

In & Out of Babylon

Unveiling God's Power and Transformational Agenda in the Life and Prophecies of Daniel

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Introduction To

In & Out Of Babylon

A Study Course on The Book of Daniel

How would you feel if after experiencing decades of God's blessing you were kidnapped, along with your entire family, and enslaved by antichristian pagans? How would you feel if God, rather than delivering you from bondage, allowed your enemies to destroy every Christian church in your city? How would you feel if God had given you wonderful promises about the future of your people, your city and your nation, but now your people were scattered to unknown regions and your city and nation smoldered in ruins.

Would you feel abandoned? Or would you still hope in a glorious future? Would you throw in the towel and live out your days in cynical despair, or would hear the call of Messiah, urging you to become the light in your now dark world?

This messianic call came through the prophet Daniel as a song of hope to the despairing Jews in Babylonia, exiled there by Nebuchadnezzar. In the face of national and cultural dissolution, and the destruction of the temple that supposedly housed the one true God — in the face of pagan mockery of their apparently impotent God — Daniel arose to declare that God not only still lived, but that YHVH was *even now victorious*. As Solomon had said, “The LORD works out everything for his own ends — even the wicked for the day of disaster” (Proverbs 16.4). God was working a plan through Nebuchadnezzar. He would continue working it out through Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes. God had not abandoned His people, but had brought about an exquisite darkness in which they could shine for His glory. Even as the Messiah would be *the* Light of The World (John 8.12; 9.5), he called to His people in Babylon through Daniel, saying, “*You* are the light of the world (Matthew 5.14); do not be overcome by Babylon, but transform Babylon with good (Romans 12.21)!”

Why expend the effort? Why swim against the current? Why invest in a dark and fallen world? Because Messiah is coming to fill *this world* with His kingdom, and has destined us to rule *this world* with Him! In this age, no righteous investment will be lost, no expression of love to hurting people will be given in vain, no demonstration of a better way to a wayward culture will prove unfruitful, no word from God proclaimed to sinful generation will return to Him void. It will all bring a return, both in this age and *the age to come*.

This is the message of the Book of Daniel. Belying our circumstances, the God of Israel is still almighty and has a transformational agenda for our world — and He calls us to join Him in His redemptive work.

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Abbreviations Used In This Syllabus

Ant	<i>Antiquities of the Jews</i> by Josephus
c.	Circa, i.e. “about,” referring to approximate dates
Ed	Editor
ET	English Translation (or Translator)
Gk	Greek
Heb	Hebrew
LXX	Septuagint (Gk. translation of Old Testament)
MS	Manuscript (pl. MSS)
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
Wars	<i>Wars of the Jews</i> by Josephus

For the names of books in biblical references, this syllabus uses the 3-letter abbreviations utilized by the *BibleWorks* software program, and a period rather than a colon to separate chapter and verse designations.



The restored Ishtar Gate of Babylon, Iraq

Eschatological Presuppositions

Roderick A. Graciano

We all interpret Scripture through the lens of our personal presuppositions, namely, through the set of underlying ideas that we have come to hold as undeniably true. When it comes to the more difficult eschatological scriptures, our interpretations may diverge greatly depending upon our individual presuppositions. It is appropriate, therefore, that your instructor tell you up-front what his most important presuppositions are with regard to the interpretation of Bible prophecy. Here are mine:

1. The Bible Is A True Record of God's Dealings With Man

If the Bible is true it means that God has really spoken through His prophets and we can have confidence in their reports and their predictions as accurate and consistent with one another. This means that the Bible stands as its own final authority for interpreting the prophecies within its pages; no other book or prophet can interpret one biblical passage in a way that conflicts with other biblical passages.

2. God Intervenes In Human Affairs

Following directly upon the belief in the truth of the Bible is the belief that God does not stand aloof from His creation, but readily intervenes in human affairs. Among other things, this means that phenomena which we call *supernatural* — because they involve an injection of the spiritual realm into the natural order — are a real and plausible aspect of human existence. Therefore, we need not relegate the supernatural events of the eschatological scriptures to allegory or metaphor. The cosmic signs and wonders, as well as the battles of angels and demons, *can actually happen* and we must not interpret them as allegorical without a compelling reason to do so.

3. Creation Is The Battleground For A Cosmic War

As part of His holy and eternal plan, God sovereignly permitted the rebellion of Satan and the fall of man. He has also permitted the ensuing battle for the souls of men that will conclude at the end of the Millennium. The fact that Satan is *released*

for a short time after he has once been bound (Rev. 20.7) underscores the fact that God has deep purposes in the outworking of the cosmic battle between His Kingdom and the Kingdom of Satan. Therefore, we should not dismiss descriptions of apocalyptic battle as purely metaphorical or as apocryphal and unworthy of a loving God.

4. The Church Includes All Believers Of All Time

As Paul tells us in the Seven Unities of Ephesians 4.4-6, there is only one body of believers. It is variously referred to in Scripture as the Church, the elect, the body of Christ, etc., but it is one flock made up of Jews and Gentiles, with one Shepherd (John 10.16). The unity of the one body does not negate the cultural distinctions of its members nor the diverse historical contexts of their redemption, but it underscores the one and only basis of their redemption, namely, the atoning sacrifice of Messiah.

5. God Never Renounced His Promises To National Israel

The fact that unbelieving Jews are “broken off” from Messianic blessing (Romans 11.19,20), does not imply that God has renounced His love or His intentions for the Jewish nation, “for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (Rom. 11.29). In



The Damascus Gate, Jerusalem

fact, Israel is the test case for God's promises. God said in Jeremiah 31.35,36:

Thus says the Lord, Who gives the sun for light by day, And the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar; The Lord of hosts is His name:
"If this fixed order departs From before Me," declares the Lord, "Then the offspring of Israel also shall cease From being a nation before Me forever."

If God were to renounce the nation of Israel before changing the fixed order of the cosmos, we would all have to wonder if any of His promises were secure. The fixed order of the cosmos has not changed, however, nor has God cast off the Jews as a people, a fact powerfully demonstrated in the last century by the reestablishment of a Jewish state in the Holy Land. God's faithfulness to His promises to Israel stands today as one of the most powerful apologetics for the truth of the Bible.

Israel is not only a testimony to God's faithfulness, but remains a chosen vessel for the outworking of God's redemptive plan for planet earth. As such, Israel has an important role to play alongside the church in the spectacular upheaval of the apocalypse.

6. Jerusalem Is The Eschatological Center Of The World

Since Israel retains an important role in the events of the last days, Jerusalem retains her status as the city of Messiah. As Benjamin Newton wrote, "The facts of prophetic history are made by Scripture to revolve around Jerusalem as their centre — and therefore any system of interpretation which violates this cardinal principle will soon find itself lost in inconsistency" (Newton, *Aids to Prophetic Inquiry*, p. 11). It is in Jerusalem that the final battle of the apocalypse will be fought, it is on her Mount of Olives that Messiah's feet will touch down when He descends from heaven (Zechariah 14.4).

Because Jerusalem is the geographical focal point of the eschatological scriptures, we should recognize that prophetic references to "the earth" or "the land" may refer only to the land of Israel, and that references to "the world" refer to the "prophetic world", that is, the known world of the prophets' day. (For a full treatment of this point, please see the treatise, *The Beast At The Center Of The World: How The Prophets and Apostles Understood The End Time Geography*, available at <<http://www.tmin.org/pdfs/BeastatCenter.pdf>>.)

7. "The End Of All Things Is At Hand..."

At first glance it seems sensational to declare that the end is near, but the apostle Peter said it explicitly in 1 Peter 4.7. John, believed to have been the longest-lived of

the apostles, also spoke strongly of the near end of the age (1 John 2.18): “Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we know that it is the last hour.” Indeed, when John recorded his vision of the apocalypse, he was told (Rev. 22.10), “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for *the time is near.*” Were the apostles mistaken, just like modern-day date-setters? After all, nearly two thousand years have passed since they wrote their declarations of impending cataclysm. Were they wrong? Well first of all, they did not set a date for the end, they only wrote that the end was coming soon. Secondly, they defined what they meant by *soon*.

In 2 Peter 3.8, the apostle exhorted, “But do not let this *one fact* escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” To understand his meaning, we read the fourth verse of Psalm 90 to which Peter alluded: “For a thousand years in Thy sight Are like yesterday when it passes by, Or as a watch in the night.” The context of 2 Peter 3, together with the allusion to Psalm 90, clarify Peter’s point: *soon* for God can mean *a long time* for us. Time is relative and is experienced quite differently by God who dwells in eternity and by people who dwell on earth. Nevertheless, as God considers the entire scope of world history from beginning to end, as He considers the long ages already past and the relatively short period that remains in His program for the world, He rightly declares through his apostle that the end is coming soon.

Peter understood this prophetic time scale. On the day of Pentecost, he quoted the prophet Joel to the effect that the outpouring of the Spirit, which they experienced in Jerusalem that day, marked the epoch of “the last days,” that epoch which would close with the darkening of the sun and the moon and the arrival of the “great and glorious day of the Lord” (Acts 2.16-21; cf. Heb. 1.1,2). Peter realized that he had lived to enter that very last era before the God’s judgment of the world and the restoration of all things (Acts 3.19,20). However long the “last days” might last, they constitute the final epoch of human history, and that meant that unlike all previous generations God’s people could now say, “the end of *all things* is near!” A global remaking was at hand that was more radical than that accomplished by the flood of Noah which only destroyed “all flesh.”

If it was true that the end of all things was near in Peter’s day, it is truer in ours. As Paul wrote, “...now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand” (Romans 13.11,12). Since these things are true, we should expect a continuing outpouring of God’s Spirit, empowering us to accomplish the commission Jesus gave us to complete before His return.