

# LESSON 2

We talked in our last lesson about the modern end-is-near attitude, and we saw that it was not that modern. We looked at a book written during the U.S. Civil War that conveyed the same end-is-near attitude.

Another book, *AD 1000: Living on the Brink of Apocalypse*, describes the “end is near” pandemonium that occurred 1000 years ago at the turn of the *first* millennium.

A century later during the Crusades, many believed the retaking of Jerusalem would usher in the end of the world. They also believed the end would not come until all had been converted, which led to forced baptisms and intense Jewish persecution.

Daniel is filled with historical characters, many that Daniel tells us about before they were even born!

We looked at a coin showing Domitian, the eleventh emperor of Rome, whom I believe we will see is mentioned in both Daniel and Revelation, and is also the man of sin in 2 Thessalonians 2.

But Paul tells us that that man of sin “as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.” Was that true of Domitian?

Look at two of the coins on the handout (available at [www.ThyWordIsTruth.com](http://www.ThyWordIsTruth.com)). On one coin, Domitian is referred to as *Divi Filius* (“DIVI F”) — son of the divine, or son of god. On the other, his own infant son (who died very young) is referred to as “The Divine Caesar, Son of the Emperor Domitian.” The child sits on the globe and stretches his hands out toward seven stars. A divine child who holds seven stars in

his hand — where else have we seen that? Speaking of Christ, Revelation 1:16 says, “and he had in his right hand seven stars.” These similarities are unmistakable.

Domitian must have seen in Christianity a threat to his own claims of divinity for himself and for his own son. Look again at what Paul say about him:

**2 Thessalonians 2:4** — *Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.*

Read that and look at those coins!

Babylon was a common figure for Rome in the first century — why? How do we know the “Babylon” in Revelation was Rome? We talked about another coin — one showing the goddess Roma sitting upon the seven hills that surround Rome. (See the handout.) We compared that coin with the description of Babylon in Revelation 17 as a bloodthirsty harlot sitting upon seven hills.

What was the history of Babylon? We talked about the difference between the city and the many nations that have ruled over the city. We traced the history of the city all the way back to Genesis 10.

### **How are Daniel and Revelation Related?**

One commentator has said that “the book of Daniel is to the Old Testament what Revelation is to the New Testament.” I agree, but probably not for the same reasons that commentator had in mind.

As we will soon see, Daniel has suffered about as much at the hands of careless commentators as Revelation has. We will need to proceed carefully and pay close attention to the historical context of the book and the time frame that is given for the prophecies.

Revelation and Daniel have one important thing in common. As we study either book we should keep in mind Mark Twain’s advice: Whenever you find yourself on

the side of the majority, it is probably time to change sides! The sensational end-is-near approaches to Daniel and Revelation will always draw a bigger crowd — but they do so at the expense of the truth.

In at least one way, however, the two books are different. Daniel is NOT primarily a message for those who are suffering in the midst of deadly persecution (although some, as we will see in our study, certainly did suffer deadly persecution) but rather for those who are living in a settled condition yet within an alien culture.

In Jeremiah 29:7, God told the exiles to “seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.” This is very different from what God said about Rome in Revelation (but not that different from how Rome was viewed earlier in the first century, before Emperor worship and persecution really took hold).

In other ways, however, the books are very similar. Many similar symbols are used, and each book helps us understand the symbols in the other. Each book has much to say about the early Roman empire and its relation to the church.

Keep in mind that while the two books say the same thing about this period, Daniel was written 600 years earlier. And, in some ways, Daniel is more detailed than Revelation about Rome during the time frame in which Revelation was written!

I have mentioned several times that Daniel and Revelation are bookends. We can see that from the text itself.

**Revelation 13:2** — *And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.*

That verse describes Rome in figures representing the evil regimes that preceded it: Greece, Medo-Persia, and the Chaldeans.

These descriptions point us unmistakably back to Daniel 7. The fourth kingdom in Daniel 7 is Rome, with the first three kingdoms being the Chaldeans (shown as a lion in Daniel 7:4), Medo-Persia (shown as a bear in Daniel 7:5), and Greece (shown as a leopard in Daniel 7:6). Daniel 7:12 tells us that these beasts lost their dominion but didn't die.

We will learn about the first two kingdoms firsthand from the book of Daniel. Chaldea (sometimes just called "Babylon"), the first of the four kingdoms, was the invading power that carried Daniel and his three friends off to exile. The Medo-Persians, the second kingdom, was the one that came to power after Belshazzar saw the writing on the wall in Daniel 5. The third kingdom was Greece, which conquered Persia under Alexander but then fell into four parts after his death. Rome was the fourth kingdom.

The beast in Revelation 13 (which is Rome) is pictured as being part leopard, part bear, and part lion. Rome had the tearing power of the lion (Chaldea). Rome had the crushing force of the bear (Medo-Persia). And Rome was swift and ferocious like a leopard (Greece). Rome, the fourth beast in Daniel 7, embodied all of the wickedness of the first three beasts and much more. Thus, it is described as being composed of pieces of the previous three kingdoms.

But how does this show that Daniel and Revelation are bookends? Look at the order in Daniel 7 and Revelation 13. Daniel 7:4-6 — lion in verse 4, bear in verse 5, and leopard in verse 6. This verse looks forward: Chaldeans, Medo-Persia, Greece. Revelation 13:2 — leopard, bear, lion. This verse is looking backward: Greece, Medo-Persia, Chaldeans.

### **The Big Controversy: When Daniel Was Written?**

The early date position holds that the book of Daniel was written in Babylon in the late sixth century BC by the prophet Daniel who had been taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar in 606 BC. The prophecies in the book are genuine and accurate.

Before I describe the modern liberal critic's position, let's stop and see if we can figure out what that position must be. I say "must" because once you adopt the assumptions of the modern liberal critic, you are pretty much in a straightjacket when it comes to the book of Daniel.

What do I mean? Daniel contains detailed prophecies about certain kingdoms that were to follow after the Chaldeans. That Daniel could know that any kingdom would follow the mighty Chaldeans was shocking enough, but Daniel provides intricate detailed prophecies about three subsequent kingdoms that look forward about six centuries.

How can modern liberal critics explain this? They would never admit that Daniel was inspired by God. They would never admit that Daniel was a prophet. But if Daniel was written before the Roman empire and if Daniel contains detailed prophecies about that empire written six centuries earlier, then Daniel must be from God.

What must the liberal critic do to get around this dilemma? They have two choices: They can move the date of Daniel until after the events that are prophesied, or they can change the prophecies so that they are referring to some earlier event (even if that change causes them to predict events that never actually happened).

And, in fact, liberal critics do both of those things. They tell us that the book was written around 168 BC, and they tell us the four kingdoms are Chaldea, Media, Persia, and Greece — that is, they split Medo-Persia into two separate kingdoms to avoid having the fourth kingdom be Rome.

Why do they split up the Medes and the Persians? Because we have copies of Daniel that predate the Roman empire, which means the liberal critics cannot push the date of Daniel far enough ahead in time to have it written during the Roman empire. (Pompey seized Palestine for the Romans in 63 BC.)

Do you really mean that they take prophecies that read perfectly on events in the Roman empire, and move them to instead refer to events in the Greek empire that

never occurred? That is exactly what I mean, and let me give you an example from the *New Oxford Annotated Bible*, commenting on Daniel 11:40-45:

Predictions that Ptolemy will provoke another war with disastrous results, so that Antiochus will conquer Libya to the west of Egypt and Ethiopia to the south, but on his way back will perish somewhere along the coastal route. None of these predictions was fulfilled.

When we get to those verses in Daniel 11, we will find that they are discussing Rome, not Greece — and that they fit with the history of Rome. Why doesn't the Oxford commentator apply the verses to Rome? Because to do so would cause him to admit that Daniel was a genuine prophet, so instead he applies the prophecies to Greece, even though they do not fit with the history of Greece.

So here are the two positions: Again, The early date position holds that the book of Daniel was written in Babylon in the late sixth century BC by the prophet Daniel who had been taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar in 606 BC. The prophecies in the book are genuine and accurate.

The late date position (or Maccabean date position) holds that the book of Daniel was written in Palestine by an unknown Jew around 168 BC during the Maccabean period. The prophecies in the book concerning events prior to 168 BC were written after the fact and hence are not genuine prophecies. The other prophecies in the book were merely guesses of future events, many of which later proved to be inaccurate.

Although this view has been readily adopted by virtually all modern scholars, it is not a modern view. It was first put forth in the third century AD by Porphyrius of Tyre. It was quickly abandoned, however, after Jerome published a refutation. During the "enlightenment," it was picked up again and popularized.

## Why do so many hold the late date view?

To answer that question, we need to understand the dual tenets of liberal theology (where by “liberal” here we mean those who do not accept the divine inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture). Those tenets are:

- Supernatural explanations of historical events are not acceptable. Any event that requires such an explanation is not historical.
- Nothing in a general sense ever happens uniquely in history. All true occurrences must be repetitive in nature so that scientists may properly observe them.

Consider the following comment about the modern approach to Daniel:

Such amazingly accurate predictions defy the possibility of merely human origin. If these prophecies were composed in the lifetime of the sixth century Daniel, they would compel our acceptance of special revelation from a transcendent, personal God. No anti-supernaturalist position can reasonably be defended if Daniel is a genuine book of prophecy composed in 530 BC or in the preceding years.

Liberal theologians approach the Bible with the *a priori* assumption that the supernatural is impossible. From this assumption it must (and does, logically) follow that Daniel is a fraud. Let me allow you to hear it in their own words (from a commentary by W. Sibley Towner published in 1984):

We need to assume that the vision as a whole is a prophecy after the fact. Why? Because human beings are unable accurately to predict future events centuries in advance and to say that Daniel could do so, even on the basis of a symbolic revelation vouchsafed to him by God and interpreted by an angel, is to fly in the face of the certainties of human nature. So what we have here is in fact not a road map of the

future laid down in the sixth century BC but an interpretation of the events of the author's own time, 167-164 BC.

Towner is correct when he says that “human beings are unable accurately to predict future events centuries in advance.” But God can and does.

It is very important to realize that the liberal critics are forced to hold the late-date view. These critics say that they are simply seeking the best theories and when a better theory comes along they will accept it instead. DO NOT BELIEVE THEM! They are seeking the best *naturalistic* theory — and they will ignore all evidence to the contrary.

Evolutionists say the same thing. They claim to be seeking the best theory to explain their observations, but they aren't. They are looking for the best naturalistic explanation — and they have found it. Evolution is the best (in fact, only! — if they had another they would use it!) naturalistic explanation for how we got here — but it is not the *true* explanation for how we got here. The true explanation is a supernatural explanation, and they aren't looking for that. They are not seeking the truth.

What's the connection with Daniel? Atheists are forced to believe in evolution — they have no choice. The radical critics are forced to accept a late date for Daniel — they have no choice. Naturalism may be called science, but it is really a philosophy. In fact, in many ways it functions as a religion — complete with sacred books, unquestioned dogma, unquestioning believers, and a high priesthood.

## **The Evidence for the Early Date View**

### **The Testimony of Jesus supports the Early Date View**

Did Daniel exist? Was he an actual historical figure? Is the book of Daniel authentic? Was Daniel a prophet? Did Daniel speak from God? Does Daniel have anything to say about Rome? The liberal critic says no. But Jesus refers to Daniel in Matthew 24:15 (and also in Mark 13:14) and calls him a prophet.

*So when you see the desolating sacrilege spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand).*

Did Daniel predict specific events that occurred many years from the date in which he lived? Jesus mentions an event in Matthew 24:15 that had not yet occurred but would occur soon (see verse 34). We will see Daniel's prophecy of this event when we get to Chapter 12.

Did Daniel have nothing to say about the Roman empire as the liberal critics would have us believe? Not according to Jesus. According to Jesus, the fourth kingdom in Daniel was Rome. The liberal critic tells us it was Greece.

Isaac Newton (the greatest scientist who ever lived) said that "to reject Daniel is to reject the Christian religion." I agree with this statement, because if we reject Daniel then we must admit that either Jesus was mistaken about Daniel or the gospel records are hopelessly flawed about what Jesus taught. Either way, Christianity tumbles.

The liberal critics simply discredit Christ as an authority on such matters. One even wrote that "Christ neither would nor could be a critical authority." On the contrary, Jesus said that he had all authority in heaven and upon earth.

Daniel 7:13 is the main source of the title "Son of Man," which Jesus applied to himself many times as a Messianic title.

*I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.*

Jesus said that Daniel was a prophet and Jesus said that part of what Daniel said was fulfilled *after* the Greek empire. Thus, the clear statements of Christ are in direct opposition to the modern scholars. Who are we to believe?

## **Daniel is accurate regarding Babylonian history**

The historical accuracy regarding Babylonian history makes it difficult to believe that the book was written 400 years after its historical setting.

Daniel 4:30 gives an accurate picture of Nebuchadnezzar's building activities:

*The king spake, and said, 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?*

One commentator has written:

The East India House inscription, now in London, has six columns of Babylonian writing telling of the stupendous building operations which the king carried on in enlarging and beautifying Babylon.

How would a late author have known that Babylon's greatness in the early sixth century was due to Nebuchadnezzar? Modern scholars didn't find about it until recently. (Keep in mind that whereas they discount the testimony of scripture, they trust ancient inscriptions completely!)

Belshazzar is mentioned only in Daniel and in the recently uncovered Babylonian records. How did the author of Daniel know about him if he wrote 400 years after the fact?

Nebuchadnezzar had Daniel's friends thrown into a furnace yet Darius had Daniel thrown into a lions' den. Why? Darius the Mede was a fire worshiper. How would someone have known details like this in 168 BC?

Daniel tells us about the participation of women at royal banquets in Daniel 5:3. The Persians did not permit women to feast in the presence of men but the Chaldeans did.

Daniel uses the term Shinar to indicate Babylon in Daniel 1:2. This term was no longer used when the radical critics claim the book was written.

Daniel knew that it was impossible for anyone (even the king) to change a law of the Medes and Persians once it had been promulgated. How would a late date author have known these things?

Consider the following conclusions by several commentators:

*Lenormant:* Whoever is not the slave of preconceived opinions must confess when comparing [the first six chapters of Daniel] with the cuneiform monuments that they are really ancient and written but a short distance from the [time they describe].

*J.D. Wilson:* No Jew whose people had been living for centuries under Persian and Grecian rule could relate with such unconscious simplicity the actual condition of affairs in Babylon 370 years before his own time.

*Harrison:* The author possessed a more accurate knowledge of Neo-Babylonian and early Persian history than any other historian since the sixth century BC.

### **Daniel is accurate regarding Nebuchadnezzar's lowly origin**

The description of Nebuchadnezzar's vision in Daniel 4 ends with the following statement:

**Daniel 4:17** — *This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.*

The lowly origin of Nebuchadnezzar's family was otherwise unknown until an inscription made by his father Nabopolassar was found in which he was referred to himself as "the son of a nobody" (of non-royal birth), "insignificant," "not visible," "the weak," and "the feeble." This kind of knowledge (the lowly origin of Babylon's

greatest king) would have quickly been forgotten — but the author of Daniel knew about it.

The decrees of the Babylonian kings in Daniel are remarkably similar to those found inscribed on ancient monuments. How could a Jewish writer produce such an accurate record 400 years after the fact?

### **The Fourth Empire in Daniel is the Roman Empire**

The visions in Chapters 2 and 7 speak of four empires. The late date theorists hold that the fourth empire is Greece, which means that the third is Persia, the second is Media, and the first is the Chaldean empire. This view is very widely held today, but it falls apart when you read Daniel. One commentator has said that this viewpoint is the weakest part of the late date theory.

There is no evidence that Daniel ever considered the Medes and Persians as separate empires whereas there is evidence that Daniel considered Medo-Persia to be a single empire.

In Daniel 8:20, we find a *single* ram with two horns representing the kings of Media and Persia. In 8:21, a shaggy male goat (Greece) with a prominent horn (Alexander the Great) tramples the ram.

Also, in chapter 5 when we read about the handwriting on the wall, the last word written is *Peres*, which is derived from the word meaning “to divide” but also is a reference to Persia. That is, Persia was depicted as conquering the Babylonians — making Persia second and not third.

If we can show (and we can) that the fourth empire is Rome then all of the arguments by the liberals to remove prophecy from the book fall apart. Copies of Daniel have been found that predate the Roman empire, and Daniel made specific prophecies about Rome.

I submit that any of these liberals would take the fourth kingdom to be Rome if they were given no information about when the book was written. But since they do have such information they must take the fourth kingdom to be Greece.

They will date the book after the prophecies were fulfilled no matter what evidence there may be to the contrary. Their basic premise about naturalism must not be violated!

Am I saying they are dishonest? Yes, I am saying they are dishonest. They accuse Christians of treating the Bible differently than all other books — and we do, rightly — but so do they. They treat the Bible differently than any other ancient source. In their minds, the Bible is automatically suspect and unreliable.

Finally, Daniel predicts that the Messiah and his kingdom would appear during the fourth empire, which of course it did if we take the fourth empire to be Rome. The liberals say that again Daniel was mistaken because Jesus did not appear until after the Greek empire!

Jesus in Matthew 24 said that some things that Daniel had written had not yet been fulfilled (but would be fulfilled within a generation). If Greece is the fourth empire, then Jesus must have been wrong.

One higher critic says that the “emptying” that Paul spoke of in Philippians 2 may have kept the incarnate Jesus from having complete knowledge about certain non-essential things. (The prophecies in Daniel are non-essential? Hardly!)