

Lesson 1 Daniel: Background

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[0 : 00] So let me just give a couple of words before we begin. One is, I believe three things are always good for every Christian. The first is to hear God's Word.

And that's what we do Sunday mornings when we come together for worship because we're listening to the Word of God. Two, I think it's good for us to talk about God's Word. And that's what we try to do in Sunday school.

And I think it's good for us to study God's Word. And when we study God's Word, we're really trying to dive deep into it. And one of the things that may be a little bit different this semester from previous semesters is that we're going to spend the bulk of our time studying and looking at what the Bible says and talking about it.

And we probably won't have that time for discussion afterwards. Instead, we will use that time if you've got questions about what we've talked about and things that are unclear or things you want to go down.

Then we can use that time for that. And so I would encourage you to think of yourself. I really enjoy talking to other people about what we just talked about. To maybe go from here to lunch together.

[1 : 07] You know, and spend some time at lunch and just talk about some of the things that we've looked at. And so, anytime you start off with a new book of the Bible, particularly something like Daniel, that is very foreign to us, you have to start with some introductory matters.

Some background information. And I try real hard to make it pretty easy to digest. But sometimes I don't get there, but we'll see what happens today.

But this is very necessary to understand these things because it's necessary in order to interpret the book of Daniel. So here's where I want to start. I want you to think for just a moment.

I'm going to describe for you a nation. And I want you to think about what nation this could possibly be. It's a nation full of immigrants.

As a matter of fact, many of these immigrants arrived voluntarily. And some of these immigrants arrived against their will. In this nation, some people have the ability to kind of rise up in the ranks and make a success out of their lives.

[2 : 17] And some people don't. They end up being kind of more in a poor class and having to live kind of hand to mouth and that sort of way. But everyone is pretty heavily taxed and weighed down by this culture.

The culture is also a culture of pluralism. Pluralism. Now pluralism is the idea of all kinds of different philosophies existing at the same time.

So you can think of philosophy as religion, right? And you could say that, say, like freedom of religion is one of those things that you end up with people who are Christian, Buddhist, Satanist, and whatever else, right?

Worship aliens and rocks. I don't know. So that's a pluralistic society. And so this is a very pluralistic nation that I'm talking about. However, it's a nation where though religious sentiments and spirituality are very high, the nation, the government itself kind of gets involved in the mix and requires people to pray the right prayers at the right time to the right people in order to be a proper citizen, right?

There are many times that other people will become jealous of you in this nation. They would hate you. They would seek to make laws that would prohibit certain group freedoms, certain people's ethnicity.

[3 : 53] I mean, there's just all kinds of class war going on in that particular nation. And I want to ask you, what nation do you think I'm describing? Is it how?

What does it sound like, though? Our nation. It sounds like America, doesn't it? Yeah. Well, what I'm describing for you is Babylon. It's Babylon, and it's the Babylon that Daniel lived in. And the interesting thing is, is that how can you live as a person of God in the face of governmental, cultural, societal pressures and oppression that Daniel had in Babylon?

That's what the book of Daniel is about. How do you live? How do you live? And so, when we then come to see this book, we want to understand the book, but we're going to have to do so by understanding four big picture ideas.

The first was we're going to have to understand something of the shape of Daniel. The shape of Daniel. And by the shape, I'm talking about the way the book is organized and how the book is organized.

[5 : 14] There's three different things, and you really have to take all three into consideration. The first shape is what I would call the shape of language. The shape of language.

Now, how many of you remember the different languages that the Bible was originally written in? Does anybody remember what the New Testament was originally written in? What?

Darumatic. Not Aramaic, but Greek. The New Testament was written in Greek. Okay? And it's an old, it's not classical Greek. It's Koine Greek, and it's not modern Greek.

There's different kinds of Greek, but it was a Koine Greek. That was the New Testament. Now, the Old Testament then. Let's talk about the Old Testament. What was the Old Testament originally written in?

Hebrew. Hebrew. Hebrew. That's right. I know. It's right on the tip of your tongue. You're just kind of going like, oh. Now, here's an interesting fact. There's actually a third language of the Bible, and it's Aramaic.

[6 : 22] Okay? And what's interesting is that the only portion of the Old Testament written in Aramaic, besides a little phrase here and there, is part of the Daniel. Okay?

So, on your page, because this may not be visible up here, because it didn't turn out very well in my graphic, but anyway. So, what I have in the first top triangle is chapter 1.

Chapter 1 is in Hebrew. Chapter 2 through 7 is in Aramaic. And chapter 8 through 12 is back in Hebrew.

Okay? Now, a couple of things about Hebrew and Aramaic. Number one, Aramaic was the language of Babylon. Okay? That was their primary language. It was the market language in Babylon.

Number two, Hebrew and Aramaic use the exact same letters. And in a lot of ways, they use some of the same words. And so, if you study Hebrew, you can eventually learn Aramaic and do pretty decent at that.

[7 : 22] So, there's a lot of similarities between the two. But this is going to shape, this is going to shape as you study it, as you read it. You can't just look at the language and go, oh, this Hebrew word is this.

It's like, well, no, that's actually Aramaic. And we need to see how that's affected by being in Aramaic. Okay? Which I have trouble saying for some reason. I don't know why. Anyway, the second shape is the literary shape.

Now, remember these divisions. Because the literary shape has got two parts. Chapters 1 through 6 kind of reads like history.

It's like stories of Daniel and his friends. It's things that happen to them. Right? Real things that happen to real people in real time and place. Okay?

So, it reads, you've got these stories. And then 7 through 12, you have these visions. Daniel has all these visions of things.

[8 : 20] And it's got some prophetic nature to it. It's predicting the future. And even though there's some prediction in the first six chapters, and there's historical elements in the last chapters, last six chapters, by and large, you've got stories and visions.

Okay? Does that make sense? Okay. Now, I'm going to blow your mind. Okay? Because there's a third kind of shape, and it's what's called a chiastic shape.

Chiastic shape. Okay? A chiastic shape. Let me give you an example from the book of Daniel. And this example, I think I have it on your paper, too, so if you can't see this.

What you have is you have, you have what's fun. Okay? You have what's written on the beginning and the end, and then the next level, and the next level, and the next level, until you get to a

centerpiece.

The centerpiece is usually the primary point. Now, Hebrews did this all over the Bible. It's in Old and New Testament. I'll show you an example here in a second.

[9 : 30] But this chiastic structure helps you to kind of narrow what's the main point, and then how does everything else affect that and interplay with that, right?

So, for example, here in chapter 2, this is the Aramaic section. Okay? Chapter 2 is the dream of a statue representing four kingdoms.

But chapter 7 is the dream of four beasts representing four kingdoms. Okay? So they're parallel to one another. Then you've got in chapter 3, worship the golden statue or perish in a pit.

And then chapter 6, worship Darius or perish in a pit. Now, when I say worship Darius, they were saying you need to pray to only the king, right? So it's a form of worship. Then the middle section is the judgment on Nebuchadnezzar, where his mind is lost and he turns into an animal for a period of time.

And then the judgment on Belshazzar, where the hand comes out and writes on the wall, right? So the centerpiece is the judgment on these two kings. Now, that becomes important for us because of why Daniel was written.

[10 : 39] And Daniel was written, I'll just tell you now, we'll come back to it. So Daniel was written in order to help people who are under oppression have hope. What better hope than to know their oppressors are going to face judgment?

Now, you can see an example of this that might help us sort of understand better what it is we're saying from the New Testament, one of the sayings of Jesus. How many of you know Matthew 6, 24, where Jesus talks about you can't serve two masters?

Okay? Okay? That's a chiastic structure. Look at it up here. The first thing that he says is no one can serve two masters. The last thing he says is you cannot serve God and wealth.

That's your two masters. They're parallel, right? See that? Then the next thing he says is for either he will hate the one, and the parallel statement, second to the last, is and despise the other.

So hate and despise are parallel with one another. But then the middle section is love the other or he will be devoted to the one. So what that does is it tells you that Jesus' primary point is that you need to love your master.

[11 : 49] Because you can't love two of them. Because you're going to love or hate. And so who are the two masters that he's getting after? God and wealth.

Now, just reading that in English as just an English person without understanding this parallel structure, we normally get the point. Right? We normally understand what that says.

But sometimes it's hard to understand what something is saying without understanding that structure. So sometimes we have to come in. I'll give you an example. One of the things that we're going to want to do is not draw wrong conclusions.

Okay? Because if we don't understand the language, literary, and chiastic shape of Daniel, we will draw wrong conclusions about things that are being written. I'll give you a couple examples.

Number one, the first part of the book is not written in chronological order. However, we don't know that this and this and this and this and this happened. It doesn't tell us that. It leaves a lot of details out.

[12 : 52] The second thing is, is that when you think about, let me go back here. When you're looking at this first vision in chapter 7, the dream of four beasts representing four kingdoms, if you don't make reference back to chapter 2 since they're parallel, then you've missed the point of that vision.

Does that make sense? He's giving you, by doing it this way, he's giving you a key to help unlock what the book means. Okay? All right, let me just pause there and see if you have any questions. Okay. This is clear as mud then. Awesome. Let's talk about the date of Daniel. The date of Daniel. What I've written down for you concerning the date of Daniel is that Daniel was written in the 6th century B.C.

Okay? So that's always really hard for me to keep those dates in my head to figure out what all that means. So just think to yourself, as you're looking here in the room, just think to yourself that this is where Jesus is born.

[14 : 09] Right? This is, say, zero. Okay? Which, it was really 4 B.C., but that's okay. All right. So here we are in the middle. So 600 B.C.

So we're going to, this is my left, your right, so this should be, this is today, right here. Okay? And that's today. So this is all A.D. on this side.

So B.C. is over here. So 600 is kind of like here. Okay? All right. So that's about when it's written. And the reason we know this is because we know when Nebuchadnezzar, we know when the kings of Israel and Judah lived, and we have passages in Daniel.

So like, for example, Daniel 1.1, in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, there's a time stamp right there, right in the third reign, third year of his reign.

[15:07] We also know that Daniel interpreted dreams for the kings of Babylon and Persia until the time of Cyrus II, the great. So you can see here, until the first year of Cyrus the king, or 628 in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian, or in chapter 10.1 in the third year of Cyrus.

All those time stamps like that help us see where Daniel was because we already know what history says. So if he's with these people, it's back here 600, 500 B.C.

Now here's why this is important. Daniel is predicting the future. Okay? And there's going to be some times you're going to find a commentary, study notes at the bottom of your Bible, somebody doing a Bible study, and they're going to say something like this.

They're going to say that Daniel was a post-exilic writing. Post-exilic writing. Okay, that's a big mouthful. Post means after.

Exilic is the exile. Okay? So in other words, the 70 years of exile that Israel was in Babylon, they're saying that Daniel was written after that exile.

[16:28] Matter of fact, they'll even put a date on it. You know what date they'll put on it? Around 150 B.C. Right here.

And many of the things that Daniel's talking about, that he predicts, they're things that happen. I don't like being in here.

I get to use the tears. Here. You're going to have to move those back, you know. I will. But you see what I'm saying. So if Daniel's here predicting things here, that's fine.

But if he's here looking back. So if you read something that says Daniel was written 150 B.C., or it's a post-exilic writing, run away from that.

It's a liberal that doesn't believe what God's word says. Okay? And I make no bones about that. Okay, so does that make sense? Daniel's predicting things.

[17:26] This is God showing him what's going to happen. And that should give people who are in oppression great hope. Right? If it's something written after the fact, then what does it matter?

What does it matter at all? Why even read it if it's after the fact? Okay. Questions? Great. All right. Next up, let's talk about the genre of Daniel.

The genre of Daniel. All right? And I've got some fill-in-the-blanks for you as we go, so hopefully I can keep you up to date on where we're going.

What do we mean by the genre of Daniel? Well, the first thing is that the stories are theological stories, not historical.

The stories are theological stories, not historical. Can everybody see the screen so you can... All right.

[18:29] So what do I mean by the stories are theological and not historical? Okay. Okay. So let me ask you this. In chapter 2 of Daniel, we know that this is the story, the first dream of the king.

And he has this dream, and he wants somebody to interpret this dream. Right? And then he goes in and says that you can't... I'm not going to tell you the dream.

You've got to tell me the dream and the interpretation. Right? So all of these people come about trying to interpret the dream, but they can't.

So they go get Daniel, who is the chief of prefects, and he interprets the dream. Now, when I say that it's not historical, I don't mean it didn't happen.

What I mean is Daniel didn't write it in order to record all the historical data. We don't know who all these other people were. We don't know why a Jew is a chief prefect.

[19:35] Now, let me just qualify what I'm saying there. The word chief prefect is magician. And Israel was commanded by God to avoid sorcery and magic and witchcraft.

So what is a Jew doing as the chief magician? He doesn't give us any of that detail as to why he's doing that.

Now, we know from chapter 1 how that kind of maybe all rolls about, but what we don't know is all the details that we might want to ask. Okay?

Because he's got a theological point he's trying to make. He's not trying to give you and I a Western satisfaction for all of the historical data.

He's trying to prove a theological point. Okay? So that's the first thing, is that the stories are theological and not historical. Second thing, now remember, the stories are chapter 1 through 6.

[20 : 40] Okay? The visions are apocalyptic. They are not literal. The visions are apocalyptic, not literal.

And remember, visions are chapter 7 through 12. Let's talk about apocalyptic literature for just a second. A couple of things about apocalyptic literature, which is very hard to say, is that apocalyptic literature was given for comfort.

It was given for comfort. It was written to people who are oppressed by some system, and it was written to them to give them hope and comfort in the middle of their oppression.

To help them know it's going to be okay. To help them have courage. I'll give you just another example of this in the Bible. The book of Revelation is apocalyptic literature.

Meaning, it was written to people who were under oppression to help them know how to live with that oppression. Now that, right there, should automatically go, wait a minute, I thought, I thought Revelation was all about being able to write fiction books that sell billions of dollars called Left Behind.

[21 : 59] It should automatically make you question things, right? If that's what apocalyptic literature is, then it kind of changes things.

So that's what Daniel's doing. He is writing this apocalyptic literature here. The second thing is apocalyptic literature is an image of the future.

It's an image. It always comes with these visions and with these strange things. You know, his eyes glowing like fire and a flaming sword coming out of his mouth.

It's like, that's strange. A beast rising up out of the sea with seven heads and ten horns. And one horn's broken off and they have eyes all over them. And you're going like, what?

And then God, you know, there's a will within a will. Go to the book of Ezekiel, right? And you can see this will within a will and you've got these four beasts and they each have four different faces and six wings.

[22 : 56] You're going like, that's crazy sounding, right? It's this apocalyptic image. It's an image of the future in order to give those in that oppression a feel for what the future is going to be and not a timeline of what the future is going to be.

It's a feel of what the future is going to be, not a timeline of what the future is going to be. And that's really important when we look at Daniel because even though there's timeline elements that we can get into and we will, there is still the primary importance of the feel of this and not for us to try to lay out a calendar because if you start getting there, then the next step is for you to write a book called 88 Reasons Why Jesus Was Going to Come Back in 1988.

So, be that as it may. All right. The third thing then is that apocalyptic literature is to be transformed. It has to be transformed.

And we're going to have a little, we're going to have a little class here in biblical interpretation because when I say it needs to be transformed, here's what I mean. Number one, I've written this on your paper, you have to get the vision right.

You spend time understanding the vision and what's happening in the vision and what the pieces are without trying to say what they are. Right?

[24 : 25] We're going to do an example of this here in a second. But if you get, if you get an animal that says it's a kingdom, stop trying to figure out what kingdom it is for a while. Just understand what the animal's doing.

Okay? So get that vision right. Secondly then, look for clues that the author gives of how that vision relates to the real world. Because in almost all apocalyptic literature, his clues slip in.

That's where you'll see just, you know, maybe after the vision or sometimes even in the middle of the vision, you'll get some little word that comes in that tells you a clue about how that vision should be interpreted and how you should look at that vision.

The third thing is you need to grasp, on in, Michelle, you need to grasp the figurative, the figurative, the figurative language.

The figurative language. There's always figurative language that's going on in apocalyptic literature. Figurative language, I mean, when you, like in Revelation chapter 1, it describes, I think, Jesus, and

it's talking about he has a flaming sword coming out of his mouth.

[25 : 39] that's a figure. Right? So what does that figure mean? You've got to get a hold of that figure and try to understand it. And then, the last thing is let scripture interpret scripture.

And what I mean by that is the author may say words about things, but don't fill those words up with what you think it means. Fill those words up with what the author thinks it means.

Okay? Now, taking those four steps, I want us to go to Daniel chapter 8 this morning. And I'm going to read Daniel chapter 8, verse 1 through 14.

And as I do, you can follow along, but I want you to try to get the vision right. Right? So, so maybe on the back of one of your sheets of paper, you could just draw the scene that I'm about to read.

Okay? And, so you can kind of get the vision right. I also want you to be looking for a couple of words as I read it. I want you to be looking for the word canal, canal, and I want you to be looking for the word or the number 2300.

[26 : 52] Okay? And then, we're going to read this and we're going to go back through our four steps, get the vision right, this kind of thing, to kind of see how this works. Alright? But we will not answer every question here, but this will just get us in the ballpark.

Okay? Alright, so Daniel chapter 8, beginning of verse 1. In the third year of the reign of Belshazzar, the king, the king, a vision appeared to me, Daniel, subsequent to the one which appeared to me previously.

I looked in the vision and while I was looking, I was in the citadel of Susa, which is in the province of Elam, and I looked in the vision and I myself was beside the Uli Canal.

Then I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a ram, which had two horns, was standing in front of the canal. Now the two horns were long, but one was longer than the other, with the longer one coming up last.

I saw the ram budding westward, northward, southward, and no other beast could stand before him, nor was there anyone to rescue from his power, but he did as he pleased and magnified himself.

[28 : 01] While I was observing, behold, a male goat was coming from the west over the surface of the whole earth without touching the ground, and the goat had a conspicuous horn between his eyes.

He came up to the ram that had the two horns, which I had seen standing in front of the canal, and rushed at him with his mighty wrath. I saw him come beside the ram, and he was enraged at him, and he struck the ram and shattered his two horns, and the ram had no strength to withstand him. So he hurled him to the ground and trampled on him, and there was none to rescue the ram from his power. Then the male goat magnified himself exceedingly, but as soon as he was mighty, the large horn was broken, and in its place there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven.

Out of one of them came forth a rather small horn, which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the beautiful land. It grew up to the host of heaven, and caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the earth, and it trampled them down.

It even magnified itself to be equal with the commander of the host, and it removed the regular sacrifice from him, and the place of his sanctuary was thrown down, and on account of transgression, the host will be given over to the horn along with the regular sacrifice, and it will fling truth to the ground and perform its will and prosper.

[29 : 37] Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to that particular one who was speaking, how long will the vision about the regular sacrifice apply? While the transgression causes horror so as to allow both the holy place and the host to be trampled, he said to me, for 2300 evenings and mornings, then the holy place will be properly restored.

Okay. That is a crazy, crazy description. Very basically, what's the vision?

Destruction of Israel. Now that's, that's giving definition. When we do the vision, we're just saying we have to use like goat and ram. That's the vision.

Okay. So what's, what's the vision? It's a goat, it's a ram, right? It's got a ram with two horns, they're at a canal, are they on, are they on the same side of the canal?

Are they at different sides of the canal? Do we know? We don't know. Okay. What's the goat doing? Right. The goat. It's attacking.

[30 : 49] He's attacking and trying to beat down. Yeah. It doesn't matter who he's trying to beat down. He's just beating down people. He's just being ugly. Being nasty little, little ram, right?

And then the goat comes along and throws him down. But then the goat has a problem. What happens to the goat? The one horn? His only horn breaks.

Right. And up comes up four horns. And off one of those horns comes up another little horn. Okay. So here's the thing. When we are looking at apocalyptic literature, don't get into trying to say who these people are, what this represents.

Don't do that until you get the vision laid out of what's going on. Then, don't even try to understand what it means yet until you look for clues.

You've got to look for clues as to what the author says these things are. As a matter of fact, let me show you a clue that's given to us. In Daniel chapter 8 verse 21 it says the shaggy goat represents the kingdom of Greece.

[32 : 01] Full stop. He's giving us what the ram or the goat represents. The goat with the one horn is the kingdom of Greece under Alexander the Great.

That's what the goat is. It's that and nothing more. The reason that's important is because the author tells us what it is. We don't have to guess. We can extrapolate that if the goat is the kingdom of Greece, what kingdom did Greece put down that was in control of the world before that?

Persia. As a matter of fact, it was called the Medes and the Persians. That's why the ram has two horns. Okay? So we look for these clues to help us understand what's going on.

We also have to take a grasp of the figurative. Let me give two ideas about figurative. Number one, the canal. What's the canal?

And this is a trick question. To me, there's a dividing line between the kingdoms. It could be. It could be. Here's my answer. Nothing.

[33 : 18] It's nothing. And here's why. Because the vision is always the whole picture as a composite. Not every detail needs to be pulled down into the real world.

Okay? You just want to get the big picture here going on. Okay? So don't worry about the thing. If you look at something over and over again, it's like, I just can't figure out what the canal means.

I just can't figure out what the canal means. There's nothing in the text that gives me an illustration of what that is. Then it's okay. Leave it alone. Don't worry about it. Don't worry about it.

Okay? Don't worry about it. But the second thing is the 2300. Now, in the vision, the 2300 is what? 2300 what? Yeah, days.

Because it's morning and evening. Now, if we start trying to pull that into the real world, you can do all the math you want to, but it does not add up to three and a half years, seven years, or anything the like.

[34 : 22] As a matter of fact, I did it. It's 6.3 years, it's 76.6 months, 30 days each month, which is not really anything that we know anything about, or it's 328.57 weeks.

See, none of that makes sense if you try to keep it literal. 2300 is just a big number for a long time. That's what that means. Okay? So we've got to let the figure. Now, sometimes they'll tell us what the numbers mean, but if they don't tell you what the number means, then you're on shaky ground if you say it means something literal.

Does that make sense? Let me pause there and see if you have questions. Is that like in other writings in the Bible when they describe how long a person lives, the character in the Bible, they live for about, you know, hundreds of years, and you know what I'm saying?

Yeah, I do. Like Methuselah who lived 900 and something, 80 something years. Right. So here's the difference. The difference has to do with the genre of literature.

[35 : 37] So Genesis is written as historical, even though it's theological, it's written as historical and not apocalyptic with all of this imagery and figures and this kind of a thing.

Whereas Daniel, and like the book of Revelation, it's apocalyptic, highly visual, highly symbolic, highly figurative. So, understanding the difference between these things is about just understanding the genre.

You can see this in other places like in the New Testament where you've got Jesus talking about do not repay evil for evil, you know, and then he talks about if somebody presses you one mile, go with them two miles.

Is that to be understood literally? No. And why? Because at the end of two miles, I could say, get on, Jack. Get away from me.

No, that's not his point at all. His point is not go two miles literally. His point is go the extra. Yeah, go the extra, right?

[36 : 44] So you have both a figurative thing that comes up that means something literal, but you also have something literal where he's saying, don't repay evil for evil, right? So as we read, we just have to understand what we're looking at here before we start making questions about, if one number is figurative, then are all numbers figurative and that's just too far of a leap.

So does that help? Yes. Okay, good. One last thing in learning to read apocalyptic literature is that we have to let the author define his own words.

verse 21, but in verse 17, if we go back up and wait, oh, I didn't include it. Well, okay, so in verse 17 of the vision, I didn't read that earlier.

I have. Okay, would you go ahead and read that then? No, I've got a different, I kind of read it. As you came near the place where I was standing, I was terrified and fell prostrate.

Son of man, he said to me, understand that the vision concerns the time of the end. Okay, full stop right there, the time of the end.

[38 : 03] Your knee-jerk reaction, what would your knee-jerk reaction say is the end? End times. But why revelation?

Why in the world is that our knee-jerk reaction? That is exactly, that's right. So what we've got to do is we have to let the author define his own words.

Before we start loading up the end with the end times, or the end of U.S. democracy, or the end of snow cones in summer, we have to let Daniel define what the end is.

And he uses this term in several places in his book. We've got to go to those, and we've got to pull them all together to see what we're talking about. And go back, what was the vision about?

It was about the kingdom of Medes and Persians and Greece. So how is that the end? Because that's something that's already happened in history. All right.

[39 : 05] The last thing about the genre of this literature is that it is wisdom and not prophetic. Well, now we've got a contradiction, so we'll deal with that in a second.

Is wisdom literature not prophetic literature? Okay, so let's just be sure we understand what is prophetic literature.

Prophetic literature is where the author is doing two things. Number one, he is prosecuting God's people by the law of God.

if you look at all of the different prophets, they're constantly chastising Israel, right? Or chastising another nation, or they're chastising several nations at once.

They're pronouncing judgment upon them because those nations in Israel, they've broken God's law. So one way to understand a prophet is that they're law prosecutors, okay?

[40 : 05] And so that's a part of what they're doing. When they do that, they're always bringing in the story of redemption as a prophetic element. Like sometimes the judgment is in the future, but then so is the rescue.

And he brings them encouragement and gospel message through what he's predicting. And then that gets to that second point is that they are predicting a future.

And sometimes the future that the prophet thinks he's predicting is here, but God is actually using that way out here. Some people call it prophetic foreshortening and it's something that happens in the Old Testament.

I don't think it happens in the New but I think it happens in the Old because they didn't have the full revelation of God. So as they see the stump of Jesse coming to deliver them they might think to themselves oh that's Uriah in the year that King Uriah died.

They thought maybe that he might be this stump of Jesse but he really wasn't. There was someone greater to come. So that's that prophetic foreshortening but the prophets wrote very specifically for those purposes.

[41 : 19] Daniel did not write for those purposes. It doesn't mean that Daniel doesn't have prophecy in it. He does. It's kind of like the Psalms. The Psalms were meant to be written and sung as worship music.

But we have prophetic stuff in the Psalms. In Psalm 2 it talks it's a prophetic thing about Jesus being crucified on the cross. Did I say Psalm 2? I mean Psalm 22.

So Daniel does do some prophecy but he's wisdom literature. Now let me prove to you he is wisdom literature. In Daniel chapter 1 verse 4 you've got these words intelligence wisdom understanding and I've highlighted together discerning knowledge because that's really one Hebrew word.

Those four Hebrew words are wisdom words out of Proverbs and the other wisdom literature. And here's what's interesting. In Daniel the word intelligence is used nine times. In Daniel the word wisdom is used three times. the word understanding is used twenty-two times. And the word discerning is used eleven times.

[42 : 36] As a matter of fact the word understanding is used more in Daniel than it is some of the other wisdom literature. It's wisdom literature. I'll give you another example of why it's wisdom literature and that is that Daniel interprets dreams in chapter 2, 4, and 5.

He's interpreting dreams. He has to come and give understanding to people so that they know what to do. That's the essence of biblical wisdom is knowing what to do.

Knowing how to apply God's truth to life. In these dreams you get this idea, well who's wise enough to interpret this dream?

And it's always, Daniel, he's our man. If he can't do it, nobody can, right? It's this idea that he's the man who understands the times and can solve mysteries because of his wisdom.

And my third reason for saying that this is wisdom literature is because of, oh, I just destroyed the world. There we go.

[43 : 43] Because wisdom is extolled at the very end of the book of Daniel. In Daniel chapter 12, verse 3, it says those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven.

Those with insight, that's that idea of that understanding, that intelligence, that wisdom, that knowledge. But there's another reason, I guess this would be my fourth reason.

In your Bibles, if you want to, open up to the table of contents of your Bible. And look at the order of the books.

Find Daniel and tell me what's the book before Daniel, what's the book after Daniel? Two prophets in the book before Isaiah and Samuel.

Right. So, in our English order, okay, in our English order, we've got Daniel listed with the prophets, the major prophets even.

[44 : 48] Right? And that may be hard to see, I apologize if it is. So, we normally have the Pentateuch, the historical books, the wisdom poetry books, and the prophets, major and minor.

And so Daniel's there. That's the way our English Bibles are put together. And, to be fair, in Matthew chapter 24, verse 15, Jesus does call Daniel the prophet.

And I think he was a prophet. But I think that his writing is wisdom, literature. Okay? And here's my final reason, and it goes to the order of the books. In the Jewish order of books, this is their order.

They had the law, Genesis through Deuteronomy. They had the prophets, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, which were the former prophets, and the latter prophets were Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve, which the twelve is the minor prophets.

prophets. Then their wisdom literature, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra.

[46 : 02] You say, the Jewish order of the Bible, how do we know about this Jewish order of the Bible? Bible, in Luke chapter 11, Jesus is chastising some people, and he says, so that the blood of all the prophets shed since the foundation of the world may be charged against this generation, from the blood of Abel, what book of the Bible is Abel in?

Genesis. Genesis. To the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the house of God. Does anybody know who the blood of, you know who Zechariah is?

He's a prophet that came after Haggai before Malachi. It's a different Zechariah. It's a different Zechariah. As a matter of fact, you will find the story of Zechariah in 2nd Chronicles, chapter 24.

And if I say 2nd Chronicles, what's the last book? Chronicles. 2nd Chronicles. The first book would be Genesis, and the last book in the Hebrew Bible would be Chronicles.

The blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah. Now we also know this because we have the documents that show that this is the way that they order their books. So here's why this is important before we get into the lessons here.

[47 : 23] Most of the other books, actually let me go back. Let me go back here. These books are concerned with what we would call the story of redemption.

The story of redemption is going to talk about who God is, why the world is the way it is, and how God's going to fix it. Right? And it always advances the story somehow.

Even the book of Leviticus, with all of its law and this kind of a thing, advances the story because it gives all this stuff that they're supposed to do to help them understand what redemption and sin looks like.

Right? When you get into Joshua and Judges and Samuel and the kings, you get to see the lineage, right, get woven through. That's why there's so much genealogy in some of these things. The prophets, the prophets then extend the story into the future of the redemption that's coming. Wisdom literature, it may help with that, but wisdom literature usually is all about how do you live here and now?

[48 : 29] How do you take the truths that you know and live it out today? I mean, just think about the book of Proverbs. The book of Proverbs is full of daily wisdom, right?

Maybe you didn't know this, but the book of Proverbs is not prophecy either. There's two Proverbs, I love them, they come right back to back to each other, and it's about how to deal with people.

One says, do not answer a fool according to his folly. In other words, you don't want to stoop to their level and act like them. The very next proverb says this, answer a fool according to his folly. Because sometimes you've got to put the fool in this place. And so, that's wisdom. That doesn't say anything about why sin is in the world, who God is, or anything else like that, but it is something he expects for us to live in a certain way because this is his world, this is his truth, and this is how we should live.

Daniel is wisdom literature. He is trying to help us understand how do we live under persecution. Remember that description of the nation I described in the beginning?

[49 : 41] And we all said, it's very possible I could be describing current United States right now. Can you imagine such a timely book that we see people knowing how they lived under such persecution, under such oppression, by following after what God had told them to do?

So then, we should be able to take lessons from this that would help us, right? Lessons such as this. How do we live in exile? How do we live as a part of a culture that's not our own anymore? How do we live a part of a group of people that don't want us to be around? How do we live in a place that wants to eradicate our faith system?

Right? And so, we see things through the book of Daniel, things like how to remain faithful to the Lord in the middle of this. In other words, how do you keep your relationship with God in a vibrant way?

How do you keep your relationship with God and not lose your belief in Him in the middle of this? That's one of the things that we'll get to. Or, how do we remain steadfast under persecution as people do things to us?

[50 : 54] It's going to be very tempting for us to look at them and go like, you know, back at you, buddy. You know? I mean, if you think to yourself, maybe I'm the only one that's like this because I'm just so angry all the time.

But, like, if somebody is going to come and try to persecute me and my family, like, there's a part of me that wants to go stand up and just like, hmm. But what did Jesus say? He said, turn the other cheek. Well, how do I turn the other cheek and at the same time protect life?

I don't understand. I don't understand how to deal with that situation. But Daniel helps us to see that. Or how do we remain hopeful in God's control? How do we not lose heart?

You know? I mean, news story after news story after news story after news story. Our government is corrupt. The culture is in decay. Financial situation is just crazy, out of control.

And what happens if it all blows up? How do we remain hopeful knowing the possibility that the world is going to be in chaos before Jesus comes back?

[52 : 00] Because we have the wind to the end. That's right. And that's the story that Daniel is going to help us with. A second thing is the idea of the vindication of the saints. The vindication of the saints.

There's a lot in the book of Daniel where people are saying, yes, I follow God, yes, I follow God, yes, I follow God, and they get into trouble. They get into trouble.

I mean, have you ever heard somebody say, you know, I don't know why, with all this heartache and with all the suffering that you're going through in your life, I don't understand why you still believe in God. Well, the vindication of the saints is an answer to that.

It's saying our faith was worthwhile. our belief wasn't misplaced. Our hope, our trust wasn't misplaced.

We see that in this verse towards the end of Daniel in chapter 12. It says, now at that time, Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people will arise, and there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time.

[53 : 09] And at that time, your people, everyone who was found written in the book of life will be, or in the book, will be rescued. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awaken these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.

Those who have insight will shine brightly as the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteous like stars forever and ever. He's basically saying to them, listen, at the end of this, there's going to be a resurrection, and those who put their faith in him, they will be vindicated, and we will get to see that their hope was not misplaced.

And it really, it really ends with the one big sort of truth or lesson, and that is to dare to be a Daniel. And I don't often like to use biblical characters as people that we would follow their example, because oftentimes we use bad ones for that.

You know, I think about the story of David and Goliath, and I think so many people want to tell us that we need to be like David and face our giants, and that's a complete abuse of that text, because if we were to put ourselves in this story, we would not be David, we would not be Goliath, we would be the fearing Israelites who need a great king to come and deliver us from our enemies, right?

And so, so, telling you to dare to be a Daniel is a little bit against my brain, but in this case, we don't see a lot of the faults and foibles of Daniel.

[54 : 50] What we see is someone who's living out the wisdom of God and the blessing of God upon that person as they do so, and it gives us the encouragement to do like Daniel did.

To do like Daniel did. And so, my prayer is that as we go through this, it's going to be an encouragement, it's going to be a hopeful study for us in the face of all the things that we are facing in our own nation.

So, amen and amen. Any questions that you have about any of this? And I have recorded it, and I will put it on our website, so if you want to go back and listen to that, maybe listen to it at half speed. My wife likes to listen to my stuff at half speed, because she says I sound really weird. She likes to make fun of me when I do that, but you can listen to it again, that way if you miss something in the notes, you can go back and check that out.

Any questions? I'm excited about getting into the book of Daniel, okay? And the course forward from here is that we will basically take one chapter a week, okay?

[56 : 07] Now, I say basically because there's going to be a time that I'm going to be gone and we won't meet, and so we'll skip that week, and then there's going to be some times that there's some of these chapters that are so long that we kind of need to break them up.

And so we will come in, and I'll bring in some of the historical stuff that we need to know as we get into particular chapters, but I felt like this was important to set the stage for how we read Daniel and what our expectations should be as what are we going to get out of Daniel?

Because I know how Daniel is used in a lot of quarters, and you're going to find that I don't use it that way because I don't think it was meant to be used that way. And so, you know, don't hesitate that if you're like, well, but so-and-so said this about this.

I'll be glad to tell you how they're wrong, okay? Oh, did I say that out loud? Okay. Well, if there's no questions, then we'll pray, and you're free to go if you want to hang out and talk a little bit.

You can do that as well, okay? Okay.