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**B0945 – November 8, 2009 – Characteristics Of Gentile
Imperialism**

Alright, we've been studying Dan 2. We'll finish chapter 2 today and get into chapter 3. We've been preparing to look at the details of the statue itself. The characteristics of this statue have relevance for the structure of Gentile power and shape the civilization we live in today. Hopefully you'll get a renewed respect for the God of history as we go through this and become more attuned to the structure we live in as a Gentile power and the forces that work to distort and with that we'll move into our response as Christians inside the system. The ever difficult question of how to live *in* the world but not *of* the world, that's where this is going.

Let's come back to the Exile. The Exile is crucial to modern civilization because it's the end of the supernatural history of Israel and the beginning of the history of Gentiles. So we're watching the transfer of political supremacy. And Dan 2 is sketching this transfer of political supremacy and what it brings with it. This is what has dominated world history for the last 2,500 years. It's a tremendous panorama of history sketched, much to the chagrin of the liberal, before the whole thing played out, to amazing precision, in fact it's still playing out, and the final form of Daniel's prophecy is on the horizon.

Now let's go to the statue Nebuchadnezzar sees in his dream. Verse 31 Daniel tells the dream, "You, O king, were looking and behold there was a single great statue," verse 32 "The head of the statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay." If you break that down you'll see there are four parts. Daniel interprets those as four successive kingdoms. Then verse 34, "You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands," and we said last time that denotes the kingdom of God because it's

not tampered with by human hands, it's not a kingdom of man's works. It's a kingdom of God's works, "and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them." That's the end of the four successive Gentile kingdoms. They're successive in one sense, in time they come one after another as the Gentile kingdoms battle for supremacy down through history starting in Daniel's day. These four kingdoms turn out to be Neo-Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. And in some way Rome is revived and takes its final form but it's Rome nonetheless. And finally, in v 35, when they've run their course, "Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time," look at that, "all at the same time, so in another sense they're simultaneous, they're successive but they're simultaneous and they all come to an end at the same time. So that's what makes some of this difficult. But the end of verse 35 says they're all replaced simultaneously by the stone cut without hands and it becomes a global kingdom.

Then Daniel gives the interpretation and here we're going to start thinking of each of these kingdoms and what they contribute. The metallurgy used to describe each kingdom is not by accident and commentators have noticed this relates to the contribution each successive kingdom makes. We don't have to guess who the head of gold represents because we're told directly. This is one of the great things about certain books that are sometimes called apocalyptic. They contain a lot of dreams and symbols, and yet what you find in the same books is the dreams interpreted, the symbols explained. So we're not just left to guess and make up what we think it might mean. The symbol is given and then it's given interpretation. So it's nice to have this kind of a thing. The end of v 38 is Daniel speaking directly to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, "You are the head of gold." So Babylon is associated with gold. What's gold? What are the properties or characteristics of gold? We will come back and answer that question. Second, v 39, "After you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you," that turns out to be who? Medo-Persia. What metal is inferior to gold? Silver. It's not stated directly here but it is in verse 32, so we can gather some characteristics of Medo-Persia from silver. Third, still verse 39, "another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth," and that has definite implications for a very current trend in political thought. And this third kingdom turns out to be Greece. So we have gold, silver, and now bronze. And then you come to verse 40, the fourth kingdom and you'll observe a much larger proportion of data given to this kingdom. "Then there

will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things,” and this is giving us data about this fourth kingdom which is Rome; the legs of iron and verse 41, “the feet and toes, partly of potters clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay. ⁴²As the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of pottery, so some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle.” And it goes on but we want to see what we can see about Gentile imperialism from these materials.

Notice first the decline in value from head to toe. The head is gold. Gold has the greatest value of all the materials and this relates economic wealth. Economically speaking Babylon is the wealthiest of the Gentile kingdoms. Babylon developed the fractional reserve system of economics and so she gets the greatest benefit of the currency. The shift to silver indicates decreasing value and the shift to bronze even further decrease in real value over perceived value. And so the decline in value from gold to silver to bronze and so forth suggests a declining value in world currency during the Gentile period.

Second, notice the increase in strength from head to toe. Gold is the weakest of all the materials, gold is very malleable. Then silver is stronger, then bronze is stronger than silver and finally iron, and iron is stronger than all the previous and this suggests an increase in military power. Each successive kingdom has greater military strength. In fact, the last three metals—bronze, iron and iron-ceramic mixture depict the history of military armor. So over the course of these four successive Gentile kingdoms there will be devaluation of world currency and an increase in military power. History has shown that the currencies of these empires eroded by continual deficit financing and resultant inflation. Moreover, history has shown that with each successive empire more and more geographic area was ruled over so they had to deploy stronger military forces to keep the empire united.

Now we want to ask why? What’s the link between the monetary system and military power? Think about it. As I expand my empire and I take in more and more people groups into my kingdom, as men like Alexander the Great did who just overwhelmed other nations with very rapid military attacks, what happens? I’m getting more and more area, more and more people to

control so I have to increase my military forces to control that. I have to build more weapons and better weapons. It costs a lot of money to do that so that gets me into deficit financing and deficit financing erodes my value, increases inflation. So the link is clear. It gets more and more difficult to come up with the resources to support the war effort and eventually the thing is in a very fragile state which is what you see by the end of this when you have the iron mixed with clay. That's a brittle combination. Things are teetering on the brink of total collapse as man expands his kingdom but struggles to finance the required military force. So those are the kinds of things the statue is inviting us to see. This is laying down the structure of Gentile kingdoms, what will characterize them and how they will combine.

That's the other thing I want to point out. Remember, they're all destroyed simultaneously. You ask, how's that? Babylon was destroyed by Medo-Persia, Medo-Persia was destroyed by Greece, and Greece was destroyed by Rome, so how can you say they're all destroyed simultaneously. Because each contributes a great Gentile idea to the next. So Babylon developed fractional reserve banking, that idea was inherited by Medo-Persia, Medo-Persia contributed the idea of globalism. They worked hard in pursuing a one world system, they passed that on to the Greeks. The Greeks took it and ran with that idea, they also now have fractional reserve banking, globalism and what's their contribution? What are the Greeks famous for? Philosophy. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, all these guys. Autonomous rationalism. The human intellect is supreme. Stop and think. Are all these things still around? Ever hear of fractional reserve banking? Where did that come from? Babylon. Anyone thinking about globalism these days? Who spawned that idea more than any prior Gentile? Medo-Persia. Greece contributes autonomous philosophy. Alfred North Whitehead said all of Western thought is a footnote to Plato. Plato already said it. Then comes Rome. What does Rome contribute? She inherits all these other things but she adds something that becomes vital in her day. Military strength. So our point is that each successive Gentile kingdom makes its contribution to the next so it's all combining and morphing into this final form of Gentile kingdom and that's how they're all destroyed at the same time. Because they all exist at the same time in the sense that they made their unique contribution and now they come together in a very brittle form in the last days, the revived Roman Empire. That's still ahead of us.

So we've been through it and that shows you the underlying structure of our society, those ideas are deeply embedded in the fabric of our thought and Daniel saw all this 2,500 years ago. I think what we take from this is we have to be very skeptical of these ideas. These are the big ideas of Gentile paganism and if you just suck them up you're sucking up the world system. I think the point God is trying to get across to us is that these ideas aren't acceptable to Him. They don't please Him. They're an abomination to Him and that's why He wipes them out. That's verse 35, the end of this thing, when the Gentiles have had their shot. Look at the description in the middle of that verse. They "were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found." Look at that. There's nothing left. It's all completely obliterated. There's no fractional banking, deficit spending, credit default swaps in the kingdom of God, that's all the kingdom of man stuff. We're living in that system, there's nothing we can do about it. I'm not saying what to do about it; we'll talk about that later. I'm just saying in the end, God obliterates it. There's no globalism on man's terms, there's a globalism but it's on different terms. There's no military whatsoever, there's no need, because finally there is peace. The world wants peace but they can't get peace on their terms. God supplies the peace; there is a future era of world peace. So that's how this shakes out.

Now I want to press on to Daniel 3 and the second characteristic of Gentile imperialism. The first is economics and military, the second is autonomous rebellion against the word of God. By the end of chapter 2 Daniel and other Jewish men are promoted into high places in the Babylonian administration. So they're going to carry this influence into the new Babylon and we want to see what happens. What happens when the word of God infiltrates at high levels in this Gentile kingdom? Here's the infiltration, v 48 "Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts, and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon." So that's Daniel's promotion. Now he has influence over the Babylonian rulers. So he brings them Jewish wisdom. What does the NT open with? There's a story early in Matthew about the birth of Jesus. What's the story? About the wise men. Where do they come from the east? What's east of Jerusalem? Babylon. Who are the guys Daniel was over in v 48? "all the wise men." Some scholars think that Daniel was over the school of wisdom astronomers and he trained them in the OT Scriptures and that his training

was passed down for centuries from father to son in this school and that's why you read of the wise men of the east coming to see the Jewish king. All that is going on in the text. And now that Daniel is in a position of authority what's the first thing he does? V 49, he begins to broaden his political influence. He says, I've got to get my guys in there because my guys think according to the Hebrew Scriptures. And so "Daniel made request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego over the administration of the province of Babylon, while Daniel *was* at the king's court."

Now we come to chapter 3, the word of God is in a position to influence and a strange thing happens. It's this strange event that leads us into a deeper understanding of our society and what's wrong with Gentile imperial culture and why it's insidiously dangerous. We live in a very dangerous situation, and we're naïve if we let our guard down.

How quickly Gentile society can turn to totalitarianism is shown next in this passage. In Dan 2:46 Nebuchadnezzar clearly infers that this vision of history, with this great thing in his mind and his dream, comes from God, the God of heaven. He acknowledges His position. Then in Dan 3:1 what does he turn around and do? The very next event! "Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, the height of which *was* sixty cubits," that's how tall? 90 feet! "*and* its width six cubits; he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. ²Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent *word* to assemble the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. Do you see a collision coming?

He assembled all the secondary officials and they were told in verse 4, "Then the herald loudly proclaimed: "To you the command is given, O peoples, nations and men of every language, ⁵that at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe, and all kinds of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up." Where do you suppose he got the idea for the big statue? The dream of chapter 2. This statue in chapter 3 has got to be connected with chapter 2; they're not independent stories existing by themselves. There's continuity in this book. Nebuchadnezzar, the pagan, has taken something God has revealed to him and his fleshly mind has now toyed with it and

distorted it and now the whole thing is golden; his kingdom has taken on far vaster proportions and it comes out as this idolatry.

Paganism distorts truth, it suppresses it, it contorts it, and it perverts it. We're learning from the book of Daniel how at the very highest levels of society, at the very highest levels of political administration the perversion is rampant and it will pervert so fast it'll take your breath away. We're learning that the pagan culture, this kingdom of man that arose is very dark and it's something that is always potentially dangerous because what happens after verse 5 of chapter 3, immediately?

You see the threat in v 6, if you don't worship the statue you're toast, the State incarnate, Nebuchadnezzar, is going to burn you alive. So what happens, verse 8, "...certain Chaldeans came forth and brought charges against the Jews." What do you suppose the charges against the Jews are? The Jews won't worship the statue. So hey, we've got a problem over here, we've got a group of right wing extremists who won't go along with your program king. They're stubborn and they're not doormats and they have the audacity to stand up to you King Nebuchadnezzar, the most powerful person walking the planet, politically speaking. They won't do what you say. Now that is very unnerving if you think you're the top guy in the universe. Here we get a glimpse of what it's like to be a big boy on the block, politically speaking, and you can't get some group of people to go along with your program. And they say, the hell with you, do whatever you want to us, we're not go along with it, we refuse. And that is scary. Why is that so scary? Why is that so upsetting to the powers that be? Because ultimately it's a reminder to them that they're not the biggest boy on the block. There's someone beyond them and this right wing, stubborn group of people are reminders that they have to answer to that someone else. So we've got to shut them up because we've knocked out our conscience but these people are now acting as our conscience, so we knock them out too.

We'll get into this more later when we get into the doctrine section but here's a case of civil disobedience caused by a conflict of ultimate presuppositions. Paganism says that man is great, man controls and the ultimate presupposition of the word of God, that God is great, God controls. There isn't any harmony between these two. It's the word of God on one hand and the word of man on the other. It's the same story over and over and over in

history. There are only two positions, and ultimately they are not reconcilable. Ultimately on the deepest level there can never be peace between these two, there always has to be a war. There always has to be a conflict, until one or the other is removed.

That's what we're seeing. On one hand we have the Eastern religions, the ancient myths, the Continuity of Being, nature, gods and man all part of the same thing, all linked by procreation and transmutation over time, all controlled by some impersonal determinism or chance. On the other hand biblical thought, buried truths of origins, the Creator-creature distinction with distinctions between God, man and nature, responsibility to God all controlled by the personal sovereign God. And you can't get these two together. You never get these together. So you have Daniel and his friends on one team and Nebuchadnezzar and his guards on the other. And it's a war of ideas. You've got to make a choice between them, you can't blend. It's one or it's the other; it can't be both. That's what's happening here and it's manifesting in a very practical case of civil disobedience at this point, to the point of death.

Let's look further. Verse 14, "Is it true," so he's interrogating, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up?" How ironic, is the guy listening to himself? You want us to worship something your hands set up? That sounds pretty stupid to me. If I set it up I can knock it down. So obviously I'm greater than the statue. Verse 15, "Now if you are ready, at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute," so he's giving them a second chance, c'mon guys, here's your chance to straighten things out, you don't want the furnace do you? "... But if you will not worship, you will immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire; and what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?" And look at that; the God of Israel gave him the dream. Now he says what god can deliver you? This is where he goofed. Unbelief is ultimately very foolish and arrogant, and eventually it oversteps its bounds and in rebellion dares God to stop it. Once that happens that's it. Now you've lit the fuse on yourself and the bomb is going to go off on you and these idiots don't even realize it. "What god is there who can do this?" Wrong Nebuchadnezzar!

Now the classic reply. Verse 16-17 has gone down in church history as one of the most famous passages in all of the word of God. It is a classic statement of godly civil disobedience, and the spirit within which it is given. “Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego answered and said to the king, ‘O Nebuchadnezzar,’ there’s honor, there’s respect, “we do not need to give you an answer concerning this. ¹⁷If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. ¹⁸But even if He does not,” look at that, even if He does not deliver us. What’s the theological implication these guys are giving us? Man doesn’t tell God what to do. He controls history. We don’t manipulate Him. He manipulates us. It was always pagan religion that manipulated the gods. So even if He doesn’t rescue us it’s because it’s His choice. He has a plan and a purpose for our lives. And “let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.” Period! Just look at that. You’ve got to have steel in your bones to say that. The fire in that furnace was hot. They were going to burn them alive. And they say, “Go ahead! Throw us in the fire! We’re not backing off.” You all know how the story turns out; there’s a fourth person that shows up, the son of Man, etc. That’s a classic case of civil disobedience and that’s what happens; that’s the potential kind of incident that can always occur as long as believers are functioning inside a Gentile power structure, because the presuppositions finally collide in very practical ways, in political ways.

Now I want to show you that this not only happened in Babylon but this happened in the other kingdoms that followed Babylon. Believers got high up in the administrations and had these conflicts with the Gentile Stage. There’s one book in the OT that everybody asks, “Where’s the name of God in this book?” God is never mentioned. It’s sort of like Daniel in that it begs you to ask, what’s going on here, what are the forces at work? It’s a book about God’s providence. Anybody know what it is? Esther. What kingdom are Esther and Mordecai a part of? Medo-Persia, our second kingdom. And if you read you know the story, Esther gets chosen to be the king’s queen but the king doesn’t know she’s a Jew. And Mordecai is her guardian; Mordecai spoils a plot to murder the king and then comes on the scene as an advisor to the king, one of the most satanic political advisors in history, Haman. And he gets the king to pass a law that everyone has to bow down to Haman, and here’s Mordecai, a Jew, and everyday he’s supposed to bow down to Haman? What do you think he does? He commits civil disobedience. And this really

ticks off Haman and he goes into the king and he goes into the typical barrage against the right wing. “We’ve got a rebellious group of right wingers, they won’t do what you say, they don’t respect your laws king, so how about you give me the authority to kill all the Jews.” And the king gives him the authority. So here it is again, the tendency of Gentile government to elevate man’s laws to the level of divine, immutable decrees. It’s human legislation with a vengeance, in this case against the Jews. God pulls it off beautifully because He’s already deposited Esther in the king’s own house and she has enough doctrine in her soul to relax and trust the Lord and so she goes before the king, unannounced by the way. What she did walking in the king’s court was a capital offense, in five seconds her head could have been on the floor, but she goes anyway because she knows her God is bigger than the king and she walks right in before him and reveals that she’s a Jew and what Haman was really up to. So we see again, just as Jewish men with Torah were in prominent places in Babylonian politics so they could get a clear hearing of biblical truth, so in Medo-Persia God providentially gets Jews with biblical training in high places in Medo-Persian politics so they could get gospel hearing and there was always conflict.

Now let’s turn to the Romans, 2 Tim 4:21. We’ve seen God distribute the word among the higher levels of administration in these Gentile kingdoms, now we turn to the NT and what do you know, we find it again influencing the higher echelons of society. The argument we’re showing is that God made biblical truth available to the leaders of these empires; they had the opportunity to respond. And some of them did. Here I want to relate from a book written by John Wurts. Wurts has done a lot of work on British genealogy and he found that “the king of Britain, Caradoc, was captured and incarcerated in Rome in A.D. 52.” This is how God gets his witness into a high level administration. “His daughter, Gladys, was adopted by the Emperor Claudius and became Claudia, who later married a man by the name of Rufus Pudens. Caradoc, his father, Claudia and Rufus were converted and baptized by the Apostle Paul, becoming the first royal converts to Christianity. Claudia and Rufus Pudens are mentioned in 2 Timothy 4:21, and Rufus in Romans 16:13.” Who do you see in 2 Tim 4:21? Pudens and Claudia. There they are; believers right in the house of Caesar. So you can’t say these kingdoms didn’t have a chance. God providentially moved Bible-believing people into these administrations.¹

Alright, I think we've established our point, now we want to conclude our time together by looking at one of the repercussions of the Exile. If the Bible is true and these things happened the way they happened, then the Exile had to cause things. We want to ask ourselves what effects, what ripples were left in history as a result of this Exile? One of them is the rise of a new kind of literature. There's different genre of literature in the Bible; genre is a literary form. You can have poetry, you can have narrative, you can have epistolary, and each of these is a different genre. Apocalyptic literature is a genre. We want to draw attention to this because this never occurred before in Israel's history. Something new is happening. The books where you see this in the OT are Daniel, Ezekiel and Zechariah and I want to turn to some of them so you get the idea of what this genre is about. Some you may never have seen before. We've already looked at Daniel, so let's turn to Ezek 40.

Now, as we read sections of apocalyptic literature, ask yourself what's the difference between this and the prophetic literature that we studied. We read those sections in Micah, Isaiah, and Hosea, and I said this is prophetic literature. Prophetic literature comes in this rib format of writing, it's a lawsuit format, it's how the prophets brought a case against the nation in God's name. Keep that in the back of your head when you start looking at this kind of literature.

Ezekiel 40:1, "In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth of the month, in the fourteenth year after the city was taken, on that same day the hand of the LORD was upon me and He brought me there. ²In the visions of God He brought me into the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain, and on it to the south *there was* a structure like a city. ³So He brought me there; and behold, there was a man whose appearance was like the appearance of bronze, with a line of flax and a measuring rod in his hand; and he was standing in the gateway. ⁴The man said to me, "Son of man, see with your eyes, hear with your ears, and give attention to all that I am going to show you;" let's stop there for a moment. Most of you have been through the Book of Revelation. Do you notice any parallels? How does the book of Revelation start? John the Apostle on the isle of Patmos and all of a sudden he's taken up to see a vision. And when he gets into the vision he sees Christ, and He's not some dinky long haired hippy, it's the magnificent resurrected Christ, and then he sees the vision of the seven churches and finally the visions of the tribulation and so forth. And who is it

that is always there? John talks to people, he talks to the angels. One of the features of apocalyptic literature is there's an angelic interpreter somewhere in the vision. Daniel 9 gives an angelic interpreter, and here in Ezek 40:3-4 this angel, under the title of a man, is given to interpret and explain this vision. That's one of the clear elements of apocalyptic literature. The visions are all about something that takes place in the far future. Notice basically Ezekiel 40, 41, 42, 43, all the way to 48 is a section on the temple. If you read the dimensions of this temple, it doesn't fit any tabernacle or temple of the OT. This is not a vision of anything built in the OT. This is a vision of a temple yet to be built for Israel.

Turn to Zech 1: 7; I want you to see another case of apocalyptic literature. After you've looked at a few of these examples you'll see that the book of Revelation is not new at all. The book of Revelation is just another instance of this kind of thing. ⁷"On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Shebat, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah the prophet, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, as follows: ⁸I saw at night, and behold, a man was riding on a red horse, and he was standing among the myrtle trees which were in the ravine, with red, sorrel and white horses behind him. ⁹Then I said, "My lord, what are these?" And the angel who was speaking with me said to me, "I will show you what these are." See the theme again, it's a characteristic of apocalyptic literature that there's an interpreting angel somewhere in the vision. The interpreting angel gives you the interpretation.

The question is what does apocalyptic literature do? Psalms are created so we can worship God and have a devotional life. Let's try to make an opposition here between the prophetic literature and the apocalyptic literature. Let's see if we can contrast and compare these two and see if we can come to some conclusion. There is a practical conclusion that we're coming to out of this.

The role of the prophets—what basically was the motive of men like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Elijah, Elisha? What were they really doing? They were taking the nation to court. They were convicting them of crimes that violated the Mosaic Covenant. So they were prosecuting attorneys of God that brought God's case against the nation for violated the covenant, and basically they were saying God's going to discipline you if you don't respond to Him. Then what would they do? They wouldn't just leave it there; they'd always bring in a final note

of blessing. The model of prophetic literature is Deut 32; it gives a summary of all of Israel's history and then says everything turns out fine in the end for those who trust God. So the emphasis, the goal of the prophetic literature is to secure repentance. It's there to convict of sin, it's there to bring the elect nation to awareness that the only solution to their problem is confession of sin. Got to have that to get restored to fellowship with God. So the goal of prophetic literature is restoration.

Think about something else? To who is most, *most*, not all, prophetic literature addressed? It concerns matters of Israel, not the pagans. It's primarily Israel centered, or we'll say primarily centered on believers, about believers. The apocalyptic literature is global in its extent. All nations are generally included in the purview of apocalyptic literature. That's not totally opposite because the prophetic literature does address individual nations, Nahum addresses Nineveh, etc. But the apocalyptic literature tends to be global in the sense that it deals with global issues. In particular apocalyptic literature emphasis is upon the final ultimate catastrophic judgment of God upon humanity. The apocalyptic emphasizes God's judgments, but its God's judgments not according to the Mosaic Covenant, its God's judgment upon the pagan world.

If apocalyptic literature arose during the period of the Exile, let's try to make a conclusion. Let's think, what is the Holy Spirit doing? What does apocalyptic literature do for believers who are going to face Exile outside of the kingdom of God, living by themselves under the oppressive conditions of Gentile kingdoms? What does it do for believers like Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, where they don't know whether next week they're going to be thrown in the fiery furnace? What function, what ministry, does apocalyptic literature provide? Hope. Apocalyptic literature gives you the gusto to hang in there. It's interesting, when it appears like there's no hope, society is going down the tubes what apocalyptic literature does is remind us there is hope.

The tragedy today is that this literature that projects hope is often allocated to the past by people in our own evangelical camps. There are people who consider the Book of Revelation to have already occurred in the past; that it occurred in AD70. Excuse me, but when did we have global earthquakes in AD 70, the sun blotted out, one-half of the world's population destroyed? Yet none other than R. C. Sproul, a preterist, believes it's all over, the book of

Revelation is passed, and we don't have that on the horizon any more. The problem is that it destroys the function of apocalyptic literature. When was apocalyptic literature given? Prior to a long time of Exile. How long was the exile? 70 years plus, because not all the Jews were restored, it was the beginning of the *Diaspora*, the Jews were scattered here and there throughout the whole world and they needed hope that eventually these powers in which they lived would be brought down. That's why the literature was given, to provide hope.

Similarly the Book of Revelation is the last book in the NT. Why do you suppose God would give the church and then nation Israel apocalyptic literature? So we could get over AD 70. No-no. Apocalyptic literature is given; its primary function is long term hope when believers are living in an alien kingdom. That's the context of this genre of literature. How absurd that we have people trying to interpret the Book of Revelation as something past.

ⁱ Josephus relates, "Caesar, when he had taken Rome, and after Pompey and the senate were fled beyond the Ionian Sea, freed Aristobulus from his bonds, and resolved to send him into Syria, and delivered two legions to him, that he might set matters right, as being a potent man in that country:" (*Antiquities* XIV, vii, 10.)

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