

God's in charge!

(Background of Daniel) Daniel 1:1-2

September 22, 2013 (ROL)

November 1, 2020 (Cop Church)

Purpose statement: God is true to his word and will see that it is carried out.

Attention Getter: What's going on in America? The media reports we see makes America look more like a third-world nation, not a superpower. We've gotten used to seeing chaos in the Middle East and North Africa. But here at home, in America? Twenty-twenty has been a year the likes of which, most of us living today have never seen.

In our country we're concerned about the COVID pandemic, rioting in the streets, government spying on US citizens, the economy, terrorism, and mass shootings.

Introduction: Law Enforcement officers like to know who's in charge and what's the plan. The national and global situation today prompts many questions like: Who's in control? Is God in control? Has he lost control? Does he have a plan? If so, what's God's plan and is it unfolding as designed?

These questions are addressed and answered in the Bible and culminate in Revelation. Revelation is an amazing book that is often misunderstood and misinterpreted by a lot of well-meaning Christians. To better understand Revelation, one needs to have a good grasp of other prophetic Scripture including the book of Daniel and the Olivet Discourse given by Jesus in the Gospels. Today we begin to explore what the future holds in store through a study in the book of Daniel.

Read: Daniel 1:1-2 *"And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand..."* (Dan. 1:2a).

Background: Cops like a good investigation, and that's what we'll do. We'll investigate. Daniel has been a controversial book among unbelievers, liberal theologians, and others who refuse to accept its prophecies. It's controversial because of the minute details and accuracy of its prophetic words.¹ Critics have attacked it through the years. Why is it attacked? Because of the implications if true.

Rather than prophecy, they claim it's history, written sometime in the second century BC.² However, this claim of a late date didn't arise until the third century AD. Critics have attacked the book on textual grounds, historical grounds, and linguistic grounds. Conservative scholars have answered these criticisms and put them to rest.

Further, and more importantly for believers, Ezekiel, who was a contemporary of Daniel, mentions him three times in his book.³ Turn to Ezekiel 14. Here the Lord is speaking to Ezekiel and mentions Daniel alongside Noah and Job, **Ezek. 14:19-20**. If you question the validity of Daniel you must also question the validity Ezekiel, Noah, and Job. Finally, and most importantly, Jesus himself testified that the book is both authentic and prophetic. Jesus identified Daniel as a prophet; quoted from the book that bears his name; and the quote is in the context of events that are yet future, **Matt 24:15a**. Not only do you discount Ezekiel, Noah, and Job; if you discount Daniel as a prophet, you must also discount Jesus. If that's the case, the entire Bible can't be trusted. But the evidence points clearly that the Bible can be trusted and in its pages are the foundation of Christian doctrine. Let's look at the book of Daniel.

The writer is Daniel and it covers about 80 years of his life, from the time young Daniel was taken captive in 605 BC and beyond the 70 years of Babylonian captivity. The inva-

¹ (Cambron, 1963, p. 7)

² (Miller, 1994, p. 23)

³ (Ezek. 14:14,20 & 28:3)

sion of 605 BC was the first of three invasions by Babylon, the last was in 586 BC. Judah was held captive until 536 BC, the third year of Persian King Cyrus.

Because there are two audiences—Jews and Gentiles, the book was originally written in both Hebrew (approximately chapter 1 and 8-12, 157 ½ verses) and Aramaic (chapters 2-7, 199 ½ verses).⁴ Things concerning the Jews were written in Hebrew and things concerning the Gentiles in Aramaic. [*Define Jew/Gentile*]

Although containing history (chapters 1-6) and prophecy (chapters 7-12), the theme of the book is “*God is sovereign*,” **Dan. 5:21b**. Four times in Daniel the Lord is called “*the Most High God*” and ten times simply “*the Most High*”. All occur in the section to the Gentiles.

Several years ago, Dr. David Jeremiah wrote a book on Daniel called *The Handwriting on the Wall*. In the introduction, Jeremiah said the theme of Daniel is rather simplistic. So simplistic is Daniel, Jeremiah’s says, that many of the so-called brilliant minds are unable to grasp it. The theme is simply this: *God is in charge!*⁵ Hence, the title of the sermon. Let’s now consider the history leading up to the book of Daniel.

I. **History leading up to captivity**

God is gracious and warns before he acts. God has consistently done this throughout history, with both believers and non-believers. We will see that God dealt severely with his people when they disobeyed him. However, he first warned them. The warning to God’s people was simple and direct, “**Remember God!**” **Deut. 8:18**.

⁴ (Miller, 1994, p. 47)

⁵ (Jeremiah, 1992)

Not only did God warn Israel he told them the consequences of not heeding the warning: their nation will perish, **8:19-20**. This warning was given in about 1406 BC. Israel went through the period of the Judges (about 300 years) and in 1050 BC Saul became the first king of Israel.

Under Rehoboam (David's grandson) the kingdom was split in 931 BC, **1 Kgs. 12:16**. Rehoboam was bent on retaining the whole kingdom and prepared for battle against the ten tribes that left, but God warned him not to. The Lord made it clear that he was still in charge, it didn't matter who sat on the throne in Jerusalem, **12:24a**.

Jeroboam, afraid the people of the Northern Kingdom would return to Rehoboam because the temple was located in Jerusalem, made an alternative form of worship, **1 Kgs. 12:26-30**. Jeroboam provided a **convenient** form of worship. Jeroboam's new hybrid religion created worship centers conveniently located. Notice where Jeroboam reasoned, *He said in his heart*. Looking to our own heart is usually a recipe for disaster—it was for him. New priests were selected by him from the people. Not surprisingly, his worship mimicked worship ordained by God.

Jeroboam's religion looked the part, but lacked authentic worship to the true God. *God tells us how we are to worship and approach him—not the other way around.*

A few years ago, Don Imus interviewed Bill O'Reilly and the discussion went briefly to salvation. O'Reilly played part of the interview on his show.

Introducing the clip, O'Reilly said: *Mr. Imus takes exception to some evangelicals who say the only way to get to heaven is to be born again and accept Jesus as their Savior.*

Imus: *I think there's more than one path to wherever people think they're going.*

O'Reilly: *The Catholic religion of theology, Roman Catholicism, has an interesting passage that they very rarely publicize, and it's called baptism by desire. That if you're not baptized formally with water on the head and all of that, you can still get to heaven if you lead a good life.*

Imus: *Very good point.*

O'Reilly: *So, if you're a theologian and really look into it, really, seriously, you find that the theology of Christianity is based on one thing, one thing. Treating other people the way you want to be treated. And if you do that, and you live in New Guinea, I think you're goin' make it.*

O'Reilly (his show): *Now the New Guinea reference I said was there are people who've never heard of Jesus and a just God would never assign them to hell.*

Sadly, a lot of people get their theology from the TV news media, or other popular media sources like internet blogs, Facebook, and Twitter. The discussion may have sounded good, but that's not the one thing Christianity is about: *"Treating other people the way you want to be treated."* And Imus saying, *"I think there's more than one path to wherever people think they're going."*

These are religions of convenience. They make us feel good. They're comfortable. The problem is they're false. The truth is, while the golden rule is based on biblical teaching, Christianity is based on the gospel...the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christ's death is the atonement for sin

and his resurrection is victory over sin. Only in Christ does one have forgiveness and eternal life. Some come closer to the truth than others, but the truth is Christ, **John 14:6—SALVATION!**

Back to history, less than 200 years after Jeroboam set up his false religion, Israel fell.

II. **The capture of Israel and Judah**

A. Assyria captures Israel (Samaria)

In 722 BC the Assyrians captured the Northern Kingdom and took her away captive, **2 Kgs. 17:6a**. The Assyrians brought in other captives to Samaria (Israel's capital) so the people would inter-marry and lose their identity as a nation and people. The people who lived there in the Jesus' day were known as Samaritans. They were half Jew and half Gentile and looked down upon by Jews.

We must note that Israel was in direct disobedience to Deut. 8:19—*You shall remember the Lord your God*. Israel feared other gods, did things both secretly and publicly against God, and did not obey him, **2 Kgs. 17:7-9a**.

Israel gave into popular **culture**. They *walked in the customs* of the pagan nations, and the *customs of the kings of Israel*—the false religion Jeroboam devised. So, in 722 BC, Assyria captured Israel; a hundred years later, Babylon captured the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

B. Babylon captures Judah (Jerusalem)

In Judah, Jehoiakim was king. During the first years of his reign, which began in 609 BC, Habakkuk issued a warning

from God to Judah, **Hab. 1:5-6**—“*Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told. For behold, I am raising up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, who march through the breadth of the earth, to seize dwellings not their own.*” That same year (609 BC) Babylon attacked Egypt.

Four years later, in 605, Nebuchadnezzar, in the first year of his reign lay siege to Jerusalem and began to deport Jews, including Daniel, to Babylon (2 Kgs. 24:1-2). Babylon attacked twice more, finally destroying the city’s walls in 586 BC.

In 598 BC Jehoiakim died and his son, Jehoiachin, took the throne, (24:6).

In 597 BC, the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign, he again besieged the city, and took Jehoiachin captive, (24:11-12). Nebuchadnezzar then set up Zedekiah, son of Josiah, as king. Zedekiah reigned as a puppet king for 11 years until he sided with Egypt against Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar again attacked and this time destroyed Jerusalem, its walls, and the temple.

Nebuchadnezzar captured King Zedekiah and had his eyes put out. The last thing he saw was his sons being slain, (2 Kings 25:5-7). Zedekiah was the last king to sit upon the throne of David.

In 586 BC, the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign, Jerusalem fell, and the remaining Jews were carried away captive to Babylon, **25:8-12**.

Nebuchadnezzar's first siege marked the beginning of the ***Times of the Gentiles*** as spoken of by Jesus, **Luke 21:24**. Israel will not have a king on the throne in Jerusalem “*until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.*”

This is where Daniel begins, with the beginning of the *Times of the Gentiles*. From the call of Abraham, and up until this point in human history, God intentionally worked through the Hebrew people. He began with the promise made to Abraham in Genesis 12. But since 605 BC, for some 2,600 years, Israel has been set aside as a world power—until the Times of the Gentiles are complete.

III. The capture of Daniel and his three friends

In 609 BC, Nebuchadnezzar, the crown prince of Babylon, attacked Egypt. In the early summer of 605 BC he defeated Egypt which exposed Palestine. In August of 605 he laid siege to Jerusalem, taking Daniel and others captive, **Dan. 1:1**. While at Jerusalem Nebuchadnezzar's father died, and Nebuchadnezzar headed back to Babylon to take the throne.

Who was it that gave Judah over to Nebuchadnezzar? It was none other than the Lord God, **1:2a**. Biblical scholar Stephen Miller points to the significance of the name for God used here, Lord, (*adonay*) meaning owner, ruler, or sovereign.⁶ Right up front Daniel emphasized God's **sovereignty**. Miller also points out that Daniel consistently uses the article *the* before God. This is likely because Daniel wanted to contrast *the one true God* with all other false gods.

Daniel reveals that God is about to work with mankind in a new way, through the Gentiles. God promised a Redeemer

⁶ (Miller, 1994, pp. 57-58)

way back in Genesis. And he chose the Jewish people to bring the Redeemer to the world. They would be a special people, responsible for carrying a special message to all nations. But they disobeyed God and now God was going to punish them as he had warned.

God chose to use the Gentiles to punish his people and to fulfill his plan of salvation. Israel turned her back on God, he now turned his back on them. Yet, as promised, God would still bring the Redeemer through the seed of David.

Besides bringing back captives, Nebuchadnezzar also brought back temple vessels. He placed these vessels in the temple of his god, Marduk, **1:2b**. One writer believes he did this for at least two reasons:

1. He wanted to offer a thanksgiving offering to his god for the victory.
2. He wanted to humiliate the God of the Jews, Yahweh.⁷

Conclusion: Nebuchadnezzar wanted to show Israel that Marduk is the most powerful god. But Nebuchadnezzar was soon introduced to the **Most High** God. As God caused history to change from Israel being the focus of human government to Gentile rule, he made it plain that it didn't matter who ruled on earth, the Most High God remains the Lord of heaven and earth. Nebuchadnezzar learned the hard way the God of the Bible is in charge, he has a plan, and his plan will be carried out!

⁷ (Showers, 1982, p. 2)