

Kingdom Down #1 - The Spirit of Babylon vs The Spirit of God

- All right, I am super excited. New decade, new year, let's open a new book of the Bible, amen. If you've got a Bible, go to the book of Daniel in the Old Testament, and as you are finding your place in God's word, let me just remind you, I don't know if you are aware of this, it's an election year. Is anyone aware of this? Spoiler alert, it's gonna get real noisy in the news. There's gonna be a lot of conflict, people are going to freak out and here's what's going to happen. Number one, people will be fixated and focused upon that which is seen. I wanna go behind that and beyond that, through the book of Daniel, to show you that which is unseen. Behind the world that we see is a world that God rules and reigns. There is a reality in the presence of God, with angelic beings that are just as real as the world in which we live as human beings. Daniel's gonna reveal all of that to give you hope and to give you courage, so that you keep your faith in a world that's lost its mind. Number two, what's gonna happen during this election cycle, people will be pulled, particularly believers, to veer toward the right or toward the left. Some of you are feeling that tension. Let me say that my hope, prayer and goal is in opening Daniel, not to pull you left or right, but to pull you up and to allow you to see all of human history and nations and kings and kingdoms and elections and politicians and decisions from the perspective of Jesus Christ, king of kings, lord of lords, so you can live your life kingdom down. That's exactly what we are doing with this series. Now, to set the backdrop, you will, as we are in Daniel, learn a lot about a place called Babylon. You know it's a bad place when The Rolling Stones name an album after it. That's how you know it's a bad place, right? What happens in Babylon is recorded in Daniel. And, I need you to see Babylon as two things and this is one of the interpretive keys and clues to the book of Daniel. Daniel is an ancient story about a man who is in an ancient culture and nation, called Babylon. But, behind Babylon is a spirit. A demonic counterfeit to the kingdom of God. The storyline of the Bible is that whatever God creates, Satan counterfeits. If you haven't picked up a copy of "Win Your War", it's a book that my wife, Grace, and I wrote on this. On the way out, just grab one. You're not stealing, it's my gift to you. But, in it, you will understand the worldview of the Bible. And, the worldview of the Bible is that, at work, behind nations, empires, movements, are spirit beings. They started as angels in the presence of God. They declared war on God. They sought to topple God as king and to establish a counterfeit kingdom. They lost that war, they were cast down to Earth, and ever since, they continually seek to do the same thing and that is to set up a counterfeit kingdom that is ruled by Satan and not the Lord, and is governed by demonic powers and not the power of the Holy Spirit. That is Babylon. Behind the ancient city of Babylon is the spirit of Babylon. It is a demonic spirit that is at work in every culture, in every nation, in every age. Daniel is not a book, just about what happened, but about what always happens when there is a conflict between the kingdom of God and the spirit that is seeking to establish the kingdom of Babylon. That being said, in the Book of Revelation, there are some interpretive clues given to us regarding Babylon. Babylon appears throughout the Bible and it concludes at the end of Revelation, the New Testament corollary and prophetic book that connects to Daniel is Revelation. It shows us what happens when King Jesus comes back and sets up a kingdom that never ends and crushes all other kings and kingdoms. It says in Revelation 14, 16, 17, 18, it talks about Babylon and calls it the mother of

prostitutes. God creates a people he calls his bride. Satan counterfeits with a people that are the prostitute of Babylon. It is God creating and Satan counterfeiting. And so, Babylon is the counterfeit of the people who belong to God. And then, it says over and over and over at the end of Revelation, fallen, fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great. Meaning, the spirit of Babylon will work through nations and cultures and times and places and it begins before Daniel and that work continues until Jesus comes back to put down this war once and forever. In the ancient days, the spirit of Babylon was at work in cities like Sodom and Gomorrah, was at work in cities like Nineveh, was at work in whole nations like Egypt in the book of Exodus. In addition, the spirit of Babylon was at work in and through Nazi Germany. It was demonic. It was an attack on those who bear God's image and it was an attack on God himself. Today, the spirit of Babylon continues in places like North Korea. It continues in extreme religious regimes like that in Iran. The spirit of Babylon is at work today in drug cartels, killing people by bringing that which is demonic and ultimately destructive into our world. The spirit of Babylon is at work in human trafficking. The spirit of Babylon is at work with political campaigns and social agendas. The spirit of Babylon causes things to trend on social media and is most assuredly working in areas of education to brainwash people to become Babylonian. My thesis is global. My thesis is historical. My thesis is eternal. And, the spirit of Babylon is at work in your life, in our world, in our culture. And, the spirit of Babylon is seeking to overtake every single sphere, sexuality, politics, morality, philosophy, education, parenting, gender, and trying to bring a counterfeit kingdom that is antithetical, opposed to the kingdom of God. Let's jump in. This is gonna be fun. At least for me, it's gonna be really fun. And, I wanna show you three things that the spirit of Babylon is seeking to do, not just in the days of Daniel, but in everyday, including our day. And then, I will show you three things that the spirit of God wants to do for you, in you and through you. Number one, the spirit of Babylon wants to topple you, wants to dominate you, wants to crush you, wants to rule you, wants to own you. Daniel 1:1 through two, in the third year of the reign of King Jehoiakim of Judah, that's God's people in the nation of Israel. Ultimately, this gives us the historical timeline. This is 605 BC. We're about 2600 years ago, and what the Bible does, it tells us what happened in the past, what will happen in the future and what happens in eternity. All of that is in Daniel, because the same God who ruled over yesterday rules over today and rules over tomorrow from his sovereign throne. And, his name is Jesus. But, this gives us historical designation. For those of you who would trust the authority and accuracy of the Bible, it gives us kings and kingdoms and times and places and nations, because this is God's work in and through history, and ultimately, archeology comes along and confirms that this is indeed an accurate depiction of history. So, this is 605 BC, in the third year of the reign of the king Jehoiakim of Judah. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. God creates Israel, Satan's counterfeit is Babylon. It is Satan trying to establish his kingdom on the Earth. Came to Jerusalem, that's the city of God for the people of God, besieged it, attacked it, we would call this a terrorist strike. We would call this an invasion. We would call this the invasion of a foreign army to occupy and conquer. This is global, this is cataclysmic for the people of God. And, besieged it, and the Lord gave Jehoiakim, king of Judah, into his hand, with some of the vessels of the house of God. That's the temple. And, he brought them to the land of Shinar, I'll explain that in a moment, to the house of his God, counterfeit God, demonic God, false God. There are not just many religions and many Gods and many paths to God, there is one God, there is one

path to God, Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father but by him. Any other declaration is from the spirit of Babylon. It is not from the spirit of God.

- [Audience] Amen.

- And, he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his God, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his God. Here's the backdrop for what is happening. Why would God create a nation and demarcate the boundaries of its existence? Israel is a nation, created, declared, decreed by God, and their land was specifically designated by God. There, they were to have a temple where God's presence would dwell and God's people would learn God's word and they were to live holy and separated lives, so that through them could come the king of kings, the lord of lords, our great God and savior, Jesus Christ. Why would he allow Babylon to come and conquer Jerusalem? Because, God disciplines his children. The story is this, in Leviticus 25, God not only gave them the land, he gave them instructions for managing his real estate. Your house is God's house. Your income is God's income. Your web browser is God's web browser. Your family is God's family. Your wallet is God's wallet. Everything you have is given to you by God. You are to manage it, but he is the one who ultimately owns it, and not only does he give you things, he gives your instructions for what he wants done with the things that are his possession. That being said, the land belonged to God, so God said in Leviticus 25, let me just say this, I'm gonna cover a lot. You've probably picked up on that already, right? Like, if you're a note-taker, welcome to carpal tunnel. You're never gonna keep up. So, let me just briefly tell you, you can go to markdriscoll.org. There, you will find a 6000 plus word introduction and overview of Daniel, to help you read and study. In addition, you can sign up for daily devotions, five days a week, for free. I'll send to your inbox all of this, with the footnotes, with specifics to help you dig deeper. But, that being said, in Leviticus 25, God said, every seventh year, the land gets to rest. Every seventh year, the land gets to rest. Now, we know why, today. Eventually, those who are in the hard sciences catch up with the word of God. And, what the hard sciences will tell us today is that all that is happening in our world is that we have increased the ability to bring forth crops, but they are lacking nutritional value. Because, we don't give the land an opportunity to recover, to rest and to replenish its nourishment. There's someone in the church that runs an ancient grains farm and they're using the ancient grains from the bible and the ancient methods for growing and harvesting and milling them, and they allow the land to rest every seventh year. So, what happens if you don't do that? Then, it is depleted of its nourishment, which means the land gets sick and the people get sick and God wants everyone and everything he made to be healthy. So, God told them, every seventh year, the land gets a rest. And, they ignored this, disobeyed this for 490 years. Okay. That's a while. Amen, that's a while. This is because God is a patient God. Way more patient than we are as parents. How many of you would not tell your kid for 490 years, please don't do that, please stop doing that, please knock that off, I do have a wooden spoon, don't make me use it? 490 years. Babylon is God's wooden spoon. What happens then, they're thinking, well, you know what? Maybe the Bible's not true. Maybe God made a mistake. Maybe there's a different interpretation. Maybe God changed his mind. Many people still think that. Oh, God doesn't judge people, nobody's going to Hell. It's been forever, he doesn't show up. He'll show up. He's just patient. And, he

shows up and he tells his people, well, you've disobeyed me for 490 years, help me do the math, you were supposed to give the land a rest every seven years. How many years did they owe? 70 years. Guess how long they're gonna be in Babylon? 70 years. Here's what I'm telling you, all of your sin, all of your rebellion, all of your folly against God, you will ultimately pay for it all. You are not, my friend, getting away with anything if you are not a Christian. You are storing up everything for the day of God's judgment and wrath. And, for them, they just kept filling the cup of his wrath, until it was poured, full strength, down their throat. You need Jesus, you need forgiveness of sins, you need new nature, you need eternal light, you need the God of the Bible, otherwise, what awaits you should terrify you. In addition, God forewarned them through the prophets. In this day, God was particularly active. Your life, like God's word, has seasons where God seems to have much to say. There are other seasons where God seems silent. The reason being, you don't need new information, you need faith in obedience to that which God has already spoken. Give you an example. The last book of the Old Testament is Malachi, and then there are 400 silent years where we have no indication that a prophet or a book of the Bible was brought forth by God. However, God was very active and had a lot to say in the days of Daniel. He was a contemporary with the major prophet Ezekiel, also Jeremiah and possibly Habakkuk. God raised up a whole team of prophets to warn God's people against continued rebellion. And, it couldn't get more specific. Let me read it to you. Isaiah 39:6 through seven, the days are coming, God says, when all that is in your house and that which your fathers have stored up shall be carried to Babylon. Nothing shall be left. Your own sons shall be taken away and be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. The entire book of Daniel was prophesied by Isaiah. Here's what I need you to know, behind the human authors of this book, there is one divine author named God, that 20% of the bible, when it was written, was prophetic in nature, preparing us for the future that God has planned, that ultimately, the same God who ruled over yesterday rules over today, rules over tomorrow, and the reason for his prophetic references are to prepare us for his intended future. Let's look at some of the main characters here in this opening segment, and they establish, for us, some of the central figures in the book of Daniel. First, there is Daniel. You may not know this, but this is crucial and critical as you examine Daniel. At this point, he is a teenager. He is a high school student, that's his age. So, when you see his faithfulness and his loyalty and his courage, he's a high school kid. He's a high school kid. And, the book covers his entire life. Because, it's not just how you begin, it's how you conclude. He is faithful to God at the beginning, he is faithful to God at the ending. The book of Daniel covers his life, 69 years in Babylon. As you read the end of the book, it's like, oh, my gosh, they're taking him away to kill him. Some of the kids' story Bibles and some of the kids' Bible videos will show Daniel as a young man, he's not, he's in his 80s. Right, he's in a scooter from the grocery store. He's on his way to be killed, but it's gonna be a while, because his walker broke, and so now he's in the scooter. He's an old man. The point is that Daniel's for young people and old people and all people, and it is possible to live a life fully devoted to God. Today, we would say that he was a prisoner of war, that he was a victim of human trafficking. He is forced to walk 700 miles as a captive of war, as a teenage kid. Imagine, invading army comes, topples America, burns down the White House and chains you up and makes you walk 700 miles to another nation that worships another God that speaks another language and gives you another identity. He was abused, he was hungry, he was dehydrated, he was exhausted

and I assure you of this, as a teenage kid, he was scared. One thing we see from the example of Daniel is that innocent people also suffer. The land had been neglected for 490 years. Daniel's a teenager. The landowners made the decision. He likely had not yet inherited his father's land. He was innocent, he was not one who created, caused or contributed to this disobedience. But, he suffers because he is part of a people. This is a good insight for you, my friend. There are things in your life where cause, effect, reap, sow, you do something and, as a result, you suffer something. There will also be times where you are innocent. And, if we learn anything from the cross of Jesus Christ, it's that sometimes horrible things happen to innocent people. This is the story of Daniel. He is a man of integrity, he is a man of obedience, he is a man of worship and he suffers. Sometimes, that will be true for you as well. We also meet here, King Jehoiakim. He is ruling over God's people. He is the 17th king and he is a horrible king. Sometimes, what disobedient people do, they vote for false prophets to tell them what they want. If you wanna do or believe something insane, you can find somebody with more degrees than fahrenheit that is very happy to cash your check to speak your message. That's Jehoiakim. We know, from one of the other prophets, that he burned the word of God. The nation belonged to God. The nation was created and sustained by God, and here, the people get a ruler that defied God, disobeys God, disregards God and ultimately sets the Bible on fire. Let me just say, there is always an attempt to eradicate the word of God. Because, in this world, if the word of God is absent, then the spirit of Babylon can be present and fill the void. This is the last time that he is mentioned, the focus moves from him as a godless man and a failed leader, though his approval ratings were high! The people loved him and God despised him. That was the problem. And, what happens is, they take the vessels from the temple. So, the temple houses the very presence of God. They not only besiege the nation, they overtake the city of Jerusalem and they capture the temple and everything that is in the temple that is to be designated and devoted to the worship of the one true God is plundered by the demonic, counterfeit, religious, political leaders and hauled back to Babylon and rededicated and recommitted to the worship of a false God. Why would God permit this? Those in Babylon would've thought, our god is tougher than your god. This is what they would've put on the back of their camel, a big bumper sticker, my god can beat up your god. That's how it would've went down in Babylon. Why does God allow this? Because, God could care less about your superstition. There are many people that are religious and spiritual, but don't really honor, love, know and obey Jesus as king, and they're very superstitious. These people thought, well, we've got a building and in the building we have some artwork and around the artwork we have some objects and all of that means we're protected. No, you're not. It's fine to wear a cross, but if you don't worship the one who hung on the cross, it's of no value or use to you. It's fine to have a painting of a saint hanging in your home, but unless you're living as a saint, it is of no benefit to you. Jesus, Christianity, the Bible, the Church is not for superstition, it's for the spirit of God. And so, God did not protect them, because they were superstitious and not spirit-filled. And then, here is Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar is ruling over the strongest empire in the world in his day. We would call them a superpower. Military, strongest. Economy, strongest. If this sounds familiar, you're paying attention. The spirit of Babylon can work in and through any and every nation and sometimes causes people to prosper and have power. He, this spirit of Babylon, is ultimately at work in powering this leader, Nebuchadnezzar. He created a massive building project and there were

magnificent buildings in Babylon. Culture was booming, cranes were everywhere. Interest rates were low, approval ratings were high. And, he wanted to be worshiped as God. So, he built a 90-foot high statue of himself and told everybody to worship him. Let me just say this, he had high self esteem. All right, we could just say that. You know what this world needs? A 90-foot me. You have high self esteem. He had high self esteem. And so, he is the representative of the counterfeit Jesus. Jesus rules and reigns the kingdom of God. Nebuchadnezzar is the demonic counterfeit, rules the kingdom of man, the nation of Babylon. Now, it says something here as well. This little word, Shinar, likely means little to you, but it meant much to those who originally heard it. This is referring to Genesis, chapter 11, verse two. All the way back to the Old Testament. In Genesis 11:2, it mentions a place called Shinar. Say, what does it have to do with anything? The context of Genesis 11, it was in the plain of Shinar that a bunch of people came together to create a city that had, as its centerpiece, a high tower, and that all was called Babel. Babel is the demonically empowered attempt to counterfeit the kingdom of God. So, all the people came together and that story in Genesis 11 is remarkable. God looks down, sees them building a great city to make their name great, not his name great. The new Jerusalem is where God's name is made great. Babel was the place where human name was made great. And, they are trying to build a great city to cause themselves to have a great name. And, they build a high tower, so that they can go up and look down on everyone else and rule and reign as if they are the replacement for God. God looks down and says, if these people work together in unity, nothing will be impossible for them. Here's the point, unified unbelievers are more powerful than divided believers. This is why Satan is always trying to divide Christians. Let me just say this. When a Christian attacks a Christian in front of a non-Christian, it's the spirit of Babylon. Because, Satan wants us to be divided and those who are opposed to God to be united. So, what God says is, I'm going to scatter their languages and I'm going to scatter their nations. And, what he does is he disperses the people to bring to an end the human effort, the demonic spirit of Babylon, to create the city and tower of Babel. That all is in Shinar. The Bible is not just about what happened, it's about what always happens. What is Babylon trying to do? What is the spirit of Babylon seeking to do? It's seeking to enslave you. The whole purpose and point, Babylon wants you, wants all of you, wants your mind, wants your heart, wants your wallet, wants your marriage, wants your business, wants your kids, wants your grandkids. The spirit of Babylon is always setting up counterfeit cultures and kingdoms to dominate and rule and overtake, topple and conquer the people of God. That's why we live as counter-cultural. My friends, do not live to be on the right side of history. Do live to be on the right side of eternity. History is judged by the spirit of Babylon. Eternity is judged by the son of God. In addition, we hear or see God. You could look at this and ask, has God abandoned them? Has God left them? No, God is at work over, in and through all that is happening. It says that God gave them. It is showing here, that in addition to the physical realm we see, there is a spiritual realm we do not see. Just as real as our meeting with human beings right now, there is a meeting in the presence of God with divine beings and departed saints. The point is simply this, that all that is happening is what God is allowing. Two things, number one, God is in control of whoever is in control. Everyone thinks that Nebuchadnezzar is the boss. There is a boss above that boss. There is a king above that king. There is a ruler above that ruler. That's why we declare, Jesus is Lord. Number two, God's kingdom is over every nation. God ruled over Babylon, God rules

over America, God rules against, over all the nations in history, present, future and into eternity. Number two, the spirit of Babylon wants to train you. What I will now say is very controversial. And, there will be great opposition, because when the truth goes forth, the spirit of Babylon pushes back. The spirit of Babylon wants to train you and your children and your children's children. That's why our war is not just against flesh and blood and institutions and organizations and candidates and curriculums, but against powers, principalities and spirits at work behind them. Then, the king commanded Ashpenaz. Some will ask, Pastor Mark, is that how you say it? Here's what I'll tell you. If you are ever required to read the Old Testament publicly, read it fast, read it confident. Nobody knows how to say these words. They'll assume you're right, okay? That's just a little vocational tip from Pastor Mark. Then, the king commanded Mr. A, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of nobility, youths, teenagers without blemish, of good appearance, skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding, learning and competent to stand in the king's palace and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans. Daniel and some of his buddies are chosen. Why? Well, they come from royal families of nobility, so they understand structure and leadership and they understand the functioning of a palace. In addition, we would say they have a high IQ, their test scores were off the charts. Their IQ was really high, their ACT scores were amazing. In addition, they had a high EQ. They were social, relational, pleasant. They knew how to entertain guests. And, they're handsome, they're attractive. They look good, so they make Nebuchadnezzar look good. Let me say this, the Bible here just throws something in and you can read right past it. And, it's this little word. Eunuch. Okay? Some of you guys are like, what does that mean? Exactly what you fear. Exactly what you fear. So, there is the chief eunuch, who oversees the eunuchs and he oversees Daniel, who must be a eunuch. The spirit of Babylon is always trying to emasculate the men of God. And, spirit of Babylon, the Lord rebuke you. This was a surgical procedure, 2600 years ago, to undo God made them male and female. It doesn't matter how bad it gets for you and me, let me just tell you this, Daniel had it worse. Let me say this as well, sometimes Daniel is wrongly taught. If you do the right thing, you won't suffer and God will deliver you. Here's what happened. Daniel did the right thing in Israel and got taken as an exile, a slave in Babylon. Now, some people will look and they'll say, well, he got saved from a fire and from the lions. Yeah, after he was castrated. And, let me just tell you, if you castrate me, please put me in a furnace, please feed me to a lion. All right, I'm out. I'm going to heaven, you know. Rock, paper, scissors, eunuch. I'm out, I'm out, I'm out. I'm out. Daniel was castrated, lived in Babylon for 69 years and died there. How many men would agree with me, that's not winning? That's not winning. I would say more, but I'd have to fire myself. Okay, now, let me say here, what is particularly offensive. What have we learned from the spirit of Babylon? Number one, the spirit of Babylon always tries to undo God-given gender roles. Behind the spectrum is a spirit. The spirit of Babylon. Number two, some of you feel fear. That's the spirit of Babylon. The Lord rebuke you and we welcome the spirit of God. Number two. The spirit of Babylon is always seeking to alter healthy sexuality within the covenants of marriage. Daniel never gets to consummate his marriage. He never gets to marry a woman. He never gets to enjoy marital relations, according to God's intentions. Number three. The spirit of Babylon is always seeking to attack marriage. By causing these young men to become eunuchs, they are negated from marriage. They'll have no legacy, they'll have no lineage, because number four,

the spirit of God does not want to see children brought into this world and raised by believers. It's a culture of death. And, this all happens when the spirit of Babylon overtakes the educational system. Daniel needs to be sent to the University of Babylon. And, there, he needs to be reverse-evangelized. He needs to be disconnected and de-committed to Yahweh, the Lord, Jesus Christ, the God of the Bible. Let me tell you this, the spirit of Babylon is still at work, attacking gender, marriage, sexuality, families and overtakes education in the universities. The spirit of Babylon has started writing curriculum for kindergartners to be brainwashed in Babylon. Those children that grow up in Babylon have been brainwashed by Babylon. They think that Babylon is correct and right, because they know nothing else until a believer shows up and stands against Babylon, to show that there is a king over that king, that there is a kingdom over that kingdom and that the God who made this world and all who dwell in it also gives instructions for how everyone and everything is to be used, according to his intentions. Some of your minds are exploding. But, it's why you're fighting with the school system and you're fighting with entertainment and you're fighting for the lives of your children and grandchildren. You're fighting the gravitational force of the spirit of Babylon. Is there any hope? Yes. Daniel starts as a teenager, ends as an 80-something-year-old man, and is faithful to God the whole time. The Bible has nothing negative to say about him. He's not perfect, but a perfect God is perfectly faithful to him. What this does, it shows us that we should raise our children to be innocent, which means they cannot be naive. Dear Christian parent, hear me in this. If you're trying to make sure that your children know nothing of Babylon, they will learn it all in an instant, they will be naive, not innocent. This is like the kid who was sheltered and controlled and then released and destroyed, because they don't know Babylon. There is a difference between learning something and believing something. God saved me in college. I went to the University of Babylon. I learned all about the Babylonian ways, but I didn't believe it, 'cause I kept reading the word of God. You need to know that just because your children are learning doesn't mean that they need to be believing. What we also see in the example of Daniel, he does not practice generational rebellion. We, because of the spirit of Babylon, we have a tradition in our culture called the teen years. And, all that means is they're just going to act Babylonian for a while, hang in there. Okay? Oh, they're drunk, but it's their senior year. Well, then, they go to college. Okay, well, they're still drunk. Well, you know, it's the college years. And then, they graduate and spend their 20s dating, relating and fornicating, disobeying. And, we just say, well, you know, that's a life stage, they're single, they need to sow their wild oats, whatever that means. You know, sorry for the oats. You know? Why? Because, we've created a life stage called adolescence. And, it is, you're old enough to be an adult, but you're allowed to act like a child. Daniel doesn't. He remains resolute, regardless of who or what stands before him or comes against him. Okay? If your children rebel, read the story of the prodigal son, love them, bring them back. But, let me say this, don't allow the spirit of Babylon to cast a false prophecy over your kids, and that is that at least for a season, they will live as Babylonians. The spirit of Babylon wants to topple you, wants to train you. The spirit of Babylon wants to tempt you. Daniel's away from home. He's away from family, friends, the culture that he's known, it's a new language, it's new religion, new gods, new customs, new holidays. He's very tempted. The king assigned them, Daniel 1:5 through seven, the king assigned them a daily portion of food that who ate? The king ate. Okay. You've just walked 700 miles. You're a prisoner of war. You're like,

you guys have anything to eat? Yeah, you can go to the king's house and open his fridge. Wow, that's awesome. This is the best food and the best wine. How much trouble do we get in by eating too much and drinking too much? The temptation is always real. And, the wine that the king drank. They were to be educated for three years. That's their undergraduate program at the University of Babylon, in diversity studies. That's what it says in the Hebrew. I'm just bringing you along for the journey. They were to be educated for three years and at the end of that time, they were to stand before the king. Their whole life was preparing them to stand before the king. Let me tell you this, there's a bigger, better king. Our king is Jesus. One day, you will die, you will rise, you will stand before the king of kings and the lord of lords. Don't worry about your grade point average, don't worry about your income, don't worry about your performance review, worry about standing before that king on the final day of eternal judgment. They are counterfeiting the judgment of Jesus Christ with the judgment of Nebuchadnezzar. It's all demonic. Among those were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. You've seen the VeggieTales. It's Rack, Shack and Benny, okay? Of the tribe of Judah, and the chief of the eunuchs gave them names. Daniel, he called Belteshazzar. Hananiah, he called Shadrach. Mishael, he called Meshach. And, Azariah, he called Abednego. You will see in Babylon and in our world, three kinds of people. These young men are godly. They remain resolutely loyal to the Lord. In this story, there are also those who are ungodly. They worship false gods, they do what they want, they are arrogant and proud and they tempt God's people to join them. In the middle are those who say they are believers, but live like Babylonians. They are eating the king's food, they are drinking the king's drink. They are serving the king's cause, they are worshiping the king's god, starting with King Jehoiakim. He's an example of this. The point is simply this. You need to determine which category you're in. Godly, ungodly or confusing. The people in the middle are confusing. We would call them lukewarm, backsliders, cultural Christians or Americans. That's what we would call that segment. I'm a believer, but I act like a Babylonian. I love Jesus and I live with my girlfriend. Those are two different teams. The spirit of God versus the spirit of Babylon. And, you're not supposed to have a reversible jersey on Team Jesus. You pick your team, you stick with the team that's picked you. That being said, what happens in Babylon, they seek to recast their identity by renaming them. Their parents gave them names, showing that they were devoted to the Lord. They show up in Babylon, Babylon wants to rename them. Let me just tell you this, the spirit of Babylon still does this today by name-calling. You're bigoted, you're intolerant, you're unloving, you're unkind, you're hypocritical. That's the spirit of Babylon seeking to name you. I'll show you what I'm talking about. Here's their Hebrew name versus their Babylonian name. Daniel means, God is my judge. Let me tell you that his name is prophetic and it prophesies his life. Nebuchadnezzar can judge him, he doesn't care. Babylon can judge him, he doesn't care. Satan and demons can judge him, he doesn't care. He lives for an audience of one. He knows that one day, Daniel 12:2, those who sleep in the dust of the Earth shall arise, that one day he will get out of Babylon, he will get out of his grave, he will stand before the king of kings and the lord of lords, Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ will be his judge. And, he lives for an audience of one. That is the key to the resolution of Daniel. Belteshazzar, they change his name to Bel or Bale, which is a demon god, protects his life. Hananiah means, Yahweh, Jesus Christ is Yahweh God. Means Yahweh is gracious. Shadrach, they change his name to mean, the command of Aku, which is

another religion, another false, counterfeit, demonic god. Here's the point, Satan doesn't care which god or goddess you worship, as long as it's not Jesus Christ. Narrow is the path to eternal life. Broad is the path to destruction. There are not many truths, there is one truth. There is not many ways, there is one way. Jesus says, I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life. No one comes to the Father, but by me. Satan wants you to believe in some general, nebulous god or some false god or chase some cult or some false religion, it's all the spirit of Babylon. Mishael means, who is what God is? What he's saying is, there's no one like my god. Meshack, they change his name and it means, who is what Aku is? No, actually, the demon god is more powerful and magnificent than the real God. Azariah means, Yahweh is my helper, God helps me. Abednego means, servant or slave devoted to, loyal to Nebo. As you read Daniel, you will see that the Babylonians continually refer to these men by these names, but they only refer to themselves by these names. They never refer to themselves by their Babylonian names. Why? They know who they are. If you are a Christian, you are a child of God. Your eternal destiny is secure. God will never leave you, nor forsake you. The heart of God toward you is a father's heart. That you are forgiven, that you are loved, that you are righteous, that you are blessed, that you are destined to be a part of a kingdom that never ends. You need to know who you are and it doesn't matter what anyone else has to say. The world can change your name, but only God can change your nature. God has changed their nature. The world can change your name, but only God can change your nature. They know who they are. Some years ago when my wife, Grace, and I were in, really, a battle. Maybe it was a battle against the spirit of Babylon. Some things were being said that had no truth in them whatsoever, but they were very difficult to hear. One of our pastors, Jimmy Evans, who's one of our overseers, we met with him. He said, it doesn't matter what they put on you, just don't let it in you. Some of you have critics in your life. Some of you have enemies. Some of you have bitter, vengeful, angry people. Some of you have demons that whisper in your ear. And, they're gonna seek to name you and put an identity on you, just don't let it in you. Know who you are. You are a child of God. And that, ultimately, who or what is against you will be dealt with by your king. And, you just remain loyal and steadfast toward him. Let's talk about the spirit of God. The entire battle is ultimately between the spirit of Babylon and the spirit of God. Just to sort of frame this, in Daniel chapter four, those who are empowered by the spirit of Babylon, they see in Daniel and those who are with him, a power, an insight, an authority that they have no access to. And, even the unbelievers, twice in Daniel chapter four, say, he has the spirit of Elohim in him. Some of your translations of that Hebrew word will say God or gods, it just simply means a citizen or a resident or a member of the unseen divine realm. Could be angels, could be demons, could be the sons of God, could be departed saints. But, the unbelievers look at Daniel and they realize, he has a spirit that we don't have. And, the spirit is stronger in him than the demonic spirit that's in us. And so, the whole backdrop is between the spirit of God versus the spirit of Babylon. And so, the spirit of God sends you, we looked at three things that the spirit of Babylon does, we'll now look at three things that the spirit of God does. The spirit of God sends you. Daniel 1:8 through 16. But, Daniel resolved, this is a decision you make in a moment and you keep everyday. This is like marriage, all right? When I told Grace, I am going to be faithful to you, that was a resolute decision that I need to keep everyday for the rest of our lives. That's covenant relationship with God. Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food or with the wine that

he drank. Therefore, he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself. I wanna be an exception to the rule. God gave Daniel favor, that is grace. You're gonna need grace to stand fast in Babylon. And, make no mistake, we're all living in Babylon. God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs and the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, I fear my lord, the king. The spirit of Babylon rules and reigns through fear. I can't talk about Jesus, because there will be repercussions. I can't quote that Bible verse, because it's controversial. I can't tell you that God doesn't tolerate your lifestyle, he wants you to repent of your lifestyle, because there will be a response, not just from you, but from the spirit of Babylon that is supporting you. Fear. The Bible says that God has not given us a spirit of fear. That's the spirit of Babylon. He's given us power, love and sound mind. That comes from the spirit of God. He says, I would love to help you, but I'm fearful. For fear has to do with punishment and the spirit of Babylon always wants to punish those who seek obedience to God. I fear my lord the king, who assigned your food and your drink, for why should he see that you were in worse condition than the youths who are of your own age? So, would you endanger my head with the king? If he doesn't do what he's told, what happens? He is post-head. That's his next life stage. Okay? I know your boss is not good, this boss is really not good. Right, you've never walked into a performance review, you know, with a machete on the desk. Story continues. Then, Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had assigned over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, test your servants for 10 days. Let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. You know that you have faith when you pick vegetarianism willfully. Amen? That's great faith. Pastor Mark, do you have that? No. No. No. Okay. Then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king's food be observed by you and deal with your servants according to what you see. So, he listened to them in this matter and tested them for 10 days. At the end of 10 days, it was seen that they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh. Don't you wish we lived in that world? The fatter you are, the better it is. Some of you like, I'm Babylonian. No. Fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king's food, so the steward took away their food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables. Four things I wanna show here. Number one, there's a counterfeit. The spirit of Babylon is always working on a counterfeit. This is counterfeit communion. All the problems started in Genesis three, when our first parents ate a meal with Satan and they didn't invite God. Passover was a meal that God's people would eat with God until the coming of Jesus. That then became communion for believers. We take communion here every Sunday, 'cause we never wanna forget the Lord Jesus and we always wanna invite him to be friends with us. The bread reminds us of Jesus's broken body. The wine or juice, according to your conscience, reminds us of the shed blood of our king and lord Jesus. That when we partake of communion, we are eating a meal with God and in so doing, we are declaring to the enemy that he is not welcome at our table. Okay? Paul says in Corinthians that there are those who say they are believers, but they are bringing demons to their communion celebration. What he is offering here is the same thing that Satan offered Jesus in Matthew four and Luke four. I didn't even think of this until this moment. Satan came and said, I'll let you rule over a kingdom, I'll give you all this food to eat, I'll give you all this wine to drink, if you will simply worship me. Eating with someone is welcoming them into partnership and friendship. This is counterfeit communion. Satan is here through the king, laying out the table and saying, let's sit down and build a relationship and be friends and

do life together. To do so would be to betray God. This is a counterfeit. Number two, I want you to see his character. Daniel disagrees in an agreeable way. Sometimes, Christians, we can be, you know, disrespectful toward boss or authority. He's respectful. He also gives an alternative plan. He says, well, okay, how about we try this? It's not just enough to tell people what you won't do, you need to find a plan for how to do what needs to be done. It's so easy to be against something. It's so hard to be for something. Daniel says, okay, how about this? We run a test for 10 days, if it doesn't work, we'll be responsible. He's very courteous to the degree that those who were overseeing him, they have sympathy for him, they have compassion for him, they like him, they appreciate him. Number three, control. Daniel has two choices at this moment. He can try and control the future or he can relinquish and just trust God to control the future. Many times, the decisions we make are trying to coordinate and control an outcome that we want or to avoid an outcome we do not want. Ultimately, Daniel here says, I'm not sure what's gonna happen. This may or may not work, but I'm gonna relinquish control, I'm gonna remain loyal to the Lord, and I believe God did a supernatural miracle to bring health to their body, because of the obedience of their soul. Number four. I want you to see his commitment. Daniel says, I'm gonna do what's right, even if everything goes wrong. You may get divorced. You may lose your job. You may have your family disown you. You may make less money. You may need to sell your house. But, ultimately, eternity will reward you for every sacrifice you make, as you venture through Babylon on your journey home. That's the story of Daniel. His treasure in heaven was great. His treasure on Earth was none. And, let me just point out something here. Your place of work is your place of witness. We would say that many of Daniel's trials, tests and troubles were on the job. They were at work. This is his job. Many of your tests, trials and troubles will be on the job, that your worship of God and your witness of God will happen where you work. What this means is, if you are a child of God, you don't just work for your boss, you work for your boss' boss, his name is Jesus. This is why we don't show up late and leave early. It's why we don't steal from our employer. It's why we don't bill our clients when we're watching YouTube videos and playing Fortnite. All right, we walk with integrity and character. Integrity and character. So that they see that our devotion to God is ultimately above all other devotions and that God loves them and serves them through our loving service. Number three, the spirit of God strengthens you. Daniel 1:17 through 20. As for these four youths, God gave them learning, skill in all literature and wisdom, they're excelling, top of their class, crushing it at the University of Babylon. And, Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. We'll get into that. God gives visions and dreams and only God can give the interpretation of those visions and dreams. We believe in the supernatural, we believe in the God of the miraculous, I've seen it in my life, we've seen it in our church and you'll see it in the book of Daniel. At the end of time, when the king had commanded that they should be brought in, it's the day of testing and judgment, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar and the king spoke with them. And, among them, none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. Therefore, they stood before the king and in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them 10 times better, that's what the spirit of God can do, something supernatural, 10 times better than all the magicians, the enchanters, the counterfeits, the false religions, the fortune tellers, the philosophers that were in all the kingdom. What we're seeing here is the work of the spirit of God in and through someone who is fully

surrendered and devoted to God. Jesus is gonna come along some years later and the Bible says in Luke two that he grew in wisdom, stature and favor with man and God. This is happening here at a young age in the life of these four young men. They may still be in their teens, at most their early 20s, but they are excelling because of God's faithfulness to them. I need you to know that if you are faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ, you are faithful to a god who is faithful. And, it doesn't mean that he'll get you around the trouble, but that his spirit will empower you sometimes to go through it. They didn't get to leave Babylon, but Babylon was not in them. The spirit of God was in them and got them through all of their tests, troubles and trials in Babylon. My friend, what you need, you need the spirit of God in you, you need some spirit-filled friends around you if you're gonna make this life journey home through Babylon. That's the story of Daniel. Is the spirit of God in you? Who have you invited to walk with you? Lastly. This is the last verse of chapter one. This is the introduction, we're gonna do this for 12 weeks. Right? We're gonna do this for 12 weeks. If you wanna start reading ahead, you can read one chapter a week. This is the end of chapter one. The spirit of God sustains you. It starts with him as a young man, but will God remain faithful to him through the totality of his life? Daniel 1:21, and Daniel was there until the first year of King Cyrus. Now, this is rather shocking. I told you that Babylon is modern day Iraq. King Cyrus rules next door in Iran. Anybody watch the news this week? It's still a hot mess, amen? It just is. It's a situation. Iraq, Iran, fighting, Iran trying to overtake Iraq. Because, the same spirit of Babylon is still at work in the same nations. All of this will continue as a geopolitical conflict until Jesus comes back, crushes everyone and everything and sets up a kingdom that never ends.

- [Audience] Amen.

- Now, what's interesting in this, the timeframe here, this is 69 years later. Here's what that means. Babylon was the premiere global empire and Daniel outlasted Babylon. Babylon got conquered and Daniel is still standing. This is the future fate of the children of God. Nations, empires, kings, kingdoms, elections will come and they will go. And, one day, the children of God will be standing on the Earth, ruling and reigning in the kingdom of God with our king, Jesus Christ. And, you, my friend, if you belong to Jesus, you will outlive all nations. You will outlive all kings and kingdoms. You will outlive the rule of all demons and spirits.

- [Audience] Amen.

- I need you to have hope this year. I need you to have courage this year. I need you to have clarity this year. So, I need you to have Jesus this year. Furthermore, there are some wonderful things here. Three times in chapter one, it says, the Lord gave, the Lord gave, the Lord gave. It's a little interpretive clue. The Lord gave Daniel into Babylon. Let me tell you this. The Lord gave you to Arizona. The Lord gave you to Scottsdale. The Lord gave you to Glendale. The Lord gave you to Peoria. The Lord gave you to Apache Junction. We apologize, but he's given you to Apache Junction. Okay? God sent you there as a missionary, not to punish you, but to reach them.

- [Audience] Amen.

- In addition, it says that God gave them favor, he gave them grace, he gave them blessing, he gave them provision. God has grace and favor for you, God gives it. And, it says that God gave them wisdom and knowledge and understanding for complicated decision-making in Babylon. God has sent you where you are, he will give you what you need and he will guide you through it all. That's the promise. And, this all sets the stage. And, let me say this. If you are here and you are not a Christian. You were born in Babylon. You were brainwashed in Babylon. When you read the story of the Bible, you, you are the slave. You are the one who has been taken captive and hostage. You are the one who does not know who the real victor is and that you were born on the wrong side of a war that doesn't just go back to history, but goes into God's presence with angelic rebellion. You need Jesus. Jesus Christ is king of kings, lord of lords. And, that for those of you who were born and brainwashed in Babylon, it is time for you to become a believer in Jesus Christ. That's why we are here. God gave, God gave, God gave, and it sets the stage for the greatest gift that God ever gave. For God so loved the world. God so loved the people held captive in Babylon, that he gave his only son, the lord Jesus Christ. The king of kings, the lord of lords, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but receive eternal life. Ultimately, God has an eternal destiny for you in Jesus Christ. And, the whole point of the nation of Israel, the whole point of the word of God was to preserve a people through whom would come Jesus Christ. So, let me do this. Let me encourage you, this week, read Daniel. You can read it all in about 75 minutes or you could take about 10 minutes a day and read it once a week through the totality of the series. But, let me just say that Daniel is a picture of someone greater, whose name is Jesus Christ. So, let me close with this. Jesus is the greater Daniel. Both went from the glory of royalty to the humility of poverty and returned in glory to royalty. Both went from their home to enter a world that was dark and opposed to them and all that they believed. Both were filled with the holy spirit. Both traveled with a few faithful friends through adversity and hardship. Both had tremendous wisdom for making ethical decisions under duress. Both were given incredible authority, helping rule over the kingdoms of Babylon and heaven respectively. Neither man married a woman or fathered a child. Both men were forced to walk to their doom in chains. Both stopped along the way repeatedly to pray for wisdom throughout their arduous journey through this world to their eternal home. The Bible has nothing bad to say about either men. Both men were wrongly accused and arrested on false charges, even though the political leaders overseeing the process declared them innocent. Both men were placed in a tomb or pit with a stone covering the entrance, from which they both miraculously were delivered alive. Both men had exemplary character, stood against the evil of demonic forces and suffered greatly for their kingdom loyalty. Today, these two men are together. Right now, Daniel's faith is sight. Right now, Daniel is in the presence of Jesus Christ, with departed saints and angelic beings and he is seeing the Lord Jesus rule over the kings and kingdoms, the nations and the elections of the world. He is singing Jesus' praises and he is serving Jesus' kingdom. Can we just thank Jesus for being our king? Can we thank Jesus for coming into Babylon? Can we thank Jesus for being filled with holy spirit? Can we thank Jesus for dying on the cross? Can we thank Jesus for rising from the dead? Can we thank Jesus that he's coming again to judge the living and the dead and bring a kingdom that never ends? I'm

gonna pray, we're gonna sing. There is good news. Father, God, thank you, thank you, thank you, that behind the world we see is a world that you see, and through the scriptures and the revelation of the spirit, we get to see. Jesus, we see you on a throne, ruling as a king, worshiped by angels and departed saints. Lord Jesus, your kingdom right now is as real as our nation and your throne is as real as these people's seat. And, Lord Jesus, one day, these two realms will become one reality. We look forward to the day when you return, Lord Jesus, and the spirit of Babylon is crushed. Until then, the Lord rebuke you, spirit of Babylon. I pray for these people to be like Daniel by the grace and the power of the holy spirit. I pray that our kids and the little ones in the back would be devoted and committed to the Lord Jesus as Daniel was, and that it wouldn't just be something that begins in their teen years, but it continues through all years and into the eternal. We pray against the enemies, servants, their works and effects. And, in a world that has lost its mind, please give us the mind of Christ, so we can be good missionaries in Jesus' good name. Amen.