

Pastor Paul Bawden
Grace Evangelical Church
Sunday, February 1, 2009
Communion Sunday
Kingdoms In Conflict
Introduction To The Book Of Daniel
Daniel 1:1-7

When the end of the world arrives, how will the media report it?

USA Today:
WE'RE DEAD

The Wall Street Journal:
DOW JONES PLUMMETS AS WORLD ENDS

Microsoft Systems Journal:
APPLE LOSES MARKET SQUARE

Victoria's Secret Catalog:
OUR FINAL SALE

Wired:
THE LAST NEW THING

Rolling Stone:
THE GRATEFUL DEAD REUNION TOUR

Readers Digest:
'BYE'

Discover Magazine:
HOW WILL THE EXTINCTION OF ALL LIFE AS WE KNOW IT AFFECT THE WAY WE VIEW THE COSMOS?

TV Guide:
DEATH AND DAMNATION:
NIELSEN RATINGS SOAR!

Ladies Home Journal:
LOSE 10 LBS BY JUDGMENT DAY WITH OUR NEW "ARMAGEDDON" DIET!

America Online:
SYSTEM TEMPORARILY DOWN. TRY CALLING BACK IN 15 MINUTES.

Inc. magazine:
TEN WAYS YOU CAN PROFIT FROM THE APOCALPSE

Microsoft's Web Site:
If you didn't experience the rapture, download software patch RAPT777.EXE.

Sun:
Armageddon Tolerant Software Now Available!

Sports Illustrated:
GAME OVER

When I read something like this, I am always thankful for a Book like Daniel in our Old Testament. For the Book of Daniel foretold some events that have already happened in history, but also the Book of Daniel continues to tell us today what will happen yet in the future. In fact the Book of Daniel ties in with other Books of the Bible, such as Matthew and the Book of Revelation.

With the uncertainty of our times, any biblical study that deals with what will happen in the future, and how to live for God in those uncertain times, can be very stabilizing for our lives while providing us hope in the midst of our challenges.

The Book of Daniel does just that, for it gives us clear insight into what is coming on God's future calendar, while the person, Daniel, challenges all of us to live out God's ultimate purpose for our lives – to glorify HIM!

Thusly, for the next couple of months or so on Sunday mornings, we will be considering the Book of Daniel.

If I were to ask you, even our children, what do you remember from the Book of Daniel? I am sure you would answer, the three men in the fiery furnace, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and Daniel in the lion's den, and then perhaps the handwriting on the wall at the feast of Belshazzar.

But other events in the Book of Daniel like the various dreams and visions that are recorded are not necessarily the easiest to interpret and understand. At the same time, they had and continue to have relevance for our day.

In this introductory message on the Book of Daniel let's first consider

1.The Circumstances surrounding the Book of Daniel (Daniel 1:1-3).

The first three verses of Daniel 1 set the stage for the circumstances surrounding the Book of Daniel.

(1) Jehoiakim was king of Judah, the southern kingdom of Israel (1:1 -609-598 B.C.)

Jehoiakim was the eldest son of Josiah. He was made king in place of his younger brother in 609 B.C. by Pharaoh Neco (Jeremiah 25:1). Jehoiakim was a vassal to Egypt for four years and then to Babylon. He squandered state funds on a new palace (Jeremiah 22:13-19), and destroyed Jeremiah's writings which warned him of coming judgment. He died in 598 B.C. (II Kings 24:1-7)

(2) Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it in the third year of Jehoiakim's reign (1:1 - 605 B.C)

Nebuchadnezzar's name means "Nebo, protect my frontier." He reigned for 43 years (605-562 B.C.).

Babylon had rebelled against the Assyrian Empire in 626 B.C, and overthrew the Assyrian capital of Nineveh in 612 B.C., and became master of the ancient Near East when it defeated Egypt at the battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C. Later that year, Nebuchadnezzar invaded and subdued Jerusalem. He took some of the vessels from the temple in Jerusalem and put them in the house of his god, signifying the power of Nebuchadnezzar's gods. He would probably think that since he capture Jerusalem and had vessels from the temple there that his gods were superior to Israel's God. He would find out soon that wasn't the case.

(3) God gave Jehoiakim of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar (1:2)

That is a very interesting verse, for it tells us that God released His hand of protection from His people living in Judah at that time.

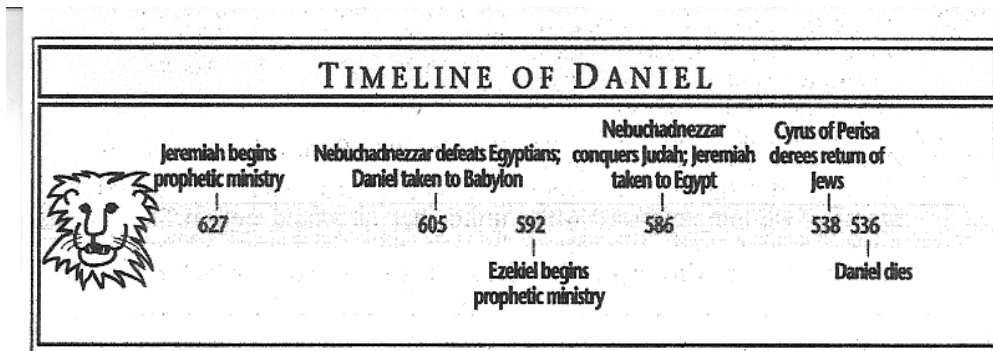
The northern kingdom had already been taken captive by the Assyrians around 721 B.C. Why was the northern kingdom of Israel taken captive by Assyria? I encourage you to read II Kings 17, where we are told that the northern kingdom was taken captive because they served idols, worship Baal and the sun, and turned away from keeping God's commandments. They did great evil in the sight of the Lord, even practicing divination and enchantments. God punished them by sending them into captivity by Assyria.

Now the southern kingdom, Judah is being taken captive by Babylon. What is happening here? The same thing that happened to Israel in 721 B.C. some sixteen years before. Judah disobeyed the Lord (II Kings 14:17-20; 25; II Chronicles 36:11-21). The nation did evil in the sight of the Lord, going after other gods and disobeying God's law. The nation must be punished.

How long would the Jews be in captivity? Jeremiah 25:11 tells us 70 years (which was from 605-536 B.C.). Why 70 years? Evidently it was from the number of seventh year rests for the land that the Jews failed to observe (over a period of 490 years they failed to keep the law and let the land be fallow every seventh year - cf. Leviticus 25:2-7; II Chronicles 36:14-21).

(4) The book of Daniel covered the time period from 605 B. C. down to the time of Cyrus the Persian, who defeated Babylon in 539 B.C.

Evidently, from Daniel 10:1, Daniel lived at least until the third year of Cyrus, 536 B.C. **The book of Daniel, then, covers some 69 years – the full duration of the Babylonian rule and into the time of Cyrus the Great.**



2. The young man Daniel (Daniel 1:3-7).

(1) Daniel's name means "God is my judge."

In one sense as God used Daniel to minister in the Gentile Court of the Babylonians and Persians, Daniel was used by God to be a judge for Him. At the same time, God used Daniel to minister to the Jewish people giving them hope.

(2) Daniel and his three friends (of noble birth).

As our text tells us Daniel and his three Jewish friends (Hananiah, Mishael & Azariah) were part of those who were captured and taken captive to Babylon from Jerusalem. Since Nebuchadnezzar wanted to increase and upgrade his court, he had picked from the youths brought from Jerusalem those who were good looking and bright intellectually. Perhaps Daniel and his three friends were in their late teens.

Daniel and his three friends were ones chosen to be part of those who would be trained and educated in the literature and language of Babylon to serve the king.

(3) Daniel displayed a sterling character.

Nothing negative is written about Daniel. His life is one each of us today in the power of the Holy Spirit as a follower of Jesus Christ should seek to emulate – a man of faith, prayer, courage, consistency, and lack of compromise. Children, young people, Daniel is the person to be like in your daily life.

In the book of Daniel, he is **"highly esteemed"** by the angel Gabriel (9:23), again 10:11, **"man of high esteem,"** and finally in 10:19, **"man of high esteem"** – words from the angel Michael. Daniel was a man of great integrity.

Ezekiel, a contemporary of Daniel, ministering to the captives out in the field mentioned Daniel three times. Ezekiel 14:14 – A righteous man. (cf. Ezekiel 14:20; Ezekiel 28:3).

Christ referred to Daniel many years later indicating that he was a true character in history (Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14). In these verses, Christ referred to the "abomination of desolation" that Daniel prophesied (Daniel 9:27) is going to come, which is the antichrist who will come on the world scene offering world peace with an answer to the economic and political struggles of the day.

3. The Book of Daniel itself.

(1) The Structure of the Book of Daniel.

The book of Daniel has been called the "Apocalypse of the Old Testament." While displaying the sterling character of Daniel, it presents a surprisingly comprehensive sweep of prophetic history.

The beginning chapter is in Hebrew. Daniel switches to the Aramaic language in chapters 2-7 to describe the future course of the Gentile world powers. In chapters 8-12, Daniel reverts to Hebrew to survey the future of the Jewish nation under Gentile rule.

Here is an overview of the Book of Daniel.

Daniel at a Glance

FOCUS	HISTORY OF DANIEL	PROPHETIC PLAN FOR THE GENTILES				PROPHETIC PLAN OF ISRAEL			
REFERENCE	1:1 — 2:1 — 5:1 — 6:1 — 7:1 — 8:1 — 9:1 — 10:1 — 12:13								
DIVISION	PERSONAL LIFE OF DANIEL	VISIONS OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR	VISION OF BELSHAZZAR	DECREE OF DARIUS	FOUR BEASTS	VISION OF RAM AND MALE-GOAT	VISION OF SEVENTY WEEKS	VISION OF ISRAEL'S FUTURE	
TOPIC	DANIEL'S BACKGROUND	DANIEL INTERPRETS OTHERS' DREAMS				ANGEL INTERPRETS DANIEL'S DREAMS			
	HEBREW	ARAMAIC				HEBREW			
LOCATION	BABYLON OR PERSIA								
TIME	c. 605-536 B.C.								

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(2) The Themes of the Book of Daniel.

1. God has sovereign control over and in the affairs of world history.

There is an amazing verse in Daniel 2:21. "It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding."

What an encouragement these words would have been for the Jews in exile at that time, far from their homeland, knowing that their city and temple had been ransacked by the enemy. God is in control.

These words should be of encouragement to us today as well, as we see man stumbling around trying to fix the economic crisis he has brought upon himself. Of course all of us are directly affected by what is happening.

Regardless, God is in control of the events transpiring in our nation and in our state. He puts certain people in office to accomplish His purpose and plan in history. But His ultimate desire today in all of the happenings in our country and the world is to see leaders and citizens turn to Him and acknowledge Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

There are a couple of interesting verses in Psalm 9 that I read in my devotions one evening this week. David is writing about those who oppose God and His kingdom. Here is what David pens:

“Arise, O LORD, do not let man prevail; Let the nations be judged before You. Put them in fear, O LORD; Let the nations know that they are but men.”

This is what God was using Daniel to say as He directed Daniel to record for us God’s involvement in history. Let the nations know that they are but men. God is saying that to our leaders in Washington D. C. and our state leadership as well. They need to recognize that they are but men, and they need to look to the Savior and LORD of the nations, Jesus Christ.

The kingdoms of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome would come and go, and the United States that has come will eventually go. Yes, all the kingdoms of man will go, but God’s eternal kingdom will last forever established through the Messiah who will be cut off, but return to establish His kingdom on earth, and eventual eternal kingdom.

2. A holy life for God can be lived in an unholy world.

Daniel knew how to live separated to God (holy unto God), while living in a world separated from God. Daniel by depending on the LORD knew how to live a holy life in an unholy world.

Living in the midst of a pagan society, in the king’s court, given the king’s influence, Daniel honored the true and living God by keeping God first in his daily life.

Daniel 1:8-16 tells us that he would not eat the king’s meat, nor did his three friends.
Daniel 6:4-14 tells us that He refused to pray to the king.

You and I in the power of the Holy Spirit can live a holy life for the LORD, which is really doing His will as given in the Word of God.

3. You and I can be involved in helping God further His eternal kingdom in time.

(1) Daniel’s ministry.

Due to the dire situation of His people Israel, God raised up Daniel now in captivity because of the sin of his people, to give them a perspective of God’s working in the history of the nations, but also to give them hope that God had not forgotten them, and there still was a future.

God used Daniel, who knew God personally, and was willing to take a stand for God’s righteousness and holiness in a pagan godless culture, even though he was educated in that culture. He saw it as just man’s ideas. But I think that Daniel saw something else.

Daniel realized that the kingdom of God of which he was a part was diametrically opposed to the kingdoms of men. He knew that God’s eternal kingdom in time was in direct conflict with the kingdom of men in time. Convinced of that reality in his life, Daniel had confidence in God that God’s eternal kingdom in time was the victorious kingdom. He was excited to be part of God’s victorious eternal kingdom.

That’s why in Daniel in Daniel 2:20, after the vision of Nebuchadnezzar was revealed to Daniel, Daniel praise the LORD with these words, **“Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to Him.”** Then the verse we referred to awhile ago, “It is he who changes the times and epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings. . . .” (Daniel 2:21).

Then in Daniel 2:44-45, as Daniel ends the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, he penned, **“In the days of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be let for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.”**

Daniel realized that he was part of God’s eternal kingdom that was in direct opposition to the kingdom of men.

Daniel recognized that God had chosen him to bring the light of that kingdom to the king's court where there was spiritual darkness and to his own people who had sinned against God and were in captivity needing God's hope.

(2) Our ministry.

How about us today?

Three questions that come to us.

1. Do I realize that there is the eternal kingdom of God in time?

The place where we see that there is an eternal kingdom of God is in the death, burial, and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. For on the cross, Jesus was battling head on the kingdom of the evil one, Satan, who opposes directly the eternal kingdom of God.

Satan tried his best to keep Christ from going to the cross, but he lost, no one or nothing can thwart the purpose of God for the salvation of mankind. Jesus died to pay the penalty for our sin, was buried, and rose again the third day to demonstrate that now forgiveness of sin and eternal life were available to all who accept Jesus Christ as personal Savior.

But in that process Jesus defeated the evil one, and established His eternal kingdom for all to enter who accept Jesus Christ as personal Savior.

The eternal kingdom of God in time is in direct opposition to the kingdom of Satan who loves to influence the kingdoms of men, and is doing a pretty good job as we watch what is happening in our world today.

2. Am I part of God's eternal kingdom?

When Paul wrote to the Colossians (1:13) he told them that through faith in Christ, they had been rescued from the domain (the kingdom of darkness), the kingdom of the evil one, the kingdom of men, and had been transferred into the kingdom of His beloved Son – the eternal kingdom of God.

The believer in Jesus Christ is now a part of God's eternal kingdom in time, which is really the church today, part of God's eternal kingdom.

The believer in Jesus Christ now has his or her citizenship in heaven, while one lives on planet earth.

The believer in Jesus Christ is living in God's eternal kingdom in time!!

Is Jesus Christ your personal Savior? I trust you have admitted to Him that you have sinned against Him and asked Him into your life to be your Savior. If you have made that decision for Jesus Christ, He lives in you, and you are part of God's eternal victorious kingdom that of course has no end.

3. Am I living for Christ in His (God's) eternal kingdom in time?

(1) Daniel did

Daniel did not have all the information we have about Christ in the New Testament Scriptures. As a young lad, he had been brought up to learn about what was written in the Hebrew Scriptures particularly the first five books of the Bible and other Scriptures written before his time. He had believed in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and was committed to doing His will, of living a holy life in a pagan society, even in the king's court where idolatry flourished.

(2) We can

How are we doing as followers of Christ? One day all this stuff we work so hard to get and maintain will be gone. The recent financial crisis is certainly a clear reminder to each of us that life doesn't consist in the abundance of what we possess. At the same time, as followers of Christ, the Bible tells us that we are to seek first the kingdom of God, His eternal kingdom and all these things will be added unto us.

1. Our monies, time, and energy can be used to further God's eternal kingdom (Matthew 6:19-20; Colossians 3:23-24).

That's why Jesus told us to lay up treasures in heaven where there is no moth, rust, or thief. How great that we can give a portion of what the Lord provides for us, giving proportionally to how He blesses us, to the Lord's eternal kingdom, His church, and to others who are giving out the gospel.

How great that as we depend upon the power of the Holy Spirit and serve the Lord with the spiritual gifts that He give us – even giving a cup of cold water in the name of the LORD – touching someone in need. Such efforts God will reward in eternity with the blessing coming now to those who give in service to others for it is more blessed to give than to receive.

So as we live in God's eternal kingdom in time as followers of Jesus, He gives us the privilege and responsibility to invest our monies, our time, and energy in that which lasts for eternity.

As the old saying, yet, new saying goes, **"only one life will soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last." Yes, our labor is not in vain in the LORD!!**

2. There is opposition for living in God's eternal kingdom in time. (I Peter 5:8).

Is it always easy living for God in His eternal kingdom in time? **Of course not.** I'm sure each of us here knows that by experience. Satan does his best, going about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, tempting us, bringing discouragement, and doubts, and doing what he can to disrupt our trust in the Lord. Satan does not want us to enjoy living in God's eternal kingdom in time. The old nature within us continues to challenge us to follow it's dictates of lust, pride, and selfishness. The sirens of the world keep blasting to our ears that doing what the world says is the way to go.

3. Christ gives us the victory as we live in His eternal kingdom (II Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 6:10; I Peter 5:90).

But as we remain strong in the Lord (Ephesians 6:10) as Daniel did, we can have the LORD's victory regardless of how we feel, for in Him we are more than conquerors through His love.

Yes, the kingdom of the eternal God in time is in direct odds to the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of men.

But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Whether we live, or we die. we are the LORD's. No one or nothing can separate us from His love. We are victors in Christ living in His eternal kingdom in time. One day we will be in His eternal kingdom forever!!

The Lord's Table we commemorate this morning tells us so. Praise the LORD!