

MARCH OF EMPIRE - LECTURES ON THE BOOK OF DANIEL

by Floyd Hitchcock

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CHAPTER 1

Introductory Lesson – The Babylonian Captivity

LESSON TEXT -- Daniel 1:1-21

Daniel, a Book of Bible Prophecy -- A Personal Word -- The Importance of Bible Prophecy -- Only the Ignorant or Godless Object to a Study and Preaching of Prophecy -- The Authentication of the Book of Daniel Was Confirmed by JESUS CHRIST -- The Personal History of Daniel -- The Babylonian Captivity of the Jews Had Been Prophecied -- The Real Reason Why GOD Allowed Such a Captivity to Happen.

Like the Book of Revelation, the Book of Daniel is primarily a book of prophecy. Some of the prophecies in the Book, however, have already been fulfilled, and have become history, while other prophecies recorded in the Book are still future and await fulfillment.

I am accused sometimes of preaching too much on the subject of prophecy, but so long as others neglect to preach upon this important subject, and just as long as I find the material for my sermons, in the Word of GOD, I feel that I am standing upon a sure foundation and that I am doing the Lord's will regardless of any criticism which men may bring against my ministry of GOD's word. Surely, GOD intended that all of His Word should be preached and not merely a certain portion of it. That, my friends, is exactly what I am trying to do. Without fear or favor, I am trying to preach the entire Word of GOD to Jews, Gentiles and Christians alike.

The importance of prophecy is well affirmed in II Peter 1:19-21, where it says, "**We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.**"

Understanding these things, it is my firm conviction that GOD will bless any preacher who will preach on the subject of prophecy, and give to the people what they need rather than what they want. Few people realize that a greater portion of the Bible is pure prophecy. This applies to both the Old and the New Testaments. Certainly the Book of Daniel was necessary or it would never have been written, and if we neglect to study it, the truth of the book will

remain the same, and we will only be robbing ourselves of the spiritual light and truth which GOD intended that we should have.

JESUS SPOKE OFTEN OF THE FUTURE

Some people, in their thinking, live only in the present. Others, while living in the present, love to think and meditate upon the past, but, how few people there are, who really seem to be interested in the things of the future. When JESUS was upon earth, He more than any other Man who ever lived, (as the Son of GOD and the PROPHET of the Lord) spoke continually to the people and to His disciples about the things of the future. He cried out prophecies against the scribes and Pharisees because of their sins and their wickedness and that was the reason they hated Him. When He told His disciples and the multitudes, of the glorious things which were in store for those who would believe and obey the Word of GOD, that was the reason they loved and trusted in Him. We can readily see, therefore, that the faithful and believing children of GOD do not object to a study of prophecy, because it increases their faith and encourages them in hope, and gives them a vision of things which are yet to come. But the godless and the wicked and unbelieving, and the unprepared, are those who object to the study and teaching of the prophetic Scriptures because it makes them uneasy in their hearts concerning what the future may bring forth.

We affirm, therefore, that the Book of Daniel is both, important and needful, especially for those of us who are living in these times, for Daniel was more than anyone else the great prophet to the Gentiles.

THE AUTHORSHIP OF THIS BOOK CONFIRMED

The authenticity of the Book of Daniel is confirmed by the fact that JESUS Himself gave His personal endorsement of Daniel and the things which he had written. This is confirmed in Matthew 24:15-16, where JESUS said, "**When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand;) Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains.**"

Indeed, my friends, if JESUS gave His personal endorsement to the author of this book, which we are about to study, and spoke of him as a true prophet, and endorsed the things which he had written, I am willing to accept the truth which it contains, in spite of all the higher criticism which modern critics have brought against the book in order to discredit its teachings.

THE PERSONAL HISTORY AND CHARACTER OF DANIEL

A few remarks concerning the personality of Daniel will be of interest and help, I am sure.

It so happens that we know more of the personal character of Daniel than we do of any of the other prophets. We must say first of all that he was a great man of faith as indicated throughout the entire Book of Daniel. All children know the story of how Daniel was cast into the lions' den and how he escaped unhurt because of the great faith he had in GOD.

He was also a man who realized his dependence upon GOD. He was also deeply spiritual and was a man of great humility. In addition to this he was a man of great prayer. During his lifetime he talked not only with men of high estate, but he also talked with angels who were sent of GOD, to speak with him. The angel Gabriel addressed Daniel as the "man greatly beloved." In addition to all this, he received divine revelations from GOD as recorded in the Book which bears his name.

AN INTERESTING QUESTION

In the New Analytical Bible it says, quoting, "The study of Daniel is invested with a special interest, in that we know more of his personal history than of any other prophet. He was of royal descent.

"While Jeremiah was being persecuted by the people and priests in the reign of Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem and carried away Daniel and others (606 B.C.). In the following year he ascended the throne of Babylon. Daniel was then about eighteen years of age and could not have been much younger than Nebuchadnezzar himself. Thus, this prophet lived through the entire period of the Captivity and was an old man when placed in a high position in the Persian Empire.

"Daniel is pre-eminently the prophet of the '**times of the Gentiles.**' In this book of prophecy, we have a new view of the world-order as it is not given by any other prophet. This book is distinctly different from any other book of the Old Testament in the manner in which it sets forth Gentile rule, from the rise of the Babylonian Empire, through the four universal empires, and to the time of the establishment of Messiah's kingdom. It is this historical picture, having such remarkable scope, that is hung up for us in the book of Daniel.

"In His great prophetic discourse in which He sketched the peculiarities of the age, to the time of His second coming, Our Lord quoted Daniel with reference to the great tribulation, placing that event just prior to the second advent. Thus, from CHRIST's interpretation of this prediction, we can see the historical range of the prophet's inspired vision."

NEW TESTAMENT PROPHECY

Dr. Scofield also says, "Daniel is the indispensable introduction to the New Testament prophecy, the themes of which are, the apostasy of the Church, the manifestation of the man of sin, the great tribulation, the return of the Lord, the resurrections, and the judgments! These, except for the first, are Daniel's themes also.

LESSON TEXT Daniel 1:1-21

We are now ready to read our lesson text, which of necessity, due to the nature of the material given, will include the first chapter of the Book of Daniel which says:

"In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah

into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god. And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king. Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego.

But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king. Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants. So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days. And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat. Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse.

As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king. And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm. And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus"

THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY PROPHECIED

This chapter is very interesting because it gives us a personal history of Daniel and his fellow captives. The circumstances which we find recorded here are all the more interesting in view of what is stated in Isaiah 39:7, where it says, "**And of thy sons, that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace**

of the king of Babylon."

Thus we see that what came to pass was a fulfillment of this prophecy given earlier by the Lord through the prophet Isaiah.

WHAT JEREMIAH SAID

The Prophet Jeremiah also foretold the Babylonian captivity when he spoke of the vessels of the Lord which belonged to the temple in Jerusalem in Jeremiah 27:21-22, saying, **"Yea, thus saith the Lord of hosts, the GOD of Israel, concerning the vessels that remain in the house of the Lord, and in the house of the king of Judah and of Jerusalem; They shall be carried to Babylon, and there shall they be, until the day that I visit them, saith the Lord; then will I bring them up, and restore them to this place."**

THE REAL REASON

Many people study about the Babylonian captivity and fail to understand the divine reason for it.

In the 26th Chapter of Leviticus we have recorded the law of the sabbatic, year, in which the Children of Israel were instructed to let the land rest every seventh year. During that year they were neither to sow nor reap but were to live by the old store which GOD had provided for them during the six years. But for 490 years which would include a total of seventy sabbatic years, they failed to do this. Apparently, they thought they would prosper by disobeying the Lord and by tilling the ground contrary to the Lord's command.

For a time it seemed as if GOD had given no attention to this trespass and disobedience. They thought GOD had winked at their sin, but in this they were mistaken, for in due time GOD allowed King Nebuchadnezzar to come and take them into Babylonian captivity, which captivity lasted for seventy years, which was exactly time enough to balance the budget, as it were. They refused to let the land rest one year in seven and therefore, GOD allowed them to be dispossessed of the land until their trespass was atoned for.

IDOLATRY

Another reason GOD allowed them to be taken into Babylonian captivity was because they had fallen into idolatry. Historically speaking, all idolatry had originated in Babylon. Therefore, Babylon was the fountainhead of all idolatrous systems of worship. GOD allowed the Children of Israel to be taken captive into Babylon and to remain there for seventy years, in order that He might teach them once and for all the sinfulness of their own idolatry. Needless to say, they learned their lesson well, for since their return from Babylonian captivity, the Jewish people have never been an idolatrous people, as before.

And so, in this lesson we have discovered a real reason for the Babylonian captivity, at which time Daniel and his fellow princes were carried into Babylon.

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