

DANIEL

Week 2, Intro part 2

As we continue in our extensive preparation to study the Book of Daniel, I would like to reiterate that the reason for so many commentaries written on Daniel that vary wildly in their interpretations and their conclusions is because of the commentator's fundamental theology. And the pre-eminent theology of the modern era commentators has been that Daniel is a wonderful piece of fiction, written by a pious Jew about 165 B.C. Therefore the so-called predictions that Daniel makes in his book were actually events that had already happened. The writer merely wrote in the literary *style* of biblical prophecy, designed to make it appear to the reader that in fact this had been written centuries earlier thus fancifully making Daniel a seer of the future: a prophet.

The ripple effect of this belief upon Christian doctrines is serious and its tentacles spread out in many directions. Last week we found ourselves faced with the question of why Daniel remains as part of our Bible if in fact it has been determined by our greatest Bible academics and the majority of our Christian Seminaries to be a forgery. But even more, it is self-evident that if Daniel is a forgery then even Christ was taken in because He quotes Daniel as Scripture, by name, in Matthew 24:15.

Mathew 24:15-16 CJB

¹⁵ ***"So when you see the abomination that causes devastation spoken about through the prophet Dani'el standing in the Holy Place" (let the reader understand the allusion),***

¹⁶ ***"that will be the time for those in Y'hudah to escape to the hills.***

Further Daniel's concepts are sprinkled around the New Testament and are foundational to the Book of Revelation. So if Daniel is false, that makes Jesus highly suspect, and essentially destroys any credibility for the reliability of the Book of Revelation. So there is a great deal we must explore just to achieve a sufficient baseline understanding before we can legitimately BEGIN to study Daniel. Stick with me; without the knowledge we're gaining in this Introduction, studying Daniel won't be nearly as fruitful.

So is there some strong evidence, or perhaps a dagger-through-the-heart that proves that

Daniel is indeed a work of fiction? In a word, no. The controversy and skepticism stems from the inherent nature of Theology itself and especially Systematic Theology; these are humanly devised systems that require agreement between God's nature and our human logic and reason. If certain words, passages, chapters and even entire books from the Holy Scripture don't meet this test of human intellect then they are deemed false. Beginning in the early 1700's, when the European Enlightenment burst upon the scene, the fundamental biblical Judeo-Christian concepts of divine miracles, the supernatural, and of predictive prophecy came under fierce attack until today all 3 of those concepts are soundly rejected within many Christian academies. Therefore the bulk of Biblical commentaries written since the late 1800's (written primarily by scholars from the so-called Biblical Criticism school of discipline) begin with the firm, unwavering premise that there are NO SUCH THINGS as miracles, prophecy, or the spirit realm.

If none of you had ever read any of the Daniel commentaries, or ever heard church teaching on Daniel or Revelation, or read any of the many books and novels written about the End Times, we probably could just start studying Daniel without any significant introduction (like what we're having). However almost all of you have; therefore part of my task, and what I must ask of you, is to be ready to undo some of what you assume you know about this extraordinarily pivotal bible Book that has been so terribly miscast and mischaracterized. And what has caused this problem is Modern Systematic Theology, especially as it regards End Times doctrines (called Eschatology, the subject of the Book of Daniel).

Therefore before we can intelligently and honestly undertake a study of Daniel, we need to be familiarized with certain aspects of Systematic Theology (something every Christian denomination adheres to in one form or another). Otherwise we wind up in the same untenable position we do when we study the latest books of the Bible, the New Testament, before having good understanding about the earlier and foundational books of the Bible, the Old Testament. We have no context, historical or spiritual, for understanding them. Thus, today, we are confronted with a confusion of theological doctrines that run off in all directions.

So how did we get here from there? This is part of what we must learn so that we are prepared not only for proper study of Daniel, but for proper application of Daniel. The worldview, and thus the beliefs and practices, of Christianity has undergone substantial transformations since its founding as a sect of Jews who followed the Galilean Rabbi Yeshua of Nazareth, believing Him to be the Messiah that God promised the Hebrew people. The first many thousand Believers were Jews; but following Yeshua's death on the cross the gospel message was taken to gentiles. Its acceptance accelerated and gentile church leadership emerged but with a Hellenistic, as opposed to a Jewish, worldview. That is generally speaking the world of Yeshua's day and for 400 years afterward was a Roman world. A world that primarily spoke Greek and demanded that members of the Roman Empire (which represented most of the known world at that time) adhere to a Greco-Roman culture that has since been given the academic name of Hellenism. However in the midst of this vast desert of Hellenistic culture an oasis of Jews in the Holy Land held-on to their own and different ancient Hebrew culture,

although it was badly damaged and waning in its purity.

Thus when Greek speaking citizens of the Roman Empire began leading segments of this new Jesus movement that was first called "The Way", they naturally approached it from their Roman worldview. That is, they injected Roman culture into it, mostly unconsciously. Paul was the leading Jewish missionary tasked with the job of taking the Good News to the people of the Roman Empire. Thus he adopted techniques and terminology that enabled him to communicate and to connect with mostly non-Jews who had little familiarity with Hebrew culture. It was easier for Paul to do that than for the rest of Jesus' Jewish disciples because Paul wasn't born and raised in the Holy Land like they were. Rather he came from Tarsus, a city in the Western Roman Empire. So he was steeped in Hellenistic culture and was comfortable operating within it.

At first the bulk of these non-Jews who accepted Christ were folks known as God-fearers; a term meaning they had adopted the God of Israel, worshipped alongside Diaspora Jews in Synagogues of various Roman towns and cities, however they generally did NOT have any desire to become national Jews. They remained gentiles; they merely adopted Yehoveh (and now Yeshua) as their God and Savior.

The Book of Acts reveals the deep tensions that erupted between the Jewish faction of the Jesus movement based in Jerusalem and run by Yeshua's half-brother James, over and against the gentile faction based in the many Roman Provinces (the group of congregations that Paul had established). But within 30 years after Messiah's death so many gentiles joined the fold and they were located in the Greek-speaking Roman Empire, that they wanted more authority within the movement. They wanted what began as a Jewish sect to morph into something that worked more in line with their existing gentile Hellenistic culture.

It seems they got their way sooner than later. James was executed in 62 A.D. and that greatly weakened the Jerusalem based leadership. But then 8 years later Jerusalem was decimated and the Temple destroyed by the Romans in reprisal for a Jewish rebellion against them. The Messianic Jewish leadership of the Way in Jerusalem was essentially dissolved and so the leaders of the various so-called churches in the Roman Empire became the new de facto leaders of Christianity. Rapidly their goal became to distance themselves from as much Jewish cultural influence as possible. Early in the 2nd century A.D., assemblies of gentile Believers began calling themselves Christians (an offshoot of the Greek Word for Messiah which is Christos), as opposed to the first Jerusalem-based Believers who called themselves either The Way or Nazarenes. And these gentile Christian leaders were less inclined to have association with Jewish Synagogues. They began meeting instead in house churches, and some grew in number sufficiently to where a building was needed. By around 200 A.D. we have the first evidence of dedicated non-Jewish houses of worship that we could probably rightly characterize as churches.

Early in the 4th Century A.D. the newest Roman Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity, and at the Christian Council of Nicea what had been a mixed bag of ad hoc policies and traditions developed by the many independent church assemblies became codified into a list of firm doctrines (that they called canons) that all churches located in the Roman Empire were expected to adhere to. Thus we have the birth of the Roman Catholic Church. One of the fundamental doctrines was that one had to be a gentile to have membership. Thus while a Jew, theoretically, could join the church they had to essentially give up their Jewishness. The Biblical Feasts were outlawed. Passover was eliminated and replaced by Easter. The Sabbath was abolished, and instead Sunday worship was adopted as the legal requirement. The Greek New Testament, first created a bit after 200 A.D., was adopted as the authorized Christian Bible and the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament) was pushed to the background and rendered as generally irrelevant because it was too Jewish.

And yet despite all this, and most likely because it became the official religion of the Roman Empire thanks to Constantine, Christianity spread like an uncontrollable wildfire. This essentially fulfilled a number of prophecies that predicted that gentiles would become the vehicle to spread the Gospel of Messiah to the 4 corners of the planet. So despite the Church's hateful position towards the Jewish people, the dismissal of the Old Testament, the formation of doctrines that bore little resemblance to Biblical commandments, and a tendency to turn the Jewish Yeshua into the gentile Jesus, we can say that with rarest exception the Great Commission was carried out; the Good News has now been taken to our entire planet. And it was brought about almost exclusively by the gentile Church.

From around the 6th century A.D. to the late 1800's the primary aims of Christianity were to inject Christianity into the political realm of nations and states, and to ward off any threat of religious competition as with Islam. Making new Believers was usually, with only a few exceptions, a back-burner goal.

Since the late 1950's and early 1960's, there has been a decided transformation within Christianity, whereby special attention has been paid to evangelism. The so-called Jesus Movement sprung from this and like all faith-based movements it had both negative and positive effects on Christianity. First, every effort was made to make God more attractive to the unwashed. Jesus evolved from our Lord and Master, to our buddy and life's co-pilot. The definition of sin became blurred and personally tailored to suit each individual; the concept of once-saved-always-saved became popularized, and it seems that the Lord's main purpose was reduced to helping us realize our personal dreams.

Second, worship services tended to de-emphasize holiness and reverence, and instead emphasized casualness, familiarity and social connection. Third, the long standing doctrine of Replacement Theology was challenged when Israel returned as a nation of Jews in 1948, and so the church pushed back and made it clear that Christianity was indeed gentile in its nature, that Jewishness had no place within it, and that even though Israel had returned it was

essentially Christian Bible Land that was being temporarily manned by Jews for the benefit of the Church. Thus we are a New Testament Church to the exclusion of the Old Testament. To venture into the Old Testament in any serious way was an affront to one's Christian faith, and a danger that could damage or even turn us away from our relationship with Jesus.

The Church again went through a dramatic growth spurt as a result of this approach. The Billy Graham Crusades used those principles I just enumerated to draw enormous crowds to overflowing stadiums in America and in foreign lands and thousands would come forward to accept Christ on those terms. We have been living in an era that we could fairly call Evangelical Christianity for 3/4ths of a century depending on how one might define it. It has had its good points and its not so good points. It represents the golden age of Systematic Theology. But something within the last decade or so is happening. Another transition within Christianity seems to be underway and it reflects the fulfillment (or at least the last stages of the process) of another prophecy by Yeshua.

Luke 21:24-26 CJB

²⁴ Some will fall by the edge of the sword, others will be carried into all the countries of the Goyim, and Yerushalayim will be trampled down by the Goyim until the age of the Goyim has run its course.

²⁵ "There will appear signs in the sun, moon and stars; and on earth, nations will be in anxiety and bewilderment at the sound and surge of the sea,

²⁶ as people faint with fear at the prospect of what is overtaking the world; for the powers in heaven will be shaken.

Later the Apostle Paul would frame this in a slightly different way, in which he explained WHY there was even to be an age of the gentiles.

Romans 11:25-26 CJB

²⁵ For, brothers, I want you to understand this truth which God formerly concealed but has now revealed, so that you won't imagine you know more than you actually do. It is that stoniness, to a degree, has come upon Isra'el, until the Gentile world enters in its fullness;

²⁶ and that it is in this way that all Isra'el will be saved. As the Tanakh says, "Out of Tziyon will come the Redeemer; he will turn away ungodliness from Ya'akov.

So the time of the gentiles was to be a period when gentile Christianity went global; but it was also to be the means by which God would save Israel.

But not only was a period of gentile dominance prophesied, but also what this era of the gentiles would transition into was prophesied long ago by Zechariah.

Turn your Bible to Zechariah chapter 8.

READ ZECHARIAH CHAPTER 8 all

Notice especially the final verse. There it says: ²³ ***ADONAI-Tzva'ot says, 'When that time comes, ten men will take hold- speaking all the languages of the nations- will grab hold of the cloak of a Jew and say, "We want to go with you, because we have heard that God is with you."'***

Here we have what I call the Circle of Salvation. The torch of the redemption process of God began with the Hebrews, and then transferred from them to Gentiles, and then “when that time comes” it transfers back to the Hebrews. Yeshua and Paul both explain and prophecy of the age of the gentiles; Zechariah describes what comes at the end of the gentile age. Suddenly, we’re told, that gentiles will start seeking after Jews to hear about God. And the trigger mechanism for that to happen is for Israel to return from a long exile as a nation of Jews.

Well, after 1900 years Israel has been reborn, Jerusalem is back under Hebrew control, and Messianic Synagogues filled with Jewish Believers are springing up in increasing numbers. The Hebrew Roots movement is expanding globally, yet it is happening with no central organization of any kind. It is greatly upsetting the established institutional denominations as some of their most fundamental doctrines are again being challenged. These are all signs that the end of the time of the gentiles is upon us. That you are here today, or listening by other media, is proof of it, because the message you are hearing is **not** one that is born of 1800 years of manmade gentile church doctrines, itself a reflection of the earliest Roman Church. It is **not** one that is based on the church replacing Israel as God’s chosen. It is **not** one that says God’s law and His prophecy are dead and gone and nailed to the cross. The New Covenant as predicted in Jeremiah 31, and fulfilled in the divine Christ, was never about Yeshua coming to void the Law (which He forcefully stated in Matthew 5:17 – 20). Rather it was about His sacrifice to save us from our sins and then the coming of the Holy Spirit to indwell us so that we could have a higher, deeper, and more spiritually correct devotion to it.

And of course, somewhat like Yeshua’s message at His 1st coming, the message that you hear

from me and others in the Hebrew Roots and Messianic movements can be polarizing. There is not much middle ground; you can either reject it and go back to the familiar traditions and doctrines of the institutional Roman Church (from which all Western Christianity has sprung) or you can accept it and begin the challenging task of recalibrating your biblical understanding and adjusting your life accordingly. A new era is upon us: the time of the fullness of the gentiles. Therefore it falls to us to look closely at what we believe and to separate biblical truth from traditions and doctrines formed by Systematic Theologies and then to make some hard choices.

So we're going to examine, now, one of the more difficult doctrines of Christian Systematic Theology called Millennialism. And this one has enormous effect not only on how we will interpret Daniel, but most of the New Testament as well.

The term Millennial means one thousand, and in our context it means 1,000 years. It comes from a passage in the Book of Revelation about the End Times.

Rev 20:1-8 CJB

^{CJB} **Revelation 20:1** *Next I saw an angel coming down from heaven, who had the key to the Abyss and a great chain in his hand.*

² *He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan [the Adversary], and chained him up for a thousand years.*

³ *He threw him into the Abyss, locked it and sealed it over him; so that he could not deceive the nations any more until the thousand years were over. After that, he has to be set free for a little while.*

⁴ *Then I saw thrones, and those seated on them received authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for testifying about Yeshua and proclaiming the Word of God, also those who had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not received the mark on their foreheads and on their hands. They came to life and ruled with the Messiah for a thousand years.*

⁵ *(The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were over.) This is the first resurrection.*

⁶ *Blessed and holy is anyone who has a part in the first resurrection; over him the second death has no power. On the contrary, they will be cohanim of God and of the Messiah, and they will rule with him for the thousand years.*

⁷ *When the thousand years are over, the Adversary will be set free from his prison*

⁸ and will go out to deceive the nations in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for the battle. Their number is countless as the sand on the seashore;

If you have been around Evangelical Christianity much at all you've heard a lot of talk about two things: the Millennium and the Rapture. And there is more than a little bit of confusion about these two events.

First of all, we see 4 mentions of the Millennium (a 1,000 year period of time) in Revelation 20 and they are used to describe two critical things in the bible that concerns the End Times: first, it is the period of time between the resurrection of the righteous dead and the resurrection of the wicked dead. And second it is the time duration of Satan's imprisonment.

That seems straightforward enough. However Systematic Theology has really worked-over these verses (and others) to force them to harmonize with other of their denominational doctrines. A classic case of trying to pound a spiritual square peg into a doctrinal round hole. Last week, using my car-as-a-system analogy, I said that when you use a systems approach to anything you are forced to make some rigid choices and decisions. And as you go down the list of each interdependent component of the system, each choice about one component has a definite effect on the choices you can make for the next component. It **always** limits them. For instance if we elect to put the engine of our car in the rear, we can't also put the luggage compartment in the rear if even we much prefer it to be there. As the choices of each part or component of the system mount up, some of the choices we must make for the next component become very narrow or we have almost no choice at all. If I want a car to hold 6 people, I can't make it the size of a sports car, nor can I give the car only 2 doors. You get the idea.

Thus some quite inventive approaches to defining just what goes on in this End Times 1,000 year period of time have been created in order to make it work with a pre-determined doctrinal system. And in order to make it work, even defining the term "1,000 years" has had to be creative. Therefore in some Systematic Theologies we can't necessarily even label 1,000 years as a period of time. That is, some will look at the words of Revelation 20 and say that 1,000 years doesn't mean 1,000 years. Rather it is symbolic of an era, or it is the name of an era and it doesn't have to be 1,000 years in duration. In fact it is quite flexible to whatever the world circumstances might be at any given time.

I think the best and quickest way for us to approach this is to simply compare and contrast the 3 primary competing theologies of Millennialism, which are called: 1) Amillennialism, Post-Millennialism, and Pre-Millennialism. There are variations of each of these, and I haven't time to go into all them; but in the end these 3 together represent almost all of Christianity. And remember, depending on which of these one accepts, it will have a substantial effect on how one interprets the Book of Daniel (I am not advocating for or against any of these at the

moment). Further, various denominations will modify some aspects of these doctrines to suit them so I'm only giving you representative definitions and not absolute definitions.

Pre-Millennialism is usually thought of today as automatically part of another part of Systematic Theology called Dispensationalism. This doctrine says that we are to interpret the Scriptures literally. Thus all promises made to David and to Abraham under the Old Covenant will be fulfilled literally in a future 1,000 year age, usually called the Millennial Kingdom.

However included in this doctrine is that God has two plans of redemption: Plan A is for Israel and the Jewish people, and Plan B is for gentiles and the church. Thus when there is a Rapture of Believers off this earth, it will be ONLY of the gentile church and it will occur at the beginning of a 7 year period of time called the Tribulation. Therefore the Tribulation period is a future time to us, and is essentially a time for God to deal with Israel and the Jewish people, since the church will have been removed. After the end of the 7 year Tribulation Christ will come, and those Jews who are converted to Christianity will be allowed into the Millennial Kingdom. The raptured gentile church will return in glorified bodies and rule with Christ during that 1,000 year period.

During the Millennium there will be a physical Temple, the Law (or something like it) will again be enforce, and at the end of the 1,000 years will be a great judgment when Satan and all who follow him will be cast into the Lake of Fire. Immediately thereafter the current earth and heaven (meaning the universe) will be destroyed and a new heaven and earth will be created from the elements.

This view is expressed by the Scofield and Ryrie Bibles, and was made popular by Hal Lindsey and more recently Tim LaHaye in his Left Behind series. Calvary Chapel and the Southern Baptist Convention generally ascribe to this doctrine and Dallas Theological Seminary is the leading dispensational Pre-millennial institution. Writers like Chuck Swindoll, Charles Stanley and Jack Van Impe also maintain this viewpoint.

Next up: **Amillennialism**. The "A" in Amillennialism means NO. Therefore the 1,000 years is a symbolic number and expresses the time in between the first and second comings of Christ. Thus there is NO separate and distinct era or period of 1,000 years.

This is historically the viewpoint of the Catholic, Presbyterian and Lutheran churches. The Southern Baptist Convention has adopted some of the Amillennial viewpoints because Calvin's teaching adopts some elements of Amillennialism. And the idea is that the Kingdom of God on earth that is to occur during the Millennium is present on earth now, even though it is currently invisible.

Further this doctrine states that all the promises of God to David, Abraham, and to Israel have already been fulfilled by Christ, and thus are given over to the Church in this present age. This is of course classic Replacement Theology.

Further, this doctrine states that Satan is currently bound up, that the Kingdom of God is already established, and Satan is no longer free to deceive nations or people. Thus at the end of our present age (usually called the Church Age), Christ returns in judgment, and immediately a new heaven and earth replace the old heaven and earth. Satan is unbound just before Christ returns, there is an unprecedented time of evil worldwide, and then at Christ's 2nd coming all evil is destroyed once and for all.

In addition to Calvin, Amillennialism's main advocates are RC Sproul, J.I. Packer, and Mike Horton.

Postmillennialism on the other hand believes that the Millennium is a definite period of 1,000 years where there is universal love and peace, and where righteousness reigns over all the earth. This happens BEFORE Christ returns and thus the determining factor for Christ returning is when the Church can finally cause this to happen. The difference between the Postmillennialism and Amillennialism doctrines is that while Post sees a literal 1000 year period of time, it also has a definite starting point at some time during the present age. Amillennialism generally sees the entire period of the Church Age that we are in right now as the Millennial Age, and it began with Christ's death.

Thus in Postmillennialism the Church is destined to victory over Satan and his forces, and so the visible, tangible Kingdom of God will be established on earth BEFORE Christ returns to claim it. Sometimes this is called the Kingdom Now doctrine. Then when Christ returns Satan will be released, a great apostasy will happen, Gog and Magog will enter battle with the Saints at Armageddon, and then the Great White Throne judgment happens, whereupon there is a new heaven and earth.

Classic Postmillennialism is propounded by Charles Hodge, and B.B. Warfield. Some segments of the Presbyterian Church have chosen this doctrine, and it was the doctrine first practiced by the earliest appearance of the Evangelical movement that began in the early 1900's. But it is the Pentecostal churches that tend to hang on to most of the doctrinal beliefs (but not necessarily all) of Postmillennialism.

So, to sum up: here you see the vast divergence of views about the End Times, and which denominations have adopted each of these viewpoints. Now you can begin to understand why Daniel, Revelation and the End Times can be viewed so differently depending on which church you might have been raised in, which preacher you have or do listen to, and what books about

the End Times have caught your fancy. And I have no doubt that in what you have heard today you will recognize things that you've heard, perhaps believed, but had no idea of their source or context.

All of this confusion is the result, to one extent or another, of taking the approach that we can and must systemize God's Word to understand it: Systematic Theology. Well it is time, it is overdue, to take a different approach. An approach that does not seek to make God think like we think; that does not require mankind's logic and reason to dictate God's ordering of the universe, plan of redemption, or laws and commandments. When we abandon a systems approach, we give up on seeking to remake God into our image.

Next week I'll spend just a few minutes to summarize and review, and then give you historical context for Daniel, and then we'll open our bibles to Daniel chapter 1.