

Ministry on Daniel

Part 4

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[00:00:01] Profane, wicked, Prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, thus saith the Lord God, remove the diadem and take off the crown. This shall not be the same. Exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it, and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is, and I will give it him. Luke 21. Luke 21, verse 20, And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, [00:01:08] then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let them which are in the midst of it depart out, and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days. For there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem [00:02:05] shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. Acts 17. Acts 17.31. God hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

[00:03:15] On Saturday we looked at scriptures which tell us plainly that the nation of Israel as a whole was in debt to God, and is in debt to God. In particular, and certainly since the inauguration of the kingdom of Israel as such, with the accession of King Saul, from that time God's [00:04:02] earthly people had robbed their God, in that they had not carried out the injunction to let the land rest one year in seven. That the land should be allowed to be under the beneficent hand of God who gave it, and that one year in seven should be a Sabbath unto the Lord. And at the time that we pick up the thread in the book of Daniel, 490 years have transpired, which meant that the nation was in debt to God to the tune of 70 years.

Man being what he is, after the first 120 years or just a little more, the nation had divided [00:05:13] into the northern kingdom, in yellow, which called the kingdom of Israel, and the southern kingdom, in red, the kingdom of Judah. Now, as we must do this week, in the time available, we were painting with a broad brush, and if you checked your maps in the back of your Bible, in your Bible atlas, or if you came forward and checked the location, the distribution of the tribes of Israel over the land, you would notice that while the southern kingdom substantially was Judah and Benjamin, you would notice that at the very bottom of the map, there was the location [00:06:07] of the tribe of Simeon. Very little is said subsequently, but certainly because they were isolated from the nine with whom they were nominally associated, they seem to have got adrift of it and seem to have been absorbed into the southern kingdom. We also know that by the time we get to gospel times, there are individuals

like Anna, of whom we read that she was of the tribe of Asa. But generally speaking, there was the northern kingdom of Israel, the southern kingdom of Judah. And we also noticed that because of their rebellion against God and disobedience [00:07:01] to him, that the nation, the kingdom of Israel, was first to be taken into captivity by the kingdom or the empire of Assyria with its capital at Nineveh. And then a little later on, and this is where Daniel comes into it, 490 years of the long suffering of God gave way to the 70 years captivity. Not now in Assyria, because that empire had in turn been absorbed by the empire of Babylon with its capital in the city of Babylon. And so in Daniel's times, we come to consider [00:08:01] the captivity of the kingdom of Judah in Babylon. And we read on Saturday from Jeremiah 25 and 29 where we learned that in payment or in part payment of this debt to God, that the kingdom of Judah was to be captive in the land of Babylon for 70 years. Now, after that kind of background introduction, we need to move into some of the direct prophetic summaries that we get in the book of Daniel. And again, it isn't the exercise, it wouldn't be the time to dot all the i's and cross the t's, but rather to establish for ourselves a framework for future study. Now, [00:09:05] it was for that reason that I read from Ezekiel 21 where, again, the tale is taken up from the standpoint that the nation, because of its rebellion, had to be disciplined by God. And a new thing, as far as the extent was concerned, God had determined that Gentile nations should be used as his disciplinary tools. And we read in Ezekiel 21, particularly in verse, well, verse 25, we'll pick it up there, [00:10:01] Thou profane wicked prince of Israel. Now, we have here a reference, the divine comment on things as they were. The kingdom of Judah was in a very sorry state. The last king was on the throne, referred here as the profane, wicked, prince of Israel.

He wasn't even a king in his own right. He was a puppet of the Gentile monarch. And he's in such a sorry state, in line with his spiritual and moral condition, [00:11:08] that both in himself and as a demonstration of the condition of the people, we find that he ended his days blind.

As always, blessing comes to man from the hands of God in all its pristine beauty and glory. And then, in responsibility, man causes it to degenerate. This is why, when we consider the sorry state of things of man and responsibility, we find that the last judge, Samson, finished his days blind. The last formal priest who judged, Eli, finished his days blind. The last king, [00:12:02] Zedekiah, finished his days blind. And in case we are inclined to preen ourselves, we must bear in mind that the last state of the church, the Christian church, is declared by the Lord to be blind, pictured in the church at Laodicea. So here we have the last kingdom, and at that, a puppet, and not only evil in himself, but a picture of things at the end, immediately before God, through Christ, takes personal control by personal intervention and setting up the kingdom, which shall never be superseded. We find that Zedekiah is a picture of another last king of the nation, [00:13:11] spoken of in scripture as the Antichrist, and we'll come to him again, an apostate Jew, seeking to present himself as the sovereign of the nation, and yet in his heart, against God and his Christ, a first prophetic element of what we have here. Now, it is because of who and what Zedekiah was, that the prophet Ezekiel says, now look, this is the word of the Lord, this cannot continue. God says, because the sovereign of the first Gentile empire, allowed to enslave the [00:14:02] kingdom of Judah, has gone beyond the limit, beyond the mark, he will, I will remove him, I will overturn. And he said, the first kingdom, Gentile kingdom, will give way to a second one, and in turn to a third, and in turn to a fourth. So in the days of the first Gentile world empire, there is this prophecy that God would overturn three times more until the second, third, and fourth Gentile world empire were allowed to run their course. And then God says, and then, I will give the kingdom to him whose right it is, until he come whose right it is, and I will give it him. Now, this succession of four world empires is that which the Lord referred to [00:15:04] in the verse we read in Luke chapter 21, the times of the Gentiles. The times of Gentile supremacy, when the Jews would be subjugated, when they would be under the sway of one Gentile nation after

another. Now, in our survey tonight, we shall find it necessary to read mainly from chapters two and seven of the book of Daniel. Chapter two, Nebuchadnezzar's image.

Chapter seven, Daniel's dream. To make things simple, in chapter two, we get man's view of the four Gentile kingdoms in their apparent majesty and [00:16:11] apparent majesty and glory and attractiveness.

In chapter seven, we get God's view of these same four kingdoms. Now, what we hope to do tonight is look to see what the book of Daniel says about the first three. And then, if the Lord will, we'll see what scripture says about the fourth tomorrow night. But first of all, let's look at chapter two. Overall statements. Again, setting out some benchmarks for our studies. [00:17:02] Daniel, chapter two, verse 31. Daniel is privileged to reveal to Nebuchadnezzar the sovereign of the first Gentile world kingdom of Babylon. And this is what Daniel says by way of interpretation. Chapter two, verse 31. Thou, O king, sawest, and behold, a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee, and the form thereof was terrible. Verse 34.

Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that [00:18:03] were of iron and of clay, and break them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors. And the wind carried them away that no place was found for them. And the stone that smote the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. Well, here we have it. Man's view of this succession of empires. Straight away, Nebuchadnezzar had it revealed to him by Daniel that this was a mighty image, that it was there in all its parts, but that this, whatever the image spoke about, would come to a sudden end by miraculous means at a time [00:19:08] which up to this point is not specified. And that the power, not personified, not declared at this stage that brought the downfall of this image would emerge as the everlasting kingdom which should never be destroyed and which would be universal. Now move over to chapter seven. Again, an overall statement, not now at the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar's image, but the beginning of Daniel's dream. Chapter seven, verse one. In the first year of Belshazzar, king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed. Then he wrote the dream [00:20:02] and told the sum of the matters. Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of the heavens strove upon the great sea, and four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. Now here's a little more detail. As well as this image, which seemed to be a continuous assessment of things, we now have four different entities, four different individuals who are referred to not in their apparent majesty and glory, but in their bestial character, beasts before God. Coming out of the sea, out of a state of unrest, speaking of general conditions in the world, and here we have these four great beasts, [00:21:05] diverse from one another. Verse 17. These great beasts, which are four, are four kings which shall arise out of the earth. Now, my main point tonight is to demonstrate from the text of the book of Daniel that what we are led to understand and can understand from the book of Daniel is not a matter of a peculiar interpretation by a small body of Christian believers. It's not a fantasy of one or two clever minds. Everything we are [00:22:01] going to look at tonight is verified from the text. As well as being there in detail, it also demonstrates again what we need to do when we study any scriptural subject. We go through and we learn broad lessons. We establish a framework and then once we've got the main gist of the thing, we start again and we comb through with a finer comb, getting more detail. And then when we've swept through a second time, we start again and we go through in finer detail again. There's no substitute really for going through longhand by yourself. Now, what we're going to do now, having established from verse 17 that it's not a minority interpretation, it's a statement of the infallible word of God that this fourfold image [00:23:08] in chapter two, these four

beasts in chapter seven, are in fact representing four kings that should come out of the world system. And as we've learned from other scriptures, these are the kingdoms in particular which are of interest to God and therefore of interest to us because they were to be used by God to discipline his earthly nation Israel. So, let us go back now to chapter two and comb through in a little finer detail. Chapter two. Again, verse 31. Thou, O King, saw'st, behold, a great image.

[00:24:06] Verse 32. This image's head was of fine gold. Verse 37. Thou, O King, art a king of kings, for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory, and wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the head of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. So, here we have it. Plain statement of scripture. Daniel speaking in the presence of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, is able to say plainly, now look, O King, this image that you saw, it begins with a picture of yourself. [00:25:10] You are the head of gold. And thou, O King, art a king of kings. Thou art this head of gold.

So, here we have it. Direct statement that the first kingdom to vanquish the kingdom of Judah as God's disciplinary measure, because they'd robbed God of 70 Sabbath years, was the kingdom of Babylon. Now, move over, please, to chapter 5 and verse 18.

Daniel speaking in the presence of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, [00:26:02] O thou King, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honor. And for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whom he would, he slew. And whom he would, he kept alive. And whom he would, he set up. And whom he would, he put down. Daniel speaking now to Belshazzar, the grandson, biologically, but in succession, the one who's now on the throne. Daniel says, Belshazzar, you haven't learned the lesson. What was the lesson? Kings, as the New Testament says, [00:27:12] kings are God's ministers for good, and for the punishment of evildoers.

Kings hold sway because God chooses that they should be there representatively on his behalf.

And if you want to understand God's idea of a kingdom, as to the principle on which it operates, chapter 5, verses 18 and 19 of the book of Daniel, give the kind of king, the kind of kingdom, the positional status, the system of government that is according to God. This is not the same [00:28:03] as saying that Nebuchadnezzar was the perfect king, anything but. But as a system of government, you have God in heaven, you have a man on earth chosen by God, enthroned, given absolute, undisputed sway, his word on behalf of God, held absolute sovereignty, as it says graphically, whom he would he slew, whom he would he left alive, whom he would he promoted, whom he would he demoted. His word was law. God says that's the kind of kingdom that will ultimately be extant on the face of the earth, but we must leave that for a moment. But as a system of government, this couldn't be better. This control in the hands of one man. [00:29:10] You and I are used to a system of democracy. Our minds are attuned to assume that it's right for everybody to have their say and it's wrong to have control concentrated in the hand of one person, a man. God says it's ideal, it's right, it's perfect for control to be held in the hands of one man, but it has to be the right man. So we have this picture of government as it should be. Chapter 7, verse 4. Verse 3 told us, four great beasts came up from the sea. Do you die, verse 1, from another. [00:30:06] The first was like a lion and had eagle's wings. I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked and it was lifted up from the earth and made stand upon the feet as a man and a man's heart was given to it. Now we aren't told which kingdom it is, but we know we've had it explained to Nebuchadnezzar, we've had it explained to Belshazzar, and this now speaking about the first kingdom gives us God's view of that first kingdom

and we know because scripture has told us it was the kingdom of Babylon. There is certainly majesty about the lion, the king of beasts. [00:31:06] There is certainly majesty about the eagle, the sovereign of the skies, which has its home in the most lofty eminence that a creature can have. That a creature can have. But speaking here of animals or birds of prey who live by devouring others, we have here a statement by God. Yes, the position is an exalted one given by God, but man's heart being what it is, it's lifted up in pride and takes to itself the glory that should [00:32:04] be God's. And in homely terms, chapter 7 verse 4 says it was necessary, it will be necessary, it would be necessary, it must be necessary that when the king got too exalted thoughts of himself, it was necessary for God to cut him down to size. That he was a mere man after all. And so we find this described in chapter 7 verse 4. That's about all the book of Daniel says about the first world empire.

We get details about how King Nebuchadnezzar [00:33:06] got exalted thoughts of himself and had to be disciplined personally by God. We learn how Belshazzar also had these lofty thoughts of self and again had to be brought to a summary end. But really, other than that, we don't get a lot about the kingdom because it was written about something that was existing at the time and was well known. So we move on. God overturned. This shall not continue. This cannot be allowed to proceed, God says, and I will take away the one and bring in another. Now what does scripture say [00:34:07] about this second one? Back to chapter 2. Again, verse 31 said, thou, O king, sawest and behold a great image. Verse 32, the middle of the verse says, his breast and his arms of silver. Verse 39, after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee.

That's interesting. Look it up in your Septuagint and you will probably expect to find that this is [00:35:03] another kingdom of the same sort, that these four kingdoms were going to be the same. In fact, it's not. It's another kingdom of a different sort, a different character. The only one of the four that's said to be God's style and God's system of government is the first one, the head of gold. But in responsibility, man always moves further and further away from God's thoughts. And in these four world empires, each one becomes stronger in material strength but less worthy in value. And that's according to God.

Well, let's turn over to chapter 7 and see what chapter 7 says about it. [00:36:05] Behold another beast, a second like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it. And they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh. Here again, it tells us a kingdom would vanquish the first one and that it would have the character of a bear which tears the flesh of its victim in a very cruel way. But that's about all that we learn except that there are three parts to it somewhere. Three ribs absorbed, taken into the mouth, and there is that connection. We have to move on to [00:37:01] chapter 8 in order that we might get an explanation of that. Chapter 8 verse 3, I lifted up mine eyes and saw. And behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns. And the two horns were high, but one was higher than the other. And the higher came up last. Chapter verse 6, the goat came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power. And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with collar against him, and smote the ram and break his two horns. And there was no power in [00:38:02] the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, stamped upon him. There was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand. Now this is explained in chapter 8 verse 20, the ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia. Now again you see, this is no interpretation by us. The first gentile kingdom that overpowered the kingdom of Judah was the kingdom of Babylon, ruled by Nebuchadnezzar and then eventually Belshazzar. Overturned overnight, vanquished, history tells us, by the Medes, who were in turn absorbed by the Persians. If we wanted to, perhaps we could see an indication of these three ribs, in that [00:39:05] the Babylonian

empire, absorbed by the Medes and then by the Persians, there were these three major elements to the kingdom, Babylon, Medes and Persia. There may or may not be a reference to that in the three ribs, but what we do learn in both the bear and the ram is that one side is more prominent than the other. In the bear, the shoulder, one shoulder is higher than the other, more prominent than the other. With the ram, we are told it has two horns and that the second, the later one to grow, becomes more prominent. Certainly, if we read the historical books and if we read the books of Ezra, Esther, Nehemiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, we certainly learn that this [00:40:09] joint empire, which became the Medes and the Persians, the earlier, the one more prominent earlier, was the kingdom of the Medes, but as time went on, the Persians became more prominent. Daniel, in his prophetic statements, was so exact under the constraint of the Holy Spirit that cynics ever since have said the prophecy is so accurate, so exact, it must have been written after the event, a tribute by the cynical unbeliever to the prophecy of God. Well, we learn here then that the ram with two horns is the kings of the Medes and the Persians, [00:41:05] and that defines it for us. Now, we must move on and we look back at chapter two. I have no apologies for taking you back again and again to the text of Holy Scripture. If we read books of ministry and if they are helpful, they are helpful because others on our behalf have gone through in the fine detail as we are hoping to demonstrate tonight. Chapter two, chapter two, verse 32. Partway through the verse, again, his belly and his thighs of brass. The third part of this image, again, stronger again in mechanical strength, [00:42:05] less worth in value. We move on to verse 39. Another third kingdom of brass, consistent with Ezekiel 21, consistent with the overall statement in chapter two, verses 31 and 32. Let's move on to chapter seven again. And verse six, after this, after the second kingdom, I beheld and lo another like a leopard which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl. The beast had also four heads and dominion was given to it. Chapter eight, verse five. As I was considering, behold and he goat came from the [00:43:10] west on the face of the whole earth and touched not the ground and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. And as we read from verses six and seven, he attacked and destroyed the ram, which we know is a picture of the kingdom of the Medes and Persians. Verse eight. Then the he goat waxed very great and when he was strong, the great horn was broken and for it came up four notable ones toward the four kings of heaven. I think we leave that at that for the moment. Except that we read verse 21, the rough goat is the king of Grecia and the great horn that is [00:44:15] between his eyes is the first king. I'd been listening to ministry, good ministry, for many years when it was explained to me that the first three kingdoms were Babylon, the Medes and the Persians, and Greece. And it was a long time before the penny dropped with me that these are the plain statements of scripture. I'm not relying upon the interpretation of others, however spiritual they may be. We are told in the text before the event that first of all, Babylon would enslave the kingdom of Judah. Then the kingdom of the Medes and Persians would take [00:45:06] over. And then this king of great tenacity and tremendous rapidity of movement, the things that characterized the first king of Greece, this Grecian empire, Alexander the Great, as history speaks of him, the thing that took people's breath away was the speed with which he operated. This leopard with four wings. But we learn also that there is another inference with the four wings and the four heads. That is, that acting on behalf of Alexander the Great, he had four deputies as we would speak of them, four generals looking after his armed forces. And we've read in the chapters that this notable king, having destroyed the kingdom of the Medes [00:46:12] and Persians, having taken over their empire into his, he coming from the West, again remember your geography, relative to the land of Palestine, he came from the West, he absorbed all the Medes and Persian empire, and then we read, when he was at the zenith of his power, he was struck down. Again, he went too far. God says, yes, I'll use you, but go farther than I say, and you yourself will be disciplined. In turn, the kingdom of Babylon, the kingdom of the Medes and Persians, and ultimately [00:47:01] the kingdom of Greece. The sad record of history is that at the age of 32, Alexander looked around and he says, he wept, there was nothing left for him to conquer. He got himself into a drunken

orgy and he died. What a sorry end to such an amazing start in his to such an amazing start in his adult life. What a commentary upon what man does with power that God puts into his hand. If the Lord will, we'll take this a step further tomorrow night and we'll see what scripture says [00:48:05] about the fourth kingdom, but let us absorb for the moment that everything that has happened so far has been stated and interpreted in the scriptures for us. We can see it and accept it as the word of God, and it's plainly stated, and then, if the Lord will, when we extrapolate from this, when we move on from what is interpreted by scripture, having learned the principles, we can use the same lessons and learn what God wants us to learn about the fourth kingdom, but we'll have to leave it there for the moment.