

1. Daniel 6 finishes the biographical segment of the book.
2. Belshazzar's feast:
 - A. Nabonidus shared his power with his son Belshazzar, who was reigning in Babylon at the time when it fell to the Medes.
 - B. That is why Daniel was made the third highest ruler in the kingdom.
 - C. There are still questions about who exactly Darius the Mede was.
 - D. With the death of Nebuchadnezzar, honor of Daniel's God ceased.
 - E. Belshazzar does not know Daniel - but he does know about Nebuchadnezzar's madness and conversion.
 - F. It is the queen who thinks of Daniel to interpret the handwriting on the wall.
 - G. The message: "God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end; you have been weighed on the scale and found wanting; your kingdom is divided and given over to the Medes and Persians."
 - H. Daniel calls down God's wrath because of the sacrilege of using the Temple vessels at the feast.
3. In chapter 5, the theme of God's sovereignty over all nations is emphasized.
4. Chapter 6 - the theme of prayer - Daniel in the lions' den:
 - A. Daniel is still praying 3 times a day as an old man in Darius' court.
 - B. Darius foolishly makes this practice illegal, but Daniel continues praying and does not hide what he is doing. He was a person of prayer.
 - C. The Babylonian satraps hated Daniel. He was persecuted for righteousness' sake.
 - D. We can be in difficult circumstances at times simply because we choose to honor God.
 - E. God shuts the lions' mouths and Daniel is saved. Darius then throws Daniel's enemies into the lions' den and they are not saved.
 - F. This chapter ends with a king of Babylon on his face admitting the sovereignty of Jehovah the God of Israel.

1. We have gone from biographical material to apocalyptic literature. We are dealing with visions that look far into the future. Whenever we encounter apocalyptic passages in the Bible, we need to remember not to “lose sight of the forest while examining the trees.” Look for the overall message. You won’t be able to fit every piece of the puzzle together.
2. Most apocalyptic literature in the Bible is found in Ezekiel, Daniel, the Olivet Discourse, and the Book of Revelation.
3. Reading prophecies is like seeing mountains from afar and from close-up - from afar they run together. The closer you get, the more you see the details. Even Daniel does not try to nail down every detail of the prophecies. He is content with the main idea.
4. Deciphering what we read this morning:
 - A. 2 separate visions with overlapping themes
 - 1) Vision #1 came in the first year of Belshazzar’s reign.
 - a) 4 beasts rising out of the sea - this made sense in the culture of Babylon.
 - b) The 1st beast seems the most noble - it looked like a lion with wings. It represents Babylon.
 - c) The 2nd and 3rd beasts are the bear and the leopard. They may represent the Medo-Persian and the Greek empires.
 - d) The 4th beast is frightening and powerful.
 - 2) The second half of the first vision:
 - a) Daniel sees thrones and the “ancient of days”; a figure like “the Son of Man” (which is the origin of Jesus calling Himself by that name) is led in after the 4th beast has been destroyed. This all shows up again in the Book of Revelation.
 - b) “The kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and He will reign forever”.
 - 3) Vision 2 came in the third year of Daniel’s reign.
 - a) A ram with 2 horns - This is the kingdom of the Medes and Persians.
 - b) The goat is Greece and the horn is Alexander the Great.
 - c) The horn is broken and becomes 4 horns (as the Greek Empire is divided into 4 parts after Alexander’s death).
 - d) One of the little horns represents Israel, taken over by Antiochus Epiphanes, who devoted himself to destroying everything Jewish. He profaned the Temple and sacrificed a pig on the altar. He stopped the daily sacrifices for over 3 years.
 - i. He was the close-up fulfillment of a long-range ruler who will also gain his power by deception and cunning - the Anti-Christ. The angel even tells Daniel this is in the distant future.
 - 4) “The saints” - Daniel is calling righteous people “saints” - unusual in the Old Testament.
 - 5) The story of the Maccabees, the family that rose up to deliver the Jews from the cruel yoke of Antiochus Epiphanes, is worth investigating. The Festival of Hanukkah celebrates their victory and the cleansing of the Temple and reestablishment of the sacrifices.
5. The big picture message: At the last God’s son will triumph and establish a kingdom that will last forever.

1. Prayer: Daniel's prayer in Chapter 9

- A. Reading Scripture drove Daniel to prayer. He was reading the work of a contemporary of his, Jeremiah, whose writings were already called "Scripture". His prayer begins with Scripture.
- B. He is serious about praying - he mourns and fasts over his people. Fasting is associated with fervent prayer. Fasting is meant to prepare us to pray with understanding and power, not to manipulate God. It can be a total fast or a partial fast.
- C. He began with confession of sin, the sins of the people of Israel. He intercedes for them.
- D. He asks for forgiveness.

2. The nature of prayer: It allows us to participate in the great cosmic spiritual war.

- A. The angel Gabriel and "Daniel's prince" (angel) are dispatched to aid Daniel.
- B. Ephesians 6:12: "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces in the heavenly realms."

3. We get a glimpse into the unseen world of angels and demons in Daniel 9 and 10 and in the Book of Jude.

4. Does what Gabriel tells Daniel about the "69 weeks" refer to Antiochus Epiphanes, to the Anti-Christ at the end of time, or to both?

- A. There are 2 decrees to rebuild the Temple
 - 1) The one given to Cyrus in 538 BC
 - 2) The one given to Artaxerxes in 458 BC

5. From the German scholar Keil:

- A. Jeremiah's 70 years were almost over when Daniel was given this vision.
- B. Daniel's "weeks" appear to be periods of 7 years, taking it to the time of Christ's baptism.
- C. 3 ½ years later Christ was "cut off" when he died on the cross.
- D. There was no further need of sacrifices, but they continued until the destruction of the Temple by Titus in 70 AD.
- E. There are a wide variety of views with regard to this prophecy. "It's the old phenomena of viewing the mountains of prophecy from the distant plains again!"

1. Daniel's visions:

- A. Daniel 7: the vision of the 4 beasts - from Babylon into the millennium
- B. Daniel 8: the vision of the ram and the goat - from Babylon to the Maccabees
- C. Daniel 9: the 70 weeks - from the time of Ezra through the time of Christ
- D. Daniel 10-12: from a bit before Ezra to the time of the Maccabees, with a jump to the end of time

2. The period of tribulation under Antiochus Epiphanes and under the Anti-Christ

A. Chapter 11 - a blow by blow description of the rulers of the Near East from Daniel's time through the Maccabean period. (Daniel has seen all that happens, but does not name the people below. Apart from the names, it is all there.)

- 1) Persian king who invaded Greece - Xerxes (reigned 485-464 BC)
- 2) Xerxes predecessors: Cyrus, Cyrus' older son Cambyses, Darius (who assassinated Gaumata the imposter), and is the father of Xerxes
- 3) Alexander the Great, the mighty king who rules with great power, but whose empire was broken up into 4 pieces after he died
- 4) Ptolemy I, the king of the south piece of that division
- 5) Seleucus Nicator, powerful king of the Seleucid piece of the divided empire (310 BC)
- 6) These 2 empires are joined by the marriage of Antiochus II to Ptolemy II's daughter Bernice in 252 BC (she is assassinated).
- 7) Antiochus the Great is seen as the liberator of Jerusalem; he defeated Ptolemy IV (c. 202 BC).
- 8) Antiochus the Great is defeated in the Battle of Thermopylae. His son is taken to Rome as a hostage.
- 9) This son is Antiochus Epiphanes, the "little horn" of Chapter 8.
 - a) He tried to destroy all things Jewish.
 - b) He called himself "Epiphanes Theos" - illustrious god/god manifest.
 - c) He embodied all that Paul envisions in the Anti-Christ (2 Thess. 2).
 - d) When the Romans force him out of Egypt, he turns his attention to Jerusalem.
 - e) Onias was the legitimate high priest. Jason, Menelaus, Antiochus...their bribery and deceit ended in the deaths of 80,000 Jerusalemites and the sacking and desecration of the Temple in 168 BC.
 - f) 3 years later, to the day, Judas Maccabeus rededicated the Temple to the worship of Yahweh.
 - g) "The abomination that causes desolation" - used here in Daniel and by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse.

B. Chapter 12

- 1) Jesus believed that this chapter was talking about the last days, pointing to a great tribulation (Matthew 24:22)

- 2) The Book of Life
 - a) Daniel 12
 - b) Exodus 32:33
 - c) Psalm 69:28
 - d) Malachi 3:16
 - e) Revelation 20:12
 - f) Luke 20:10

- 3) 12:2: a great resurrection leading to judgment - at the end of the world
 - a) Job 19:26
 - b) Isaiah 25:8

- 4) The “2 others” Daniel saw on the banks of the Tigris River ask when all this will occur - “a time, times and half a time” - 3 ½ years - ending in the Battle of Armageddon.

3. Daniel is utterly confused. His head hurts! He is told that this is for a much later time and the wise at the end will understand.

4. Since the part of this prophecy that has been happened has been fulfilled to the letter, we would be “wise” to expect a literal fulfillment at the end of time and recognize it if it starts to happen in our lifetime.

1. We are moving from prophecy to a book of history, Ezra, the story of the beginning of the return of the Jews to Israel from their exile in Babylon. Ezra is a continuation of 2 Chronicles - the first 3 verses repeat the last 3 verses of that book.
2. Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther (last 3 history books in the Old Testament) cover the period from about 538 to 433 BC. Ezra and Nehemiah cover the 3-stage return of the Jews:
 - A. Zerubbabel came first with about 50,000 people.
 - B. 80 years later Ezra came with his party.
 - C. In between Zerubbabel and Ezra's returns, the story of Esther takes place.
 - D. In 445 BC, Nehemiah and his party return.
3. The Babylonian Empire has been overthrown by the Medo-Persian Empire:
 - A. King Cyrus (ruled 559-530 BC) - he issued the decree allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem. (Proverbs 21:1 and Isaiah 44 and 45)
 - B. His son Cambyses was followed by Darius I (ruled 522-486 BC) - under his rule the Temple was rebuilt and Haggai and Zechariah were prophets at this time.
 - C. Xerxes I (ruled 486-465 BC) - he made Esther his queen.
 - D. Artaxerxes (ruled 464-423 BC) - he sponsored the return of Nehemiah. Malachi was a prophet at this time.
4. Cyrus followed the policy of his nation in returning the Jews to their homeland, but it had been prophesied by Isaiah long before that he would do so. God is Sovereign.
5. Ezra was a scribe and he recorded everything and everyone that returned to Jerusalem in great detail. God cares about details.
6. The importance of family records:
 - A. The descendants of Hubaiiah, Hazkoz and Barzilla could not produce documents to prove their priestly ancestors, so they were excluded from the priesthood.
 - B. Herod the Great destroyed the records that proved he was not a full-blooded Jew so there would be no proof of that fact.
7. Cyrus sent back whatever could be found of the Temple furniture and equipment, and ordered those Jews who decided not to return to give the returnees provisions.
8. Zerubbabel and Jeshua (also mentioned in Haggai 1) are 2 important names in the Ezra 2 list.
9. The absolute priority of worship in the lives of God's people:
 - A. They first built an altar to the Lord and offered sacrifices.
 - B. Then they celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles and made more offerings.
 - C. It was more important to them than security and provisions.
10. In the second month of the second year they laid the foundations for the Temple.
11. There was praise, but there were also tears:
 - A. Tears of repentance - all this never had to happen if Israel had obeyed God.
 - B. Tears of regret - the new Temple would not be as glorious as Solomon's Temple.
 - C. Tears of disappointment - it would not be the Temple of Ezekiel's vision.
 - D. The eschatological Temple named "The Lord is There" will last forever.