

Last Sabbath we addressed a prophecy in Daniel that concerns a duality about the coming of Jesus Christ. It concerns what is commonly referred to as the 'Seventy-Weeks Prophecy', although always in the past that has had to do with His first coming. We didn't know, candidly, until about a week ago that it's a duality. And to see the timing of it is absolutely incredible; to see how God leads, guides, and directs us in various matters, to understand things, to see things, to add to those things that are in scripture, it's truly inspiring.

As a result of that particular sermon some questions have arisen concerning the prophecies of Christ's first coming and it became clear that now is the time to begin addressing some misunderstanding in this area of prophecy, and in so doing this in turn has opened up a much clearer understanding of how God was working with Daniel from the beginning.

Last Sabbath I also read from a 'Personal' of Herbert W. Armstrong going back to early 1972 when he addressed the importance of timing and how God was working with him to fulfill Matthew 24:14, and within that context Mr. Armstrong spoke of a *commission* that God had given to him. He was always focused on that commission. We heard it a lot. Anyone that was in the Church back at that time heard him mention that a great deal, referring to that scripture often because he was very much focused on *exactly* what God had given him to do. It was very clear that God *inspired* him to understand what his purpose was, and so again, that commission that was summed up in Matthew 24:14, he spoke of it often. And that *did* reveal the purpose of God calling him. God gave him a commission because of that purpose that He was going to accomplish, that God was going to accomplish. And so again, God had a specific job for him to fulfill.

Within that commission Mr. Armstrong was given responsibility to accomplish it within the era of Philadelphia – that was the period of time. It began with Mr. Armstrong and it ended with his death. And the primary purpose that God was working out was that the gospel was to go into all the world for a witness, as we read last Sabbath, and part of that witness consisted with how God was going to once again raise up His Church, because of what happened in Sardis; so part of that was raising up the Church and of Mr. Armstrong leading, teaching, and administering the Church during the Philadelphian era.

Now, in the Laodicean era that followed I was not given a commission until the time of the apostasy, and that's when that began. The purpose of my calling was to lead, teach, and administer to God's Church *after* the apostasy; because there was another that was given a job and a commission to fulfill, if you will, of by what God was going to accomplish in 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 2, to allow certain things to go in a particular direction, and God did. And as soon as the apostasy occurred, going back to that, God began working with me to begin drawing a remnant back into the Church, and the timing of my commission began when the Church became scattered, spewed out of God's mouth, and for all practical means when the scattered Church was taken back into a type of captivity because of spiritual sleep. That's the result of spiritual sleep, people went back into captivity; in a different way than the rest of the world and what they were called out of but nevertheless a captivity because they can't come out of it. They can't come out of it, and those who have come in since that time as a remnant have come in because of God awakening each and every one of us at some point along the way - right at the apostasy and at any point after that. And God has to do that as much as He has to in the world when He first calls an individual.

So again, everything about the end-time beginning with the 1<sup>st</sup> Seal of Revelation, when it was opened, began a countdown, as we very clearly looked at even last week concerning the prophecy in Daniel, the seventy-weeks prophecy that concerns Christ's second coming.

This brings us back to the book of Daniel and it should help everyone to learn things about God's purpose and about God's calling in *their* life. Daniel was called for a great purpose. God had a commission for him to fulfill and that's what this sermon is entitled, *Daniel's Commission* and this is *Part 1*. It's going to be two or three parts, I'm really not sure yet, maybe even four, we'll see. There's a lot here; a lot here that glorifies God, that magnifies God, of things that happened with Daniel that actually help us to better understand in this age the power of God Almighty to *meticulously, precisely* work things out according to His plan. It's going to be accomplished, and we become more in *awe* of God, we truly do. And candidly, that strengthens faith.

Everything about God's purpose being worked out through Daniel was about a commission to live out a life, along with prophecies that were given to him that would lead up to, that would reveal, the very timing for both the first coming of the Messiah and the second coming as well. That's what it was about.

We're going to begin this sermon by focusing on what is recorded in the book of Daniel that shows what his life, the very *timing* of his life was centered around, because it's quite awesome when you begin looking at Daniel and how God worked with him from that focus. There is so much there, there truly is, and as it's all very revealing and awesomely inspiring as we continue to consider the meticulous manner whereby God so precisely did His work and we'll see that in the life of Daniel as well, over and over again in people's lives, but especially in the things He gave through Daniel. And everything that happened there was for a purpose for the end-time. *Everything* that God did there was in preparation for what was going to happen at the end-time! It was setting the stage for, it was giving 'types' of various things that were to take place so that we could better understand and be in awe of the power and the might of Almighty God to bring to pass those things that He says He's going to do. And it's even more awesome then when you understand that you're given an opportunity to be a part of it. A purpose, a part of a purpose, a part of a calling, all to fit into an overall purpose that God has that He's working out at this particular time.

So, as we're going to see more deeply than ever before, Daniel's commission, the purpose of his calling was to establish the coming, both the first and the second, of the Messiah and how all this would be accomplished in such awesome ways by the hand of God, that He would do it. Let's begin in Daniel 1 by looking at this story and look at some lessons along the way as well. It becomes very specific.

In working on this particular sermon there is so much history of things that have been found on clay tablets, exact dates, various things, sometimes differences in calendars because of how they kept time in Babylon and how they kept time in Egypt and how they kept time in Judah, and there are some discrepancies in some of those things but it really becomes an awesome thing when you begin to see how people interpret a lot of those things, whether it be those in Judaism or traditional Christianity, or those of just a desire to see things of history.

Through all that there is a lot of wading to do; there's a flood of information out there and so much of it is so messed up because of prejudices, because of what people read into the Bible, of things they don't understand about God's plan. And so we're going to focus on some of those things without getting

weighted down, if you will, in some of the bog and some of the things that are out there. There are a lot of good lessons in that though.

**Daniel 1:1- In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim**, this is a **king of Judah**, it's very specific here about when this began, when this took place. It says, **Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came into Jerusalem and besieged it**. A lot of controversy, even amongst those of Judaism and others about some of these periods of time and a lot of it is a problem with understanding the seventy years, because it doesn't add up for a lot of people...and we'll get to that maybe toward the end of the sermon or next week.

**Verse 2 - And the LORD gave Jehoiakim, king of Judah, into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god.** So again here, taking things out of the temple, the wealth and so forth of that which was contained there – great wealth – a lot of gold, a lot of silver, a lot of precious things, gems and so forth, the things that he carried away. Now, this sets the stage for all that will follow concerning the significance of these events, for all of these events focus on a central theme and purpose that God was working out. The timing of this is precise. *God made* these things happen. God moulded and fashioned these things to take place at a specific time all through the book of Daniel. Things happen at a specific time, in some occasions in a very specific manner, in some cases in *dumbfounding* and *awe* inspiring manners that are astounding, that should build and strengthen faith and confidence in what God has to say - that God is going to perform exactly what He says.

I know we believe that but sometimes people are put to the test as to whether they *really* believe it, because if you *really* believe it then you *live by it*, truly. Think of something I heard this past week that's... I don't know if there are very many, but in one particular case, some even ordained, making comment they're saving certain funds aside *in case* Jesus Christ doesn't return on May 27<sup>th</sup>. I am *astounded* at such a comment! I am *dumbfounded* by such a comment! And I think... "What are we holding back and why would we hold anything back? Do we believe this with all of our being, because if we don't we need to bring ourselves into check and examine ourselves and go back to the sermon we heard at the end of the Feast!" How can you *represent* God's way of life? How can you be a *part* of something so *great*, so *awesome* and have such *mighty reservations* in your mind?

I understand certain things that might be of doubt, especially of those who are newly called, because it takes time to grow in experience, but if you've been around for a long time, if you've been a part for a long time *I have a little bit more difficult time grasping some of that because GOD HOLDS YOU ACCOUNTABLE for what you live!* So, shall I hold back? Where should I hold back? If I were to hold back I wouldn't say some of the things I do, I wouldn't *write* much of what I write, I would do a lot of back-peddling! ...but *I'm not* because *THIS IS EVERYTHING*, and that's what God has led, guided, and directed me to do! And He's directed all of us to do the same! So it's, so to speak, the whole kitchen sink and everything in it is thrown into this, and if we hold anything back for 'security' *where is your security? Where is your trust? Where is your confidence?* Is it in the *Great God?*

So, sometimes we have to examine and ask ourselves. I throw those things out there perhaps to shock and dumbfound some, perhaps to be a part of helping to awaken some so that some who maybe get caught into doubt and confusion, to realize you can't let that happen in your life! You've got to put everything into it! In a race *you don't hold back!* That's where I saw people *quit*, and *people give up* in real life experiences like I've expressed in times past. If you hold back, if you hold something in reserve,

after a while you talk yourself into something else! The next step is to quit! The next step is to just give up *because this is too hard!* ...the race is too hard.

And so again, repeating some of this concerning what is written here. This sets the stage for all that will follow concerning the significance, if you will, to all these events, for all these events focus on a central theme and purpose that God was working out – the timing of His Son to come into this world, to begin working out the first phase of salvation, the Passover of all mankind. So, God was setting the stage here and was adding to it and adding to it as He went through Daniel's life, to give him more and more and more, to have something written that is complete and concise from beginning to end, that is very powerful with an incredible focus – just as things that God did with Mr. Armstrong in his commission from the beginning to the end, and a focus that Mr. Armstrong had to the end that was *far more powerful, far clearer, far mightier* than it was at the beginning or the middle. And the same is true with us concerning the apostasy and when *this* commission began and when this part of what God was working out began and the clarity and the vision we have that is *so much more* powerful, it truly is.

It also becomes very clear now how easy it is for people to 'read into' scripture what they believe, because that's a part of what I mentioned earlier; traditional Christianity, Judaism... Oh they're in a little bit of turmoil in some of the things they had to write about the seventy years because they can't come up with exact dates, so they play games. They play games like they do with the going down of the sun for Passover – some of the same kind of rhetoric, some of the same kind of absolute *stupidity* because it doesn't add up, but they make it add up. Just as much as what traditional Christianity does when they get 3 days and 3 nights out of Friday sunset to Sunday morning. They play these games of how you can, in Hebrew or someplace else... well, they can't do it in Hebrew but they try, they try to do any way they can to say how that part of this could be in part of another day and all this garbage. No, God is exact. God is precise. We've seen that over and over again.

280 days to the hour, 40 Sabbaths, 40 weeks, 40 X 7 and a man dies because of an apostasy? And you look at other numbers. I was really dumbfounded... I started thinking about some of this and I thought, now how incredible would it be that if from the beginning of the apostasy to the coming of Jesus Christ that it's to the hour, and I started to look, I asked Johnny Harrell what time the sermon was given, what time was mid-point perhaps in that sermon, how long was the sermon and some of the things that took place? The return of Jesus Christ, Jerusalem time...to the hour! Coincidence? Hardly! It's *awesome* what God does. God is so meticulous and all powerful, and sometimes we don't remember or don't focus upon the promises of God, the power of God to accomplish His purpose, and how blessed we are to be a part of that.

So again, it becomes very clear then going through all of this how easy it is for people to read into scripture what they believe with preconceived ideas rather than letting God reveal the truth. Now, this is going to help some because of maybe lessons of the past, or even now, concerning the book '2008 – God's Final Witness' because I've had this from different kinds of questions and I understand that, from a lot of people. You have to come to understand in time that there are things that happen because of preconceived ideas in the mind. In time God will show you. In time God reveals all. And sometimes we have to have patience, because things that are written in a prophetic manner, they aren't all to be understood fully yet until God accomplishes it and then we...

Look at Daniel! We're going to go through things here that because of through time people came to understand certain things, and now God is blessing us to add to that. We came to understand things about the 1335, 1290, 1260, all those things that were there, and now God has given us more to

understand from an apostasy and what is written there to the time of the Messiah's return, and He just keeps adding to it and it becomes more awesome. But to understand all those things, oh it's easy to read into it. It's happened in God's Church, it's happened with people from the beginning of time because we so desire to want to know, but we have to be careful of that as well. God will show. God reveals the truth in *His* time...in *His* time.

That was a great lesson with Pentecost back in 1974. Much of the Church couldn't receive it. Much of the Church was troubled by it. 1974! Pentecost! God could have given that at the beginning of Mr. Armstrong's calling, but He didn't for a purpose and for a reason.

So again here, in all this subject matter we're going through there is much confusion in the world as to these events and their timing, their significance, their prophetic fulfillment along with prejudice and bias along the way, even in the Church that was scattered.

The matter of seventy years begins to take on meaning from the very beginning in what is addressed here about a captivity by, of all nations, the nation of Babylon; a *name* that God has placed great significance on, a *name* that we've had sermons about, and content of sermons out of the book of Revelation, a *name* that should not escape us, and a '*type*' that should not escape us either. Let's read more of the story.

**Verse 3 - And the king spoke unto Ashpenaz the master of the eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and the king's seed, and of the princes; children in whom there was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace.** Now, some of these had already received a lot of education, a lot of training, because of where they were and those are the ones that they are to work with, those that had already at a very young age had begun to be worked with to receive education, and to be added to then by what they were going to address here. And so these are the individuals, the young people that they were given charge here to take care of and to work with in a specific way for a certain period of time over a few years.

And it goes on to say, **and cunning in knowledge, and understanding of science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace;** he didn't want just anyone there, he wanted people who were well trained for what they were going to do and what they were going to represent and the jobs that might be given to them; **and whom they might teach the learning and language of the Chaldeans.** Sometimes, and especially of where you are in time, some people have struggled with the importance of education, as to whether it's important or not. The development of skills is always important. To develop skills, to not coast in life, to not take it easy, but to drive yourself, especially when you're young, because at some point what you do in the future is dependent upon what you put into it. It's just the way it is, it's the way it works.

Is all of it true? Is all of it right? No, it wasn't in all that was taught here either, but to learn those things so that you can know what is right and wrong as God teaches you and shows you *gives* you wisdom. It's a part of attaining wisdom and understanding. It's a part of knowing how to deal with and work with situations and circumstances, especially in the future of people that are going to come out of those things in the Great White Throne. Great opportunity to help and work with people, to know and *understand* what they're dealing with and why they're dealing with it. To understand evolution you've got to know something about evolution! For Mr. Armstrong to speak about evolution he had to go back and study evolution...and he did. He studied many works of evolution so that he could know how to

address that and help in the arguments to show people how dumb and ignorant and foolish they were. So we can't underestimate how God works with us as human beings. God *wants* us to grow, He *wants* us to develop ability and talents and so forth, but we have to work at that! I don't care what kind of a job it is – *throw yourself into it* – there's a principle in Proverbs, 'Whatever you do, do with all your might!' Don't do it part way, throw yourself into it! Indeed, learn from it the best you can, whatever it is! Because I'll tell you, God can use every circumstance in life like that to mould and fashion and train you in certain things.

I learned a *great deal* from the time I *left* Ambassador College, *worked for seven years in the world*, and then God put me in the ministry. I learned a *great deal* on the jobs that I had and from some of my employers that later on I saw that God *taught me* so that I could use those lessons in the ministry. Principle after principle, that if I had not been in that training ground of life and those circumstances for that seven years I wouldn't have been able to become the kind of minister that God was moulding and fashioning, or allowing, or offering to me. It's a reality! And people in the Church saw a difference in that, they commented on that.

I'm not saying those things as a matter of haughtiness or pride, but as a matter of something to teach, to educate, to help people understand the truth; it is a reality! Because a lot of students went out from Ambassador College immediately after graduation and became ministers and they had no experience in life, they had no experience in holding down a job. It's *easy* to talk about the Sabbath and not working on the Sabbath; it's *easy* to talk about not working on the High Days and to go to the Feast of Tabernacles – until you're there! If you've never done it it's a different world! And that's what happened after the apostasy. There were people who didn't go to the Feast of Tabernacles who still believe in it because they couldn't lose their job. "I'm going to lose my job... boo hoo..." People who left early! Boo hoo; now you know what it's like! Are you going to live it or not or are you going to be a hypocrite and a liar? Amazing what God can teach us.

So my encouragement to the young people – throw yourself into what you do. Use the opportunities to learn. We only have five months, but hey, when Jesus Christ returns you want to do that at that time, whatever it is do it with all your might! Cry out to God to teach you, to help you to learn, to learn how to work with people, to learn about people, to grow in wisdom. Because most things have to do in life with *relationships* and how we function together, they truly do, and the wisdom that goes with that.

You know what we're sadly lacking so much in the world today? ...and sometimes as we grow God gives us opportunity for that, but something that's so lacking in the world today and sometimes in parts of the Church, of what God is doing, is balance! *Soundness of mind!* Where does that come from? It doesn't come from the world, it comes from God! The ability to have *soundness* of mind in things we do and being *balanced*, even within the ministry as well! It doesn't matter where it is! To be balanced and sound, to be able to look at something and judge it rightly and weigh it out and see what is balanced...it comes from God! It's given by God!

**Verse 5 - And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's food**, in other words provided to all the royal house, so it's the same food, **and of the wine which he drank**: so what was given to him was given to these as well. They had access to the best (that's what it's about) it's about having the best, it's about that in which a lot more work went into it. Everything that was there was the highest quality in that respect, as far as what was considered the quality of that time and the things that were there. It was the very best, the freshest, if you will, of various things. That's what we're talking about. We're talking about the king. We're talking about his palace. We're talking about all those of the royal house,

in essence, that had this kind of care, unlike the rest of the country or even the wealthy of the country. This was the best, but the best of what man thinks isn't always the best. It might have a lot of...well, it was probably quite a way inland, it didn't have a lot of clams and lobsters, but probably had pork or other unclean things. It was Babylon!

And so it said here... **so nourishing them for three years**; there was a plan here to teach, to lead, to guide, to direct, to help, to mould, to fashion, to educate, to help develop skills and so forth in various things, as it talked about in science and language, and various studies... on and on it went. And then also in the food that was eaten, and this was a program of three years that the king was preparing these individuals for (God was obviously involved in all this as well), but this was what the king had set up, **so nourishing them for three years so that at the end of that time they might stand before the king.**

**Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names, for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar, and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego. But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat,** considering especially that which was unclean, **nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.** Now, sometimes we read through something and we don't know all the story or have all the story, and certainly in this we don't have everything that's involved here, but whatever the decision was made upon he wasn't going to be a part of the same system and a part of what they were doing.

And it goes on to say then in **verse 9 - Now God had brought Daniel into favour,** great lesson. God gives favour! To me, some of the most inspiring stories that I have seen or heard within the Church are occasions in my life and the life of others that I know when there are things that people are given favour that is not normal; favour, by whomever, by an employer, by relatives, whatever it is, certain things that work out in life and a special favour that's given. Because it becomes obvious to that person in their life that it came from God. Something changed, something here was just not a normal process here and this is was a part of what was given to Daniel, about Daniel, for a purpose that God was going to work out. And so there was favour here, and it says; **and tender love,** took a great liking to for whatever reason. There was something special, and that which was special was from God.

How often when we meet each other and we talk to each other and we see each other for the first time and it's almost as though you've known each other for a long time. There's something there that binds you, oftentimes from the get-go, from the first moment, depending on where we are, depending on how much we are giving of ourselves to this and we love what we see. And so there's that bonding, that binding, if you will, that takes place that is of a spiritual plane, because God's involved. And that's what was taking place here. God was involved in Daniel's life and there was that which was just there of favour. And some of those things have to do with Daniel and what God had already given to Daniel, because Daniel was a unique young man. He wanted to live this way of life. He wanted to live what he knew and understood about God's way of life. He had an attitude toward God that was unique, and so because of that God was able to work with him and mould and fashion something within him that was different and unique and stronger than others of his age, as a whole, except it mentions here, some of his friends. And they had some of the similar attitude, that's why they were friends, because they had some of the same desires and some of the same things that were taking place in their life and God had a purpose and a plan for them too if they chose... but people always have choice to yield themselves to that.

And so it is with us in the Church. All of you who are called, you have opportunity to yield yourself to the process, to let God do the moulding and the fashioning, to throw yourself into it, to glean all you can, and to wait on God; just to do what you're doing because it's God's plan and God will bless and mould and fashion. Things don't happen overnight! Here these individuals did this for three years, but there was something already in Daniel, that's why in the very beginning there was this something that drew this individual to have a desire toward Daniel. And again, a lot of it had to do, if you understand, with what was already moulded there. Because Daniel had opportunity, he had an environment where he could learn and was taught certain things, and he absorbed it, he drank it in. Not everyone drinks it in, not everyone wants it.

**Now God had brought Daniel into favour**, see, so there was that which God did in moulding and fashioning with him already, because God was doing it to bring him to this time. See, we can't just wait around. It doesn't mean that God can't or won't at times intervene to do certain things because of where we are and who we are, but so often it has to do with what we have been doing for a period of time and yielding ourselves to God. And that is so much of the process. And so as we yield ourselves to that then God can work with us more and more and more. That's how it works, but it's a lifelong process of growing. And so now there's three years of this that they're going to go through, and they threw themselves into it, but they put God first all the way. They didn't have what you and I have. They couldn't go to Sabbath services every Sabbath and hear a minister give sermons and have the kinds of information that we have today, but there was that which God was going to do and offered to them at that time for what they had and they wanted it. They *wanted* it. It was up to *them*!

How much do you want it? That's why I ask those things sometimes. How much do you want it? How much are you willing to fight for it? Because it *isn't owed* to anyone just because you're called! It isn't *owed to us*, this way of life. It *isn't owed* that God should just give us something when we come to a point in time if we haven't put ourselves into it! And for those who are holding back because 'just in case' Jesus Christ returns – what do you think God owes to you? What do you think God's going to do in intervening in your life when you need it, when you want it? What should God say? What are you going to say? "I shouldn't have done that...Please God!" Well, it depends on the mercy and the help of God at that time and the repentance that's there, but how much more if we just throw ourselves into this. How much more can God use us? Sometimes we just restrict God, His ability to work with us; but God will work with others if not us. That's happened through time, 'many are called, but few are chosen'. It's always been that way. God's going to accomplish His purpose but He doesn't *make us* do it. He doesn't make us do it against our will. On the contrary, because of our will changing, because of our ability to say, "I *want* this! This is *my will*!" See? That determines as to the degree God can work with you.

That's why baptism is so important. At that moment my life was God's. "Whatever You want to do with it, I'm Yours." To do anything less, we can't do. We can't do! Are we going to do it perfectly? No. We're human beings, we're going to make mistakes, we're going to have sins in our lives, but we're going to continue to repent, continue to cry out to God to help us, to lead us, to guide us, to direct us.

So, He brought Daniel into **favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs**. It's God who grants favour – never, never, never forget that! He does so from the time He begins to share in us His purpose. That's how a calling works. He begins to share in us His purpose, but it depends so much upon our response as to the depth and the favour we're going to have and receive, truly.

**Verse 10 - And the prince of the eunuchs said to Daniel, I fear my lord the king who has appointed your food and your drink:** So, you're making a request and I fear the king. I fear for this, the part above my shoulders, that it might get dislocated. Because that's the kind of world they lived in.

He said, **I fear my lord the king, who has appointed your food and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse looking than the children who are of your sort?** In other words, the others here; why should the king see something I have done or granted and allowed and then you look far worse than the others over here. What's that going to mean for me, he said, **And then you shall make me endanger my head to the king.** He was afraid his head's going to get lopped off if he did what Daniel wanted.

So: **Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had made over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, Put your servants to the test, I implore you, for ten days;** so he said, just do a test. Would you consider this, just for 10 days put us to the test, **and let them give us a mixture of,** basically what it was here, **vegetables and grain,** various things here, not of the table of the meats and so forth that they were eating in the royal house, **let us just have this, and water to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon before you, and the countenance of the children who eat the portion of the king's food: and as you see difference, deal with your servants.** So you judge, deal with us accordingly; give us ten days and see.

**So he consented to them in this matter,** figuring ten days, okay, that'll go by quickly and if there's a mistake here it's a long time before the king sees them and we can get them back on this other routine and things will be okay. **So he consented to them in this matter and put to them the test ten days. And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fuller in flesh than all the children who ate the portion of the king's meat. Thus Melzar, says took away the portion of their food and the wine that they should drink; and gave them a mixture of these vegetable and grains** and so forth that Daniel had requested.

What an incredible thing! Just ten days and God helped there to be that difference, in ten short days, from what the others were eating. And God gave that to him. See, sometimes there are things if we truly are placing ourselves in God's hands that God will give us the words to speak, He'll give us that which is in the mind, the knowledge, a wisdom, an understanding of something, whatever it is that God grants. It comes from God, not from us; but because we're part of a plan and a part of a purpose God will give us what we need at a particular time. And this is something that Daniel needed in his ability to converse with this individual and God gave him favour and God worked with him and God worked it out – just in ten short days. How many of you change a diet in ten days, unless it's really a bad one, and your countenance change that much in ten days? Especially when you're young and healthy? They were young, teens, healthy!

So again, Daniel was called to fulfill a specific purpose and all this is being worked out in these stories, from beginning to end. It's an awesome, awesome journey, it truly was. When God calls us and offers to share His purpose with us it becomes vital how we respond to Him. That's what we've been talking about. *Vital, how we respond to Him*, to what He's doing in our life, for even in all this God has shown, again, that many are called and few are chosen, but how we respond to God from the beginning – that's important – *from the beginning*. Now, I understand we grow through time, we learn, but that should be the desire, that should be the spirit, that we want to change. You don't want to stay the way you are, you want to *change*. That's the most beautiful thing in seeing when God calls people, the *change*! We grow! That's what my wife and I love in going from region to region and seeing *change* and growth because individuals apply themselves. You can see it through that period of time, generally about ever

six months or a year, or whatever it is, and individuals apply themselves and there's that change. You may not feel it or see it because you're you and you live it every day, or you're with each other and you don't see it within each other as much. Maybe you don't feel that unless you think back, but it's hard to remember. But we see it because it's something that's obviously there from time to time, that's inspiring! But that's something that God does. As we yield ourselves and to the degree we yield ourselves to Him, then change comes about and we grow. But again, it's a matter of how we do it, on a continuing basis of yielding ourselves to God.

So again, that emphasis here that nothing is owed when we're called.

And so it goes on in **verse 17** to say - **As for these four children, God gave them knowledge**, did God give you knowledge? Can God help you in your mind to grow in knowledge? Can God help you to digest things and see things and understand things? Knowledge, and understanding follows knowledge through experiences and so forth. Yes! It's an awesome thing! I look back to the time when God called me when I was nineteen - through time, through things of learning and so forth and it's an awesome journey, it truly is, and the changes that can take place. Never becoming of an age where you can't learn. Never becoming of an age where you can't grow. Never becoming of an age where you don't grow in understanding or wisdom. On the contrary!

And so it says here, **God gave them knowledge and skill**, skill...this thing I was talking about earlier! That skill oftentimes has to do with balance, soundness of mind, the ability to use the knowledge. It's not just a matter of flooding knowledge in like you would a computer...What good is that? It's how you use it! And that's where soundness of mind and balance is reflected, how we use that knowledge.

It says **...and skilled in all learning and wisdom**: And that happens through time. Wisdom just can't be funnelled into your mind. I hope we understand the process; knowledge, and then you begin to learn and understand what the knowledge is about, ever how it's applied in life, and then comes wisdom. You become committed and convicted that this is good, this is right, and you see it and it's a part of you, and now that's what you live and it becomes a matter of wisdom, but that happens through exercising of understanding. That's up to us whether we exercise the understanding that God gives to us. First we start exercising the knowledge. What do you start exercising at the very beginning? The Sabbath, keeping the Sabbath, and then in time you begin to understand it.

I've known periods of time in God's Church where for a long time people never came to an understanding of the Sabbath, what it was all about. To them it was do's and don'ts. To them it was mostly what you couldn't do on that particular day. They couldn't grasp an understanding of the most important thing that God gives us on the Sabbath and the purpose for it, to teach so that we can learn, so we can understand God's purpose and God's will, so that during the week we have opportunity to live certain things in it or to grow in it and we just keep building week after week, Sabbath after Sabbath. That was so much missing at times in people's lives. But it's something that should have been there - understanding - and then you live it from then on because it's a matter of wisdom, it's a matter that through time you have this, you grow in this understanding and then that's what you choose and that's what you live and nothing's ever going to try or hurt you or take you away from that. It's you! It's something that God has moulded *in* you that's from Him! Because we've had sermons in the past where true wisdom.... we're not talking about the wisdom of the world, we're talking about wisdom that comes from God, of a set way of life to be lived, that you wouldn't consider living something else, it's just not you.

...and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. So something else was added with Daniel here, visions and dreams. It's going to work into the purpose of something that God was working out later on as time went on.

**Verse 18 - Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. And the king visited with them; and among them all was was not found any like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah:** so they had this period of time, these years to be worked with, to learn, to grow in understanding of the language at that time – Aramaic. It's interesting, first part of Daniel is written in Aramaic and the last parts in Hebrew. Interesting. Chapter 8 begins to be written in Hebrew, some of the earlier things are written in Aramaic. A lot of people don't know that the New Testament was written originally in Aramaic as well, they think it's all Greek. Well, it's translated into Greek but it didn't start there, but that's where it's preserved, that's what God gave in time. And then later all of it, even that which is in Aramaic in Hebrew, because the Jews were to keep it.

**And the king visited with them; and among them there was not found one like,** before them, it says here **therefore they stood before the king. And in all matters of wisdom and understanding,** of things that they could speak and show, because the ability to perceive that someone has wisdom comes from their understanding of how to use the knowledge that's given there and what they are living, what they are doing. And this became evident, the king could see it! The king could see it. **In all matters of wisdom and understanding, and the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better:** Awesome! *Ten* times better, not just twice as good, not three times better, ten times, ten-fold **than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.** All those that he'd had there before him when he talked to them, conversed with them and so forth, these young people dumbfounded him. That's basically the bottom line.

**And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus.** So God gave favour. God gave favour at this point here when it was all finished. He *applied* himself for those three years. The other three men, they *applied* themselves during those three years. It didn't just happen! God didn't just funnel it into their mind with a funnel! They *wanted* that which was given to them, they *wanted* to be able to do the best they could in these things. They *applied* themselves to it and God worked with that and moulded and fashioned that for a great purpose that He had. Truly awesome the lessons that are here! God doesn't just...and sometimes I don't know if you even think that way, or whatever, it's like, well, at some point here God's just going to go put it in there. There are some things God's going to put in the God Family when they're resurrected that we don't have the ability of right now, but not in human life. God will help you along the way and God will help you to become you, but we have to apply ourselves to it, we have to *want it*, we have to *desire it*, we have to *cry out for it*. It is up to us! It is not *owed to us*! It isn't something that He's just going to give us something new one day. It's something you grow in; it's something we mature in through time.

That's why this is an awesome story, a beautiful picture of the right way, of how things are done, truly. Reminds me of a situation where I've made comments - I'll just add this to it - that I've made comments that sometimes because of being young and sometime's some advice that may be given from someone older who is needing to grow a little more in wisdom as well, about those whom God is calling, especially young people. I am excited because of what God's doing! But it doesn't mean everybody is going to become a minister! We don't want to have that mindset that the best thing to attain to in the future is to somehow be a minister. That happened to the Church, that happened to Worldwide, that happened at Ambassador College, and then people would go back out in an area and they thought they

were *so much better than everyone else* just because they were at Ambassador College. It was a *horrible* thing that developed in time because of human nature. That's not what you want unless God's called you to it. There are other awesome things coming, of structure, of organization, of opportunities that you will be in awe of such opportunities and be seen for and recognized for. Don't desire it just because of the recognition, but it does go with the territory sometimes. But if you desire that you won't receive it! If that's what you want you won't get it! Let *God* mould and fashion what God is moulding and fashioning. Don't get the false idea in your mind that somehow there is a job, one job here that's better than the others.

I've known of people who have left since the apostasy who because they came to a point in time that they realized, because of what was being said, they couldn't be a part of the 144,000, they left. "I'm going to go someplace where I can be a part of the 144,000, because that's where I belong, that's what I am. Who are you to tell me I can't be there?!" Well, it is what it is. Take your marbles and go someplace else, play in that corner. That's fine. That's the attitude sometimes. We resist and fight God not knowing there's something awesome, inspiring... it all glorifies God when it works together. It's *hard* sometimes as human beings to grasp and comprehend the might, the power, of what God is building, a Family. And we don't decide where we're going to be in the Family, because if we think we see something that's more prestigious and that's what we want then it's the wrong spirit, God can't use that, He can't have that in His Family. Really!

You will be the most fulfilled where God moulds and fashions and places you. That will be the most exciting. More will be produced and given in the Body. That's why the example is given of a body in scripture. Paul talks about it; the hand doesn't like its job, it would rather be the mouth. The eyes, they don't like what they see... The toes, they would rather be the eyes, "I'm always covered up by shoes and stinky socks and I'd rather be in some other place." Well, we all work together and we all need each other. That's what God wants us to grasp and comprehend. We all need each other, we're all a part of a Body, and we all help each other in the Body and we all benefit from each other in the Body. And it takes time to grow in comprehending and living that and understanding that.

And so it shows here from that point on Daniel continued on until Cyrus. Cyrus, the one God was going to use to conquer Babylon, the one whom God was going to use to send the children of Judah back to Jerusalem. That as soon as a time began that there would be that where the king was going to send Judah back. And there are some awesome things that God did even in this part of the story, but here, here's this whole period of time, not seventy years – less. Less than seventy years from the time that Daniel, the first of the captives that was taken, up to the time of the return of Judah, it's not seventy years, it's less, and everything that happened, the different times of ... in 587, in 597, the different times that they came into that area, in that region and took different ones captive. Each time you go a little farther in time it's less and less; once you get down to about a point of 50 and 48 years toward the end, the last group of people, but none of them add up to a full seventy. So what does all that mean? God is not true? Because that's the way some historians and some of Judaism, they have to mess around with a couple years in there to stretch it out, like taking this rubber band, "It doesn't quite fit down there so let's pull it out here... Oh, we made it, now we've got seventy years because...!" Anyway, some of the stupid reasoning out there. God's word is true. In time God will show what His word is without people twisting and distorting things.

And so again, an awesome story here from beginning to end. He was given favour all the way through the Babylonian kingdom on into the Medo-Persian Empire.

**Daniel 2:1 - And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and he could no longer sleep. Then the king commanded all the magicians, and all the astrologers, and all the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, so that they could show the king his dreams. And so they came and stood before the king and the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream.**

**Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic, Syriack, I think it says in some Bibles, it's Aramaic, O king, live forever: tell your servants the dream and we will show the interpretation. And the king answered and said to the Chaldeans,** now, all this is setting something up and it's all about what God's doing with Daniel. It's all about what God is doing from Daniel, from the very purpose and the very beginning when he was taken captive until the end – all the way through this and it all has to do with the coming of the Messiah. It has to do with the end-time. All of these things were being established for Christ's first coming and Christ's second coming and this life that would set all these things up to show the power and might of God to accomplish it.

And so the king said, again, here to the Chaldeans: **The thing has gone from me: but if you do not make known to me the dream with the interpretation thereof you shall be cut in pieces and your houses should be made a dunghill.** Not a nice thing to say. It's a nice sounding word. **I'll make your houses a pile of \*\*\*!** Today we would use that, something else. ...in the Church, like, "You can't say that!" Nah, I'm not going to say it because I don't want to offend people out there listening, because they have enough ammunition they throw at me all the time anyway, they think, in twisting and distorting things. That would just give them another reason. "Did you see what he had to say... a man of God, yep..." But God speaks very plain language to get through to us, to help us to understand. And so even back in the time of King James they made it a little nicer sounding, they thought. Course it might not have been so nice... ☺ So he just told them this is what it's going to be. That's what you want? I'll show you!

It's an awesome thing that God did, because God did all this. He gave him the dream and stirred him up, caused fear to be there because of what he saw, but then it left him. Have you ever woken up and you've had a dream and you can remember certain things but it's not all together because it's a dream. And this is a part of what was happening here except this woke him up to where he couldn't even sleep and it bothered him but then it went from him, but it so stirred him that he wanted to know what this was and what the interpretation meant because it was so powerful! Awesome! And then he tells them it's gone from me, and they said, "Well you tell us what it is and we'll tell you what it means." He wasn't stupid, was he?

**Verse 5 – So the king said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: but if you do not make it known to me, the dream, the interpretation thereof, you will be cut in pieces, and your houses will be made a dunghill. And if you show the dream and the interpretation thereof, you shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honour: therefore show me the dream and the interpretation thereof. And they answered again and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream,** they were getting a little fearful here because they couldn't do that which was impossible, not even be told the dream so they couldn't even make something up, which is the only thing they could do anyway, that's how they lived their lives, **and we will show the interpretation of it.** We'll tell you something.

**And the king answered and said, I know of certainty that you're trying to gain time because you see the thing has gone from me.** It's like, if maybe a little more time comes along here maybe it'll come back and I'll be able to tell you. So you're just stalling, another way of saying it, you're just stalling. **And if you do not make known to me the dream, there is but one decree for you: for you are preparing**

**lying and corrupt words to speak unto me**, in other words, that's all you're going to do, **until time has passed: therefore tell me the dream and I shall know that you can show me the interpretation of it.** Tell me the dream because it's gone from me and then tell me the interpretation; I'll know that you know.

**The Chaldeans answered before the king and said, There is not a man upon the earth**, ah, some truth, finally. **There is not a man upon the earth that can show the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that has asked such things of any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. And it is a rare thing that the king requires**, they were basically pleading for their life, that's what they're doing, because he already told them what was going to happen and they're making a plea here that no one has ever asked such a thing, no one has the ability in doing such a thing and so this is a rare thing for a king to do this. This wasn't making the king any happier but they were pleading for their life, basically is what it amounts to.

**It's a rare thing that the king requires and there is no one else that can show it unto the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh. For this cause the king was angry and very furious and commanded to destroy all the wise of Babylon. And the decree went forth that the wise men should be killed; and they searched out Daniel and his friends to be killed.** So it wasn't just those to whom the king spoke directly to, it was to Daniel and the rest as well.

**Then Daniel then answered with counsel and wisdom to Arioch the captain of the king's guard, who had gone forth to kill the wise men of Babylon. He answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, Why is the decree so hasty from the king?** He didn't know everything that had gone on here, they weren't there. This has come to them now, what was taking place, and it's like, "Why would the king be so hasty in all this?" **Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel. Then Daniel went in and desired of the king that he would give him time and that he would show the king the interpretation.** Pretty bold! He believed that God would give him the help, that his purpose wasn't just to go there to be killed, that there was a purpose being worked out and that God would work it out with them. By whatever other experiences Daniel had had he was confident of this matter, that's why he went with boldness in trying to approach and have audience with the king, or to send message to the king and to make this desire known.

**Then Daniel went to his house and made the thing known unto Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, that they would seek out mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret;** in other words they realized they needed to go before God. They understood what that meant – to go before God in prayer, to beseech God, to look to God, to ask God to be merciful, to help them, to intervene and to give them what they needed... **that Daniel and his friends should not perish with the rest of the wise of Babylon.**

**Verse 19 - Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision.** God has worked with people in different ways at different times. This is how God worked at this time with them. Some of these things have to do with the world, different ways of the world that God has worked with. It's an incredible thing to go back and look at various aspects of history and see where people were, to see the kind of knowledge that was on the earth, to see the different things that man had developed by a certain time, to see how nations were and how things have changed, eras of time and knowledge that was available and so forth. And to live through these things, to see at this particular time and God just chose to work in different periods of time.

That's what it says in Hebrews. It says, God has chosen different ways and different methods through time and a lot of that has to do with the time and where people were. A lot of it had to do too with beliefs of that time, the gods, ideas about the gods and what people had concepts in society of and how society was at various times and the beliefs that existed and so forth. And so God dealt with society according to where society was, and on and on it goes. It was very much that way in Paul's time and how God worked with Paul and dealing with people who are coming into the Church.

**Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God forever and ever: for wisdom and might are His:** comes from God. You want wisdom? You want might? It comes from God. Power? Ability? Strength? Strong faith? It comes from God. You can't work it up. *You can't work it up! Nothing you can do, in that respect, works it up.* It's a matter of how you live, how you think, a desire toward God and then God giving it in His time, in His way. It is something as a matter of a desire we have to draw closer to Him, a desire as a matter of something we have, that we recognize comes from God, that we recognize that this is God. That's why I've talked about Red Sea moments – it comes from God or otherwise it's of no value. If we think it up in our own minds, if we work something out in our own way without God being a part of it, what does it mean? What good is it? What value? When it comes from God then it has value, and that's what we look to. And so a repetition of that in your life, you grow in understanding of that in time, and the more you practice it it becomes who you are, it's a matter of wisdom, it's a matter of how you live your life. And so God is the source.

And you know what this does? It helps to prevent a lot of the things that happened in times past in Worldwide, in the Church, in the ministry. Because as it happened in the ministry it happened throughout the Church. If it happened with a minister it generally happened in the Church; it happened in the leadership and then in the rest of the Church, and after a while it was all gone...that's the way it went. And it has to do so often with people being lifted up with self-importance, with doing things *their* way. It's not a matter of yielding to God, striving to do something God's way, that it be a matter of God, and that has no room in God's plan, that we do things *our* way, the way *we* want to do it. It's a matter of being fully yielded to God, desiring God's answers, desiring God's way in your life, in your family life, in everything you do, that you desire God. Do you do it perfectly? No. Can you do it perfectly? No. But that's your desire and you work toward that and you pray according to that and you strive for that. That's how it works. And the more we do that and the more that's a part of our life then God can give us more and more.

That's why I love a scripture from Paul; not coming to mind at this moment exactly where it is, but it's in there. But basically the comment is having to do with grace, the blessing, the favour of God, that as we yield ourselves to that we receive that and God's desire is to give more and more, the more that we receive the more we use it in our lives the more He can give to us to give away more. That's how it says it in essence, that we can give away more. In other words, even with grace, something we receive from God; mercy - Do we live mercy toward others? Are we patient? We receive it from God. Do we live that toward others? The more we can then the more God can give us more to give away more. That's what it's all about. And that has to do with grace. That's what grace is all about. It's about mercy, it's about patience, it's about love, it's about all the attributes of things that God gives to us in our life as He calls us, and then as we yield ourselves to that that's God's will, He wants to give us more and more of that. But it's up to us, our response, if we're giving it as well or if we're just kind of a big ole vacuum cleaner, just sucking it in. "Give me more mercy. Give me more help. Give me more favour. Give me more money. Give me a better job. Gimme-gimme-gimme-gimme..." and so we're like this giant vacuum cleaner and no benefit is going out to anyone else. That's just about us then and there's no

value there, but when it's going through us and being shared and given to others in our life and how we live our life.... That's why it starts in the home. Mercy, patience, sharing, giving – not harsh, not hard.

There's so much to be learned in that that sometimes people can be in the Church for a long, long time and never learn - you can't be controlling. When does the light come on? Because some still have a dark room and it's not for developing film. Some people are too controlling in life. There are men who are too controlling of their wives in God's Church. After all the sermons we've had we still have situations where there are men who are just controlling. They don't even see it. They don't understand it yet. They don't understand they're controlling. There is not a freedom given to the wife to make choices, to make decisions. It's like if it doesn't come from the man it's like, "This is the way it's done, walk you in it." That's not the way it's supposed to be. And so people exercise that in their children's life. It's like if you control then you know what's best.

That's the way the government is. The Republican Party's that way, the Democratic Party's that way, "We know what's best for you. Vote for me, I know what's best for you. We'll pass it. We'll get it done." All these platitudes that are out there; "Because we know what's best for you!" There are certain things done in congress, there are certain things done in government, that *they know*, and that's their mind, I understand that. It's *wrong*, but people genuinely believe they know what's *best* for you, whatever that means. And that is oppressive. It truly is a spirit of tyranny; I don't care where it is in life.

And there still exists within God's Church, because we're human beings and we're coming out of those things, but until we actually see it we can't change, we can't repent of what we cause. I've mentioned this over and over again, that is something I learned through time in such an awesome way. When we were taken out to Pasadena in the refreshing programs they would last for week to two weeks at different times; all the ministry around the world over a period of a year and a half. It generally took a year and a half to bring in every minister from around the world in small groups that could be worked with. I don't know, what did we have? 40-50 in a room at a time, husbands and wives because we're a team, that's how we function, that's how we worked. And in that process around 1987 I *know* with all my being that even though Mr. Tkach, Sr. was beginning to have problems, some difficulties himself, in 1987 things were still moving in a particular direction where you couldn't say this is all wrong, by any measure. God used Mr. Tkach, Sr. to tell the ministry you've got to stop sheriffing, you've got to stop controlling. The word 'sheriffing' was used.

I remember when after the apostasy in an organization we became a part of, affiliated with, that even the leadership of that.... I got into a teeny bit of trouble one time when I sent out an email to all the ministers, all the elders. They were kind enough to come to visit us, the president and others. And I talked about 'sheriffing' and how it exists to that day. That was 1997 by the time I had that little visit, the beginning of the year. And this individual said, "You know, I've heard people talk about that but I haven't really seen that in the ministry." I'm pretty sure I didn't say it. My wife said I didn't say it. There wasn't a point of saying it. But I thought, "And you're one of the biggest sheriffs of all!" And the reason he couldn't see it is because he's a sheriff. And you don't see it if you're that way; you can't see the other way until you start repenting of what you're doing.

But to make a long story short, going back to '87 and after that, that was one of the hardest years of my life. It was probably one of the better years spiritually because of repentance. But I had to learn some great lessons and it was difficult because I realized that I'd been around, I'd been trained by, I'd been in that environment of seeing things at Ambassador, seeing things in different leaders of the Church, different ministers I'd been around, that I had learned too much of that way that wasn't a matter of

mercy and grace and love, it was a matter of control, it was a matter of you're trained and taught and you know what's best, and not a lot of room left for decision making or choices or opportunities for people when it's that way. Control. Anyway, it was hard because I knew I couldn't go back and change any of that but I could go forward and change and become a different minister, a better minister, the kind that God wanted, one who is a shepherd, one who's mind is one of serving and giving. That's what ministry means, serving. And so those concepts become different.

So, husbands when you come to understand in a deeper way that you're to serve your wife, it's a different way than to control her. See, you're doing one or the other, or a mixture of things in between. But if you're moving in a certain direction because you want to do it the right way and you want to serve then change will come and the marriage becomes better, life becomes better, and the same thing is working with family, with children. Same thing is true there. If there's such control in people's lives...you can't be with your children 24 hours a day. How do you train them? You give them opportunity. You give them slack. You give them opportunity to make choices and decisions that (now it depends on their age and where they are, because some people will misread this)...I'll give you an example. We've had situations in the Church where people have given freedom to their children to decide whether they're going to come to Sabbath services when they're 12, 13 and 14, in through there, whatever, and if you don't like church anymore we're going to let you have the decision. Well, that's why you're a parent, because you don't give them the choice of making that decision because you know they're going to make the wrong decision that has to do with God's way of life. That's why you're a parent.

So there's wisdom. Where does the wisdom come from? Where does the balance? Again, it comes from God. But there are other things in life that might have to do with things where they're going to have some suffering because of a decision they make, of something they do wrong, and you have to learn to entrust and give some space. You know, God does that to us; He gives us space and time. He doesn't *control our lives*. Can we not learn from that? He doesn't manipulate and control. He doesn't come down and *smack* you every time you start to sin. He doesn't. This concept that some had of the Millennium, that every time you start to sin somebody's going to tap you on the shoulder and say, "No-no-NO – *THIS* is the way, walk you in it!" That's so protestant and stupid! It really is! It's just asinine! *That isn't the way of God. That isn't the way God works. God is not a controlling God, otherwise we become robots, otherwise we'd do it for the wrong reason. We have to have free moral agency, minds that are able to grow and mature. And you know where that starts? In the home!*

The desire is that we learn these things. And even within God's Church we are going into an age very soon now where so many things are going to begin to be corrected. Get a head start! And the more you do the more God can use you then. See? The more God can use you then.

I don't know why I went in that direction but it needed to be said. We need to learn in God's Church. We need to grow, and we need to understand how God works with us. If we learn how God works with us then we learn how to work with others.

**Verse 20 - Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God forever and ever: for wisdom and might are His:** that's where it comes from, as mentioned earlier; **And He changes/controls the times the duration of various things and timing and the seasons:** God's all powerful and all mighty. **He removes kings and He sets up kings:** Awesome, this is the entire story of things going through Daniel; a kingdom was destroyed in order to begin a new one when Daniel came on the scene. It was because one kingdom came to an end, another began. The Egyptians and the Assyrians were warring and they

were warring against Persia. Egypt actually came up against Judah; that's how one of the kings was killed toward the very end here before Jehoiakim came on the scene. When the first invasion came through some believe Nebuchadnezzar was not yet king at that point, he came through Jerusalem and took some of the younger people, took a few things at that time. It wasn't the main time of deportation of the Jews – they gave them time and took some later in 597 BC. Later on in 587 the final deportation of Jews out of that region of the world took place because of rebellion under Zedekiah. It's an incredible story of things that took place. God brought an end to a kingdom and started a new one. He stopped the Assyrians. The Assyrians ruled, basically, at that time and the Egyptians still had rule in parts of the world at that time, but God brought them against Babylon because the Medes were involved with them at that time. The Medes had a way of working their way in there at different times even with the Persians.

It's like how some countries have always done, they make these choices of who they're going to align themselves with. So God brought an end to Assyria and He raised up Babylon. Awesome! Period of time went along – 70 years – and then it came to an end and God raised up a new kingdom, Persia. All for a purpose, all to teach powerful, powerful things that would go into the future that we can be inspired by, moved by, and learn from, and have better understanding of various things in the future. That's why I love the more we go through this the more the verse keeps popping out at me in Daniel, 'The wise will know.' Where does that wisdom come from? Comes from God. He gives us knowledge, He gives us understanding, and after a time more and more fits together and it's just there. It's what we are, it's what God has given to us, it comes from God; not because we're wise, it's because of what God has done and what God has given to us and what He's brought us to.

It goes on to say here, He does these things, **He removes kings, He sets up kings, He gives wisdom to the wise**, so it doesn't stop. It just continues to grow and God gives more and more. If we look to Him, we know He is the source, He just gives us more and more; **and knowledge to them that know understanding: He reveals the deep and secret things**: only God can do that! I think of what God gave us last Sabbath! I am really dumbfounded by that! It's always been there and I think of all the number crunching that I've done through my life (because I like numbers) and I think of all the number crunching others have done. I was doing some number crunching this morning on something else...nothing fit! It's not time. There are some other things out there that I know God's going to show in time, but I don't know what they are because it just isn't time yet. When it's God's time all of a sudden you're led to it and it's just there...it's just there! *Dumbfounding! Awesome! So meticulous, so precise*, but God gives it in His time.

So, **He reveals the deep and secret things**: and you're not going to know until it's time. 2008 – there are things written in there in a prophetic manner that you're not going to know until later, until you look back in some cases, and then you're going to be able to say, "That is so plain!" Right now sometimes it causes doubt. One day everything will fit into place. **He reveals the deep and secret things; He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him.**

**Verse 23 - I thank You, and praise You, O You God of my fathers, who has given me wisdom and might**, How often do you pray that way? How much do we understand and grasp that everything we have, that everything we know, that everything we see, that everything that moves and inspires us is that which comes from God? That which we grow in, that knowledge that He brings us to when He first opens our minds... What an awesome experience that no one can ever take away from you; no matter *what* you go through – no one can take that away from you – the day your mind was opened, the day you began to see. It's just there! It's an awesome experience and something never to be forgotten, and candidly

that we grow in through time and we become more and more in awe, as I am in what happened last Sabbath. Because it didn't come until just before the Sabbath. As so many prayers are to God with being at the Red Sea, I didn't know what to give this week; I didn't know what God was going to give. I didn't know! Then all of a sudden I knew the subject matter for us to go into, but I didn't know what was going to come together or how it was going to come together and that part takes work. He doesn't just funnel it in, "Oh, here you go... don't work at this, I'll just give it all to you." No, you have to put yourself into it, you have to work at it.

And so I'll just repeat a part of it because it inspires me because I lived it, and when these things happen they're exciting. A prayer telling God, "I don't know." And then all of a sudden in your mind, "Daniel: the seventy-weeks prophecy." So I go and open up and start reading it – don't know why. What does this mean, all these different things? It's a little confusing because people have had all kinds of ideas about it and what it means. And then *why on earth* all of a sudden in the mind to be inspired (that's what I look at it as because it was) to look at the day of the apostasy and the day of Christ's return and subtract it and come up with a certain amount of days, 6370. Oh, what does that divide by? 7? Another seven? Ah, 70 – what does that leave? 13. And then all of a sudden things begin to come, what it's all about, what it all means. God gives it! You can't figure things out! If it's time, it's time. If it's there for a purpose it's going to be there for a purpose. And so God has to give it as He gave things to Daniel. When it's time He will give it. When it's time that we're to see something, when it's time we're to understand there's a way that God gives it to us, and it's inspiring!

And so these are the prayers that follow, these are the things we should tell God on a regular basis: **I thank You and praise You.** One of the worst things a human being has sometimes is ingratitude, a lack of thankfulness, the ability to tell others, "Thank you." The ability to *recognize* sacrifice, the ability to recognize *giving* and the recipient of what's received and just thanking people – thanking God in this case. **I thank You and praise You.** More than just thanking God, inspired by it, moved by it, and praising Him: **O You God of my fathers.** To understand all who have gone before us... I am in *awe* at times of all who have gone before us, of things that they have gone through, stories in their life that I understand far more deeply now today because of what I've gone through and sometimes a matter of the suffering you go through to realize what *they* went through, to understand what they were saying at the time they said it. There are some things we can learn by knowledge, but to understand it in a deeper way because of what you experience and then you think, "Oh yeah.... I see Noah in a way that I never saw him before. I see different ones – Paul - in a different way than I ever saw him..." and on and on it goes, because of what you go through in life.

**I thank You and praise You O God of my fathers who has given me wisdom and might;** God has done it. Whatever you have, whatever you receive, whatever makes you different from the day you were called, you didn't do it yourself; you didn't pull yourselves up by your own boot-straps as some have taught out there in the world. People do that. I've been to training seminars. I've been to school, things where they teach you those kinds of things. I remember one company I worked with where they paid for us to go to this place for a few days to listen to (I don't even remember their names anymore)...Zig Zigler? I don't know what their names were, some of these different people out there, people that used to go on these routes back in the 70's and they'd come in, and all these things about sales and business and corporations and how you can get ahead and... anyway. There are things to learn of human nature, of life and people, but only God can give you what is needed to put those things in a right perspective and to use them properly. And so it's God that gives us what we have.

...and He has made known to me what we desired of You: and so He's telling Him these things – these things are going on here about God and about what's being said about God and what God has done: **for You have now made known to us the king's matter.** So it was appreciation for what had come to pass.

**Therefore Daniel went into Arioch, whom the king had ordained to destroy the wise men of Babylon: he went and said thus to him;** What a crazy thing! What an amazing thing! Here's the person you know whose job it is to kill you. If this situation doesn't change his job is to... he's going to obey because otherwise it's his head. It doesn't matter what else exists there but his job is to kill these individuals. It doesn't say how many had already been killed, I don't know what had happened, because they went out and he started this process and they finally came to Daniel. It says they were looking for them, searching out everybody to destroy them. And so the time had been given here and so now he went to him to tell him, to follow up on this.

So it said, **Therefore Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had ordained to destroy the wise men of Babylon: he went and said thus unto him; Do not destroy the wise of Babylon: bring me in before the king and I will show to the king the interpretation. Then Arioch quickly brought in Daniel before the king:** He didn't want to do this; he didn't want to go around doing all these things so he was glad to be able to bring him in, and that's the attitude that was there; **and said thus unto him, I have found a man of the captives of Judah who will make known unto the king the interpretation. And the king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen and the interpretation of it? And Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret which the king has demanded cannot be shown to the king by the wise, the astrologer, the magicians, or the soothsayers; But there is a God in heaven...** so basically he's saying, "Not from myself! There is *no one* that can do this!" in essence, as a human being. He didn't take it to himself. He acknowledged exactly where it came from.

**There is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and makes known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days.** Now, it was going to be told to him but he had no idea what this meant. It's just like the disciples were told certain things about Christ; they didn't know what certain things meant until the Day of Pentecost, and afterwards they came to deeper understanding. But literally this means exactly what it says. *We are in the latter days;* this is what it's talking about, because the whole story of Daniel builds up to, all prophecies that get closer and closer to *the end, the fulfillment, the Messiah, the Kingdom of God established on the earth.* That's what it's all about. That's the commission that was given to Daniel, to live a life that set all these things in motion for us, for those who have gone before, for a testimony that's there that's written here that we can read and benefit from, and learn from. Incredible! ...in God's time.

And so it says, **in the latter days. Your dream,** now, his interpretation of that would have been a little bit different because who doesn't want to know what would happen later on in your life. So what might have entered into his mind is not what was being said. **Your dream and the visions of your head upon your bed are these; As for you, O king, your thoughts came into your mind upon your bed, about what should come to pass hereafter: and He who reveals secrets makes known to you what shall come to pass. But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have...** this is a beautiful lesson, this is a beautiful verse to understand, it truly is, because I know God gave that. In times past, seeing people who are lifted up by what they were doing, who believed that something was coming out of them as a result of *their* knowledge, *their* understanding. I have a hard time expressing all this because it so sickens me – of things that have happened in times past when power, if you will, has been abused and misused. Because that's what I was talking about earlier with families, husbands, because it

starts there... that's where it's been as far as life is concerned in families and then wives obviously are very much a part of that as well depending on the situations and the good or bad that can be done there. And so it's a matter of family and structure that God wants us to learn from in that environment and so forth.

This attitude here is one of humility – true humility – because it's truthful, it's realistic, it is the way it is. It is the *absolute* way it is. I have known of people in times past who have gotten *so upset* and *so jealous* or mad because they weren't able to (within the ministry...or some who weren't even a part of the ministry yet), because they didn't get to speak at a certain occasion or whatever, because they had something so important to give, or they wanted the limelight, what they considered to be the 'limelight' – to be seen or heard by others. This attitude doesn't exist here in Daniel. Daniel did this in a very humble manner, truly. Powerful, powerful lesson that I could give whole sermons about, but unless or until we come to a point in time where we begin to see our own nature and see the mind that can do this and the mind that's in each and every one of us that has this capability, that's what repentance is about.

So he says... **this is not for any wisdom that I have more than anyone living**, that's humility. God gives it, it comes from God. Don't take credit for it! If you have an opportunity... you know, not to look down upon others, not to look down upon people in the world. They can't help what they don't...that's why God, Jesus Christ said, "Father, forgive them, they don't know what they're doing." What a spirit! What an attitude! Stephen basically said the same thing, "Don't hold this sin against them as they're putting me to death." You know, to live that is a whole lot different than thinking you can live it, until you're there. We might think we're going to do certain things under certain circumstances, and so God gives us opportunity to live those things, to do it the right way. And it's always a matter of humility and it's a matter of understanding where everybody is in God's Family and in the world. People don't have that opportunity yet, they're in bondage. You should feel compassion and mercy upon them. Are they going to respond to you in a good way? No!

That's why in the latest interview I could tell a difference from interviews I've given in time's past to where I am today. Maybe you saw that and maybe you didn't, but I've learned some great lessons along the way. Now, I knew it, but know I know it, if that makes sense. And because of that there are no expectations. The only expectation is what I know is real – is the repercussion – is the consequences that go with it that have always been there for mankind – those whom God is using, in the Church, whatever we've gone through in time. Because they can't see and they can't understand and the only thing they're going to do is to respond in a carnal human way; some more carnal than others in that process and I understand that.

I look forward to the day, if some haven't gone too far - because some have such hatred for the Church of God because some have been a part of it –some have such hatred for that I don't know where the unpardonable sin exists in some people's lives; in other words, sin they will not repent of because they have gone so far in their hatred and bitterness toward anything to do about the truth. There are people out there that have such hatred still to this day – since a man died in January of 1986! It just *bowls* me over that there is still such hatred toward Mr. Armstrong! Now a lot of that's shifted in time, so he has company. But I understand that! I don't enjoy it, I don't like it, I wish it weren't that way, but that's the way it is. But that helps our attitude and how we deal with things. And it helps how your attitude is in how you deal with the world, on the job, when things come down your way. People can't help it and sometimes people get stirred up. There's a spirit world out there and you've got to be careful how you react toward them and to them...not tit for tat, not kind for kind. See? And that's where the danger lies

in human nature in our lives in the Church. We can't do that. And that's why it talks about Jesus Christ being the example, when He was reviled He didn't revile back. On and on it goes, see.

So this attitude is a most precious attitude to have before God, of such incredible value. **But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than anyone living**, see, that's something I've known for a long time. We were talking about it last night. In 2005 I was in the hospital and I'd been given a lot of blood thinner because of a bypass that I had – not a bypass yet, they'd put a stent in, I should say – so they went in and they were able to put one stent in but there were two places they couldn't reach in the same way with stents and so they knew they'd have to go in there and do a bypass. But they'd given me something that starts with a 'p', I can't think of what it was now, but they had to let that run through my body. It thins the blood too much and they put it in there for stents so there are no clots and nothing that will cling to the stent, I guess. I'm probably not explaining it right. But anyway, so they're going to cut me open, open up your chest and go in there and do what they do.

You don't know if you're going to live or die; but one thing my wife and I talked about – God's work is going to go on. If it is, it is. If that's what it is that's what it is – life goes on, people live and people die. That's life. Man has never really enjoyed that part of it, especially if there's much suffering before it, but it's a part of life. And so, that absolute knowledge, because at that point in time we didn't know, I didn't know, what our jobs were at that point in time – hadn't been written yet, didn't know what it was yet. But we knew – talked about the Church is going to go on. God can give to anyone whatever He wills. God can put anyone into, mould and fashion, give to, any of us whatever He desires. No one's better than anyone else.

And so that's what Daniel is saying here. **This secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than anyone living.**

...Matter of fact, just to add behind that...it's *what* you live. At that point in time we didn't need life insurance anymore so we quit buying it, we dropped it. We didn't save it back just in case, "Oh, we better pay this *just in case* it doesn't really *happen*..." I hope some wake up out there if they're having a difficulty in some of this. Not a place for any of God's ministry. If that's not repented of you won't be there much longer. If I don't do it, I know God will.

**But as for me this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than anyone living, but for the intent that the interpretation be made known unto the king so that you might know the thoughts of your heart. You, O king, looked and behold a great image. The great image whose brightness was excellent stood before you; and the form thereof was fearful. This image's head of fine gold, and his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Awesome!** Awesome story here in how God did this and what He pictured here for time, for nations, for kingdoms.

**As you looked upon it a Stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image upon his feet, and as he's saying this it's coming back to him. God gave that to him, this image is coming back to him, he sees it again. What an awesome thing that God did! So he talks about this Stone that was cut out without hands which struck the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces.** The very last, the part that's struck, the part that's destroyed – not until the very end - that's where it hits, that's when it hits, that's how it hits, that's where it is. Awesome! Didn't hit him in the head! Didn't hit him in the chest!

**Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken into pieces altogether, and became like chaff on the summer threshing floor; just crumbled all up and blowing away; and the wind carried them away, and no place was found for them:** What a beautiful picture for what's coming. No place is going to be found for any of this anymore in the world. ...**and the Stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.** The Kingdom of God led by the Messiah.

*Awesome!* So Daniel was called to set up this entire story, to give something to us, to give something to people through time to whatever degree God revealed these things, and all having to do with the end of man's rule, the end of 6,000 years, the establishment of the Kingdom of God, the establishment and the coming of the Messiah – not just His second coming but His first coming. All these things are in the story and God set everything up here in a very powerful way to give us things as a 'type' in some cases and things of inspiration and things to reveal the power of God that should inspire us of how precise and meticulous God is. That's why when we go into this farther and farther and God gives us more and more I'm speechless! What do you say? You just come to where you know certain things, you know what's next!

It's like when Johnny, I and some others were talking and I mentioned this and we were discussing when Johnny had given that sermon down there in Florida and talking about that experience that Myrtle and himself had there at the time of the apostasy on December 17, 1994 and then he mentioned about the December 24<sup>th</sup> sermon because that's when it was videoed in Big Sandy and sent out to everyone and it's just like...I know what fits into place next – it's got to be January 7<sup>th</sup>! It can't be the 31<sup>st</sup>, wouldn't it be *awesome* if it was on January 7<sup>th</sup>, of all days, that this was when it was to be played in all the Churches worldwide. And he was so excited, by the time he got home he looked it up and called us and let us know, because I hadn't had a chance to look it up yet – Yes, it was January 7<sup>th</sup>! It just comes to a point...! And that's why I mention it's just the next step, isn't it? The days from the apostasy to the day of Jesus Christ's return: 7 X 70 X 13 – and you think...Oh, not only that, but knowing the precision, the power of God –wouldn't it be awesome - and I feel it is - that at that moment is to the same hour in Jerusalem. Sure enough! These things are inspiring and exciting and God just gives more and more and more, and what does that do? Strengthens your boldness, it strengthens your confidence, it strengthens your resolve! No matter what you're going through in time, that God will work everything out according to His plan, and whatever part that it is so be it. Whatever comes – so be it! *Bring it on!* Whatever it is!

We're almost there, and whatever we go through that might be tough between now and then can't be *compared* to what's coming. And of *all people* on earth, *we* have been some of the most blessed! I hope we understand that! To live in *this* time rather than a hundred years ago, or seventy years ago to have died, or twenty years ago to have died, or a thousand years ago, farther back. *This* is the time. *THIS* is the time! And I hope that moves you, inspires you!

So he's explaining all this and showing all these things about the image; going on...**This is the dream; and we will tell you the interpretation thereof before the king. You, O king, are a king of kings:** now this is good for Daniel and his relationship because isn't it nice that the first part of that is the one with the head of gold? And a little flattery goes a long, long way with someone like this; this is going to be good. And God did all this by design and purpose. **You, O king, are a king of kings: for the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory.** God did this; God gave this to you. **And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven has He given into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all. You are the head of gold!** It's better than the clay and the iron on the bottom! That helps! This helped in a big way didn't it? And God gave that! God gave that favour in a very unique and powerful way.

**Verse 39 - And after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to you**, so as time goes along, ones that come up will be inferior to you; yours is the greatest. What does that do? Same thing – gold – the greatest – “Everything else that comes afterwards is going to be inferior. My name’s going to be great...what happens to the end...” anyway, that’s the way kings were. That’s why such monuments and things have been built in times past, because they want to be seen as, indeed, great.

**...and any kingdom rising is going to be inferior to you, and then another third kingdom**, it talks about here, **of brass, which shall rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be as iron: forasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and subdues all things: and as iron that crushes in pieces all things. And whereas you saw the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided**; Just look at Europe today and see what’s happening and you see how this is all going to fit together. It doesn’t fit together well because it’s iron and clay, but it’s going to have to fit together and it’s going to function for just a little bit, and that’s as long as it can function. And these examples here that so identify that relationship. It’s an awesome thing!

**...forasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken.** Loose; it doesn’t fit together, not going to be fully unified because it’s an unequal mixture! What a combination! What a *dilemma*! What an amazing thing that’s happening over there right now with the economies and the corner they’re being pushed into and the downgrades all of a sudden and France being downgraded – but don’t touch Germany..... They didn’t downgrade Germany and several other countries. I think someone said nine were downgraded, but all these downgrades that are taking place and all this is working together to push them into a corner. They’ve got to unite. They don’t want to. Right now there’s this battle going on with France and Italy kind of ganging up against Germany, but that’s not going to work either and they’re just going to get pushed into a corner more and more and sooner or later ten of them will have to say yes. Yes! And then after that yes it’s too late and it falls apart again.

**Verse 43 - And whereas you saw iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men:** this is an interesting phrase because it has to do with the concept of marriage, marriage bonds, contractual marriage. Just because you sign something and you agree on something at some point doesn’t mean it works. And that’s the kind of thing that’s happening here. It’s like the first treaty that they have, now they realize that’s not working so they’re going to have to do another one to supersede that one and that’s what ten countries are going to do and they’re going to get ‘married’. Not a good one. **...but they shall not cleave one to another**, it’s not going to work; **even as iron is not mixed with clay.** It’s a very fast, very short lived contractual agreement, if you will.

**And in the days of these kings**; what a beautiful thing God gave all the way back then to lead us up to now and we’re living it! It says, **And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom**, it’s in this time, it’s in the time when this happens, that this Kingdom is finally established, **which shall never be destroyed**: ‘that which was made without hands’ – the stone - ‘the stone which the builders rejected’ - **and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.** So everything that’s ever been, all of man’s ways. What a beautiful picture in the book of Revelation – ‘Babylon, Babylon has fallen’ – all the systems of man, all the governments of man, all the ways of mankind is going to be crushed like chaff on a floor and blown away by the wind, and God says they’ll *never* exist again. He will not allow it. It’s a beautiful thing and we get to see it.

**Forasmuch as you saw the Stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it broke in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the Great God has made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter:** and so in this perception now he gains a little bit more ability to grasp a little bit of what was being said, that this statue has to do through time with different kingdoms that are going to arise and one that's going to come that's going to destroy them all, as far as kingdoms, but it's a long, long way off. And so this is still pleasing to him because he's the one of gold and he's the greatest of all and all the rest are inferior to him. ...**and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.**

**Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel,** can you imagine? Someone of such stature and power and the way kings were at that time – you didn't mess with them, you didn't cross them, you didn't speak in a wrong way to them, you didn't look at them in a wrong way – of course if you do that today you'd be suffering too. But anyway...they may not be able to lop off your head as easily but... **and commanded that they should offer an offering and incense unto him.** What an incredible thing they treated him like this.

**The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods,** He is God! ...**and Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets,** he was moved by this experience; **seeing you could reveal the secret. Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon.** Do you think that while he was going through, and the first time he went and asked for different food to be given that a concept like this was any part of his mind, of what was going to be given to him, of the opportunity he was going to have as a part of a structure in rulership? That's why a lot of you, you *just don't know* what's on the other side of all this, the awesome time that God has called you to, the opportunities to serve, the opportunities in a very great way, to serve, to learn things now, to begin being moulded and fashioned now, to have a head start now - it's for a purpose and for a reason if you yield yourself to the process and as you yield yourself to the process.

**Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the men of Babylon. Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon:** Awesome! Bring my friends along; they've been trained for this, we've been trained for this. ...**and Daniel sat at the gate of the king;** top of it all, under the king. Awesome! What an incredible thing, things that God has done through time, the power of God to bring things to pass, the power of God.

I think of the book of Esther. You think of all the intertwined things that happened back there with Mordecai and Haman and government, all the stuff that took place at that time. And it's so awesome in the meticulous process whereby God was working all of this out. It wasn't just by happenstance that all this happened. It didn't just happen out of the blue. Things didn't just come into Esther's mind or things that Mordecai did, out of the blue – God was designing all this. God was moulding and fashioning, and they yielded themselves to the process that God has prepared them for long before. *Awesome* the power of God.

And those things are being moulded and done now in our lives in the Church right now and in the world in ways that we don't fully see but they're there – as great and greater – things that God is going to do because of where we are in time and because of a *great* purpose He has, an *incredible* purpose!

Just as a reminder here – in this story God has chastened Judah and given them to captivity for their rebellion against Him. The reason they went into captivity is because they polluted the Sabbaths of God. They were told long before what would happen if they did. "You're going to go into captivity if you continue... if you do not repent then this is what's going to happen to you." Israel had been taken captive back in the 700's BC by the Assyrians. The Assyrians were the ones who were in control at that time; the Assyrians were a great kingdom at that time. God started with Babylon because of the name and because of how He's going to use that in time and all the things He moulded and fashioned then at the end of Assyria to show His great power, to bring everything to pass that would go from that point forward to the return of His Son, to the return of the Messiah, to the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of His Kingdom.

So again here, awesome things that happened through time. It's just incredible when you put it all into a picture; you see what God is doing. The book of Daniel just jumps out at you greater. It's more than just reading certain stories in Daniel, it's seeing a flow and a *purpose* of something God was doing through the entire book that is so awesome and powerful and mighty; and every bit of it has to do with what we're living today!

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