

Last Sabbath we began a new sermon series entitled *Daniel's Commission*, and today is *Part 2* of that series. We've been focusing on God's purpose and calling that Daniel received, the commission that Daniel was given, because throughout scripture, especially when you look at Daniel and others as we've talked about, when God calls someone to a purpose, especially someone who would be leading and guiding and directing some of the things that God is going to have them doing, there is a commission that they have, an overall commission that He sets for them.

And as we talked about last Sabbath, God had a very specific calling and commission for Mr. Armstrong, for Herbert W. Armstrong during the sixth era, Church era of Philadelphia, and as a result Mr. Armstrong was very specific about that particular commission and he understood what that was. We talked about that last Sabbath as being Matthew 24:14, of the gospel going into all the world and then the end would come. And as even two weeks ago we read a particular letter from him from January 7th, or at least talking about January 7th of 1972 and he went through talking about the importance of some of the 19-year time cycles; and in that particular portion discussed that commission and fulfilling Matthew 24:14, and it was literally at that point in time that we had literally gone into all the world as far as the gospel message was concerned when you look at 'The Plain Truth' magazine, radio, and so forth; as of that date that had been accomplished. But what was amazing was that he understood that there was more to take place, more that was to be done and we understand now all those things that would lead up to the apostasy recorded in 2nd Thessalonians 2.

And so we've been talking about Daniel's commission, that God in like manner through time has given different ones a commission, but that commission He literally gave to Daniel was to set the stage from beginning to end, from the first chapter in the first verse all the way to the last chapter and the last verse, of those things that had to do with the coming of the Messiah. His first coming, literally, and we're probably going to get into that next Sabbath, about some of the seventy-weeks prophecies, but it really becomes inspiring when you come to understand how meticulous and precise God is about the timing of various events, and especially the coming of His Son, because in the very beginning when you go through and look at some of those things concerning the time it began, when that count was started, to the very end of it and how God divided up the seventy-weeks. It really becomes a very inspiring story.

And God set the stage here as we were going through it last Sabbath with chapter one and chapter two especially, of a count of seventy years, because later on Daniel talks about a specific amount of time of something that was to take place that he understood in the book of Jeremiah, that we read in a recent sermon, when in the book of Jeremiah he came to understand the seventy-years prophecy that Jeremiah had given concerning Judah. And this becomes all the more important, if you will, if you go through and you look at various things that Judaism and others have gone into, because they can't come up with the seventy years, they don't understand it, and the way that Judaism comes up with the seventy years....

You know, God's word is true, it's absolute, and the things that are said here are absolute, but it's a good study in what we're going through now to show that it's easy to read things into the Bible. It's easy to read things into – especially prophetic things that God gives in scripture and in the books that are given – while not having the entire story. You have to have the entire picture, the entire story of

what's taking place, and Daniel is a great place for that because it is a literal seventy years of something that God said would be fulfilled, and God begins to place emphasis on the importance then of a seventy year period, if you will, of things that are prophetic, the seventy-weeks prophecy and so forth that have everything to do with the Messiah, the Christ, His coming.

So, we're going to begin here by doing a little bit of a review of last Sabbath. Again, it's awesome when you go through here and read some of these things, the exact manner, the precise manner in which God works.

Daniel 1:1 - In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, so right here it gets very specific. And I don't want to bog you down with dates but dates are important and it's interesting. May not interest you as numbers don't interest some people, but again, I'll give you the meaning of some of these things as we go along. From the very beginning God is very specific about a time period, and it's a well known time in history, **the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came into Jerusalem and besieged it.** And right from the very beginning here it's easy to read things into scripture, and this is a common mistake throughout the book of Daniel. When you go through and read what others have said about the book of Daniel in traditional Christianity and in Judaism, there are a lot of places where people read into what they *think* is being said without going to other places to get the true picture. And God reveals it in a very precise manner. So this verse here, as an example, is one that can be misunderstood. It isn't when King Nebuchadnezzar was king; he was only a general at this time.

Daniel is writing this at a point in time when he already *was* king, and so he's referring back to a period of time, **of the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, when he was king of Judah**, that an event took place, **when the present king** (when he was writing) **Nebuchadnezzar went into and besieged Jerusalem.** And this was a period of time of 605 BC.

An incredible time in history because it was a point in time when Babylon had conquered thoroughly and overthrown the Egyptians. What was happening in history here – there was a changing of a time of empires. Assyria and Egypt were fighting against Babylon. Babylon was the emerging power in the world and Egypt and Assyria were actually uniting in fighting against the Babylonians; and this is when Nebuchadnezzar came into that area as a general, because he was the king's son in Babylon, and he was coming into that region to conquer it. And this big battle that was taking place in 605 BC was at a very important time that the Battle of Carchemish [Kargamis] with Egypt took place that's recorded in history.

There was also a second siege of Jerusalem that took place in 598. And the reason I mention 605 is because there is one date that's consistent through time that everybody agrees upon as a whole and it's 538 BC. That was the end of the Babylonian Empire and the beginning of the Medo-Persian Empire; and everyone agrees to that particular period of time because there were specific events that happened in history.

The importance of mentioning those dates is that from 605 to 538 it is only 68 years, and so that is the farthest out you can go to try to get the seventy years in the seventy-years prophecy of what was written in the book of Jeremiah, that was to take place. And the reason we're going through this is because it's a good exercise in showing that the truth is there but you have to understand God's plan, you have to understand other areas of scripture and what is being said and not read things into it, not taking one verse and basing other things upon what one verse says. You have to put all the verses together. It's one of the most basic things we learn in Bible study when we're called into God's Church.

Here a little, there a little, and you put the whole story together. And God does that, and it's awesome when you see it.

So again, the second time that Jerusalem was besieged was 598 BC; this was following a rebellion of King Jehoiakim, because what took place that's unique back in that time, just to give a little bit of history, is that...you remember when the Assyrians came in and conquered Israel, the northern tribes? The way the Assyrians did it as an empire at that time was they would take a people out of one region totally and move them to another region in order to have control. That's why you read in the Bible how they brought in the area of Samaria into the northern area - that's why when Jesus Christ came long and they talked about Samaritans in the area of Samaria - that's where the northern Israelites were originally, the tribes of Israel used to be located. And what they did with the Israelites then, they took them farther up into Europe, but they brought in Samaria. So that area at the time of Christ, the Assyrians had already brought in the Samaritans, and that's why when you read about the Samaritans they were a people transplanted. But that's how the Assyrians kept control.

The Babylonians did it totally different. What they would do is they would go into an area, conquer it, take their youth, take those of the royal families, take those who could be educated in the way of the Babylonians, and set them in rule over those regions, people who had familiarity and understanding of their religions (because there were all kinds of gods throughout that part of the world) and all kinds of traditions, and so they would get people from those areas to train them for the purpose of rulership, to be over those regions later on, to deal with those peoples. And so this is what happened with Jehoiakim. Jehoiakim was to pay large taxation and so forth, and that's why when Nebuchadnezzar went through there as a general he took these young people with him; Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that are recorded in scripture here, plus a lot of others in the royal family. A lot of them just teenagers, 14 through 18; those are the ones they picked, those are the ones they chose, and took them away. And at this time here it was 605 that he actually ransacked the temple and took all the valuables of the temple back to Babylon as well.

And so then we have the second date of 598 BC and this was following the rebellion of Jehoiakim when he didn't do as the Babylonians told him to do, so they went back and besieged it again, killed a lot of people and took a lot of people captive - larger numbers this time. Following that, however, there was another siege, finally the third siege was in 586, and this is the one that really troubles a lot of people because of other scriptures we're going to read in a little bit here. But in 586 there was a final siege of Jerusalem and Judah and this is when the massive numbers of people of all Judah were killed, large, large numbers were taken captive into Babylon. So this is when the largest siege took place and the greatest captivity took place of Judah. They were taken into Babylon. *This* is when a lot of people escaped, this is when Jeremiah and others actually escaped then into Egypt, because although the Babylonians had conquered them they didn't go all the way into Egypt, they only went part way and controlled a certain region of northern Egypt.

An awesome story here, mainly about the timing and what God reveals. But if you go from 586 to 538, again you only have 48 years. And there are some interesting things said about Jerusalem that people have a hard time with because they believe it should have lasted for seventy years and it doesn't fit, so people say that Daniel wasn't a prophet or that his word wasn't true, or that God isn't true, because of certain things that are recorded here.

Let's go back to Daniel now and continue on with chapter 2. Again, as a reminder of last Sabbath when we went through this, this is where Nebuchadnezzar had his dream and it left him, but it so troubled

him that he wanted the wise men, the various ones, the astrologers, the various ones from the other areas they'd conquered, to be able to come in and tell him what his dream was. And you remember the story here, how that they said, "Well, you tell us the dream and we'll tell you what it meant." He understood if he told them what the dream was they're just going to make up some kind of a story, so he said, "If you can tell me what my dream was," which he had forgotten – but it so troubled him he wanted to know. He says, "If you tell me the dream and its interpretation then I'll know that your interpretation is true." So anyway, again, we went through the whole story there, but what's important here is the image, is the statue of what he saw, because it was setting up all the empires, the kingdoms.

Daniel 2:28 – Here's where he's talking to the king, and he went before the king, when Daniel was the one that went in before him. He says - **There is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and makes known to king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days.** And so what's awesome here – in the very beginning God sets up everything in talking about the literal kingdoms that are going to rule the earth all the way to the end, to the coming of the Messiah; not the first coming but His second coming. And literally within the chapters of Daniel there are very specific things about the seventy-week prophecy that literally talk about the time of Christ in His first coming, and literally the time He would lose His life. It's all there! And it's astounding! And as a whole, traditional Christianity comprehends that portion but Judaism rejects it because they don't believe the Messiah came, they don't believe that Jesus Christ was the Messiah. So again, a lot of confusion of things that are written and recorded.

Let's go on down here to **verse 31** – this image – **But you, O king, saw a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent stood before you; and the form thereof was...** my King James version says 'terrible', but it's fearful – a fearful sight. **This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and arms of silver;** and so we discussed this last Sabbath, how that Nebuchadnezzar was told here and it was a good thing Daniel was able to say, "You're the head of gold, the most precious part of the statue. You are the head of God, you are that kingdom. God has given you your kingdom and it's the mightiest of all these kingdoms." But it's interesting to notice it starts with Babylon. There were other kingdoms before; Egypt was great before, Assyria was great before, because Assyria was the one that God used to punish the Israelites, but now Babylon was going to come on the scene in the time of Daniel, all setting the stage for the coming of the Messiah.

And so he says, **the image's head was of fine gold, his breast and arms of silver,** and that's the Persian Empire, the Medo-Persian Empire that came in 538; and again, all that's prophesied here. **...his belly and his thighs of brass,** and again, we understand that's the Greco-Macedonian Empire – the empire of Greece beginning with Alexander the Great. And what's amazing here, is contained in the story of the pages of Daniel here, which we're not going to go into, but if you were to go into it and study some things about the Celusians and Ptolemy it talks about the division of Alexander's empire into four different kingdoms. And that's exactly what Daniel goes into, how that it was actually going to be divided, this particular phase of it was going to be divided.

But I was going back through an old chart we used to have in Worldwide, pretty faded, but it goes back and gives a chronology of Daniel 2 and then it gives Daniel 7, the four beasts it talks about in Daniel 7, and then Daniel 8, the ram and the goat, all these things prophetic about kingdoms on the earth that would exist until the end, all the way to the end of time. And then Revelation 12 and Revelation 17, and it gives a timing here of all these events that were taking place through time, but one that I'd forgotten about and hadn't really noticed in large part here was an explanation of some of these symbols – every one of them is recorded as being a part of Babylon. It's a Babylonian system. And what an awesome thing because later on, obviously, in Revelation [18:2], it talks about "Babylon the great is fallen, is

fallen,” finally it’s fallen. But God uses that name – names have meaning – and Babylon having to do with confusion and a system of confusion in the world that man cannot govern himself. And that’s the lesson for mankind: Man cannot successfully govern himself in the world.

And so it went on through the image here. Finally it comes down to the legs. It says... **His legs of iron, and his feet of iron and part of clay.** And so again, the image has these different times of rulership until the very end, until the very latter days, until the end-time, and we understand that to be the Roman Empire and all the things connected to it that go through time, especially in the feet. What an awesome picture, that we live in that time, where it talks about the feet mingled with clay. It’s not a good mixture, especially in a huge statue of this stature that is being described here. And yet in this gigantic statue you have iron mingled with clay in the feet and the ten toes having to do with the ten kingdoms at the very end. But it says, as Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar (what an awesome story), **You saw a stone made without hands that came and struck the image at the feet,** and that’s what happens at the end-time, it has to do with the Kingdom of God, it has to do with God’s government, ‘the stone that was rejected by the builders’, referring to the Messiah and His coming and that He establishes, finally, the Kingdom of God on earth, the rulership of God on earth; something that the Jews were looking forward to in the time of Christ’s first coming. That’s what they asked Him, “Have You come to Your kingdom?” Pilate asked, “They say you are a King.” And Jesus Christ said, “That was the purpose of My birth, but My Kingdom is not of this age/of this time.” It’s for later on. Awesome!

And so again, continuing on through the story here after Daniel had done this (just as a part of a review here going through some of these). Thought it’d be good to go over to Revelation 17 before we continue in the book of Daniel, just talking about that last portion and what it says. And because of understanding scriptures like this, understanding what would happen in the end-time, understanding the migrations of people and what has transpired through time, what happened to Israel and their migration and the ten horns that finally emerge – it’s a prophetic event at the very end-time.

Revelation 17:12 - And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings/rulers who have received no kingdom as yet; it hasn’t come together, but receive power as kings/rulers one hour with the beast. And so it’s very short-lived. And the agreement between them is a very short-lived agreement and I find this awesomely inspiring and I feel that all of you do as well as we’ve gone through some of these things and talking about them in times past, as we’ve gone through some of the articles being written here of recent time, because I remember Mr. Armstrong talking about 1950 and that period of time when ‘The Plain Truth’ magazine sent reporters to Europe when the Common Market was beginning. And the reason he did that is because he understood this prophecy, God helped him to understand that at the end-time Europe would rise one last time and there would literally be ten nations who would come together in agreement to do what they’re going to do.

It was during that time that we read certain scriptures here in Revelation, he came to understand what was happening toward the end of WWII, of something that was recorded in scripture that we’ve read many of times. And so we’ve had articles; we’ve been reading articles about how they’re already talking about nine nations, they’re speculating, and this has nothing to do with the Bible, it’s just speculation out there and what’s going to come together. And so through this period of time we have watched things in Europe, because one thing that’s always been said in time, they would have a common military, they would have a common currency, they would have a common economy. And we’ve seen much of that come together, except for the last portion concerning that which is a military, or a power, military power which is already there in the form of NATO.

So, again here, **these have one mind and shall give their power and strength unto the beast**, in other words, that same power that get's revived over and over again, referred to as Babylon, refers to those who reign at different times within the system called Babylon. **These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall conquer them:** speaking of Jesus Christ, **for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they who are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful.**

And that's the scripture I read a little bit later in **[Revelation] 18:2** where it goes on down in context here and it says; **And he**, speaking of a mighty angel, **cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great has fallen, has fallen;** and the reason that name is in there is because it describes, again, all the kings that would reign, though they would be different empires, but it began with Babylon and it ends with what God calls Babylon, because it's a matter of confusion and how everything functions and works.

And so God chastened Judah and gave them into captivity for their rebellion against Him. It's an awesome story when you go through and read why the Israelites (the ten tribes in the north) were taken captive to the north, because Judah was just one of the tribes, the Jewish people - and what the Assyrians did, not to Judah but to Israel, the northern kingdom, in 712 BC. God took them captive because they quit keeping the Sabbath and quit keeping the Holy Days and they went to observing those times of Baal and Baal worship and so forth, the sun god, and so God took them into captivity and their identity was lost. But the Jews continued to keep the Sabbath but they were condemned for polluting it and they began to bring in things with other gods as well and started to make a mixture of that. And that's where God stopped it and He took Judah into captivity, and warned them over and over again, Jeremiah did a lot of that warning, different ones, the prophets warned Judah over and over again what would take place.

And so again here, God raised up a kingdom, that which we read about in the statue here. So Babylon came in and conquered.

Let's go to Isaiah 45 here next, because something was going to be established with the number seventy which would be the Babylonian rule, and that's how God began this whole process of that which would lead all the way up to the end-time and the coming of the Messiah. But there's an interesting story here. Before we get into more of it I wanted to read this about Cyrus and a name that God gave to an individual in scripture here that is inspiring. This happened 170 years before Persia actually came to the forefront in 538 BC and this is the story.

Isaiah 45:1 - Thus says the Eternal to His anointed, to Cyrus, God literally named the individual who would conquer, would be a part of the conquering of the Babylonian Empire, who would send Judah back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple, to rebuild the walls, and He literally named a person, surnamed him, and this is that story, 170 years before it ever happened.

So **He says, to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I will uphold**, in other words, God is going to do this, **to subdue/conquer nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings.** It's an interesting story of what happened toward the very end when you read part of what happened, when it talks about 'loosening his loins', the king lost control. You remember the example in Daniel, the story (we haven't read it recently) but if you've read it, he saw this hand and writing on the wall - 'MENE MENE TEKEL UPHARSIN' - meaning 'your kingdom is numbered, your days are numbered, it has come to an end.' Anyway, it was so scary, what took place, to King Belshazzar that he lost control, the loins it's talking about. You can say he wet his pants and a little more. Okay? That's literally what it's talking about.

That's what the expression means, 'to loose your loins', in this example here. That story is in the book of Daniel, literally what happened to him. Because he was so afraid of what he saw. And in that night...it literally describes in Daniel how they would come into the city to conquer Persia. You go back in history and read some of this, it's absolutely dumbfounding because it talks...well, let's read the rest of it here.

...and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; the way into the city that they actually used to come in and conquer it; the waters were down and it was an area that had to do with some of the watery area there, of a river, and it says, and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before you, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut asunder the bars of iron: And I will give you the treasures of darkness, and the hidden riches of secret places, that you may know that I, the Eternal, who calls you by your name, am the God of Israel.

Awesome! And when it finally came time it did so move Cyrus, because these scriptures were read to him, that he did what he did, that he knew he was named 170 years before he ever came on the scene, before anything ever took place, and how they actually conquered Babylon, that when this was read to him...it's an awesome story, we'll maybe read part of it later on, how he glorified God because he knew that no one could foretell such a thing let along his own name.

And he went on in **verse 4** to say - **For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel My elect, I have called you by your name: I have surnamed you, though you have not known Me. I am the Eternal,** now, we've read this before in other contexts, in other sermons; **I am the Eternal, and there is no one else,** this is one of those scriptures we use to show that indeed Jesus Christ didn't pre-exist. There was no one else as part of the God Family, if you will. It's something in the future, because Jesus Christ had a beginning. And again, this is one of those scriptures that is a part of that process there when God is declaring there is no one else but Him, as far as God is concerned. **...there is no God other than Me.**

I clothed you, though you have not known Me: So that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, and there is none other but Me. I am the Eternal, and there is no one else. Beautiful – powerful! **I form the light, I create darkness: I make peace, and create evil:** I think of a sermon we had a couple of years ago at the Feast talking about this process, how God creates evil. It's because He gave free moral agency to mankind and to the angelic realm knowing full well what would happen, knowing full well the danger involved in doing that, that not all are going to agree with God. And that's been the story in the angelic realm, it's been the story of what happened with mankind. When a third of all the angelic realm along with Lucifer rebelled against God. Awesome! Millions and millions of beings who through time, perhaps millions and millions of years, we don't have how long a time, rebelled against God, the earth was literally *destroyed* at that time, and when you come to Genesis 1:1, 6,000 years ago, it's a story of God remoulding the earth. It wasn't about Him creating it. A lot of people misunderstand that. It was about Him remoulding what was already here. It says He separated the firmament – it was already here but there was no life on earth, it'd all been destroyed. Incredible!

And so He says, **I formed the light, I create darkness; I create peace and I create evil. I, the Eternal, do all these things.** Because of His purpose! Because a reality is in order to become a part of God's Family God is not going to allow what happened in the angelic realm happen in His own Family, so we're made human first, subject to (as God says) the pulls of the flesh from childhood on, 'the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life'. We are selfish by nature. God created this way for a purpose. When a baby begins to cry it learns that that's how you get attention. It wants something, it desires something, and we grow up through life like that, and we're inward, not like God; God's way is outward, outgoing, giving, the way of love, agape, as we read. Human beings don't have that until God lets us taste of it. God has to give it because the source is God. We, by nature, are selfish, and that's our

battle. That's why I love what Paul had to say. You know, when you come into God's way of life he talks about this battle, because we love what He's giving to us, we love the truth, we love His way of life, we strive to live by it, but we find within ourselves this war, because the carnal mind, it says, is enmity with God, it fights against God, it resists God. And that's what repentance is about, the ability to continue to fight against something that's inside of us that we don't want, we choose not to have it.

And so again, He says, **I, the Eternal, have created it.** All these things are there, all for a purpose, God's purpose, so that we can choose, come to a point in time where we choose that we do not *want* the way of selfishness. We see what it's done in 6,000 years of human rule on the earth, of mankind ruling himself. All the wars, all the heartache, all the sorrow, all the pain in life comes from selfishness, and God offers something better and in a different world and in a different time when His government comes and His way of life only exists on the earth. No more governments, no more religions, no more choice of different religions. God says there's only going to be one; one God, one truth, one way of life, one King of kings, and Lord of lords, Jesus Christ, when He rules.

So He goes on to say here in **verse 9** – God says, **Woe to him that strives with his Maker!** In other words, resists God's purpose. **Let the pottery strive with pieces of clay/pottery on the ground.** In other words, this is what a potter does, he makes something and there is plenty on the ground that's been broken because the potter decides what he's going to keep and what he doesn't keep and there's plenty of clay on the ground broken up already, so in other words, this is what you are, you want to strive, strive among yourselves, but not with Me, **because I will form what I form. What I make I will make,** and "You can either yield to that and be a part of that or go play your own games," that's basically what God's saying, "...go do your own thing."

So, again here, he says, **Does the clay ask the potter, "What are you making?" or "Your work has no hand."** In other words, on the pitcher or whatever it is... in other words, we don't tell God how to mould and fashion us. God knows what He's doing but human beings tend to argue with God.

God destroyed the Babylonian Empire through Cyrus. Awesome story! Even how they conquered it and so forth, and brought a close to a seventy year prophecy through him, and it did end at that time, but the beginning is what has been a mystery to people.

It's kind of interesting, when I went through and read things about Judaism and how they counted the seventy years, because they do count seventy years, but they do so just like they do with Passover and how they count time and they extend... like the going down of the sun on Passover, that it can be at noon. They don't talk about the sun, when it actually goes down, they twist and distort scriptures because they want to make it longer. And so they actually end up explaining how that 68 years can be 70 when you're done.

There are literally 70 years and to not understand that is really a crying shame, because God's Word is true and absolute. That's why I love these things we've been going through – precise, sometimes to the hour, the day, the week, the year – it's awesome! God's word is true.

I want to go back with a little bit of history here, because to understand how you begin to count the seventy years is to understand a bit of history and then go back and read some other scriptures in the Bible. But in 612 BC, Nineveh - you remember the story of Jonah, he was sent to Nineveh? That was the capital of the Assyrian Empire and Jonah was sent there to give a message about their destruction if they didn't repent. He was swallowed by the great fish, spit up on shore – of course the Assyrians, the

people there at that time, they worshipped the fish, they see a man who's been spit out on the shore, he's white, his skin is white because he's been inside there eaten up and he wants shade because his skin hurts – and it's an incredible story. But here, literally, Nineveh did fall finally in 612 BC, and again, it was the capital of the Assyrian Empire. The Babylonians were fighting for a long time against Assyria. It was a little bit later then that Egypt came up and engaged in the battle as well because they knew if the Assyrians fell they're going to be next. So they actually went up there next to engage them...and Judah was involved in that war. It's an awesome story, what happened to the last rightful ruling king, if you will, by their own sovereignty, in Judah, and that's part of the story because the Egyptians placed someone else over Judah of their own choosing and it wasn't total freedom on their part. They had been conquered by the Egyptians before 605.

So in 612 Nineveh finally fell, and Egypt entered into those battles with them. Then it was in 608 BC – awesome story! In 608 BC this was the actual fall of Judah under the Egyptians, this was when Jehoiakim was placed in power by the Egyptians, because it says here a little bit later, the very first verse in Daniel, **'in the third year of the reign of the king Jehoiakim,'** well, the Egyptians placed him there to rule because Josiah, if you go back and read the story about Josiah, Josiah went to battle the Egyptians and he lost his life and the Egyptians defeated them, Judah, at that point in time, in 608. And it's an interesting story because it happened in Megiddo. Babylon begins right here and it ends in Megiddo.

It's an awesome story, it really is. It's very inspiring when you read some of these things and go back and see what took place, because Megiddo has an important place in prophecy and important events and Babylon and so forth. But this is the point that it all began, 608 BC. You go from 608 to 538 and it's the seventy years, because this is the turning point, this is when Babylon came into power. We'll read some scriptures here in a little bit that'll make all this clearer as to what God is showing and why it all begins here and not later on. But again, it's inspiring! I'm moved by these things, when you read stories about what God does when He does it with such precision, when everything is so absolute and perfect. And people get into trouble when they try to read something else into it rather than to learn about how great and how powerful and how mighty God is to do what He says He is going to do. He will achieve it. He will accomplish whatever He says.

Let's turn over to Daniel 9 and begin to get part of the story and see why people stumble and get tripped up from time to time in what's taking place. I've had mercy on you in not going through a lot of history I was going to go through here today, because I know it's not that interesting sometimes unless you're actually just reading the whole story yourself.

Again, there were three periods of captivity for Judah, the first as I said in 605 BC, 597 and 586. Then we come to **Daniel 9:1 - In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of years, whereof the word of the Eternal came to Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.** And this is where people start having big problems, because what do you mean 'in the desolations of Jerusalem'? When he went through in 605 it wasn't destroyed. There was a battle, it wasn't very big – they'd already been conquered by the Egyptians, Babylonians conquered the Egyptians then, and so Judah, the next thing would be to be under the Babylonians because they didn't have the power to resist the Babylonians. So for them to come in and take Jerusalem at that point in time wasn't as big a deal and they didn't take very many captives. They did take of all the valuables of the temple but this was a very small thing compared to what would happen in 598 and 586 later on.

But again here, it says, Daniel came to understand **that God would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem**; well, the point being is that Jerusalem wasn't desolate for seventy years. They were still ruling there. There was a rulership there. They were still there in 598 when they came through and besieged it again...and it was still there. It wasn't fully destroyed, literally, until 586, and then they destroyed everything, they destroyed the walls, they destroyed the temple, they literally destroyed everything. And this is what gives historians and people who study the Bible a tough time because the literal destruction was in 586 BC – leaves only 48 years, so how can God's word be true? It's because they're reading something into scripture.

And that's why we're going through this today, because it's a great lesson. Be careful. Let God reveal it. Sometimes it's a matter of looking back to see what is fulfilled and done in God's way.

And so it says here in **verse 3 - And I set my face unto the Eternal God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes**: this is leading up to a later part of the year even when these things were actually revealed, the document went out that they were to go back. This was done later by Cyrus; we'll get to that eventually in the story here but this is the very beginning of it in 538. And it's important now to go back to 2 Chronicles and take in some other things that are recorded in Chronicles, things that Jeremiah said so that we can understand what this seventy years prophecy was all about. Because this is one example that most people read and then they stop here. They don't go into Chronicles and they don't go into Jeremiah to see what was stated there. But it's all a matter of people reading something into scripture that doesn't exist, that isn't really there.

2nd Chronicles 36:20 - And those who had escaped from the sword he, now this is speaking of Nebuchadnezzar here, this is talking about this particular story. So this is Chronicles where some of this is being recorded because it's the history of Judah, it's the history of the kings of Judah being recorded here, and so in the book of 2nd Chronicles here is a part of this period of time that's being recorded. And it says, **And those who had escaped from the sword, he, Nebuchadnezzar carried away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: To fulfil the word of the Eternal by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land enjoyed her Sabbaths**: here's another one that causes people problems when they do go to Chronicles, because it says, **for as long as the land lay desolate she kept the Sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years**. And that's seventy years. And the reality is it wasn't 'desolate' for seventy years. It was literally desolate for 48 years, and candidly, this is what it's referring to. And it's easy to read something else into the scriptures here that it doesn't say because it doesn't say that it stayed desolate for seventy years. It says **...to fulfil**, as a part of a fulfillment of something that would happen in the seventy year period, that within that fulfillment this would take place, **that literally the land would enjoy its Sabbaths**, as it says here.

So, let's go on, it becomes a little clearer as we go along. **Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Eternal spoken of by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished**, so again here, Daniel is referring to the prophecy of Jeremiah, and so it's saying here **in the first year of Cyrus the king of Persia, that the word of the Eternal spoken by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished**, in 538, **the Eternal stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and put it into writing, saying, Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth has the Eternal God of heaven given to me**; because again here, he has these verses read to him in Isaiah that we read earlier about him being called by name, literally, surnamed by God Almighty 170 years before, and he recognizes the story of how they conquered Babylon and knows that God had foreordained this that long in advance and he was deeply moved by that then after this had been read to him. He was moved to fulfill exactly what he read in scripture, or heard given to him,

and was motivated to *send the Jews back*, to be a part of that, to send them back to begin building the walls again, to send them back with some of the things of the temple and so forth. And this is when it began. It was a long, tedious process of things that took place and a long struggle if you go through and read different stories there in the Bible of what took place afterwards. But this is when it began and this is what it's recording, what Cyrus was moved to do.

And so Cyrus was recognizing that this was given to him by God Almighty. **...all the kingdoms of the earth has the Eternal God of heaven given to me, and He has charged me to build Him a house in Jerusalem**, Awesome! A Gentile king being moved in such a mighty way because of something that was recorded, and he's moved by God's spirit. That's what we're reading here. He was moved by God's spirit to do this, to say these things.

Who is there among you of all His people? The Eternal his God be with him, and let him go up. And so again here, the story, it's an interesting story when you go back and read it, because from the very beginning there were letters sent (and I don't remember exactly who they were sent from, whether it was Jeremiah or other prophets), but they basically told the people of Judah who were in captivity to build there, to build your homes, to settle there, to yield, in essence, to the government that had conquered them. And most of them had actually been there for 48 years. Now, when you have built up an area - and it even talks about this, talks about the farms they had, the different things they had that they had worked for for so long, candidly, there were a lot of people who were not really all that anxious to go back. So they didn't go back in one great wave of people. Not everyone really wanted to go back because they were already settled and they had families and they had homes and all of them weren't as keen to go back. But God moved different ones at different stages, if you go back and read some of the history of it, in the scriptures; they did go back in different waves. But if they'd gone back all at once it'd have been much easier, but they didn't do that because they were pulled, and many of them just stayed behind because they'd been encouraged to do these things before and they were settled for forty eight years plus in Babylon. That was their home, literally, by that time.

Let's go over to Jeremiah 25 and see what Jeremiah had to say. **Jeremiah 25:8 - Therefore thus says the Eternal of hosts; Because you have not listened to My words, behold, I will send one and take all the families of the north, says the Eternal, and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about**, so this is being written in advance and literally talking about Nebuchadnezzar, that Nebuchadnezzar is going to be the one to do it long before he ever did it. But he was already alive, already had the name, God was going to raise up Babylon, and this is a part of what Jeremiah was telling the people and this is what God had given him to tell them, that Babylon's going to rise and because you have not obeyed this is what's going to take place to you, with you. Because He'd warned them again and again and again through the different prophets, especially in the beginning with Jeremiah, about what they were doing and they wouldn't repent, and they didn't change.

So, He says He's going to raise up **Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, My servant**, His servant to do His bidding, to do what He wants them to do, **and will bring them against this land and against the inhabitants thereof and against all these nations round about**; well, who were the other nations? Well one of them was Assyria, the other was Egypt. Those are the big ones, but there were other small ones as well because Nebuchadnezzar, literally, at Babylon, God was going to raise up in power to become the first great kingdom as a part of the prophecies that would lead up to the Messiah, and establish the seventy year pattern, and seventy times that God would use that apply to prophecies concerning the Messiah. That's why the seventy-weeks prophecy becomes so important later on in the book of Daniel.

So **against the inhabitants thereof and against all the nations round about, and I will utterly destroy them**; it's not just about Judah! What's amazing here – it's about Babylon! It's about the establishment of Babylon. It's about bringing them into power, it's about *seventy years of Babylonian rule* that God was going to control from the beginning to the end, right down to the wire; and that's what took place, as God does. All these other prophecies that, as Daniel refers to it, people read into it extra that's not there. They think that the first time that they came through and took some of the children of and so forth in 605, that this was the beginning of the seventy years. The point is that it's not just about Judah, it's about Babylon ruling and then being established, and about *all these kingdoms* being brought down at this time, or all these nations. And so that's what's being addressed here by Jeremiah. These are the words given through Jeremiah to the people.

And so reading it again; **Behold, I will send one and take all the families of the north, says the Eternal, and Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, Judah, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about**. That includes Egypt and Assyria, **and will utterly destroy them**. And so that's what took place. Assyria was destroyed first, it fell first, Egypt fell second. They were pushed way back, they literally had at a kind of point in time, to surrender, but not deep into Egypt. And they rose back up again and fought at different times, but they were overthrown as a nation, they weren't powerful anymore, they weren't a kingdom anymore of great power. And Assyria was definitely gone by this time. They fled into the north. Isn't that awesome? I think of that Museum that's in Berlin that we went to, and it shows the things of Assyria going back in some of the statues and things, and they don't understand the very thing that's in the very heart of their nation that's them. Germans are the Assyrian people. They fled. They fled to the north, they went exactly where they took the Israelites captive, and then the nations of Israel then spread out into different parts of the world, went into Western Europe and make up the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand. Awesome stories when you understand some of the movements of the peoples through time and who they are.

But anyway, going back here, God is talking about a time that all these nations round about that will be utterly destroyed, **I'll utterly destroy them and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations**, meaning they will not rise again. Not meaning everything there is going to be destroyed, because others would live there, but they would be destroyed, they would be destroyed as kingdoms, as nations, or as powers, and a perpetual desolation as it says here, because we know the kingdoms that followed afterwards.

Verse 10 - Moreover I will take from them the voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, and the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle. Meaning that at the time that they are conquered, at the time the Babylonians come in there, they're totally defeated, they're totally gone, they're taken out of the area, they're taken out of the picture.

Verse 11 - And this whole land shall be desolate, not just Judah. The Assyrians aren't going to be there to rule anymore, the Egyptians aren't going to be allowed to come back up into that region of the world anymore. And that's what's being addressed here. **And this whole land shall be desolate, and an astonishment; and these nations**, see, the mistake is when people read things into scripture. It's not just about Judah; it's about all these nations, of what God was going to do when He caused Babylon to rise.

And these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. Who did it begin with? Basically Assyria. They were conquered, they were taken captive, others escaped into the north, the primary

majority of that fled to the north regions that we know of, of Europe, but what they took captive they took captive. That's what the Babylonians did, they transported people, they didn't leave them in an area as a whole when they fully conquered them, that's why the third siege of Jerusalem and Judah was the final one because there was mass killing and the rest were taken captive. But others had fled away just like the Assyrians did. But in this case here, this is the story of where Jeremiah went into Egypt, later on up to Ireland, all the history that's there of things that are recorded that are dumbfounding and awesome about the kings of Europe and so forth and the lineage that God preserved, that He said would be there until the time of Christ's return. Said there will always be a throne. Awesome!

Verse 11 – And the whole land shall be in desolations and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass when seventy years are accomplished, the context is Babylon, it's about their rulership over these other nations, their rise and their fall; and that's well documented – 608 and 538. Seems simple, but it's astonishing to me because I've read a lot of things on this and it's astonishing when you go through some of these things, how confused people become, historians become, and of all sides, it doesn't matter.

And then He says, **and I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, says the Eternal, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and I will make it perpetual desolations. And I will bring upon the land all My words which I have pronounced against it, even all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah has prophesied against all the nations.** So again here, to me this is an inspiring story when you go through and read some of these things and recognize the format of what God took them through.

Just like in **Jeremiah 29:10** it says, **for thus says the Eternal, that after seventy years are accomplished at Babylon...** it's about Babylon, not Judah, not Jerusalem, but Babylon, **I will visit you and perform My good word toward you in causing you to return to this place.**

So when you go back (and I encourage you to go back) and read some of that which was in Chronicles and some of what Daniel said, [do so] with this understanding as a part of the story.

The next part of seventy-weeks takes a lot more to set the stage for and go into and thought it'd be good here today to cut it a little short.

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