

Daniel 05-09-18a

As we continue our worship this morning on this 18th day of September 2005, let's take a moment as we approach the study of the Word of God to clear our minds and prepare our hearts and seek the ministry of God's Holy Spirit so that we will be in a position to receive God's grace to its fullest extent. The great thing about God's grace is it overcomes any limitations on the part of the speaker or the hearer because as we direct our attention at the Word of God, it is transcendent. It is perceived and ascertained by God's power and not by our own.

We're not limited by our IQ, thank the Lord. We're not limited by any of the problems that might be associated with the speaker or the preacher. God's Word is transcendent both in the delivery and in the hearing, and it is only essential that all of us be susceptible to the ministry of God's Spirit for that to take place.

So we pause, as is our custom, to make sure that we avail ourselves of God's grace in that area. Shall we pray? Father, what a blessing it is to come before you as an assembly, as believers who are united in understanding and appreciation of the greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ, the magnitude of your love expressed through him, and the great potential and great opportunity that we have in this life as a result of our salvation, as a result of being entered into your plan and purpose, and in this age specifically being made members of the body and bride of Christ. We thank you for the revealed truth of your Word.

We thank you for the faithful men who have gone before us and have been diligent students and have left us a record of their studies and their conclusions drawn from your Word. We thank you for those who fought and in many cases gave their lives just so we could have a copy of the Bible in our own language, that we did not have to go to someone else. We didn't have a giant copy chained to the pulpit.

We have as many and as proliferate versions of your Word as we desire. We're grateful for the freedom and the prosperity that we enjoy in this country so that we are not persecuted, we are not hampered in any way, and we know that you have given us this great time of opportunity for a reason. We pray that as we study your Word together and as we go forth armed and equipped with that truth, that our lives will ultimately reflect your glory and the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We ask it in his name. Amen. We begin a new study this morning, the book of Daniel.

This is the first time I can remember in the past ten years, and this month we also celebrate ten years as a church. Grace and Truth Bible Church has been here in the Dallas area since September of 1995. So God has blessed us.

We have met every time the pastor was able to stand up and teach, and there has always been someone here. So it's a testimony to the faithfulness of those who appreciate God's Word, and it is a testimony to the opportunity that God has given us and that we avail ourselves of to study

his Word. We have gone through many different book studies.

We've gone through the 50 chapters of Genesis together. We've gone through all of Exodus together. We have studied the Levitical offerings together most recently.

We've been through the book of Hebrews. We've been through the book of Romans. We have been through the Gospels of Mark and Luke.

We've been through the book of Acts. And we now begin yet another study of a book, which we will address chapter by chapter, verse by verse, word by word when it is pertinent. And this is the book of Daniel.

But in all of that time, this is the first time I think we have studied two books that are side by side in our canon. We're partway through the book of Ezekiel, and we are now studying the book of Daniel. So this section of our Bible will probably become well-worn.

I can remember in the past going through studies, the first time I went verse by verse for a long period of time through a book was in the book of Ephesians. And ever after, I could look at my Bible and see that the pages were creased and wrinkled, and it was easy to turn to Ephesians because that was the worn spot in my New Testament. Because the pastor who was teaching that, I think we went up into 300 or 400 lessons in Ephesians.

And so that part of my Bible, the ink practically came off the page. But as I said, we are beginning that book. And in honor of this occasion, our Scripture reading is going to be the first chapter of the book of Daniel.

We'll read it. It will give us a taste of what is to come. And then we will move into the introduction, which will go rather quickly, and then we'll dive on into the text that we read.

But this is the book of Daniel. It is attributed to Daniel and bears his name, as is the case with many of the books of the Bible. And it more or less introduces itself.

Chapter 1 serves as the introduction of the remaining 11 chapters of the book. So we might as well, without further ado, dive right in. The book of Daniel, chapter 1, verse 1. In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the articles of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar, to the house of his God. And he brought the articles into the treasure house of his God. Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel, and some of the king's descendants, and some of the nobles, young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the language and the literature of the Chaldeans.

And the king appointed for them a daily provision for the king's delicacies, and of the wine which he drank, and three years of training for them, so that at the end of that time they might serve before the king. Now from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. To them the chief of the eunuchs gave names.

He gave Daniel the name Belteshazzar, to Hananiah Shadrach, to Mishael Meshach, and to Azariah Abednego. But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank. Therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

Now God had brought Daniel into the favor and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs. And the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, I fear my lord the king who has appointed your food and drink. For why should he see your faces looking worse than the young men who are your age? Then you would endanger my head before the king.

So Daniel said to the steward, whom the chief of the eunuchs had sent over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then let our appearance be examined before you, and the appearance of the young men who eat the portion of the king's delicacies. And as you see fit, so deal with your servants.

So he consented with them in this matter, and tested them ten days. And at the end of ten days, their features appeared better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king's delicacies. Vegetable diet, fatter faces.

Just thought I'd point that out. Thus the steward took away their portion of delicacies and the wine which they were to drink, and gave them vegetables. As for these four young men, God gave them knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

Now at the end of the days, when the king had said that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. Then the king interviewed them, and among them all, none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Therefore they served before the king, and in all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king examined them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm.

Thus Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus. The first year of King Cyrus, by the way, will be some 70 odd years later. This, as we will find in our introduction, spans a considerable period of time.

But that is the introduction to the book of Daniel. That sets the stage, gives us the backdrop. So we want now to familiarize ourselves with some of the features of this book.

Probably one of the first and most important things is if you were going to categorize the book

of Daniel based on the different kinds of literature and the different divisions that we have in the Old Testament, where does it fall in our Bible? Remember, some of you may have learned that song, Let Us Sing the Books of Moses. I forget what that tune is actually to, but what is that? Yes, but what's the song that that comes from? What's the secular song that that tune comes from? I can't remember. Anyway, it's a little sing-song, children's tune.

All I can ever remember is singing the books of the Bible to it. But you have the books of Moses, then you have the books of history, you have the books of poetry, Let Us Sing the Major Prophets, Let Us Sing the Minor Prophets, and so you get through all 39 books of the Old Testament that way. So where does Daniel fall? Major Prophets, Let Us Sing the Major Prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, who wrote Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, who was true to his God, and so on.

So Major Prophets, this is my whole point. Just thought I'd give you a little, we didn't sing quite as much as usual this morning, so I'll give you a little musical interlude there in your mind. You can sing the books of the Old Testament to yourself.

But Daniel is listed in the Major Prophets, right? Well, in my Hebrew Bible, Daniel is not in the Prophets. Remember the three great divisions of the Hebrew Bible? If you go by a Hebrew Bible today, many times the name on the binding there is going to be Tanakh. Tanakh.

As with all Hebrew words, that is formed from three consonants, and you kind of fill in the vowels yourself. T, N, and K. What does T stand for? Torah. The five books of Moses.

That's the first division of the Hebrew Bible, Torah. The second division is the Prophets, which is Navi. The word for Prophet in Hebrew is Navi.

N-A-B-I, or V-I. The Naviim are the Prophets. So you have T, N, and of course I'm going from right to left, because that's how you read Hebrew.

And then you have, at the end of the Hebrew Bible, everything that's not Moses and not Prophets, the writings. This is Rehoboam, Nehemiah, and all of that. And that's the Ketuvim.

Ketav, K-A-T-A-B or V. Ketav means to write, to cut, literally. And so, because that's what they used to do, chisel stuff into rock, that kind of thing, into soft clay. So, Tanakh is made up of Torah, Naviim, and Ketuvim.

And Ketuvim, the writings, is where you find the book of Daniel, in the Hebrew Bible. It is not up there with Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and the major Prophets. So, this is a little bit of a head-scratcher.

Why did it get moved up into the Prophets in our Bible? Well, our Bible generally follows the pattern of organization found in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. And the Greeks said, wait a minute, what's this Prophet doing way back here at the end? Let's put him up here with the other Prophets. But the ancient Hebrew organization puts him with the writings.

The reason for this is, at least the speculation on the reason, these people are long dead and gone, 2500 years ago, we don't know exactly why they did what they did. But, it is probable that there are two basic reasons. First of all, Daniel is never called a Prophet.

He is a seer, S-E-E-R. Prophet was an office in Israel. Elijah was a Prophet.

Elisha was a Prophet. Samuel is considered to be the first of the Prophets to Israel. Jeremiah was a Prophet.

The prophetic office was recognized by the contemporaries. The Prophet would be the spiritual advisor to the king, was recognized as a man of God. And he would speak generally in contemporary terms about current events, O King, don't be going down there to Egypt and leaning on that reed that's going to break and shove through your hand and so on.

Daniel is never called a Navi, the way Isaiah and Jeremiah and many of these others are. And so there is a technical distinction there, because he is a seer. Joseph, the eleventh son of Jacob, was also gifted in the interpretation of dreams.

Not only was he gifted in their interpretation, but he had some dreams himself that were interpreted. Remember, he, as a young boy, saw the sheaves in the field bowing down to his sheaf, and he saw the sun, moon, and stars bowing down, and this was the whole thing that kind of rubbed his brothers the wrong way and led to the pit and the slavery and the long separation, the bloody coat given back to the father. He seems to be dead, and yet he's really not, foreshadowing Christ and so on.

But all of that was because Joseph had a dream and told everybody about it, and his brothers got very jealous. Oh, so we're going to serve you? I don't think so. Let's see how we serve you while you're down here in the bottom of the pit.

You're daddy's little favorite, and we despise and have bitter feelings toward you. And so they got rid of him. Well, they meant it for evil, God meant it for good.

But he also had this gift in the area of dreams, and he also is not a prophet, although he has some of the abilities of a prophet. So this is one reason. The second reason is a little bit sharper by way of a point, and this is that unlike the other major prophetic books, by the way, all of the minor prophets, after you get Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nehemiah, Bacchus, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, all of those guys, in the Hebrew Bible, those are fairly short books, they're all on one scroll.

The minor prophets, this is why sometimes in the New Testament, they'll say, as was spoken by the prophets, or as it says in the prophets, something like that. Well, many times it can be talking about this one scroll that's got all of those twelve minor prophets in it. So, the difference between what Daniel says in his apocalyptic, in his predictive portions of the book, and what the other prophets say is, very seldom do you find in Isaiah or Jeremiah a specific time given in which a prophecy will take place.

These prophecies are generally contemporary, talking about the immediate future, and they have kind of a far echo coming up. But Isaiah is talking to Hezekiah and saying, hey, here comes the rabshaka, here's this, that, and the other, and you need to do this and so. Well, Daniel has many more specific time references.

You don't get the 70 weeks out of Isaiah or Hezekiah, you get it out of Daniel, this 490 year prediction. And the very specific sequence of kingdoms given in the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the head of gold, the shoulders of silver, the belly and thighs of brass, the legs of iron, the feet of iron mixed with clay, that's a pretty easy thing to see in terms of progression. Well, the rabbis who organized the different independently circulating books of the Old Testament and brought them all together and said, this is our canon, when they looked at the book of Daniel, by the way, this canonical assembly took place after the time of Christ, the Masoretes, 200 AD or thereabouts, that's when you start having the Masoretic notes, that's when they start counting words and making sure that nothing gets lost, but there was some flux.

There might be different versions of the book that were circulating around. And so, it is speculated that one of the reasons Daniel is shoved down into the writings rather than up with the prophets is that it was too easy to look at the timing of Daniel's very specific prophecies and see Christ, Jesus, as the Messiah. You can fudge away, the Virgin will conceive out of Isaiah chapter 7, you can get away with some of the more general prophecies and say, well, Jesus didn't fit that.

But when Daniel gives the 483 years, the 62 weeks and then 6 more weeks, and then the Messiah is cut off but not for himself, from the going forth of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem until the coming of Messiah the Prince, Daniel says there will be this many years. Well, guess what? If you go back and find the decree to rebuild Jerusalem, now there are several different decrees, but you find the right decree and come forward, guess what? It hits right in the 30th year of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's when that hits.

Well, this obviously was the reason that there were so many people claiming to be the Messiah. This is the reason people who were students of the Word of God, like Simeon and Anna and Zacharias and many others, recognized that the time was mature for the Messiah to come. They read their Bible.

They were watching. Remember old Simeon? God revealed to him he wouldn't check out until he had seen the deliverance of God. And that wasn't just a complete bolt of lightning out of the sky.

He was a student of the Word of God. When he read Daniel's prophecy, he said, hey, this could happen in my lifetime if I last long enough, kind of the way we look forward to thinking that the Lord Jesus will come again, hopefully before our lives end. I think it would be really great.

I think it would be a wonderful blessing if God would let us last and be that unique generation

that gets transformed in the twinkling of an eye instead of having to be reconstituted. I think that's going to be very interesting. Do you rise from where you checked out? Or does everybody kind of come up from the ground underneath where the Lord Jesus appears? Because if he appears in the air over Jerusalem, let's say, and you have a relative or somebody who was a believer and sunk in a ship off the coast of Japan in World War II, well, is he going to pop out of the sea and fly around the earth to meet the Lord in the air? Are you going to have this circuitous path? People have speculated about this.

A fellow up in Tulsa that my parents listen to sometimes made this comment. Is it going to be kind of a geographical decision about which way around the earth do you go? Or does everybody kind of come straight through and we all come up right below the Lord Jesus to meet him in the air? Because it doesn't really matter. God is not putting your atoms and molecules back together.

Some of us probably incorporate atoms and molecules that were in somebody else. That would just be a real state of confusion. And it's not necessary because we will be in a resurrection body that's not made out of this kind of material that is transcendent, immortal, partakes of the dimensions where God and the angels dwell, not these earthly dimensions.

But the whole point here is the... Can you remember what my point was now? I don't remember how I got off on that. But the book of Daniel, giving the timing so specifically that would tie to Christ, that was my point, caused the rabbis who didn't think Christ was the Messiah and didn't want to believe in him to put it in the writings which were not considered to be as authoritative. Now, not by us or by anybody who believes the word of God, but by those who think there are degrees of inspiration.

Moses is the most inspired, so he comes first. The major prophets are the next most inspired. They come second.

And then you've got Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, stories and things. God's never mentioned in which book. There's a book of the Bible where the name of God never occurs.

A little Bible trivia for you. Esther. The book of Esther.

The name of God is never mentioned. You've got Mordecai, Haman, Esther, Xerxes. God is never once mentioned.

So there were people who said, Hey, how can you have a book of the Bible that doesn't mention God? And so it's down there in the writings. That category kind of flexed from time to time. Sometimes people thought, well, maybe Maccabees ought to be in there.

Maybe Baruch and some of the other books that are sort of pseudepigraphical or apocryphal or whatever. If they ever were in the canon, they were thought to be in those writings. Well, Daniel is down there in these not so well-respected books.

And we think this may be the reason. Now, some of the features of the book of Daniel. The book is composed of 12 chapters and divides naturally into two parts.

The first six chapters and the last six chapters. The first six chapters are primarily historical. They are a narrative that tell us things that happened in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar and so on.

Although there are elements of prophetic vision, people have dreams and so on that are interpreted. But it's primarily historical with these other things inserted. The last six chapters are primarily apocalyptic.

And Daniel is formally considered the first apocalyptic book. What is apocalyptic? Apocalyptic literature is distinguished from prophecy in general because you can have a prophet stand up and say a woman is going to conceive and a young woman is going to conceive and bear a son. This is Isaiah 7. Alma will conceive and bear a son and before he is old enough to do this, that and the other, here is what is going to happen.

And there is a prediction of historical events. We have been through Ezekiel and God says here is what is going to happen because of your sin, because of your failure. And you can take these prophecies pretty literally.

Apocalyptic looks further into the future from a higher perspective and uses highly symbolic language. You have a statue whose parts represent kingdoms. This is not the kind of thing that Isaiah does.

Once in a while, you will have a sort of little parable. We saw one in Ezekiel where there is a forest of trees and one tree stands up taller than the others and there is a branch that is taken off by an eagle. That is a little fragment of apocalyptic where you have highly symbolic language but then it gets explained right there in Ezekiel.

So it is not so obscure. It is not so hard to figure out. The last six chapters of Daniel are apocalyptic primarily although there is history in there as well.

We have narrative and historical events as well. But it divides equally into those two parts. Daniel is also unique in that it is written in two different languages.

Chapter 1 and the first three verses of chapter 2 are in Hebrew and chapters 7 through 12 are in Hebrew. But the rest of chapter 2, chapter 3, 4, 5, and 6 are all in Aramaic. Now, Aramaic is the language that Jesus spoke.

It was the common language of the people. The people of Israel, the people of Judah, picked up Aramaic when they went into captivity. This was the language of trade and commerce.

This was the language spoken in Babylon and later in Persia. It is related to Hebrew but distinct from it. I would approximate the distance between Hebrew and Aramaic as something like the

distance between maybe it is closer than the distance between Spanish and Italian.

If you know Spanish, you can get by in Italian. It is something like that, although they are a little bit closer even than that. But perhaps the distance between our modern English and Shakespeare's English.

If you have gone back and tried to read Shakespeare, there are so many terms and so many phrases and so many figures of speech that you really need a footnoted version to keep track of what is going on, and yet you can get the gist. So it is a little further apart than our English and Middle English, a little closer than the distance between Spanish and Italian. So, why two languages? Well, people have all kinds of speculations.

Was it all written in Hebrew, and some of it translated into Aramaic? Was it all in Aramaic, and some was retroverted into Hebrew? It is what it is. And I think the introduction of Aramaic suits the time and place. This is a different view than we have in Ezekiel.

Ezekiel is all written in Hebrew. Ezekiel is with the Hebrew captives in this very same land at this very same time. But Ezekiel is from an Israel point of view.

It is written in Hebrew. That is what these people speak. They are the first generation of captives there.

They have not been amalgamated into Aramaic. By the time their generation ends and their children get ready to go back into the land, they will be Aramaic speakers. And if you read Ezra and Nehemiah, you remember when they stand up to start reading the scriptures? They have to have people translate because everybody speaks Aramaic and they can't really figure out what the scripture is saying.

They have to have people interpret and explain. Much like if you read the old King James, sometimes you have to say, well, this is what throw word means and this is what cleave means. Today, if you cleave something, what do you do? You get a meat cleaver and you cleave it.

You chop it in half. But in Genesis it says, for this reason shall a man leave father and mother and cleave unto his wife. So, what does that mean? Chase her around with a cleaver? Back then, cleave meant just the opposite.

It meant to cling. So, we have to make explanation. But there was more distance than that when Ezra and Nehemiah come back in the rebuilding phase.

So, the Aramaic, this is the language three years, Daniel and Azariah, Hananiah and Mishael get trained in Aramaic so that they can access all of the literature of the Chaldeans. So, you have the account given in the language that is spoken in this milieu. Thought I'd put in a French word since I'm doing all these foreign... which I no doubt slaughtered the translation ever since I never had French, but it sounds pretty refined and intelligent.

So, milieu. The other feature of this book that immediately stands out is the first part of it is given in the third person. We've just read the first chapter.

Daniel and his three friends are spoken of as though the narrator is independent. And if Daniel wrote these parts, he wrote them in the third person and talked about himself in the third person. It would be like me saying, well, you know, Sam moved from Garland up to Plano and bought a house and mowed the lawn and this is what Sam did.

Well, it's kind of strange. So, you wonder, well, who exactly wrote these first portions? Could have been Daniel, could have been one of the three friends, could have been some other guy, might have been dictated by Daniel. Daniel had a staff.

He is a mucky-muck in three different governments, beginning in the Babylonian government under Nebuchadnezzar, extending through the time when Nebuchadnezzar is out of the picture and his regent, Belshazzar, who has the feast finger on the wall, weight in the balance and found wanting that guy. Daniel is, briefly, third in the kingdom under Belshazzar. Then he's out and Darius or Darius, the mead comes in, and Daniel is a high official over 120 satraps and so on in that kingdom, all the way into the successor to Darius, who is Cyrus.

And we know that he goes at least three years into the reign of Cyrus. And we don't have quite as much detail or know exactly what his position was under Cyrus, but we assume he continued on as a high government guy because Cyrus could have easily pitched him out as soon as he took power. And three years into the reign of Cyrus, you have Daniel making some notes that are found here in the book.

So, Daniel is up there and he's got a staff. You don't have a cabinet minister, you don't have a high official that doesn't have a lot of lackeys and flunkies and scribes and so on working for him. So Daniel could have said, we need to set this story down.

The guy writes it down and they set it all in the third person. Third person for the first six chapters, last half, the apocalyptic. Daniel speaks in the first person.

I Daniel had a vision. I Daniel called before the king. How did Daniel get there? What was the means by which he ended up in Babylon in the first place? We know a lot of this background from our study of Ezekiel, don't we? We know that in the latter days of the kingdom of Judah, you had good king Josiah.

The law was found. Jeremiah starts his ministry around that time. And for 40 years, God says, look, here's your Bible.

This is what you're supposed to be doing. I've given you a good king who's calling you back to faith and to function and to obedience. And the people just had kind of, oh, yeah, rah, rah.

And then they got busy and didn't really think about it. They did not follow through on those reforms. They didn't change in their hearts.

It was just sort of this superficial, well, okay, as long as Josiah's the king, we'll kind of ride along. But their hearts weren't in it. When he leaves, Jeremiah continues to prophesy, continues to warn.

And subsequent kings wind up throwing him in broken cisterns and ignoring him and pushing him to the side. And there are these 40 years of warning. It comes all the way down to circa 600 B.C. This is the general time frame we're talking about.

And in 635 and 640, this is around the time when Jeremiah is preaching his prophecies of warning and so on. You come all the way down. The people don't turn, don't turn, don't turn.

The warnings get more and more dire, more and more intense. People just blow it off. They're busy with other things.

And they think, well, you know, God has given us this land and He keeps talking, but He never does. This happens in the public school, by the way. There are teachers who threaten their students.

But the students know that they're never going to carry through on these threats or that their power is very limited and that there's not much they can do. And so they talk and they threaten and they try to exert influence on these juvenile delinquents that are in the public school system. And these children, having not been trained, having very, very minimal respect for authority, what they have respect for is personal damage.

My grade is going to be bad or I'm going to get a detention. That's about the only thing that motivates them. The rest of the time, the teacher can say something and they will get cursed at to their face.

Stuff will be thrown at them in the classroom. One of my daughters was in class the other day and a young man malfunctioned. And so the teacher took him outside the room to address him in the hall.

But she had her hand, because she had to stand in the doorway, so the class didn't run amok. So she had her hand on the inside of the doorway. And so the children in the class started throwing sharpened pencils and stuff at her hand, knowing that she wouldn't see who did it.

I mean, this is just a minor example. I could spend the whole rest of the morning telling you examples of the goofiness of what goes on in public school, because they have taken authority away from the teachers. And they have this mindset that, oh, we might traumatize the child if we discipline them in any way.

And so the teachers are there with both hands tied behind their back, trying to maintain order, and they just get hit with spit wads. They're verbally abused. In some cases, they're physically assaulted in various ways.

They turn their back and stuff hits them in the back of the head and they turn around. Nobody will fess up. Nobody will say who did it, and so on.

Well, the degeneration of a culture and of a society is reflected in the way those people act. And this is what happened in Judah during those 40 years. And Jeremiah was up there preaching, and people just thought, ah, it's all right.

People look around today and say, oh, well, those kids, it's always been that way. No, it has not. It has not been this way.

And you're beginning to see now the unraveling of the fabric of the United States of America in the adult behavior that goes on any time there is not the threat of physical bodily harm, like New Orleans. Take away law and order, people just run amok. Bring those people out of New Orleans and put them in shelters and try to take care of them, many of them, stealing people blind.

Somebody puts someone up in a home, and when those people, it's time for them to leave, you come back and your refrigerator is empty. I mean, this is a case I know of. And you've heard many of the other stories.

The press is kind of suppressing these because it doesn't fit with their model that people are essentially good, and if you do good things for them and put them in a good environment, they'll just naturally be good. No, they won't. And particularly not in our generation, where there is not even the shell, not even the superficial structure and respect for authority that used to be taught as a part of our culture, used to be taught in school.

I was in an antique store yesterday, whiling away some time, and there was a set of books called Childcraft. Some of you all may have seen these when I was a little boy. There were some floating around.

They have an orange cover with black decoration, kind of a checkerboard thing. It's Childcraft. Well, these were books for parents, and it has the child at school, the child at home, the child at play, the guide for the parents.

There's four or five volumes. So I picked up the book on the child at home, and there's a whole section in there advising parents on the nature of discipline and a detailed explanation of what happens when they are or are not given these opportunities. There's a section on manners, standing up when a woman enters the room.

You say, well, what difference does it make if somebody stands up or not? There is the imbuing, there is the absorption on the part of children of an attitude that you need to be aware of people around you through these manners. What are table manners? What are things like opening the door and standing up and the nature of an introduction? Who gets introduced to whom? You say, oh, you know, that's all by the by. We're a very casual society.

When we used to teach those things, it creates a habit of awareness because manners are basically consideration of others. And this is a biblical principle. Consider others better than yourself.

Put the interests of others ahead of yourself. John Kennedy, whatever else you want to say about him, reflected that principle in his famous quote, ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for the country. And he's the last expression in public of that kind of idea that you ought to be outward looking.

And maybe you don't feel the best or maybe you're not getting the most benefit. But this is Christlike. This is the model in the New Testament that we ought to be thinking, well, certainly I'm not going to totally disregard myself and sit out there on the highway like Gandhi and starve to death.

But to be outward looking and think, how can I be a blessing to others? What opportunities? What's our memory verse in Galatians? Let us do good to all. As we have opportunity, well, how do you know if you've got an opportunity or not? You have to be outward looking. This is what manners and customs and courtesy used to teach to be outward looking.

Well, this is what disappeared in Judah. This is what went away during those 40 years. God finally had enough and he said, alright, the only way I'm going to be able to get your attention is to yank you out of everything I've given you and put you in this awful place.

You're down by the river Kabar, you've got nothing. And we'll just have to start over. This is a mini Egypt experience.

I'm going to have to put you back in Egypt, treat you like an unbeliever, treat you like a slave to sin, and the Babylonian captivity is essentially a mini Egypt. And so they're back in Egypt, and after a generation there, God is going to take them back and put them in the land. There's going to be another sort of exodus.

And there's going to be another building of the land under Ezra and Nehemiah that is a small mirror of that. And it's a rehearsal, it's a review. It's like, well, in case you forgot, I'm the God that brought you out of the land of Israel.

In case you forgot, I'm the God that's bringing you back from the land of Babylon and giving you back some of what you lost. So, the point is, in Ezekiel and Daniel, these two books that we're both studying, we have two perspectives. In Ezekiel, you have the slave perspective.

Ezekiel is down there with him by the river Kabar. He's living in the prison camp, and he's speaking the word of God to these people. The book of Daniel is also to those people, but it is from a different perspective.

Hebrew, the old perspective. Aramaic, the new perspective. The old perspective, Israel.

The new perspective, a wider view. And it is in Daniel, speaking Aramaic, the language of the Gentiles, that we first begin to see that the plan of God encompasses more than just Israel. There are kingdoms.

There is a world history that is larger than Israel. Israel is a part of it, but not all of it. And God has a plan for the world, and so it is delivered in the language of the world, in the language of the world of that day, which is Aramaic.

And God's spokesman is fixed, is appointed and established in that Gentile hierarchy. Daniel never makes any noises about going back to the land. When it's possible, he doesn't go back to the land, because God has appointed him a place in this Gentile perspective, looking at Israel, but also looking at the world.

So this explains both the structure of the book, where it moves from history and narrative into apocalyptic. It broadens its view from Daniel and the three friends, who are initially spoken of with their Israelite names, to the later part of the book where they are spoken of. Everybody knows the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

That's what the song says. Why? That's the Gentile names. Those are the Gentile perspectives.

Daniel, later on, is called Belteshazzar, his Babylon name. And you have Israel viewed from the perspective of the Gentiles. So, this is going to be a fascinating study for us.

We are going to see, when we come back from the break, that we're almost going to treat this like 1 and 2 Daniel. We're going to study the first six chapters with one approach, and we're going to study the last six chapters with a different approach, because they really are practically two different books. Third person in the first, first person in the second.

And in this first section, we're going to see that there's an overarching structure. Six chapters. There are six major themes given in these first six chapters.

So, when we come back, we'll take a look at that, and see what it is that God is saying through this book, not only to Israel, but also to us. So, let's pause here and take our break.