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B0947 – November 22, 2009 – Separation From Pagan Culture

We've been working through the repercussions of the Exile when the Jewish kingdom of God left history as a visible, geopolitical entity. The shift to Gentile kingdom of man carried with it tremendous repercussions that ripple through the last 2,500 years of world history and we've been viewing some of that structure in economics, human thought, military and so forth. These ideas of man govern the spirit of our age and so today we want to think about the doctrinal ramifications of this.

Before we get into this I want to back up a minute and remind ourselves what we're doing. This is not a traditional Bible study in the sense that we exegete verse by verse through the Scriptures; we have two other studies each week dedicated to that approach. The first thing we're trying to do here is bring the whole Bible together for you so the emphasis is on the whole of Scripture. I mention this because we're going start drifting into the contribution of apocalyptic literature and the unique roll that literature plays in the Bible. Part of our objective is to present a panorama of the history of the world interpreted through the lens of Scripture. The events we have listed are picked out because if you read the sermons; (Joshua's sermon in Josh 24, Solomon's sermon in 1 Kgs 8, Stephen's sermon in Acts 7, Paul's sermon in Acts 14); the classic sermons in Scripture, if you list the historical events that are cited in those sermons you discover that it's the same list of events that come up again and again. And that shows you how these men thought, what kinds of ideas dominated their mentality. So what we've done is to go through the same ideas they went through.

Secondly, in addition to going to these events and emphasizing their historicity we've tried to show that each event is interlaced with certain doctrines, certain truths, so we've tried to connect particular doctrines to

these events. This is not to say that those doctrines can't relate to other things, it's just that there's a preferential treatment. For example, justification by faith clearly in the NT relates to Abraham, the Call of Abraham, over and over again it's related to that. So there's a structural integrity going on between historical events and the doctrinal truths that the Holy Spirit teaches through the events.

The third objective has been not only the historical event and its doctrine but the truthfulness of the gospel. Therefore when we went through Gen 1-11 we spent a lot of time going through geology, biology, some astrophysics, because it's necessary to make a map in our minds that we can think according to. Whether you have a biblical map or not everyone has a map tucked away in their mind; there's no question everybody has one and most of our maps are composites, there are pieces of the Bible in there and there are pieces of paganism in there and it's all mixed up. Then, when we run into a problem in life and we respond, particularly when we respond rapidly and almost thoughtlessly, our whole psyche, our brains and everything else are coming out with something and the something is being dictated by the map.

It's sort of like computer software. If you know a little about computers you have the software, whatever programs you load on your computer and then you have the operating system and it's the operating system that underlies and sets up how the software runs. In other words, it's the operating system that sets the parameters and what we're trying to do is get down into the operating system of our mentality and straighten it out. The problem in Christian growth is not that we need a new program; the problem is that we want to insure that the operating system at the lowest level, the most basic level of our head and our hearts is structured scripturally. That's not an easy structure to fix because half the time we're not even consciously aware of the problem; half the time we're just responding to event after event and we don't see that the way we're responding should tell us something about the fact that our operating beliefs may not be too sound. We may know pieces of the truth; the problem is that we can take in pieces of doctrine, pieces of Biblical stories, etc., and yet never get it all together on the operating level. One of the ways that happens is through spiritual phenomena: it's the Holy Spirit opening our eyes. I think one of the conscious ways it happens is when we're deeply convinced of the truthfulness of Scripture. I'm convinced from watching kids, myself and several different kinds of Christian groups that

there are large chunks of unbelief in our hearts, and half the time we're not even conscious of it. But it's why sometimes we encounter a situation and we wonder, why did I respond that way? It's probably because down at the operating system level it hasn't been indelibly imprinted with enough Scripture, and deep down we're not convinced that it's true. So when we come to these events what we try to do is show the historicity of these events so that each event becomes revelatory of our God's work in history and what that does is it convinces us that this really did happen the way the Bible says it happen. This is how our God works and then we have a little more umph behind our faith.

The event that we've been working on is the event of the Exile. There's no question this happened, absolutely no questions. There were questions about early Genesis, questions about the Exodus, questions about the Conquest and some of the archaeology of Jericho, yes, there's debate about those things. Probably there wouldn't be any debate if we had the library of Alexandria, probably it was all written down in volumes of material and we could reconstruct before the 7th century BC just from secular historians. But once you reach this side of the 7th century there's no debate. The Exile is not a debated point in history circles. This is close enough in history so that even unbelievers know this.

Now the question comes, okay, so what? Now we have the Exile, we have Israel kicked out of the land, what is God doing? What's the meaning of this thing? We said the meaning is that He's teaching more about sanctification, and today we're going to be dealing with sanctification particularly stressing separation, **Israel's Separation from Worldly Culture**. That's the first truth that falls out of this event; they are injected into worldly culture but they remain separated from worldly culture. There are actually two truths that seem to be emphasized in this event: the issue of separation is an issue of sanctification and the other truth is revelation and inspiration of Scripture because at this point a new kind of literature arises for the first time in Biblical history called apocalyptic literature.

By the way, don't confuse words. If you come out of the Catholic Church there's another word that sounds similar to this called apocrypha. If you look in a Roman Catholic Bible you'll see that between the OT and NT there are 14 other books; that's the apocrypha, books like I and II Maccabees, Bel and

the Dragon, etc. The Protestant canon doesn't have them because the Protestant canon follows the Jewish canon; the Jewish canon didn't include the apocrypha books. The Roman Catholic canon didn't have them formally until the Council of Trent in AD1546-63; they added them as canonical at that council to counter some of the Reformers arguments. The reasons the Protestants don't have those is not only because the Jews didn't have them, the Masoretic text doesn't have them, but also because doctrines are taught in the apocrypha that frankly we don't believe. In the apocrypha there's prayer for the dead, for example. The Protestants don't believe that and the Catholic Church uses the apocrypha to justify it but we don't accept the apocrypha as part of Scripture. The word, apocrypha means "hidden" and refers to those books. That's not what we're talking about when we're talking about apocalyptic literature. Apocalyptic means "unhidden," it's the opposite word. So those are two different nouns, don't confuse them.

First let's start focusing on the doctrine of separation. Separation is an issue in the doctrine of sanctification. Sanctification we've lumped under five aspects; the three Phases; positional sanctification, experiential sanctification and ultimate; the Aim; to learn loyalty to God in every area of life; the Dimensions, there are two dimensions, the existential present, in and out of fellowship and long-term growth, maturity; the Means, both law and grace, both are essential to spiritual growth and finally the Enemies; the world, the flesh and the devil. So with the Exile we're elaborating on separation from the world. We can't really separate from the flesh, we carry that with us, and in the present time we can't separate from the devil so we can only separate from the world and we want to look at what that separation should look like.

To start lets with Rom 12:2. If you've been a Christian for very long you've heard this verse. We cite it to show a classic reference to the fact that we are to separate from worldly pagan culture, Rom 12:2, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." There's the classic NT text on separation. Notice that the separation emphasis in Rom 12:2 isn't on where you're living; it isn't on what job you're doing. The emphasis is on how you think, how you think in your mind. The separation of Scripture originates down at that basic operational level, that's where the issues are. So when the Holy Spirit speaks to us through the Scriptures He's pointing out that it's not primarily a matter of dress, it's not a

matter of custom, it's not where you live, it gets back down to a matter of the heart and where our minds are focusing. That is where the separation occurs. If you can hold it in that area you can endure an enormous amount of pressure, but if you lose it at that level the least little thing will knock you out of the game. So it's that inner heart mentality that's necessary.

Remember, we're talking about Jewish Exiles, they didn't have Rom 12:2 but they did have similar advice. Here they were cast out of their land and into the world system and they had to work with the problem of separation from the world. Do you think we might gain a little wisdom by looking at how they handled it? One of the things many of them did as they got out in the Gentile world and opened business and competed against other local businesses was they didn't work seven days a week, they closed on Sabbath. And Sabbath, Saturday, was a big day for most businesses and yet historians have recorded that the Jewish businesses still did better than the Gentile businesses in the same market. And this really bugged Gentiles because Saturday was the biggest day at the market and here my Jewish neighbor takes it off and still out capitalizes me. So they took the biblical principles out into Gentile culture and applied them with great success.

Let's turn to Ps 137. This is a passage where we find some very specific information of how they handled being in Babylon. This Psalm contains some of the most quoted verses by the Jewish people even today, the words "If I forget you O Jerusalem" etc...are very historically significant. But just before those words about Jerusalem we have some words about how they responded to the world system in Babylon. Notice in v 1 the Jewish Exiles are by the rivers of "Babylon" and in v 2 we read, "Upon the willows in the midst of it We hung our harps." In other words, here they are sitting by the river and they're hanging their instruments up on the willow trees. So the context here is music and musical instruments. They're refusing to play them. Why are they refusing? V 3, "For there our captors demanded of us songs, And our tormentors mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion." And they say we're not going to play for you the songs of our national history. The songs of Zion are joyful songs of God's presence and God's blessing in the land. And we're not going to sing them just so our enemies can get psychological stimulation out of them. Music isn't just a stimulant. And so they hang their harps up. Sorry, we're not going to let you guys envelop our music, re-interpret it and turn it into a mockery session. And we're not going to act like

we're full of joy out here in the world. Why not? Because if we get too happy out here in the world then what happens to our allegiance? It gets attached to the world and we start to forget. That's what they fear. They may get too comfortable out in the world and then they'd forget Jerusalem, they'd forget their loyalty to God. So they say, we're not going to play our music before you, not in a foreign land, there's just too much at stake. So this is a very interesting text on separation. It's a heart attitude that I'm not going to display joy out here in front of the world system, lest they get a kick out of it and think I endorse it when I don't endorse it.

Then there are other verses that show you how the OT Jewish people thought about this, 1 Sam 26:19 and 2 Kgs 5:15-18. In those passages they used this expression to "serve other gods" as a synonym for living in a pagan land. You have to stop and think about that one because when David says "go serve other gods" we have to be careful how we interpret that. David wasn't an idiot; he didn't go into Philistia and worship Dagon. That's not what he meant. He must have meant something else. So when he says I had to go to Philistia, I had to be exiled and I served other gods, it must mean something other than that he capitulated in his faith to Dagon and the Philistine gods. It must mean something else.

What else could it mean? We have to infer this meaning from the context. We infer that what they are talking about is when you are in a pagan land you're living in a different value system, a pagan value system. What sets up the values in any community? The underlying operating system. The operating system that dominates most people in that community, the power leaders, how they think at the operational level. And what's down at the operational level of the mentality are theological issues. It's always the theological and spiritual that underlies the ethical and the moral. So what David is arguing, I think, is when he says I have to "serve other gods," he's working with the idea that I worked with a Philistine king, I trained some of their soldiers, and the idea is when I did that in another land I was operating under a different value system and I had to live inside that pagan value system, I served other gods. I couldn't change the structure, I had to live in it; it was God's will for me to live in it. That's the situation that we're talking about here. That's the kind of system we live in in 21st century America, a system dominated by people who have another value system, which means they have a different operating system.

This is how the Bible seems to treat separation. “Separation, therefore, involves every societal influence upon our behavior whether local peer pressure, commonly-assumed agendas, educational goals, and populist causes.” These are the things that are programming our operating system, because we hear it enough times that eventually it works its way into the fabric of how we think and we start to believe it. It’s insidious and if you don’t critically examine the stuff coming in, it seeps in and it just kind of goes down to the operating system level and all of a sudden hardens up on you and gee, somebody poured concrete in there, because you didn’t see it coming and then it hardened up. We’re all subject to this, I am, you are, everybody is. That’s why the Scripture tells us to concentrate, be not conformed to the world in your mind, that’s where the central issue is. So everything we say today, understand that even though we’ll talk a lot about behavior, understand that the behavior is coming out of the theological thought pattern. “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.”

Since this is a difficult issue for Christians we want to note three false ideas of separation that have grabbed Christians over the centuries of church history. I use three categories, they’re basically the same three categories we used back when we were dealing with Genesis and how interpret Genesis. So I’m trying to show it’s the same patterns that are followed by the sin nature, always it’s doing one of these three things. One is **capitulation** that means we wholesale buy into the value system of our community, the value system of our society, it automatically becomes ours, and we capitulate to it. We don’t resist it, we don’t examine it, we just surrender all and capitulate. That basically is what liberal theology has done in the 20th century, there’s no separation, there’s just been a total capitulation.

Then you have **accommodation**. Accommodation is sort of a mild version of capitulation, and that accommodation is usually what believers do. Capitulation is usually what unbelievers do who claim to be Christian. Accommodation is what believers do and so unfortunately this is in our own camp. In accommodation what happens is that because of my economic situation, because of my social situation, because of some academic situation, I find myself wanting to stay here, but then in my heart I know the Scriptures want me over here. So to get out of the bind I come up with a gimmick, and the gimmick is I can justify being here instead of over here if I

reinterpret the Scripture. My methods of interpretation kind of get greasy because I don't like the literal interpretation of Scripture that would drive me over to this position because there are some life consequences I don't like, so we have a mixture. This is the most popular position to be in because it's easier, you can talk Christianity and you can talk secular at the same time, it makes no difference. This is always the position you will find people who want to get along with the world. They want to get close to the world because they think they can win the world to the Christian position by looking like the world and there are a hundred examples of this, but the minute you look like the world the world doesn't take you seriously because you look no different than them. We can see that, the pagan world can see that but somehow the people who are doing this don't see that too often. You also find this in academic circles; Christian scholars who've published in journals and gained some accolade, they don't let out of the bag that their biblical Christians because that would damage their professional lives and so I don't really want to do that so I kind of take portions of the Bible, sort of a buffet approach to the Scripture.

Then we come to the real gutsy people; these people really want to separate so they **physically separate**. Over history there have been whole movements of people that have done this. They say the way we will stay separate from the world society is to physically separate ourselves out from society and build our own society. Usually you can see these groups because what they inevitably do is they come over and preserve the culture and lock it up and freeze it. The rest of the world goes on and they still stay frozen in time at whatever it was in 1832, whatever the historic date was that they did this thing. Monasticism is an example of physical separation. People in the Roman Empire were stupid, and I can understand wanting to get out of the system, so you can understand why. They wanted to learn, there was not much learning in pagan society, they wanted to go read, they wanted to study, they wanted a Christian perspective, so let's just get out of here and come on over here to a nice monastery. The problem is the sin nature comes with you. You're not separating from the flesh. The other problem is you're destroying the evangelistic link. So it becomes a problem of how to reach the world, it's very inner, very selfish position.

The biblical position is a term we've seen before, **counter-attack** and for this I want to quote from J. Gresham Machen. Machen thought long and hard

about this and the date of when he said this was around 1920, somewhere around there. Machen was a fundamentalist professor at Princeton Seminary, they were under a lot of pressure at the time, the pressures of linguistic studies and scientism on the Bible was causing division at Princeton and Machen who thought a lot about this had a very good answer. He said, "Instead of destroying the arts and sciences or being indifferent to them, let us cultivate them with all the enthusiasm of the veriest humanist, but at the same time consecrate them to the service of our God...Let us go forth joyfully, enthusiastically to make the world subject to God." So he suggested that as a bible believing Christian you can't separate from the arts and the sciences, etc, you can't just get out of those disciplines. By the way, this is an address he gave to the seminary class in September when the school year opened. He is trying to teach the guys that would be preachers what they should expect. He was warning them, don't knock the arts and the sciences *per se*, don't retreat to a religious box, critique them on the basis of Scripture, but don't neglect them, because if we don't go out there and we don't have Christian artists, and we don't have Christian musicians, and we don't have Christian scientists then what happens is we become vastly irrelevant, we become vastly detached from the world, we have no competing thought form to offer and we lose these areas to pagan thought.

That brings us to a second quote, linked to the first, the long-term result of abandoning these areas is, and we're facing it on mass scale today, Machen was preaching it and seeing where this was going in 1920, the result is that our evangelism goes down the tube, because we lose the ability to communicate in street language. What we do is we tend to develop an evangelical vocabulary and we start witnessing with the evangelical buzz words that are common in our circles. That's like speaking Spanish in China. They don't know what you're talking about, you have to bring it into the language of the every day man, and you have to speak to them in their terms but without losing the biblical content. Here's what Machen said, 'We may preach with all the fervor of a reformer and yet succeed only in winning a straggler here and there, if we permit the whole collective thought of the nation or of the world to be controlled by ideas, which, by the resistless force of logic, prevent Christianity from being regarded as anything more than a harmless delusion.' What he's talking about is when paganism becomes rampant in a society, when pagan thought pervades on the operational level then you can talk about Christianity all day long but the pagan just envelops

every Christian thing you say inside his most basic ideas, chews it up and spits it out as quote 'harmless delusion.' That's a pretty succinct description of how we're perceived today. Unbelief is like an amoeba. They'll take some Christian truth and I'm sure people in your family, you've talked to them about the gospel, you tried to witness to somebody, some friend, neighbor, family member, and you give your testimony, I became a Christian and here's what happened to me, and you think you've communicated just as clearly as you can do it, and then five minutes later and they're talking about the psychology of your personal makeup is thus and such and I can see how that might work for you, I'm not built like you are psychologically and that's not going to work for me. What happened? What happened was that you witnessed, and you put forward some piece of truth. What they did is they took their unbelief and surrounded it, re-interpreted it and assimilated it within their system. So what we have to do with unbelief, we have to use the same tactic, just in reverse. We have to suck it up, envelop it, reinterpret it, and assimilate it with the Biblical amoeba.

This is why we have to re-engage in the arts and the sciences and develop them as distinct Christian areas of service to God. We don't need more Christian biologists *per se*, we need more Christians who pursue biological studies under the premise of biblical authority. We need more Christians who pursue physics studies under the premise of biblical authority and so forth in every area of life from math to art to literature to music, every area of life brought under the ever scrutinous eyes of Scripture and subjected to it. That's the biblical answer to separation, we remain *in* the world, we study every aspect of the world, and we just do it in a distinct fashion, under God's authority rather than under the man's authority and the idolatrous principle of autonomy.

But, if you do this, a little warning here, if you set out to use your energy to develop in these areas under the biblical mindset then just realize that you're going to rub with society, there's going to be friction created, there will be repercussions and you will be perceived as a threat and a danger to society. So we want to narrow in on this in the legal arena, the courts and the biblical concept of civil disobedience. We want to develop the idea of civil disobedience at this point under four points. So we direct our attention to the doctrine of civil disobedience. Is there a proper time to disobey civil authorities? Or are we always to submit to the states wishes? On one hand we're told in Rom 13

to come under kingly authority for there is no authority but that which is given by God (also cf Tit 3:1; 1 Pet 2:13). Then you have cases like this which suggest there are certain times when civil disobedience is warranted. If that's the case what are the issues that authorize the believer to refuse obedience to the state? You can't just violate civil law at will. Certain issues must be involved. You can't just rebel over any issue you don't like. So the first point of the doctrine of civil disobedience is that it is authorized only for certain narrowly defined issues in the Bible.

What are these issues? The first issue has to do with worship and is modeled by Daniel and his three friends. Whenever the state dictates who we must worship, how we must worship, when we can worship or the content of our worship the state is intruding and we can't go along with that. This is the case in Daniel 3 with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, the state authorized that all men must fall down and worship the image of Nebuchadnezzar and these three men refused and were cast into the fiery furnace. Then you have the case in Dan 6 where Daniel refused to pray to Nebuchadnezzar; he continued to pray daily at specific times in open view to the God of Israel, and for that he was thrown in the lion's den. He refused to submit to the civil authority when it came to the issue of worship and he was willing to face the consequences. So, whenever the state dictates the who, when, how and content of our worship a situation is set up in which we have to decide, are we going to go along with this or are we going to stand up and do something about it.

The second issue has to do with genocide, euthanasia and abortion, the taking of innocent life. This is modeled by Shiphrah and Puah in Exodus 1:15. In Exodus 1 you have Pharaoh threatened by the numerical increase of Hebrews. He fears his empire will be overrun so he tries several tactics to decrease the Hebrew population. v 15, "Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other was named Puah;" now these two gals were the head of the organization of Hebrew midwives, they didn't deliver every baby, but they controlled the operation. Verse 16, and he said to them, "When you are helping the Hebrew women to give birth and see *them* upon the birthstool, if it is a son, then you shall put him to death; but if it is a daughter, then she shall live." It was real easy to do this, as the mother couldn't see what was going on, all they would have to do was grab the neck and strangle the little boys neck before anyone

knew what was going on, verse 17, “But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt had commanded them, but let the boys live.” If the state comes in and authorizes the destruction of innocent human life and that you must take part in these actions then you have a legitimate reason to say, “No, I’m sorry but I cannot do that.” Those are the only two legitimate reasons I can find in the word of God where the believer has the responsibility to refuse the state. Some of these are on the table as we speak in the nationalization of health care issue so be forewarned.

So the first point is that the issues are narrowly defined. The second point is the issues concern worship and the sacredness of innocent human life. The third point is how you carry out the rebellion, how you treat the state, there are tactics to this, and the first thing to remember is always show respect to authority. Daniel respected the office, Daniel didn’t malign the office. Daniel knew very well that Nebuchadnezzar had the right as a Gentile king to rule. It’s just that this king asked Daniel to do something he could not honestly do before God and he wasn’t going to do it, period. There is respect for the office of the 4th divine institution.

A second point about the tactics if implementing this is that while you’re doing this you’re praying 1 Timothy 2 type prayers, praying for those in authority, praying “Lord, let us live in peace and tranquility.” You’re not trying to create a war here between church and state because boy, once you’ve made the state mad you’ve got a holy war on your hands and it’s cruel on both sides, because you’ve hit an ultimate snag, neither side can compromise. And if things ever get to that point you’re going to see what war is like, the tragedies down through history of holy conflicts where one side considers its ultimate cause is to destroy the other side completely. But that’s the horror of a church/state conflict, ripping apart families, countries, groups of people like they’ve never been ripped apart before. It’s a horrible thing and so you pray 1 Timothy 2 prayers, “Lord, let this not happen.”

And finally, be prepared to take the consequences of your choice. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshech, Abednego, these guys were all ready and willing to take the consequences of their civil rebellion. They knew very well what awaited them but they feared God more than they feared men. They knew who really controlled history. Think back to what Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego said to Nebuchadnezzar when old king Nebi gave them a last chance to bow

down to his statue. We know God can deliver us if He wants to, if He doesn't okay, we know who holds the steering wheel of history so go ahead, do what you want. To say that standing next to a 4,000 degree furnace takes some guts. And so it's obvious, having been cast into a Gentile culture that they had trained themselves mentally, alright guys, this is what we might face and so when they faced it they were mentally prepared for it. So be ready to accept the consequences.

To finish up the theme for today follow this quote: "Wisely separating from worldly culture while citizens of a pagan society requires great alertness (starting from self-examination of our hearts), hard work, and a dedication. It requires a peculiar resource," and here's the resource, "a vision of God's sovereign control over, in back of, underneath, and behind every pagan power that pushes on us." You need to know that, because what happens in the tug of war in our hearts is that we need to have the ability to envelop. Remember when we talked about apologetics, I drew this diagram and said that if this a piece of unbelief impinging upon you, the way you deal with that is not by a direct approach, or trying to deal with it. What you try to do is envelop it within a Scriptural framework.

Let's look at how this is done, turn to Dan 2:31 and see if you're eye can observe this. This was a new thing that God has done, keeping in mind the historical situation. Again background: what was Daniel's situation when this happened? He was young, he was all alone, he was a political hostage, he had been deported from his country, he basically was a prisoner of war. And worse than that, he was being groomed and de-cultured. The communists did this in China, the cultural revolution of Mao, a horrible time in China. He would have re-education camps, if anybody halfway indicated they were thinking for themselves, they were out of there, they had a special class for you. So you go to this concentration camp and you get re-indoctrinated. That's what they did to Daniel. Remember, they gave him a new name, tried to change his identity, tried to make him lose his Jewish-ness, tried to make him forget the OT, tried to make him worship other gods. He's a believer, alone, isolated in this overwhelming pagan environment. He and hundreds of other young Jewish men, what do they need in this kind of environment? They need to have some perspective on what's coming. They need to have some hope? And so God injects hope through this vision and that gives them

the gusto to press on. That's what you need when you're feeling all alone in a seemingly hopeless situation, everything against you.

So he comes and interprets this vision, verse 31, "You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you..." we went into the statue. Verse 32, "The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze, ³³its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay." What you have is four kingdoms here. What's going on in this vision? What's going on is that Daniel is all by himself, and from his perspective here's this Gentile king, he's the authority and I'm the victim. What is God saying though about this Gentile king? He's part of the system. He's not above the system. All four of these Gentile powers are part of the system. But what happens in v 34? "You continued looking until a stone was cut off without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay, and crushed them." See, there's another system over and above the Gentile system, it's God's system, God's plan and it's going to crush the Gentile systems, it's the system "made without hands," that is, it's not of human origin, it's of divine origin. So what does that do for you? Do you see what's happening in this vision? Here is this Gentile pagan power that at first looked so big to Daniel, but its being enveloped. The pagan power is itself a puppet of the Most High God, it's not out of control, God controls even that, so Daniel, when you look out and you see this pagan state coming at you with their re-education program, with all their political power, with the threat of capital punishment, with imprisonment, with torture, you understand that I am in control says God. And one day all four of these systems will be absolutely crushed, and when I get done in verse 35 they'll be "like chaff from the summer threshing floors." and with that we're already bordering on the Dynamic Behind Successful Separation and we don't have enough time to press on into that, but know there is a proper dynamic or motive and we'll get into it next week and what apocalyptic literature is all about.

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