

Daniel 06-05-14b

We resume now our study in the book of Daniel in the latter part of chapter 11. You'll remember that we had in this chapter a very detailed account of future history, so much so that secular scholars insist that it is retrospective, that it was written after the fact. I did some research this past week to see what the manuscript evidence is, because I knew there were copies of Daniel that were translated into Greek for the Septuagint, and I knew that Daniel was represented in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

And I was curious, well, if scholars want to posit a date of circa 160 B.C. after Antiochus IV Epiphanes for the writing of the book, to what extent would the Dead Sea Scroll evidence debunk that? And if the Septuagint was translated circa 250-200 B.C., and if Daniel was in the Septuagint, would that not also militate against that view? Of course, I figured they must have had a response for the Septuagint, because that's been around forever. The Dead Sea Scrolls are new within the last 60 years. At any rate, I looked this up, and it turns out that in the Dead Sea Scrolls, which I find to be the more interesting piece of evidence, the materials from Qumran have very much established the authenticity of the book of Daniel.

When Daniel was translated for the Septuagint, and it's hard to tell when that was done, and you're about to find out why, it wasn't a very good translation, and it had a lot of extra stuff in it. Things that have come down to us that only have a Greek antecedent. These additions to the book of Daniel, they only exist in Greek.

There's no Hebrew original, there's no Aramaic original, and the fact that they only exist in Greek tells us what? It couldn't have been written until everybody was speaking Greek. Why isn't there a Hebrew or an Aramaic exemplar? Because those portions are not old. Somebody felt like, well, let me expand this and make it better, and that's a real strong clue that it isn't original.

Well, the Septuagint version of the book of Daniel, that was circulating in the time of Christ, had all of this extra stuff in it. The bell and the dragon, and the song of the Hebrew children, and the prayer of Hananiah, and one thing and another. They felt like, well, you had such a good story here, and you just didn't really sock it home.

Let me add in a prayer after they get out of the fiery furnace, and Hananiah launches off in this big long spiel to God, thank you that we didn't burn up, etc. Anyway, in the early to middle part of the second century A.D., this is in the 130, 140, 150 A.D., after Christ time frame, there was a great scholar named Theodotion, and Theodotion looked at the existing Septuagint version of Daniel, and it just made his eyes water, and his nose crinkled up, and he said, boy, this is really bad. And so he went back and produced a far superior Greek translation.

It's not clear to what extent he relied on the original Hebrew manuscripts, and to what extent he used the work of other scholars, but suffice it to say, as soon as Theodotion published his

Greek edition of Daniel, all the Septuagint copies of Daniel got thrown in the waste can. They said, oh yeah, now we're talking. This is Daniel, this other stuff.

And so much so that in the entire corpus of ancient literature, there is only one copy of the old Septuagint version of Daniel. It's the only way we know what's in it. So Theodotion's version completely supplanted that.

So that's the Septuagint. We can't find out a lot about the Septuagint, because we only have this one copy that would have been before Christ, and it's full of egregious mistakes and so on. And what we're really interested in, in terms of the book of Daniel, are Hebrew copies.

Well, this is where you go to the Dead Sea Scrolls. You go to the materials from Qumran. There were a lot of fragments of Daniel.

Now remember, the library of the Qumran dwellers, who most people think were the Essenes, although there is some debate about that. But we'll just say for the sake of argument, it was the Essenes. I haven't really entered into that whole who lived there debate.

So we'll say it's the Essenes. They had a library that the oldest manuscripts in it are from the middle of the 3rd century B.C., circa 250 B.C., right? So 300 years, 250 years before Christ is when you start having these old manuscripts. And they go all the way down, and they're kind of in three groups.

There's an early group that's from that old period. Not too many of them, but there are a few. There's a middle group that's from circa 100 B.C., because the original settlement was destroyed by an earthquake.

And it took them some time to come back and resettle it and rebuild it. So there's an early occupation, a middle time occupation, and then there is a late occupation from after Christ. And that goes away in 70 A.D. with the destruction of everything else.

Those people got wiped out as well. Remember, they built a siege ramp and killed themselves, etc. So, there are manuscripts that date from each of these three times of occupation.

Well, Daniel is obviously treated as a canonical book by the dwellers at Qumran, all of them. And there are fragments of six different copies of the Book of Daniel. And you can tell that they treasured it, they thought it was important to have a copy of it, and they had several copies of the Book of Daniel.

Some of those have survived better than others. But it was particularly treasured and safeguarded in their library. Now, the first two occupation layers are what we're talking about in terms of these copies of the Book of Daniel.

The oldest fragments are from that early time. The oldest fragments in the library are from the 250 B.C. time. And this is like copies of 1 Samuel and things like that.

Nobody will come down and say how old they think the oldest fragments of Daniel are. They are either from the early occupation or the middle occupation. They're not late.

So, all of the chapters of Daniel that we have in our modern book are represented in these fragments. We can piece together pretty much a complete text from these pieces of six different copies, except for Daniel chapter 9 and Daniel chapter 12, the chapter we're about to go into. There's one manuscript.

It's 4Q Dan from K4. K4 had the most stuff in it. And this is actually 4Q Dan C. There's a little C there, which means just to distinguish between pieces.

This was published in 1989. It's a tragedy that these things were discovered in 1948 and the early 1950s. And even now, most of what's in the Qumran library has never been published, has never seen the light of day, because scholars have been bickering and quarreling over who's going to get the credit, who's going to write the definitive paper.

The stuff has languished and deteriorated. It's a travesty. If you want to read a heartfelt decrying of that whole situation, you can look at Herschel Shanks, the editor of the Biblical Archaeology Review.

He will talk you blue in the face about how bad it is that this stuff has languished for 50 years. Most of these scholars, once they are entrusted with a manuscript, they won't let anybody else look at it. Until the last 10 years or so, you couldn't even find a picture of a manuscript or get any kind of a transcription or anything because these scholars were hoarding it so that they could make their professional reputation by being the guy that published it.

It's really typical of human nature. At any rate, 4Q Dan C has been dated to the late 2nd century B.C. This would be circa 125, 130, 140 B.C. Somewhere before 100 B.C. Now, when do they say Daniel was written? 160? Antiochus Epiphanes dies in 163. He's off in some place and he goes insane and dies.

Fitting end for him. Old Epiphanes. But the earliest copy, conservatively speaking, the oldest copy of Daniel that they've got under this 4Q Dan C is dated within 50 years of that.

This book is treated with canonical status in that community. This is an unheard of rapidity for a book to reach canonical status within a few decades. There are more copies of Daniel than there are of several of the other recognized, authentic Old Testament books that no one questions.

This strongly argues that people thought Daniel was scripture and knew of it. Of course, if you read Josephus, he talks about the fact that a copy of Daniel and the pertinent section of Daniel was read to Alexander when he came through Jerusalem, and it's one of the reasons he didn't destroy the city. Because they got Daniel out and they said, you're the man that's in this prophecy.

And Alexander was all smiles like, oh, well, hey, great. And he kind of changed his attitude because he realized these people had a religion that talked about him. But, of course, people say, well, Josephus is late, so that doesn't count.

But there are two other major documents, 4Q Dan B and 4Q Dan A, which have been published since 1987. And these also bear on the authenticity and the accuracy of the text of Daniel that we have before us. Now, why am I telling you all of this? Because the predictive nature of this, if we cannot have reasonable assurance that what the first part of chapter 11 has said, predicting Antiochus Epiphanes, came to pass, and compare the historical fulfillment with the biblical prediction, this gives us a good idea of how biblical prophecy works.

Because beginning in verse 36, we have this part that clearly lifts away. In the layers of scripture, you have things that overlay and seem to be talking about two or even three things at the same time. Then you have this layer that lifts away and is not talking about Antiochus anymore.

It's talking about the future Antichrist. Antiochus, like the king of Tyre is for Satan and so on, is a picture of the Antichrist. And in Antiochus' earthly career, he reflected a lot of those attitudes and a lot of those policies and actions.

But now, there are some things Antichrist is going to do that Antiochus never even thought of. And this is where we are in Daniel chapter 11. So, knowing that the Bible accurately predicted and what a detailed fulfillment there was in the first part of the chapter, we can have confidence that the last part of the chapter, talking about the Antichrist, is going to receive a similar literal, accurate fulfillment.

So, anyway, I just wanted to fill you in on the dating issue on Daniel. It does not support, the Dead Sea Scrolls don't support the critical view that Daniel was written late. Every Bible book, by the way, is represented in the Qumran library.

Every single book of the Old Testament is in there, except Esther. No fragments of Esther are in there. Every other canonical book of the Bible is represented in there.

But see, Esther, again, was one of the late books. It doesn't mention God. The Essenes, the people who maintained that library, were a pretty strict lot, and it may have been excluded for that reason.

The Genesis Apocryphon, which was also found in the Qumran library, is written in Aramaic, and it is a contemporary document. It confessively was written in the 2nd century B.C. And when they compare the Aramaic in Daniel to the Aramaic of the 2nd century that's in the Genesis Apocryphon, they never had an exemplar of Aramaic before the time of Christ until the Dead Sea Scrolls turned up. So there was a lot of speculation that, well, the book of Daniel was actually all written in Aramaic in 160 B.C., and then portions of it were retroverted into Hebrew to make it seem older and to attribute it to Daniel.

And this was a common scholarly opinion until the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, and in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Daniel is in Hebrew and Aramaic. And the text very closely matches the Masoretic text, which is the shorter text, not the expanded version that Theodosian had to throw away and correct. So, like Isaiah, and like many of the other, until the Dead Sea Scrolls, many people don't realize that the oldest Old Testament manuscript that we had was from about 980 A.D., almost a thousand years after Christ.

That was the oldest Hebrew manuscript we had for the Old Testament Scriptures. And when they found the Dead Sea Scrolls, it rolled back the textual evidence a thousand years. You think, what was going on a thousand years ago? It was the year 1006? It's like the days of King Arthur or something? That's just unheard of a long time ago.

That's how far back the Dead Sea Scrolls manuscript evidence takes the witness to the Scriptures. And I'm sure you've read and heard about the Great Isaiah Scroll, which was a complete, pristine, beautiful copy of the book of Isaiah. And how remarkably close the Masoretic text from 1000 A.D. matched the Isaiah Scroll from 200 B.C. For example, in chapter 53 of Isaiah, the Suffering Servant chapter, if you take the Dead Sea Scroll Isaiah and you take the Isaiah from 1000 A.D. and compare them, there's only 17 letters in that entire chapter that are different.

And they're easily discernible as slips of the scribal pen. There's not anything in that thousand years that changed the meaning of any sentence, of any verse. In the entire 66 chapters of Isaiah, it's virtually identical.

The text actually matches line for line, word for word, letter for letter, better than 95% of the time. And all of the differences are matters of orthography, spelling, where words collapsed or changed their spelling, or they are obvious scribal errors where someone mistranscribed. But they're minor.

And in a thousand years of hand copying, I can't even copy my own stuff and get that kind of accuracy. So it's really amazing. But similarly, so many critical arguments against Isaiah were absolutely eviscerated by the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The same is true in a lot of these theories about Daniel. Most scholars now are not willing to claim a 160 date for Daniel. And now they have to start arguing that, well, bits and pieces must have been around, and it must have been assembled in its form.

And the Antiochus part was put in after. And they're having to fall back and regroup because their argument's been knocked into one stone is not upon another. Well, let's return now to the text itself.

Daniel 11, as I said, in verse 36, it says, "...the king shall do according to his own will." This is where, beginning in verse 36, this leader is described simply as the king. He's just called the king. Antiochus did foreshadow this king in many ways.

But Antiochus, for us, is now past. And this king is still future. This is the coming king.

This is the little horn that we saw in Daniel 7 and verse 8. And this is who we saw as the ruler in chapter 9, verse 26. We had an extended description of him in chapter 8, I think it was. Of course, we know of him in Revelation 13, verses 1 through 8. The beast rising up out of the sea, the seven heads and the ten horns, ten crowns, one of the heads mortally wounded, the deadly wound is healed.

And who is like the beast who is able to make war with him? He's given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies. Revelation 13, verse 5. He was given authority to continue for 42 months. He opened his mouth in blasphemy against God to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven.

This is kind of an odd thing. Revelation 13, verse 6. He blasphemes those who dwell in heaven. How is this possible? Can you imagine the president of Iran or something standing up and saying boo on the angels? You could hear him decrying the Christian God or Christianity in general.

Or if the Jews tried to rebuild the temple or the tabernacle or something. But why would he launch on a diatribe against the angels? Well, this gives us the nature of the future quote unquote religion that is going to be promoted by the Antichrist. He will do according to his own will.

He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and speak blasphemies against the god of gods and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished for what has been determined shall be done. Now, there's no difficulty figuring out who is the god of gods. The El of the Elim.

This, of course, is the god of Israel. And he will speak. What's interesting to me, looking at this in Hebrew, is there are all kinds of hiphil and hiphil stems here because he causes a lot of things to happen.

And he does things for himself. He's focused on himself. He's going to raise himself up.

He's going to exalt himself. And he's going to cause a lot of things to happen because of this exaltation that he's doing to himself. One of the few sort of normal verbs in this whole area here is when it says he will speak.

And that's just your standard davar. He will speak. These swelling words and so forth.

But it says he will prosper until the wrath has been accomplished for what has been determined shall be done. And this is the principle. We take the Antichrist for granted in the sense that we've heard about in prophecy that we say, well, the Antichrist is coming and he's going to do all these horrible things.

He's going to put his mark on people. He's going to persecute the saints. And there's going to

be lots of death and woe and destruction.

And the Jews are going to have to flee to the hills and all the rest of that. And we just say, well, of course, that's all a part of prophecy. The Antichrist is coming.

But one could ask oneself, why does God let this happen? If God knows ahead of time who the Antichrist is, it's kind of like if God knew who Hitler was, why didn't He snuff him out before He could kill six million Jews and a bunch of other people? Why does God let these bad, evil, heinous rulers come to power? Well, the answer to that question is the very same as why does God allow adversity into our lives? We're exploring it in detail in our Job study. There are reasons why God foresees and allows bad things to happen. And we tend to overlook that when we're in these prophetic passages about the Antichrist.

But think about it. God is going to let the Antichrist prosper until His appointed time. And the key there is that His time is appointed.

It's limited. He's given a space and He's given a time and He's given power. God absorbs in a sense.

He allows Him to speak these words. He allows Him to speak these blasphemies. He allows Him to lead people astray and to badmouth the God of gods and prosper.

God lets Him prosper. We look at our lives and sometimes bad things come in. Some of them are of short duration and resolve.

Others of them are sort of ongoing yokes that we have to bear that wear a raw spot and create a blister and cause constant discomfort. And it's important for us to remember that God foresaw. God allows.

And these things are going to continue and there are cases in which evil will prosper for its appointed time. Remember Jesus said Jerusalem will be trodden underfoot by the Gentiles. We don't realize what a shocking statement that was when Jesus made it.

You imagine the Jews and looking there at the temple with its golden trimmings and its massive established appearance. People have been looking at that temple for hundreds of years. And Jesus said there won't be one stone left on another.

And this whole city is going to be trodden underfoot by the godless, uncircumcised, pagan Gentiles until their times are fulfilled. And a lot of people this would have been like eat my flesh and drink my blood. I mean they were just thinking whoa, how can you say that? And yet it absolutely came to pass.

It absolutely came to pass. And Jerusalem is yet trodden underfoot until the times are fulfilled. Antichrist is going to rule and blaspheme and prosper for his appointed time.

You and I have bad things that come into our lives and they are going to flourish for their

appointed time. Our faith is directed toward God in limiting that time and in providing deliverance and vindication of our faith when that time is over. That's the value of being a Christian.

That's the value of having divine viewpoint from the Word of God is being able to see past the moment. Being able to see beyond the immediate and recognize and it's not just pie in the sky by and by, oh, cloud, silver lining, this too shall pass. You know, what goes around comes around.

There's a lot of human wisdom. There is a concrete, finite, definite, biblical, divine purpose for the things that come into our life. And they are set.

They are appointed. They have a resolution. And there is blessing that follows.

This momentary light affliction is working for us, Paul says, an eternal weight of glory. If we don't have that as an anchor in the soul, we are going to be blown about by every wind of circumstance. We are going to fail.

We are going to fall. We are going to lack faith. We are going to be unstable.

We are going to be like the ship without a rudder just blowing around, backing and filling and snapping off the masts and sinking. The actual grist, the real content of faith, day by day, is recognizing and believing and acting on the faith that God knows what He is doing in our life. That it may not make sense to me, but it makes perfect sense to Him.

And it is my job, you know, it is not for us to question why. It is for us to do or die. And God has that figured out.

And there are certain things He doesn't reveal to us, particularly in the circumstances of our lives. So this is not an idle statement when it says and emphasizes the fact that the Antichrist, the king with his own will, is going to prosper till the wrath has been accomplished. There is wrath in store for him.

But until it is accomplished, he is going to prosper. What has been determined shall be done. And if there is one thing we can remember from Daniel chapter 11, it is what has been determined shall be done.

We can look in history and see the fulfillment of the first part of this chapter. The last half is going to be the same. This king will regard neither the God of his fathers nor the desire of women.

A lot of people who continue to see Antiochus in this section say, well, he's the northern king. Antiochus was a Seleucid king. And the God of his fathers was Jupiter.

And Antiochus, if you go back in history, changed the worship of Jupiter for that of Zeus. And so people say, well, this is what this is talking about. He changed out the divine symbol.

Actually, Apollo was the god previous. He went from Apollo to Zeus. And he did it for a lot of the same reasons that Constantine made Christianity the religion of the empire.

It was political. He was consolidating power. It didn't have anything to do with him actually believing in Zeus.

But he had not come to the throne. Antiochus IV, Epiphanes, did not get to the throne by rightful succession. You remember? He murdered a guy, Pseudo-Smyrtas, and he took the throne.

That's how he got there. So by substituting a new god who's not the god of the fathers, he doesn't have to worry about his fathers giving him the divine right to the throne. So this was all political.

And in the same way, the Antichrist is going to come to world dominance by something of an illegitimate means. You've got the ten horns there, and then you have this little horn that pokes up and pushes other horns out of the way. And it's going to be similar to the way Antiochus came to power.

So the reason this is important is when you look at the other phrase here, the desire of women, this on the surface of it, if this is once again still sort of overlaying Antiochus, who is the god of the south? Who is the god of the Ptolemies? Well, down there, of course, the Ptolemies are not Egyptian. This is not going to be Isis or something. This is going to be Adonis, was the big cheese down there, or Dionysus.

And Antiochus didn't give three hoots in a rain barrel for whatever gods they worshipped down in Egypt. He just went down there and conquered them the first time and got sort of rebuffed the second time and decided to take it out on Jerusalem. Some people think this might be Tammuz, women weeping for Tammuz.

This is the idea, that the desire of women, this was a god that women particularly cherished. There were gods that were popular among women in the Greek culture and later in the Roman Empire. They were sort of the equivalent of a patron saint.

But he, regardless of which end of the spectrum you find yourself on, whether it's the powerful war god on one end or the compassionate desire of women god on the other end, he pushes all of that aside and substitutes himself. He does not regard any god. He shall exalt himself above them all.

This is what the Antichrist is going to do. He is going to surpass and transcend religion. I can't tell you, I'm so sick of hearing people tell me, religion is really the problem in the human race.

Religion is what has caused the wars. Look at Christianity with the Inquisition and the Crusades and look at Islam with their jihads. It's religion.

We've got to get away from religion. Well, this is what the Antichrist is going to hook into. And that's one of the ways we think that the time is near.

Because there is a worldwide disgust with religion. People are sick of the Catholics. They're sick of the Muslims.

They're sick of Christians. And someone who comes in and says, look, I've got a thing. I'm the Tony Robbins of the political world.

I've got a positive thinking deal here. And this is going to just banish all mystical, benighted religions into the dark ages. That's what he's going to do.

In their place he shall honor a god of fortresses. A god which his fathers did not know is the one he will honor with gold and silver, precious stones and pleasant things. You know what I think this is? What is a god of fortresses? Martin Luther said, a mighty fortress is our god, a bulwark never failing.

But if people are not going to turn to God and they're not going to turn to religion, where are they going to turn? What's the cry that people constantly put forth these days? I want to be empowered. Homosexuals want to be empowered. Women want to be empowered.

The abused and the downtrodden want to be empowered. I want control. I want to take charge of my life.

I want to assert myself. I want to move toward my goals. I want to climb every mountain and ford every stream and follow every rainbow until I find my dream.

This kind of thing. People are looking for enablement and empowerment. And this is going to be the gospel song that the Antichrist is going to sing.

Look, I've got this great thing. And he's going to sink a lot of capital into it. He's going to sink gold and silver and precious stones.

He's going to have a website. He's going to have a merchandising campaign and a marketing brigade out there pushing this new and better philosophy. And he himself is going to be the godfather of it.

And everybody's going to say, isn't he great? Just like people idolize Tony Robbins because of his little power of positivity. He's just warmed over Norman Vincent Peale and Dale Carnegie. But people think, oh, this is the next big thing.

Hollywood celebrities. Tony Robbins is my prophet and apostle. I've just elevated myself to a higher plane.

They just can't get enough of Tony Robbins. He's like the desire of women and the god of fortresses all rolled into one. Well, a god that his fathers did not know.

This is a new thing. And he's going to honor it with all of this wealth. He will act against the strongest fortresses with a foreign god which he shall acknowledge.

So, he's going to knock down all of these other spiritual... He's going to knock down Mecca. He's going to knock down Rome. He's going to knock down all of the centers of religious thought and worship.

He will knock down Jerusalem. Not knock down in the sense of destroy, but knock them off their pedestal as seats of spiritual authority. These religious fortresses.

He will advance in glory. He will cause them to rule over many and divide the land for gain. Divide and conquer.

Well, this stronghold god, Zeus, Jupiter, whoever you might think it is, doesn't really pertain. He is going to, at the time of the end, the king of the south will attack him and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind with chariots, horsemen, many ships. And the country is overwhelmed.

He first wins their hearts and minds. He's going to win the hearts and minds of the people with this new philosophy, this new religion, with himself at the center of it. Then he's going to get his military conquests.

So, when the king of the south attacks, he's going to come against him like a whirlwind. Of course, chariots, horsemen, many ships. You can imagine modern day equivalents of this.

And the military movements and things are not as important to us as what it means by way of application. What happens typically when you circulate amongst people and there are those who have bought the lie, who are in the service of the Spirit of Antichrist, who are all with the woman who rides the beast, initially resistance is sort of attitudinal and verbal, isn't it? You first come in contact with someone, they find out you're a Christian or they are definitely not a Christian. You find out that they are some other weird thing.

And they have rejected God. We start out having differences of opinion. We start out having maybe conversations.

And this is particularly woeful when it happens within a family where you have a completely different perspective in some part of the family. And that rift begins to form when there is this strong difference of viewpoint and of understanding. And there are those on the Antichrist side and there are those on Christ's side.

And Jesus said, I have not come to bring peace but a sword. I will divide mothers and daughters and fathers and sons and households will divide over the issue of Christ. But it's a philosophical divide.

It's a spiritual divide first. And this is why we have this order in Daniel chapter 11 because that

hearts and minds thing happens first. It turns into physical conflict.

It turns into warfare on the ground with troops and chariots. So that's what we see here. And it says, The king of the north will come against him like a whirlwind.

He will enter the countries, overwhelm them and pass through. He will enter the glorious land. Many countries shall be overthrown.

But these shall escape from his hand, Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon. The defeat of the northern king that we saw back in chapter 11 or that we're going to see here in 45 has its seeds in this big attack. The survival of Moab and Ammon and Edom is kind of a puzzle, isn't it? Why would those escape out of his hand? We tend to think of those as the traditional enemies of Israel.

We can puzzle on that because we're going to cover it next week. But at the time of the end, God has appointed him a time to prosper and a time to put his psychological, pseudo-spiritual bait out there and for everybody to bite. Then the military conflict is going to begin.

And initially, he is very successful. And initially, he's going to overwhelm and walk right through these countries and take charge of them. This, by the way, is something Antiochus never did.

It's one of the reasons we know that this section is predictive and future. He's going to overwhelm and pass through. He will enter the glorious land and many will be overthrown, but some of these are going to escape from his hand.

Now, without talking in detail about Moab and Ammon and Edom, there are some who escape from his hand. There are some who didn't buy the new religion. There are some who don't succumb to this onslaught of physical force.

And in our lives, as Satan works through his Antichrist-like agents in this life, attacking us, our warfare is against principalities and powers, we want to be of those who are not overwhelmed, of those who escape out of his hand, who don't buy the false Christianity. The most insidious attack today is the false Christianity that is being marketed, that is being sold and merchandised, that is being proclaimed over the radio and over TV, so much so that if you get into a discussion with somebody about Christianity, you have to spend the first two hours just defining what Christianity really is and not what it has become in the modern day. Otherwise, you wind up arguing against stuff that aren't even a part of genuine Christian faith.

That's the Antichrist. That's the king, the willful king, who has sold this false package of goods and then comes in with the force to take people captive and to overrun. The key is not to be sold the bill of goods, and that's why we spend our time in the text of Scripture, in the Word of God, memorizing it, coming to understand it as best we can, so that we can be like that tree planted by the rivers of water and bring forth our fruit and not be defeated, not be neutralized.

This is why God allows adversity in our life, so that we can tell what is real and what is false,

what is Christ and what is Antichrist. Exercise. You remember, and our closing passage here is in Hebrews 5. Verse 12, By this time you ought to be teachers, and yet you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God.

You have come to need milk and not solid food. Everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. Now look at verse 14.

Solid food belongs to those who are of a full age, those who are mature, who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil. That's our goal. That's our priority.

That's the value that we should assign in our lives, is to be those who by reason of exercise, when these things are allowed through by God, that's our practice problem for discernment. That's where we make application. It requires meditation.

It requires study of the word of God. It requires endurance. Let's close here in a word of prayer.

Father, we thank you for this great chapter from your word. We thank you for the preservation of the divinely inspired text. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress it on our hearts.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.