

Daniel and His Times (Part 2)

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[0 : 00] We have kind of a gap in at least what's presented on the website.

! That's alright. It was all kind of preliminary stuff and historical stuff, but we had really just barely started the outline! We're really getting into the text itself, and what we're looking at first of all is the captivity.

So we're kind of under this heading, which is really part of the introduction, and it's good that we can look at a few verses on into the book to gain some kind of some introductory material from the first few verses of the book itself.

We're going to have a little problem, and so I think we made plenty of copies and went ahead and just filled in the blanks of those that we were able to get through last time.

We're really three kings. Three kings mentioned in these opening verses of Daniel.

[2 : 06] And it is the character of these three kings that explains captivity of Judah. Judah.

Remember, this is Judah, the southern kingdom, eventually going to be taken into captivity by the Babylonians.

The northern kingdom, usually called Israel, has already been in captivity for a number of years. And so now Judah is going to be taken into captivity.

And so that's where our focus is, the southern kingdom. And there are three kings mentioned here.

And again, the character of these three kings explains the captivity of Judah.

Now you can probably guess who the third king is going to be. And it's not really someone who's necessarily mentioned by name.

And he's not an earthly king. He is God the king, a sovereign king. But we have some earthly kings, some men that are mentioned first.

[3 : 10] And the first one is Jehoiakim. Jehoiakim, excuse me. Jehoiakim. And so here's the first king, Jehoiakim and his depravity.

Now did I go ahead and include that word in there? I didn't know if we had already talked about this point before. Anyway, you can fill that in. Jehoiakim and his depravity.

That's really point number one under the main heading of the captivity. Jehoiakim and his depravity.

Verse 2 says, And the Lord gave or delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand.

Into Nebuchadnezzar's hand. All right, so into the hand of the captor. All right, so the Lord gave, delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand.

Into captivity. Now, Jehoiakim, though he's king, he's representative of the people. And so he really, as a personality, as the key figure in the southern kingdom, in Judah, the king, he represents the main problem.

[4 : 22] The depravity of the nation is the reason why God put them into captivity. So, Jehoiakim represents the sin and the rebellion of the people of God.

And really, there are two sins that caused Judah to be carried away into the Babylonian captivity.

We could identify two sins. And they're big ones. They're kind of the overarching kinds of sins under which all other sins fall into place.

The first one is disobedience to the word of God. Disobedience to the word of God. They had the word of God. And they disobeyed his word. And really, we have to go to Jeremiah to be able to see this clearly.

In fact, I think I gave you the reference there, did I not? Jeremiah 36. Did I put that in your notes?

And you can go ahead and turn to that passage if you want to. The Bible would be good for you, too.

I want to read a few verses out of Jeremiah 36. And I'd like to read the entire thing. But I think we can kind of look at two blocks of the passage and get the idea, the gist of it.

[5 : 35] But in Jeremiah 36, verse 1, the Bible says, Now it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, king of Judah.

Oh, it's Jehoiakim that we're talking about here, right? So it was in this fourth year of Jehoiakim that this word came to Jeremiah from the Lord's sake.

Now, remember I said last time that there were a number of really high-powered, very notable prophets who were prophesying during this period of time.

Jeremiah is one of them. Ezekiel is another one. We'll get to Ezekiel a little bit later, too. All right. So here's Jeremiah. He's speaking. He's the prophet. And the word of the Lord came to him and he said, Take a scroll of a book and write on it all the words that I have spoken to you against Israel. And when God says to a person to write down all the words that he has spoken, then that's the word of God, isn't it? Okay. That's one of the wonderful things about the word of God.

[6 : 36] And that is, you know, God has spoken to us. And aren't we glad? God spoke various ways at various times, you know, through the prophets and many other ways, as Hebrews one says.

So God spoke, but he didn't just speak. He had it written down. And so we have the written word of God. And I add a third thing to that when I'm teaching a theology of preaching.

Now we're commanded to preach it. Preach the word. That's what Paul said to Timothy. So God has spoken. That's what makes preaching, by the way, unique among all other communication, verbal communication.

We have God's word that was written down. And that's what we preach. So when it says here that Jeremiah or rather God said, take a scroll of a book and write on it all the words that I have spoken to you against Israel.

This is the word of God. All right. And against all the nations from the day I spoke to you from the days of Josiah, even to this day, it may be that the house of Judah will hear all the adversities which I propose to bring upon them.

[7 : 47] That everyone may turn from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin. Then Jeremiah called Baruch, the son of Neriah.

And Baruch wrote on a scroll of a book at the instruction of Jeremiah, all the words of the Lord, which he had spoken to him. And Jeremiah commanded Baruch saying, I am confined.

He was in prison, by the way. I am confined. I cannot go into the house of the Lord. You go, therefore, and read from the scroll which you have written at my instruction, the words of the Lord and the hearing of the people in the Lord's house on the day of fasting.

And you shall also read them in the hearing of all Judah who come from their cities. It may be that they will present their supplication before the Lord and everyone will turn from his evil way.

It really turned out that way. But this was the hope. This was the hope. For great is the anger and the fury that the Lord has pronounced against this people. And Baruch, the son of Neriah, did according to all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him, reading from the book of the words of the Lord in the Lord's day.

[8 : 56] Now, I want to go ahead and skip on over to verse 20. And they went to the king. People went to the king into the court, but they stored the scroll.

What's that scroll? That's what the Lord had spoken to Jeremiah and Baruch, kind of his secretary wrote it all down. Stored the scroll in the chamber of Elisha, the scribe, and told all the words in the hearing of the king.

So, who's the king? Jehoiakim. So, the king sent Jehudi, or Hudai, probably Jehudi, to bring the scroll and he took it from Elisha, the scribe's chamber.

And Jehudi read it in the hearing of the king and in the hearing of all the princes who stood beside the king. Now, the king was sitting in the winter house in the ninth month with a fire burning on the hearth before him.

And what did he do? It happened when Jehudi had read three or four columns that the king cut it with the scribe's knife and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth until all the scroll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth.

[10 : 07] Shame on him. All right. So, we're talking about Jehoiakim and his depravity. He being representative of the people. And so, the first sin is disobedience to the word of God.

Now, the details, by the way, of Jehoiakim's death are not recorded in the Bible. That is the actual death, you know, being recorded exactly how it happened, when it happened, who did it, and all

that.

It's not recorded in the Bible. The Bible just simply says in 2 Kings 24-6, he slept with his father. That means he died. So, we know he died.

But we do know some of the details of his death from God's prophecy. God prophesied on the subject of Jehoiakim's death.

Long before Jehoiakim died, Jeremiah wrote, Jeremiah 22-18, let me just read it to you. Did I put that in your notes? This is scripture good.

[11 : 11] Therefore, thus says the Lord concerning Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, king of Judah. They shall not lament for him. He shall be buried with the burial of a donkey, dragged and cast out beyond the gates of Jerusalem.

Now, we don't have an account of that actually happening. How do we know it did happen? We have God prophesying Jehoiakim's death. And why would God judge him so harshly?

Because of what he did with his word. I mean, you can't imagine, I don't think, anything more disrespectful than to take God's word, cut it up with a knife, and throw it in the fire.

I mean, you know, I suppose there are other things that a person could do and probably have done, even in our culture today, to desecrate the word of God.

But Jehoiakim did that, and God prophesied, this is how you're going to die. And he was executed, we must assume, by Nebuchadnezzar. And his body was thrown out in the city dump, just like God said it would.

[12 : 23] And we also have, by the way, a record of a historian who didn't live back in Jehoiakim's day, but lived in the times of Jesus, Josephus.

And we can learn a great deal of history from that kind of extra biblical source that, in many ways, has proven to be very accurate.

And in Josephus, his Jewish history of the Jews, he recorded his death, Jehoiakim's death, just like that. All right, so two sins that led to the captivity, disobedience to the word of God.

The second one, departure from the worship of God. True worship of God. Jehoiakim, as did many of Israel's kings, Judah's kings, Jehoiakim embraced and promoted within the nation idolatry. Idolatry. And he didn't make up this idolatry. As always, they borrowed it from the surrounding idolatrous pagan nations. And here's where we can go to Ezekiel.

[13 : 36] In Ezekiel chapter 8 and verses 5 through to the end of that chapter, let me just read that to you. Then he said to me, Son of man, lift your eyes now toward the north.

So I lifted my eyes toward the north. And there, north of the altar gate, was this image of jealousy in the entrance. Not sure what that image may have looked like.

Furthermore, he said to me, Son of man, do you see what they are doing? The great abominations that the house of Israel commits here to make me go far away from my sanctuary.

Now turn again. You will see greater abominations. So he brought me to the door of the court. And when I looked, there was a hole in the wall. Then he said to me, Son of man, dig into the wall.

And when I dug into the wall, there was a door. And he said to me, Go in and see the wicked abominations which they are doing there. So I went in and saw there every sort of creeping thing, abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel portrayed all around on the walls.

[14 : 49] By the way, pointing to animal worship and even unspeakable things with animals. And there stood before them seventy men of the elders of the house of Israel.

And in their midst stood Jehoshanah, the son of Shaphan. Each man had a censer in his hand. That's something to put incense in.

And a thick cloud of incense went up. When he said to me, Son of man, Have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel do in the dark? Every man in the room of his idols.

For they say, The Lord does not see us. The Lord has forsaken the land. And he said to me, Turn again. You will see greater abominations that they are doing.

So he brought me to the door of the north gate of the Lord's house. And to my dismay, women were sitting there weeping for Tammuz, the fertility god.

[15 : 48] Then he said to me, Have you seen this, O son of man? Turn again. You will see greater abominations than these. So he brought me into the inner court of the Lord's house. And there at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men with their backs toward the temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the east.

And they were worshiping the sun toward the east. So all this idolatry. Worship of animals. And, you know, worship of the sun.

And he said to me, Have you seen this, O son of man? Is it a trivial thing in the house of Judah to commit the abominations which they commit here?

For they have filled the land with violence. Then they have returned to provoke me to anger.

Indeed, they put the branch to their nose. Therefore I also will act in fury.

My eye will not spare, nor will I have pity. And though they cry in my ears, a loud voice, I will not hear them. Ezekiel is prophesying to the time of Jehoiakim, just before the captivity.

[16:57] And so there was a departure not only from the word of God, but a departure from the worship of God. And, you know, it's really kind of strange when you think about it. That God's cure for their idolatry was to take them into captivity to the very place where the birth of idolatry took place.

Babylon. That's interesting. Verse 2 says, To the land of Shinar. And Shinar is mentioned there by name. It's Babylon.

But that name is used, that word is used there, to refer the reader back to the book of Genesis. And back all the way to the time of Nimrod, and the land of Shinar, and the Tower of Babel.

And you remember that story. In case you don't, I'm going to read it to you. Genesis chapter 10, first of all. In fact, a few verses in chapter 10, also chapter 11.

And I have the reference there in your notes. But starting with verse 8, in chapter 10 of Genesis, Cush begot Nimrod. He began to be a mighty one on the earth.

[18:08] He was a mighty hunter before the Lord. Therefore it is said, like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel. Erech, Akkad, and Kalneh, in the land of Shinar.

From that land he went to Assyria, and built Nineveh, Rehoboth, Ur, Kala, and Rezin between Nineveh and Kala, that is the principal city.

All right, so we're just talking about the region of Babylon, which would eventually become the nation of Babylon. Misraim, begot, and we go through those begots.

But let me go and skip over to chapter 11. So you're kind of introduced to Nimrod. And, you know, his kingdom of Babel. And then in chapter 11, verse 1, Now the whole earth had one language and one speech.

This is part of the story you're familiar with. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. Then they said to one another, Come, let us make bricks, and bake them thoroughly.

[19:17] They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. And they said, Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens.

Let us, and here's the statement of idolatry, Let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad of the face of the whole earth.

But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the sons of men had built. And the Lord said, Indeed, the people are one, and they all have one language. And this is what they begin to do.

Now, nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. By the way, it doesn't mean that they can just do anything and be even greater than God. It means whatever sin they devise to do, they can do it.

Come, let us go down, and there confuse their language that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of the earth, and they ceased building the city.

[20:15] Therefore, its name is called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth, and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth, and they took with them idolatry.

See, this was the birthplace of idolatry, and what is really unusual when you think about it, maybe even nonsensical, when we think about it in our finite minds, that God would attempt to cure their thirst for idolatry by sending them to the very birthplace of it, being Babylon.

And in effect, God's saying, I will cure your addiction to idols by taking to you where they had their origin, back to their source, and there you can learn what idolatry is really like, what it really is.

And so Israel stayed in that captivity in Babylon, in Shinar, for 70 years. God kept them in captivity for 70 years in the birthplace of idolatry, and after that, guess what?

They never, ever again returned to idolatry. I mean, throughout the Old Testament up to this point, you have through the books of Kings and Chronicles, and really you can go back before that through Joshua and Judges and on through their history.

[21 : 39] It's just one rebellion after another, one step toward idolatry after another, and God judges them and so forth. Now finally, he's going to judge them, at least for their idolatry, one last time, he's going to cure them of it.

That doesn't mean that, you know, that Israel today is just insolid with God. I don't mean that. But they never again turned to idolatry after this time.

And in Jesus' day, the Jews were aggressively, aggressively against any form of idolatry. Matter of fact, so much so, that, like I mentioned Sunday, the Jews then and even today do not believe in the Trinity.

They don't believe in, they're not Trinitarian. And so the Messiah is not God, not going to be God. They were so locked into monotheism to the point that they denied even the scripture and could not see a Messiah being God.

And today it's still the same, strictly monotheistic. So they loved idolatry. All throughout their history, they loved it. And it was so much a part of their history that it, you know, just is pitiful.

[22 : 59] And really when you consider all that God had done in their history to prove himself, to identify himself, and yet they still, almost before they took another breath, you know, God does a mighty thing in their life, confirming who he is and his power.

And then in the next breath, they're going after some golden idol of some kind. All right, so they loved idolatry. So God sent them to its birthplace and that gave them their fill of it.

So we can say it was a gracious thing that God led them into captivity. All right, so there are three kings. This is what we're looking at here just by way of introduction to the book of Daniel.

Three kings mentioned in these opening verses of Daniel. And the character of these three kings explains the captivity of Judah. And so first of all, Jehoiakim and his depravity.

Second, Nebuchadnezzar. That's the second king mentioned here. Nebuchadnezzar and his ingenuity. All right, his ingenuity. Look at verse three. And you've got it printed there in your notes before you can look at it in your Bibles.

[24 : 10] Then the king, that's Nebuchadnezzar, instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring to Babylon some of the children of Israel and some of the king's descendants and some of the nobles.

All right? Now we're familiar with this part of the story. You know, we tell this story, study this story, even in children's Sunday school classes. So we're familiar with this.

And these children, the Bible calls them here, the children of Israel, they would have probably been pre-teens, young teenagers.

Daniel, most scholars agree, was probably around 15 years old, 14, 15 years old at this point. The boys, these boys, would have been from families really in the ruling class of Judah, specifically from the nobility within Judah.

According to the Hebrew grammar, this verse could read, to bring some of the children, specifically some of the king's descendants, the royal family, even from the nobility, those in direct line of the throne.

[25 : 30] So he's not, you're not really talking about two sets of kids, you know, from two different backgrounds. It's the same background. It's the ruling class.

The broader category would be the nobility. All right? So, Daniel and his friends, then, we need to understand, were of royal birth. And probably of Zedekiah's family, the last king of Judah, in all of Israel's history.

The very last king. And he didn't really serve very long. Now, the reason Nebuchadnezzar did this, really, I think, is obvious. His strategy, I mean, if you're going to take some of the best and brightest from a nation, weaken that nation, take those best and brightest from the ruling class.

Those who would be next in line to kings and leaders. And so this is what he did. So he weakened the royal line of Israel and used their best and brightest for the benefit of the king.

So Nebuchadnezzar was no fool. Now, as it turned out, he ended up a fool. But that was God's judgment upon him. We'll get to that story later.

[26 : 52] All right, so Jehoiakim and his depravity. Nebuchadnezzar and his ingenuity. And now we want to look at Yahweh.

That's the third key. Yahweh God and his sovereignty. Yahweh and his sovereignty. See, really, well, look at verse 2.

And the Lord gave Jehoiakim, king of Judah, into Nebuchadnezzar's hand, into his hand. All right, who did it? The Lord did. And that's what we are able to see as we go all throughout Israel's history. All these really bad things have happened to them, even before the captivity of the northern kingdom, Israel, and very soon now the captivity of the southern kingdom, Judah.

Long before that, even back in the days of the judge. In fact, you could argue even going all the way back before Egypt. God is the one that is sovereignly and providentially leading them and directing them for his purpose.

[27 : 57] But he is also the one who is using these other nations, these other powers, these pagan nations, as instruments of his judgment on Israel.

And so verse 2 just says it like it is. The Lord did this. The Lord gave Jehoiakim, king of Judah, into Nebuchadnezzar's hands. Not the might of the Babylonian army that took Jehoiakim and eventually all of Israel into captivity.

It was the hand of God. And I think I listed, what, about five? Five references in the book, in chapters 4 and 5, I guess primarily, that really affirm the sovereignty of God in the book.

Chapter 4, verse 17. The most high rules in the kingdom of men gives it to whomever he will.

Chapter 4, verse 25.

A little different wording. Same idea. The most high rules in the kingdom of men. Which kingdoms? By the way. All of them. And gives it to whomever he chooses.

[29 : 08] By the way, that applies to America, too, if he so chooses. Chapter 4, verse 32. The most high rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomever he chooses.

It's almost redundant. It is redundant. But you can't make that charge against God's word. Chapter 5, verse 18. The most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar a kingdom and majesty, glory, and honor. He gave that to Nebuchadnezzar. This pagan king. Can God do that? Yeah, he can. He can do whatever he wants, that's right.

But it's all according to his purposes. Chapter 5, verse 21. The most high God rules in the kingdom of men and appoints over it whomever he chooses. All right? So next time you disagree with the president elected, remember this passage.

All right, so first, the captivity. Second, the end for tonight. I'm not going to be able to get through it.

[30 : 11] And I don't want to go long. So we've got the captivity and the crisis to go through, and we'll wait until next time to do that. Thank you.