And they will soon be put to the test. They will not deny their God!

The conductor takes his place, the band strikes up, the music begins and the entire assembly falls flat and three young men proudly remain standing. They will not deny their God. That thought never even crosses their mind!

But there is a whisper in the crowd – “hey, psst – look over there! Can you believe it – those guys are done. They are toast! Wait till Nebuchadnezzar hears about this! Well, you know how

it turns out. They honor God and God honors them. They are bound, thrown into the fire, and saved by an angel – that angel could very well be the Lord Jesus Himself. I haven't resolved that one yet. If you know, help me out.

We also see in the account of the fiery furnace a foreshadowing of salvation provided by Christ. The three men declare that God is a saving God who can provide a way of escape from the fire. And he does! In the same way, God, by sending Jesus to die for our sins, God provides a way of escape from the fires of hell. And he does!

We're going to leave the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego right there. But as I was preparing this message, I thought "Where is my commitment?" Maybe the same question has crossed your mind, I don't know. I mentioned earlier about us being in exile – I believe we are inexorably heading deeper into exile now in our country and it's going to get far worse. Christians, if not now, then soon are going to be the sore thumbs; we are going to be sticking out in society as the odd balls. The weirdos who won't comply with government mandates, whatever they may be. May God grant us the wisdom and grace that we need to first and foremost discern the times in which we live, and then to live for Jesus in a society that is getting darker and darker by the day. But no matter how dark it gets, let's remember to run the race with all diligence because we win! We are guaranteed a place at the finish line.

There is one more aspect in Daniel that I chose to look at today. Let's jump to Chapter 9, verses 24-27. **And this is a monumental revelation. It's monumental!** It stretches from the rebuilding of the temple, all the way to the return of Jesus Christ. Here God, by way of the angel Gabriel outlines to Daniel God's eschatological plan for His people, the Jews. It is important to note that this is a Jewish prophecy! More about that in a minute.

I want to say at the outset there are a number of interpretations of Daniel – everything from "it's a fake book and has no place in the Canon" and a number of other views that have potholes in them. to Daniel 9:27 and a number of other views, some of them clearly aberrant." It got more exciting when I started looking up the Greek meaning of words.

Is the passage really about Titus and the destruction of the Temple in AD70 and the persecution of the Jews, or is it about Antiochus Epiphanies, or about the Antichrist? Does the prophetic Law of Double Reference apply to this passage? If so, how are we to understand it? What I'm giving you today is the premillennial dispensational view which is what I believe scripture teaches. You will have to come to your own conclusion. But always let scripture interpret scripture.

As we go into these verses, Daniel finds himself in prayer for his people. He realizes the 70 year exile is about to end, and he pleads for his people. While he is still praying, the angel Gabriel comes to him and gives him this vision from God.

These 4 verses, Dan 9:24-27, form the skeleton for all eschatology. Whether we talk about Revelation, or Ezekiel, or the Olivet Discourse in Matt. 24-25, or the events in 1 & 2 Thessalonians, this prophecy in Daniel is foundational. The exile was to last 70 years, and it did. This prophecy is to last 490 years and it culminates in the second coming of Jesus Christ. The 490 years is divided into parts. But the actual text says 70 weeks – now we're saying 490

years – why? **So, very briefly**, the “weeks” in v.24 are “weeks of years.” There is much in Leviticus 25 (and also in Ezra and in Isaiah and other places) that helps us understand this. **Always let scripture interpret scripture.** Daniel would be familiar with these passages and they lead us to the word **heptad** meaning “a set of seven.” So there are 70 sets of 7 or 490 years. So this prophecy, from beginning to end will be completed in 490 years.

A word about dates; scholars have minor disagreements about the dates due to differences in calendars, differences in Jewish and Gentile years, leap years and Jewish leap months, and time keeping in general, there being no year zero in the transition from BC to AD and so on. But any errors in dates are ours not the Bible’s. Now, 483 of the 490 years are completed, they are history – literally. 444 BC to AD 32, or thereabouts, on Palm Sunday when Jesus rode into Jerusalem is 483 years. But the prophecy was for 490 years. We have accounted for 483 years, but that leaves 7 more years.

Where did they go? Are the numbers that far off? Is the Bible wrong? If it is wrong about this, what else is it wrong about? NO – the Bible is not wrong, and the prophecy is accurate. For one thing, history – or HIS STORY proves it.

What God did not reveal through the angel to Daniel, was the fact there was going to be a **great intermission** between the completion of the 483 years and the start of that final seven year period, that final “week.” **We are presently in that intermission and quite possibly near the end of it.** We call it the age of grace, or the church age, when God’s focus changed from the Jews to the Gentiles. We presently are in the great intermission that was not revealed to anyone in the O.T. It was a mystery to them. A mystery in the sense that it was not yet revealed, not that it was impossible to understand. Even Jesus disciples were not aware of it – they expected Jesus to usher in the kingdom. Believers today are in the mystery form of the kingdom, but a kingdom nonetheless.

Jesus knew Daniels prophecy. In fact there is no knowledge, anywhere, through all time and eternity that Jesus does not know. Jesus Christ is God incarnate. **Jesus is God** – in a human body. And in Him, that is, in Jesus, dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily – Colossians 2:9.

The late Dr. John Walvoord points out that in Scripture there are prophecies for Israel, prophecies for the church, and prophecies for the Gentile nations. You can’t mix them up and hope to come to the right conclusion.

This book of Daniel is a prophecy for Israel, and of course the Gentiles and the church are affected, but this is a Jewish prophecy. And here it is – Vs. 24 – “seventy weeks (or 490 years) are determined **upon thy people.**” (Daniel’s people – the Jews) And Gabriel outlines to Daniel in this prophecy six things that must be accomplished – (1) to finish the transgression, (2) to make an end of sins, (3) to make reconciliation of iniquity, (4) to bring in everlasting righteousness, (5) to seal up vision and prophecy, and (6) to anoint the most holy. Three negatives, related to sin, and then three positives, related to God’s kingdom.

Then in verse 27 we read: He (he being the Antichrist) will confirm a covenant with many for one “seven.” In the middle of the “seven” – or at 3 ½ years, he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. “And at the temple he will set up an **abomination that causes desolation**, until the

end that is decreed is poured out on him.” So this last week, this last 7 year period refers to the Tribulation.

Putting an end to sacrifice and offering assumes there was first a Temple, and then sacrifice and offering can begin, and that very likely will be permitted by the Antichrist during the first half of the tribulation.

In God’s Temple, or anywhere, really, what is it that offends God more than anything? What does He hate? What does He abhor? What is it that abominates? The thing that God hates, the thing that offends the true God more than anything else is an idol, a false god, and the Antichrist is going to bring an idol, a false god into the Temple. **And that false god is himself.** The Antichrist is going to go into the rebuilt Temple and declare himself God and demand to be worshipped. And I just don’t know how else to state it, but all hell will break loose on earth. I like the way the ESV puts it – 2 Thess. 2:4b – “he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.”

So we have seen here in this great prophecy of Daniel, world history from roughly 550 BC right to the end, culminating in the arrival of the antichrist, wars and desolation are decreed, and the 70th week closes with that great Rock that destroyed Nebuchadnezzar’s image, so that same Rock, the Lord Jesus Christ, returns and the kingdom’s of men are over, the Kingdom of God is established on earth.

But the book of Daniel is not closed. In chapters 10, 11 and 12 there is more. In chapter 10 we are given insights into activity in the heavenly realms, where angelic powers, both good and evil exist. In chapter 11, we are shown some of the military movements and how it all actually ends, and then in chapter 12 Daniel is told “go your way until the time of the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance.”

What’s the takeaway for all this incredible revelation? In view of this how do we act? What do we do? I think Peter summed it up well.

"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be? In all holy living and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God in which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless, we according to His promise look for new heavens and a new earth in which dwelleth righteousness. "Therefore, beloved, seeing that you look for such things, be diligent that you may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless." 2 Peter 3:11-14

The rapture is the next event on God’s messianic timetable.

Dare to be a Daniel

Dare to stand alone

Dare to have a purpose firm, and

Dare to make it known.