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Sermon Notes

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An Overview of the Book of Daniel

Daniel 1-12

I. The Message of History

Henry Ford: “History is bunk.”

Bible: History is controlled, has a definite purpose, and is right on schedule

Revelation 22:13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

Isaiah 46:9-10 Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. ¹⁰ I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.

II. Context of Daniel

A. Israel’s history

1. Call of Abraham
2. Bondage in Egypt
3. Exodus under Moses
4. Wandering in the Wilderness
5. The Second Giving of the Law
6. Conquest under Joshua
7. Cyclical Idolatry under Judges
8. The United Kingship (Saul, David, Solomon)
9. The Divided Kingdoms
10. Israel’s idolatry, Judah’s struggle
11. Repeated prophetic warnings

12. Israel exiled, Judah warned
 13. Judah's final rebellion
 14. Judah's conquest by Babylon
- B. Nebuchadnezzar's conquest: 605 B.C. conquered the city, entered it
- C. Judah's exile
1. Taken from the Promised land to the most idolatrous nation on earth
 2. Among the exiles: members of the Judean noble family, including Daniel
- D. Times of the Gentiles

Luke 21:24 Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

1. The "times of Gentiles" = time in which Gentile powers are in control of Jerusalem
2. A time that stretched on through one Gentile power after another
3. Began in the days of Daniel... the road map clearly laid out through dreams/visions

III. Major Themes

- A. Supernaturally accurate predictive prophecy
1. The exact order of Kingdoms following Babylon
 2. The coming of Alexander the Great... four hundred years after Daniel
 3. The coming of Antiochus Epiphanes... four hundred fifty years after Daniel
 4. The coming of Christ's kingdom... during the days of the Fourth Empire
 5. The growth of Christ's kingdom to rule the whole world
- B. Battle for the Bible: "Daniel in the Critics' Den"

Key questions: Who wrote Daniel, and when did he write it?

1. Porphyry: attacked Daniel as a forgery
2. Modern liberal critics have followed suit

3. If Daniel was written in sixth century B.C., predictive prophecy cannot be denied

4. If Daniel is a pious forgery, all of Scripture possibly falls

C. Daniel's godly character

1. Uncompromising in pagan Babylon

2. A leader of men... influencing fellow Jews

3. A humble man of prayer: MUCH about Daniel's prayer life

4. A careful student of the Scripture

5. A diligent, hard-working, competent public official

D. God's sovereign control over all nations and all history

1. World history traced out in grand scale... empires rising and falling at God's command

2. World history micromanaged on a personal scale: one king humbled, another one destroyed

E. God's glorified by His personal dealings with Gentile rulers

1. Poems of praise by Gentile kings:

a. by Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2:47

b. by Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 3:28-29

c. by Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4:1-3

d. by Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4:34-37

e. by Darius in Daniel 6:25-27

2. Amazingly gracious patience in dealing with Nebuchadnezzar

a. direct revelation to Nebuchadnezzar: all the scope of human history

b. miraculous vindication of three witnesses from the fiery furnace

c. Nebuchadnezzar humbled then exalted: mind changed into a beast, then restored

3. Shockingly immediate wrath for Belshazzar

4. Miraculous vindication of Daniel before Darius

F. The deity and glorious kingdom of the coming Messiah

1. Christ's kingdom clearly prophesied in Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Daniel 2)
2. Christ's person perhaps seen in the fiery furnace (Daniel 3)
3. Christ's deity and triumph proclaimed in Daniel's Son of Man vision (Daniel 7)

IV. Controversy over Daniel

A. What's At Stake?

1. The identity of Jesus Christ Himself: Daniel testified to Christ, Christ testified about Daniel
2. The truthfulness of Scripture:

William Newell: "If the keys of the Bible up to the book of Psalms, hang on Moses' books, then the rest of the Bible, through Revelation, hang on Daniel..."

Edwin Jenkins: "The best proof of the inspiration of the Scripture is prophecy. But because the church has allowed false teachers to come in, prophecy has been neglected and laid aside... when this is done, the people fall prey to every wind of doctrine, eventually disbelieving that the Bible is the word of God. Prophecy is the most sturdy rung in the ladder of faith."

3. Proof of the existence and sovereign power of God
4. Certainty of our salvation

B. Critics ancient and modern

1. Porphyry: *Against the Christians* (died A.D. 303)
 - a. neo-platonic pagan, hated Christianity
 - b. saw incredible accuracy in Daniel: rise of pagan Kings & the coming of the Christ
 - c. stated that Daniel written after the fact, during the reign of Atiochus Epiphanes
 - d. this only proved that Daniel was supernatural if written in 6th century B.C.
2. "Higher critics"
 - a. so-called historical inaccuracies: dates of Nebuchadnezzar's ascension, who is Belshazzar, etc.

- b. so-called linguistic errors: words borrowed from Babylonian, Persian & Greek languages appear in Daniel
- c. rejection of detailed prophecy: Daniel is too detailed... no way it could be beforehand!!
- d. rejection of miracles: fiery furnace with no trace of being burned?? IMPOSSIBLE
- e. rejection of book by ancient Jews: they didn't include it with prophets but only in "writings"
- f. text problems

3. Old Testament testimony to Daniel as historical figure...**RIGHTEOUS & WISE**

Ezekiel 14:14, 20 even if these three men--Noah, Daniel and Job--were in it, they could save only themselves by their righteousness, declares the Sovereign LORD.

Ezekiel 28:3 Are you wiser than Daniel? Is no secret hidden from you?

4. Christ's testimony to Daniel

- a. constantly called Himself "Son of Man"
- b. quoted Daniel 9: "abomination of desolation"

Matthew 24:15-16 "So when you see standing in the holy place `the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel--let the reader understand--¹⁶ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

- c. quoted Daniel 7 at moment of conviction by High Priest

Daniel 7:13 "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven.

V. Chapter by Chapter Overview

A. The Historical Accounts: Daniel 1-6

- 1. Uncompromising Character: resolved, tested, and rewarded by God (Daniel 1)

Daniel 1:8 But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine

Daniel 1:17 To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.

2. Nebuchadnezzar's first dream: God's sovereign plan for world history... a Kingdom that will never end (Daniel 2)

Daniel 2:19-22 Then Daniel praised the God of heaven ²⁰ and said: "Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his. ²¹ He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning. ²² He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him.

Daniel 2:44 "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.

3. The Golden Image and a Trial by Fire: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego (Daniel 3)

Daniel 3:28 Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.

4. Nebuchadnezzar's second dream: God humbles, then exalts a mighty potentate (Daniel 4)

Daniel 4:35, 37 All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth.... Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.

5. The Writing on the Wall: Belshazzar and Babylon judged by God (Daniel 5)

Daniel 5:22-23, 30 "But you his son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this.... you did not honor the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways.... That very night, Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians was slain."

6. Daniel and the Lions: The persecution and vindication of a godly man (Daniel 6)

Daniel 6:27 [God] rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions.

B. The Apocalyptic Visions: Daniel 7-12

1. The Identity and Triumph of the Son of Man (Daniel 7)

Daniel 7:13-14 "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. ¹⁴ He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

2. The Coming Greek Tryants: Alexander the Great and Atiochus Epiphanes (Daniel 8)

Daniel 8:19-22 He said: "I am going to tell you what will happen later in the time of wrath, because the vision concerns the appointed time of the end. ²⁰ The two-horned ram that you saw represents the kings of Media and Persia. ²¹ The shaggy goat is the king of Greece, and the large horn between his eyes is the first king. ²² The four horns that replaced the one that was broken off represent four kingdoms that will emerge from his nation but will not have the same power.

3. Daniel's Godly Prayer, the Seventy Weeks, and the Coming of the Anointed One (Daniel 9)

Daniel 9:24-25 "Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy. ²⁵ "Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.'

4. Daniel's Vision of a Man: The power of persistent prayer (Daniel 10)

Daniel 10:2-3 At that time I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. ³ I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over.

Daniel 10:11 He said, "Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you."

5. The Trampling of the Promised Land and the Testing of God's People (Daniel 11)

Daniel 11:32 "The people who know their God will be strong and resist him."

6. The Great Resurrection and the Sealing of Daniel's Book (Daniel 12)

Daniel 12:2-3 ***Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. ³ Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.***

VI. Applications

A. Concerning Scripture

- Rejoice in the supernatural origin of God's Word
 1. Despite all attempts to crush Daniel, it stands as one of the greatest proofs of the divine origin of Scripture
 2. Prophecies of the Four world empires, Alexander the Great, Antiochus Epiphanes, and the coming Messiah should be enough to satisfy anyone!
- Study Scripture carefully, and act accordingly
 1. Because the Bible is a supernaturally accurate book, we take our marching orders from it
 2. Every word of Scripture exhaled by God through human author... treat Scripture with respect
- Use Daniel to witness to friends/coworkers
 1. Everyone is interested in the future and in fulfilled prophecies
 2. Daniel is the most astoundingly clear prophetic fulfillment in the Old Testament
 3. Therefore, use Daniel to prove to unbelievers the Bible is the Word of God written!

B. Concerning godliness and ungodliness

- Be godly and don't compromise to the surrounding culture
 1. God uses uncompromising godly men and women to be His choice servants
 2. Your usefulness to God and therefore your fruitfulness for Judgment Day depend on your personal holiness and your willingness to confront pagan culture
 3. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego would rather have died than to have compromised

4. America's Christians pay very little for their faith and look a lot like their surrounding culture

5. DARE TO BE A DANIEL!!

- Establish personal habits of godliness: prayer, Bible study, mortification
 1. Daniel was a model of consistent, humble, persistent, self-denying prayer... "Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before."
 2. Daniel was also a model of deep Bible study
 3. Daniel was committed to personal godliness, through the mortification of the flesh
- Be warned from Nebuchadnezzar's example: God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble
 1. Nebuchadnezzar was willing to take God on
 2. He worshipped himself and wanted others to do so as well
 3. He flaunted his achievements and exalted himself before God
 4. God changed his mind... LITERALLY
- Be warned also from Belshazzar's example: persistent rebellion and blasphemy against God will ultimately bring judgment
 1. God is gracious and long-suffering... BUT he doesn't wait forever; at some point the sword falls
 2. Note that Belshazzar's sin was sin against knowledge... HE KNEW WHAT HE WAS DOING!
 3. So also will America be held accountable for sinning right in God's face

C. Concerning history: past, present, and future

- Be at peace about the flow of history: God is running everything
 1. Everything in the past had a purpose: to bring us to where we are
 2. So also everything in the present has a purpose: to bring us to where we're going
 3. No king, no matter how powerful he may seem, is beyond God's almighty reach

4. No nation, no matter how powerful they may seem, has established a permanent realm... all of them rise, and all of them fall

- Be at peace about the future... IF you're a Christian!
 1. The future may seem dark to us... but it's perfectly clear to God
 2. God rules over history, and thus will bring about every promise He's ever made
 3. Not one of Daniel's predictions have failed... we still wait for the resurrection!

D. Concerning the Christ

- Worship the Son of Man
- Be confident in his coming Kingdom... nothing can stop it
- Be amazed at the accuracy of Daniel's predictions
- Don't separate Christ from the Scripture: all our testimony is from the Word