

God's Crystal Ball

Daniel Overview

(preached Pine Grove 10/4/15; Sunday PM)

Introduction

Last year in the US alone, over 2 billion dollars was spent on psychic hotlines...

TWO BILLION DOLLARS on people who claim to know your future, but actually know as much about your future as you do...

That does not take it to account people who go to palm readers or fortune tellers or astrologers.

And unfortunately, many of those people would also identify themselves as Christians..

Yet, they pay good money to folks who are phonies and cons and who make a living telling lies.

Now, do crystal balls actually tell of coming events?

Is the future found in tarot cards?

I guess if you had a crystal ball with verses out of Revelation or Ezekiel or Daniel written on them, you could say that they told the future...

Or if you have tarot cards with Scripture on them, you could say that let you know what coming next..

But other than that, these things and the people who claim to hold the future are to be avoided by all believers in Jesus Christ...

The truth of the Bible is that God alone knows the future.

Now, that comes with an asterisk because God has revealed some part of the future to us in the Bible.

In fact, a great portion of the Bible is prophetic, which means that many verses were written that were at the time predictions of the future.

The birth, the life, the death, the resurrection of Jesus were all spoken of years, if centuries before they actually occurred.

If you remember the promise to Adam and Eve way back in Genesis 3 after they fell into sin when God promised that One was coming to crush the head of the serpent.

In a sense that was a prophecy and prediction of the coming of the Lord Jesus who defeated Satan in part at the cross...

But even that prediction hasn't fully come to pass until Satan is cast in the lake of fire at a still future date even from our day...

And so the Bible is filled with this kind of prophecy.

In fact, one proof of the truth of the Bible that you should carry around with you when someone says that Bible is "just another book of man..."

Is that one evidence that the Bible is supernatural is found in the fact that the Bible predicts the future and the predictions found in it come true...

Though people disagree over the specific number, it is safe to say Jesus fulfilled over 300 prophecies when he came to earth the first time.

And there are even more prophecies about Jesus that await fulfillment...

But the Bible just doesn't predict events around the life, death, and resurrection of Christ...

It also predicts the rise of an anti-Christ...

It predicts the destruction of cities.

It predicts global catastrophes.

The book of Daniel is a prime example of this characteristic of Scripture...

Because in the book of Daniel, God is going to look into his crystal ball and predict with 100% accuracy the course of world events..

From the time of Daniel forward...

He is going to begin with the story of the Gentiles in the world and He is going to end with the story of Israel in the world.

And as we are able to look backwards over the words of the God in Daniel...

Guess what we are able to see?

What God said would happen actually happened...

We will look at the details of that in a minute...

But let's set the stage for the book of Daniel...

IF you were here last week, this is a very familiar context as Daniel writes around the same time as Ezekiel.

You can see from our timeline that Ezekiel and Daniel were about the same age and wrote to the same audience..

They were both writing to Judah, who had been taken to Babylon.

If you remember from last week, the Babylonians were a major world power around the time of Ezekiel and Daniel...

And they were on the march.

They had destroyed the other world power of Assyria in 612 BC....

Then they destroyed the Egyptians and finally set their sites on destroying Israel, which they did in 3 stages...

The first stage of the defeat came in 605 BC when Daniel was taken captive back to Babylon..

The second stage of the defeat came in 597 BC when Ezekiel and 10000 others were taken back to Babylon.

And the final stage of the defeat occurred in 586 BC when Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians...

And so with each defeat, more and more Jews were taken back to Babylon..

You can see the map of the exile up here...

And though God removed them from the land
because of their sin...

He did not remove His Word from them because he
continued to speak through his prophets to them.

Now, Ezekiel writes in a little different fashion from
Daniel.

Even though both speak God's Word to His people
who are exiled in Babylon.

WE saw in Ezekiel last week that God used him to
remind the people of the sin that led them into
exile..

And then to tell them that they would not be in exile
forever but that God would one day restore them to
the land.

Daniel is going to serve a different purpose in
communicating God's Word to the people in
exile...

Because Daniel is going to write about actual events
that occur while he is in exile in Babylon...

And then he is going to use those events to
encourage Israel that God is not through with them
as a nation.

The truth is that the Gentile nations would dominate the world but Israel would never be fully eliminated from God's plans...

You see here is the big picture of Israel...

God had desired to use the nation to bring forth his kingdom in to the world...

But they had failed to live up to their end of the agreement.

They had disobeyed God, and now they had been removed from their land.

Yet, Israel's failure did mean that God failed.

Even in their disobedience, God was still at work to bring his Kingdom plan to pass...

And Daniel is going to spend a great portion of this book telling Israel how God is going to work it all out to perfection.

For Israel in exile in Babylon, it may have looked like God's plan was unravelling, but to God everything was working according to His plan...

And Israel needed the assurance that God was in control even when it looked God had lost control...

And Daniel is going to be the voice of assurance
when things aren't looking so good for them...

So, lets dig into Daniel tonight...

The outline is up here on the screen...

And we will begin in verse 1....

By looking at...

I. God's Plan for Daniel (1)

When Jerusalem and Judah began to be taken away to Babylon in exile, the king of Babylon (Nebuchadnezzar) acted wisely.

He wanted to train some young men of Israel the customs of his kingdom, so then they could teach it to Jews in exile.

Now, the principle of this is simple.

People taken out of a foreign land need to become good citizens of their new land...

And they need to be taught the language and customs of the new land so that they learn to love their new surroundings...

And become less like to rebel one day against the government of their new land.

Now, to do this, Nebuchadnezzar picked some young men who were healthy looking and pleasing to the eye...

And he trained them, and the hope is that other Jews would see these very respectable men and be willing to listen to them and learn the culture of Babylon.

Daniel was one of the men that Nebuchadnezzar selected along with 3 others who we know as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Now, we know that God is the one who ordained these men for this task...

And what you are going to find out about these young men is that they are mature beyond their years...

Because all of these young men are going to act with great courage for the Lord.

Today, we miss the mark on what it means to be courageous...

Teens today are seen as courageous if they will attempt to do dangerous stunts...

Or take part in meaningless activities that no one else will do...

However, true courage risks life and limb to do the work of the LORD no matter the cost...

And that is exactly what these young men will do...

Let me read verse 17 of chapter 1 because this is always important to remember as we look at what are often called heroes of the Bible...

Here is what verse 17 says about these young men...

17 As for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every branch of [q]literature and wisdom.

And because of their intelligence and wisdom, Daniel and his friends won the respect of the king...

And that is coming to come in handy as we move to chapter 2...

Which is outline point #2...

We have seen God's Plan for Daniel, now let's look at

II. God's Plan for the Gentiles (2-7)

A. A King Who Had Problems (2-4)

Chapter 2 is the story of the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar, the king.

He has a dream one night, but he doesn't know what it means, so he calls in his physics and fortune tellers and magicians...

And he asks them to interpret the dream...

They say to him...

“Well, tell us what the dream was and we will tell you the interpretation..”

Nebuchadnezzar says “Not so fast. First, you tell me what the dream was if you can “see” all things”.

Ans if you can tell me what the dream was, I will trust your interpretation...

(I like his style.)

But none of them can do that because they are all phonys, liars and con artists...

So, Nebuchadnezzar tells his men to go out and kill all the “wise men” of the kingdom.

And since Daniel and his friends would be considered wise men, they would be killed as well..

So Daniel gets together with his friends, and they decide to beg God to tell them what the dream was..

God answers their prayer and reveals the dream to Daniel.

The men are relieved to have an answer for the king, but I want you to notice what they did first..

Look at Daniel 2:19...

19 Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven;

There's a great lesson for us..

How often does God answer our prayers, yet He is the last one that we thank for what has happened...

He must always be first and last out list of who needs to be thanked...

And in the verse that follow in chapter 2 from verse 20 to verse 23, Daniel gives one of the greatest descriptions of God in the entire Bible...

20 Daniel said,

*“Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever,
For wisdom and power belong to Him.*

21

*“It is He who changes the times and the epochs;
He removes kings and [ab]establishes kings;
He gives wisdom to wise men
And knowledge to [ac]men of understanding.*

22

*“It is He who reveals the profound and hidden
things;
He knows what is in the darkness,
And the light dwells with Him.*

23

*“To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and
praise,
For You have given me wisdom and power;
Even now You have made known to me what we
requested of You,
For You have made known to us the king’s
matter.”*

After Daniel blesses the Lord, he goes off to find Nebuchadnezzar to tell him what the dream was and to offer the interpretation of the dream...

And I don't have time to look at the dream in complete detail..

But the king had a dream about a statue, and that statue represented the Gentile kingdoms that would rule over Israel until the end of time....

When God would set His kingdom on the earth to destroy all the others...

Let me sum it up for you in this way...

What Nebuchadnezzar saw in the dream, and what Daniel said about the dream have come to pass with perfect accuracy...

The kingdoms represented in the dream have all risen and fallen from power...

The remnants of the feet remain and they will be strengthened in the final days, but God will then destroy them with the return of Jesus...

To establish his kingdom upon the earth...

Now, an interesting thing happens after Nebuchadnezzar has the dream and hears the interpretation...

Now, the point of the dream was meant to show that no kingdoms of the world will survive, but that God's kingdom will be established forever...

And I know that Nebuchadnezzar praises Daniel and his God after the interpretation...

But I can't help but think that Nebuchadnezzar could never get past the end of verse 38 in chapter 2..

Where Daniel had told him that he was the head of gold..

Because guess what?

That statement literally went to his head..

And in chapter 3, he orders that a golden statue be built of himself...

And he then orders everyone in the kingdom to worship it every day...

You would think that after the dream and the interpretation, he would be requiring everyone to worship Daniel's God...

But just the opposite happened, he made himself into a god and demanded that all honor him..

Well, this is the chapter where we get to see the courage of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Because they are going to refuse to bow down and worship the statue.

Nebuchadnezzar is then going to order them to be thrown into a fiery furnace...

But the only thing that is going to burn in that furnace are the cords that has been used to tie them up...

So far, God has shown Nebuchadnezzar that there's a problem with his kingdom...

It is isn't going to last forever because God is sovereign over all things..

Then God showed him that there's a problem when he tries to kill God's people..

That isn't going to work because God is sovereign even in the fire..

But there is one more problem that Nebuchadnezzar is going to find...

His power was no match for God's power...

Because in chapter 4 as Nebuchadnezzar's pride began to rise, God turned him into a beast of the field for a number of years...

Until Nebuchadnezzar came to his senses and acknowledged that God was the one who was truly in charge of all things...

And not himself...

I love his words in 4:34-35...

34 “But at the end of [ag]that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my [ah]reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom endures from generation to generation.

35

“All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can [ai]ward off His hand Or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’

As a side note, I believe that we will see Nebuchadnezzar in heaven...

Folks disagree about this, but I see a change in him that demonstrates his belief in the God of the Universe...

And I think he went to be with the Lord when his days were done..

B. A King Who Had Bigger Problems (5)

Though Nebuchadnezzar had problems, his successor, Belshazzar, had bigger problems...

In chapter 5, we meet Belshazzar, as he is holding a banquet for all his men..

Nebuchadnezzar had been dead about two years at this point, and Belshazzar is busy partying it up in Babylon.

The kingdom appears to be in good hands or so he thought...

And so, the king orders his servants to bring out the gold vessels...

When Babylon had destroyed Jerusalem, they ravaged the temple and took all the gold in it.

At this party, Belshazzar is feeling good, and he wants to drink from the gold cups...

His servant goes and gets them, and verse 4 of chapter 5 says that the people at the party drank

from the golden vessels and praised the gods of gold and silver...

Listen to this closely...

God gives us gifts to enjoy...

And He is glorified when we use those gifts to glorify Him...

But we take that gifts and twist them to satisfy ourself, God is not pleased.

That is what perversion truly means...

To take God's gifts and use them in ways that don't honor Him..

Your life is the greatest example of this...

You were given life in order to use that life to worship God, serve God, and point others to Him..

When you take your life and use it in ways that don't honor the Lord, you are perverting God's design for your life...

And God is not pleased...

These cups were a gift of God designed to be enjoyed by people who were celebrating God's goodness...

And not only did Belshazzar take the cups, he used them while praising other gods...

If you are wondering, This isn't a good move. :)

Almost immediately in one of the strongest passages in the Bible...

A hand appears and writes on the wall where the party is being held.

Belshazzar doesn't know what it means, so Daniel is called back in interpret the writing on the wall.

Daniel tells the king that his time as ruler of Babylon is up...

And the time for the Babylonian kingdom is also up...

And that very night, Belshazzar is killed and the Medo-Persian kingdom destroys the Babylonians...

And right there in verse 30 of chapter 5, we see the head of gold in Nebuchadnezzar's dream give way to the breast and arms of silver...

30 That same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain. 31 So Darius the Mede received the kingdom at about the age of sixty-two.

Verse 30 changes the course of world history as the Medo-Persians rise to power in the world..

This is going to good news for the Jews because the Persians are going to allow the Jews to return to their land...

And though it is good news for Daniel, he gets some bad news first in chapter 6...

C. A Prophet Who Had a Bigger King (6-7)

The king of the Medo-Persians passed a law that no one can pray to no other gods..

Since Daniel is a man of prayer and must first obey His God, he continues praying to the God of the Scriptures..

The officials of the government find out and Daniel is cast into a lion's den...

We all know the Sunday School story of how Daniel is protected from the lions and comes out the next morning with not even a scratch.

After God's miraculous protection of Daniel, King Darius passes a law that all people are to temple and fear before Daniel's God...

And that leads to the protection of the Jews under this new kingdom...

And the stage is set for the Jews to return to their land..

That ends section two of the book of Daniel...

God has used this first section to show how the Gentile kingdom will relate to Israel...

But now God will turn his attention to the nation of Israel...

And for the remainder of the book, Daniel will write about what will happen to God's people until God establishes His kingdom upon the earth...

All of this begins in chapter 7 as we begin to see....

III. God's Plan for Israel (7-12)

A. A Series of Visions (7-9)

Men have spent their entire life studying the visions of Daniel 7-12 and I get 10 minutes to explain all of this to you..

I have spent some time in year's past studying these chapters in depth..

And here is what I will say...

People get distracted by all the images and fail to miss the truth of what this teaches...

In chapter 7, Daniel goes back to a vision that God gave him some time earlier while Nebuchadnezzar was still king...

And his vision was very similar to Nebuchadnezzar's statue.

Daniel saw the same kingdom except he saw them represented by creatures and not metals in a statue..

And he saw how all the kingdoms related to Israel, with special attention to the final kingdom that will rise against Israel..

And Daniel was given a vision of the ruler who will persecute Israel that is found in the iron and clay of Nebuchadnezzar's feet..

That kingdom was made of iron and clay, and it represents a Roman Empire that is still future to us this day...

And over that revived Roman empire will arise an Anti-Christ who will persecute Israel....

I think we see him in Daniel 7:8 for the very first time in the Scriptures...

8 While I was contemplating the horns, behold, another horn, a little one, came up among them, and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it; and behold, [g]this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth uttering great boasts.

In my opinion, that is still a future ruler who has yet to be revealed...

But then for the remainder of the chapter, Daniel goes back in time to look at all the rulers of the other kingdoms that will come before that final Roman Empire...

Then in chapter 8, we read of another vision that Daniel had...

The contents of this vision are very similar to his vision of chapter 7 but with some added details about how these kingdoms will rise and fall...

And that brings us to chapter 9 which is concerned with the timing of all these events...

Daniel is concerned about how long will it take for all of the historical events to take place...

And if you think about it, Daniel had just witnessed how fast things could change..

He had witnessed the fall of Babylon and the rise of the Persia..

His concern is how much time does Israel have to repent and return to God?

He wanted to know what was next...

And in chapter 9, the angel Gabriel comes to Daniel and tells him one of the most debated phrases in all of the Bible in Daniel 9:24...

24 “Seventy [t]weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to [u]finish the transgression, to [v]make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting

***righteousness, to seal up vision and [w]prophecy
and to anoint the most holy place.***

We don't have time to look at every part of this
verse...

But let me say this...

Gabriel gave Daniel a definite period here...

70 weeks...which means 70 periods of 7 years...

or 490 years..

And in those 490 years, you will find the future of
the people of Israel...

We can talk about that more at a later date, or if you
have questions come to me later...

But here is the summary...

69 sets of those 7 year periods have passed...

From our perspective, there is one 7 year period
remaining in what God will do with Israel...

And that 7 year period is known as the Tribulation
which is described in the book of Revelation...

In those 7 years, Israel will come to faith in Christ..

The Bible says that they will look on Him whom they pierced and realize that that Jesus was the One sent to save them...

And in that day, Israel will repent and believe in Christ...

And all of that is contained in the time frame that Daniel received in chapter 9.

B. A Promise of Victory (10-12)

All of those 7 year periods are then explained to Daniel in more detail in chapters 10 - 12...

The 69 sets of seven years are explained more full in chapter 11...

And then in chapters 11 and 12, Daniel is given more detail about that final 7 year period that we call the 7 year tribulation period.

Again, there is loads of good information in these verses...

I would certainly encourage you to read them...

I can offer you some resources that will help with some of the difficulty of the symbolic language.

Daniel is to the OT what Revelation is the NT.

It is the plan of God revealed to God's people in His own words...

And let me say this...

People shy away from Revelation and from Daniel and even from the studies of the end times..

And that is a shame because we are all truly psychics if we read the Bible...

We are the only ones who truly have the ability to predict the future...

We can look at books like Daniel and Revelation and we can see where the world is headed with incredible accuracy...

Can see every world event that is coming?

No, but we can see some major ones and we can spots the trends that are happening right before our eyes even today...

In a day and age where unbelievers ask questions like...

Where is this world headed?

We need to be able to point them to books like Daniel and Revelation and be able to share some of the truths taught here...

And tell them that God is in control and that nothing is not happening in the world that HE didn't plan to occur...

And that the Bible can be trusted because it predicts the future with 100%...

IT has in the past and it will until the very end...

And it also speaks about their personal future as well...

And it predicts with 100% accuracy where they will be in 100 years as well...

The Bible is not a book of the past.

And God is not the God of the past..

He is the God of the past, present and future, and we find much comfort in that in uncertain times.

Let us pray...