THERE IS A GOD IN HEAVEN AND HE IS IN CHARGE

**DATE: 11/07/10 pm**

**TEXT: Daniel 1:1, 2**

**INTRODUCTION**

If you want to know about the past and the future,

Then the book of Daniel is the book

The first half of the book is Historical and the last half is Prophetical

From a Historical perspective -

We learn of Israel being carried away into Babylon and the 70 years they spent there in captivity

We also learn about Daniel and his companions, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah

We are more familiar with them by the names of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego

From a Prophetical perspective -

We are given one of the most comprehensive and chronological prophetic views in all the Bible

The book of Daniel is to the Old Testament what the Book of Revelation is to the New

The word “eschatological” is the theological term for *“things that are to come”*

If you want to get an order of prophetic events,

The book of Daniel is essential

It is a book that has come under intense scrutiny and attacks

Higher critics have questioned its authorship, dates, its miracles, and of course its prophetic declarations

When so-called experts are critical of a Book in the Bible

It doesn’t cause me to question the book, it only confirm its importance

Because the devil hates it so much only makes me aware of how important it is that we study the book more

In **Daniel 2:28** we read the words -

***“But there is a God in heaven”***

In my opinion these words give us the theme of the book

***“There is a God in heaven”*** and throughout the book we are reminded that He is in charge

In fact, we see this in the opening words of the book

That God is in charge

We read –

***“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.”***

In these opening verses we meet three kings **or** three rulers

Let’s begin our study of Daniel by thinking about these three rulers

**~~~Prayer~~~**

First let’s think about:

**I. A “CORRUPT” RULER**

The first ruler that is mentioned is Jehoiakim

He is called the ***“king of Judah”*** in **v.1**

His name means, *“Jehovah raises up”*

He was the eighteenth king of Judah, coming to the throne at the age of 25 and ruling for eleven years

**II Kings 23:36 – *“Jehoiakim was twenty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. (And his mother's name was Zebudah, the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah”***

His original name was Eliakim which means “*God will establish”*

His name was changed to Jehoiakim by Pharoah-necho, the king of Egypt

**II Chronicles 36:4 – *“And the king of Egypt made Eliakim (his brother) king over Judah and Jerusalem, and turned his name to Jehoiakim. And Necho took Jehoahaz his brother, and carried him to Egypt”***

There were eleven kings that ruled over Judah (the southern part of the land of Israel) and for the most part, eight of these kings were godly kings

However, there were four that were anything but godly and Jehoiakim was one of these four kings

The Bible says in **II Kings 23:37** that -

***“he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord”***

He would ultimately die a violent death

He would be thrown from the wall of Jerusalem and his body taken away and given a dishonorable burial

He was an ungodly and corrupt king

His corruption is seen in:

**A. How He ‘Defiled the Worship’ of God**

The reference ***“he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord”***

Speaks of how he allowed (and even encouraged) idolatry and the worship of false gods

Instead of leading the people to worship The True God,

He turned the hearts of people from the One and Only True God

Instead of worshipping the One who abides forever,

Jehoiakim worshipped Baal and the pagan gods of the east

The first commandment states in **Exodus 20:3** –

***“Thou shalt have no other gods before me”***

God gave specific directions to Moses when he entered the land of Canaan and encountered a people who worshipped false gods

He said in **Exodus 34:13, 14 –**

***“But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves:” “For thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God”***

Jehoiakim disobeyed and desecrated God’s commands concerning idolatry and pagan worship

**He ‘Defiled the Worship’ of God**

Furthermore, his ungodliness is seen in:

**B. How He ‘Despised the Word’ of God**

The thing that Jehoiakim is best remembered for is how he took the Word of God,

And cut it in pieces and threw it into the fire

We learn in the book of Jeremiah that the prophet had a collection of his prophecies to be written out by Baruch and publicly read in the Temple

Jehoiakim heard about it and sent for the writings and had them read to him

What happened is described in **Jeremiah 36:22, 23 –**

***“Now the king sat in the winterhouse in the ninth month: and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him”***

***“And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth”***

His actions give us an idea how corrupt he really was

His heart was calloused and cold when it came to the Word of God

Look at **v. 24** of **Jeremiah 36,** it says - ***“Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words”***

I’d be terribly afraid to reject God’s Word and treat it the way Jehoiakim did,

But there was no fear on his part

**Psalm 36:1 – *“The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes”***

**Romans 3:18 – *“There is no fear of God before their eyes”***

Note the results of this kind of Foolishness -

**Proverbs 1:20-33**

His heart was spiritually hard as stone with no fear whatsoever of God

Jehoiakim stands as the stark contrast to the person who knows and loves the Lord

When it comes to the **Worship of God …**

There is to be no rival to His place in our hearts and affections

I love **I Chronicles 16:29** that says –

***“Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His Name: bring an offering, and come before Him: worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness”***

The Lord Demands, Desires, Deserves our worship

When it comes to the **Word of God** there should be a willingness to obey the Word of God

We should receive it with open arms and with an open heart

It should be precious to us

We should love the Lord and His Word

**A “CORRUPT” RULER**

In the second ruler we see:

**II. A “CONQUERING” RULER**

In **v.1** we not only see ***“Jehoiakim king of Judah,”***

But also ***“Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon”***

Of all the heathen kings mentioned in the Bible,

Nebuchadnezzar is the most prominent

The prophecies of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and the last chapters of Kings and Chronicles are centered around his life and rule

There are many things that I could say about Nebuchadnezzar

But let me confine my comments in this message to just 2

**First**, I think of him historically and of:

**A. The ‘Place He Constructed’**

In **Daniel 4:30** we read of him saying –

***“Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?”***

Under his rule he built one of the most magnificent cities of the ancient world

The Hanging Gardens of Babylon that were built during his rule are considered one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World

He had walls that were almost 85 feet thick built around the outside of the city

Huge inner walls protected the city’s main section

A wide moat surrounded the inner walls

People entered and left the city through eight huge bronze gates

The grandest of these gates, was the Ishtar Gate,

It stood on a street paved with bricks called the *Processional Street* that lead to the Temple of Marduk,

One of many temples and shrines he built to various gods

The Ishtar Gate and its walls were decorated with figures of dragons, lions, and bulls made of colorized brick

Nebuchadnezzar’s main palace, an elaborate structure that was actually a fortress, stood between the Ishtar Gate and the Euphrates River

It was within this palace the Hanging Gardens were found

When he declared that he had built ***“great Babylon”*** he was not exaggerating the magnificence of the place he had built

**The ‘Place He Constructed’**

Biblically, I think of Nebuchadnezzar and:

**B. The ‘People He Captured’**

We read in **Daniel 1:1** that he came ***“unto Jerusalem, and besieged it”***

It was, as **v.1** says, ***“In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah”*** …

That Nebuchadnezzar led his armies against Jerusalem and captured the city

This was actually the first of four raids he would make on Jerusalem

In **v.2** we read that he ransacked the Temple and took part of the sacred vessels of the Temple

***“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”***

In our next study we shall see how he not only took part of the vessels of the temple, but …

He also took captive those of the royal seed …

Of whom included Daniel, and carried them to Babylon

In Nebuchadnezzar’s eleventh year of his reign he led another raid on Jerusalem

We read about that siege in **II Kings 24:13, 14 –**

***“And he carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the Lord, as the Lord had said” “And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths: none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land”***

He took captive (on this raid) at least 10,000 …

Leaving only the poorest and unskilled people

He carried this large number of Jews to Babylon where they would spend the next 70 years in captivity

Nebuchadnezzar is a man that was characterized by pride and selfish pursuits

His exclamation in **Daniel 4:30 –**

***“Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?”***

…Reflects his heart of pride and his inflated ego

What he constructed and who he captured all served to promote his name and self worth

God hates pride in any form !

In **Proverbs 6**, Solomon spoke of six things God hates and in **v.13** a ***“proud look”*** is among the list

God said in **Psalm 101:5 –**

***“Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer”***

In other words, God will not put up with a proud heart

And as we shall later see in our studies of Daniel,

God does not put up with the proud heart of Nebuchadnezzar

**Ill.** He was like the Woodpecker who was pecking on a certain tree when it was hit with lightning. A little later he came back with several woodpeckers with his chest puffed out. He pointed to the tree and said, *“There it is boys, look for yourselves”*

We should constantly search our hearts for any measure of pride

Then Guard ourselves against it!

**A “CORRUPT” RULER**

**A “CONQUERING” RULER**

The last ruler we find in **v.2**

And in this Ruler we see:

**III. A “CONTROLLING” RULER**

Now you may read **vs. 1, 2** and say, but there are only two kings mentioned

No, if we will look closely we will see a third

He’s found in the words of **v. 2**

***“And the Lord…”***

In the Lord we have the Ruler of all rulers and the King of all kings

In Jehoiakim we have a **“Corrupt” Ruler**

In Nebuchadnezzar we have a **“Conquering” Ruler**

In the Lord we have the **“Controlling” Ruler**

Notice again **v.2** and the words –

***“And the Lord gave the king of Judah into his hands”***

Behind all that is happening in **vs. 1 & 2** is the Lord who ***“gave”***

Or to say it another way,

The Lord was Controlling all the events that took place

It was not so much Nebuchadnezzar who ***took*** as it is the Lord who ***gave***

***There is a God in heaven and He is in control***

As we look closer at God’s control of things,

The events of the book of Daniel remind us that:

**A. The ‘Appointing of Kings’ is in His Hands**

We read in **Daniel 4:17** that -

***“the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will”***

We also read in **Daniel 4:25** that -

***“the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will”***

A third time in **Daniel 4:32** we read that -

***“the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will”***

As we shall see later in our studies,

Nebuchadnezzar learned that it was God who rules over the kingdoms of the world

And it is He that appoints the kings who reign over those kingdoms

You can be absolutely certain that whatever happens in this world, unseen by men and behind the scenes,

God is controlling what is happening and who sits upon earthly thrones

In **v.2** we read of how Nebuchadnezzar ransacked the Holy Temple and carried away some of the sacred vessels that were used in worship and service to God

We read in **v.2** that these vessels -

***“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”***

In those days, when a king conquered a people, he would take the treasures from their temples and place them in his temple or shrine as a symbol of not only his supremacy,

But also the supremacy of his god over their god

It would appear that paganism won over the true God

But that was not the case at all

What happened was allowed of God or it would not have happened

Kings and kingdom are -

→ Appointed by God

→ Arranged by God

→ Allowed by God

For one purpose and one purpose alone,

And that is the fulfillment of His own purposes

Listen, God is in control!

It may appear as if God is nowhere to be found in this world and the things that are happening,

But you can rest assured that He is in every event and

He is moving each piece on chessboard of the world so that it serves to ultimately bring fulfillment to His plan and purpose

The Republicans or Democrats are never in control,

I don’t care who is in the majority

The President is never the one ultimately in charge

The events that unfold in our world never take God by surprise

Not on your life!

There is a God that is working behind the scenes controlling everything that happens

Some events seem to run contrary to God’s Word and Will,

But when the smoke clears you will see that He was running the whole show

**Ill.** A group of distinguished historians once amused themselves by writing a book called *If*, or *History Rewritten*. Some of the "ifs" which they discussed were these: If Lee had not lost the Battle of Gettysburg; if the Moors in Spain had won; if the Dutch had kept New Amsterdam; if Louis XVI had had an atom of firmness; if Booth had missed Lincoln; and if Napoleon had escaped to America.

But I say unto you there are no ***"ifs"*** in history

There is only His Divine Will

***There is a God in heaven and He is in control***

**The ‘Appointing of Kings’ is in His Hands**

**Proverbs 21:1 – *“The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will”***

Furthermore we see in Daniel that:

**B. The ‘Affairs of Men’ are in His Hands**

Now you might wonder why God allowed the people of Israel to be overtaken by a despot such as Nebuchadnezzar

The reason was God’s judgment on the people for their sins

There were two particular reasons why God allowed these events to take place:

**First,** the Mosaic Law specified that every 7th year the land was not to be farmed since it was a sabbatical year, a year of rest for the land

This rest was not only to allow the nutrients of the land to be replenished,

But more so, it was a symbolic gesture that declared that the earth is the Lord’s

The Israelites had not observed this law for 490 years

Turn to **II Chronicles 36:18-21 (esp. v.12)**

**The Second** reason was for the gross sin of idolatry

They had forsaken God and turned to the worship of false gods

They had disobeyed the first commandment –

**Exodus 20:2, 3 -** “***I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage”***

***“Thou shalt have no other gods before me”***

What happened was all of God’s doing

He is in control of all the events that happen in our life

There is nothing that happens in our life that is not filtered through His purpose and plan

That is why Paul could say in **Romans 8:28 -**

***“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose”***

**Ill.** People often use the term “Good Luck” Chance

Let me say that we do not live in chance-world

Nothing happens by chance

***There is a God in heaven and He is in control***

He controls what happens in our lives

As Warren Wiersbe said, *“There are no accidents, only appointments”*

As we move through the book of Daniel this great truth is stamped on every page

I am glad that ***there is a God in heaven and that He is in control***