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B0946 – November 15, 2009 – The Rise Of World Religions & Philosophy

Question: I have often wondered why Daniel is not mentioned in chapter 3, but only Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego. Why isn't Daniel there?

Answer: This relates to the question of civil disobedience. Since Daniel's three friends committed civil disobedience we would expect to find Daniel committing civil disobedience as well but we don't. Why not? Some people say he may have been sick, others say he may have been out of town on government business and still others say he wouldn't be required to worship at the ceremony because his loyalty was unquestioned since he served in the royal court. We're not told in the text. I think the best answer is that Daniel served in the royal court and was therefore not required to worship since his loyalty was unquestioned. In ancient history, kings often put up images of themselves in the farther reaches of their kingdom to remind their subjects that they are under the king's jurisdiction despite his absence. A great reminder that this principle is still with us in Middle Eastern cultures was when we were in Jordan in 2006. Everywhere we went there were these very large pictures of the King-Prince of Jordan, obviously placed there for the same reason as the ancients, as a reminder of his authority over the region, despite his absence from the region. It may be that since Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego served in a distant province without the kings' presence that their loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar was based on image worship. Since Daniel served in the king's presence image worship was not obligatory. We should recall that the image worship looks forward to Anti-Christ's requirement of image worship in Rev 13, another startling reminder that the Gentile power structures described in Daniel are still with us and the same attempts at making the State, God-incarnate, have not disappeared.

Alright, last time we started working with the repercussions of the Exile. The first one we looked at was the rise of apocalyptic literature. Apocalyptic is given when there is a long era of silence coming. God is shutting down His verbal revelation to man and so apocalyptic literature reveals God's long-term plans, the big events of history that are coming and this gives men hope. That's why the end of the OT sees the rise of apocalyptic in Daniel, Ezekiel and Zechariah and that's why the end of the NT ends with the book of Revelation. That's one of the repercussions of the Exile.

The second repercussion of the Exile was the rise, and this is amazing, the rise of seven different world religions within fifty years. Look at the quote from Robert Brow's book *Religion: Origin and Ideas*, "In the sixth century BC there was a tidal wave of revolt against the priestcraft of the ancient world. This wave shattered the power of the old religions, though their cults continued to exist as backwaters for centuries. *Seven world religions appeared within fifty years of each other and all continue to this day.*"

Think about the period of the Exile. A remarkable fact, I have never heard a historian deal with this. The Exile occurred in 586-516BC, and even after that there were a lot of Jews in captivity. What happened in 586BC? The Shekinah Glory left the nation; we saw the departure of the Glory. The Jews are dispersed out among the nations. They take their Torah. The Torah testifies of the Abrahamic Covenant, that there is a plan for history, that history had a direction. The Torah carries the testimony of the Mosaic Covenant, that there is such a thing as law and ethics, that there is such a thing as human responsibility, that there is truth. The Torah gives birth to the wisdom literature of the Golden Era of Solomon, the poetry, the psalms, the proverbs, the idea that there was an underlying wisdom that unified every area of life. These ideas from must have spread all over the Middle East. Wherever the Jews went these ideas went.

If you look at the dates, the first guy out, it's important to see who it is in the sequence of dates, Zoroaster; we don't hear much about Zoroastrianism but it's dualism, good and evil. Look at his date, 600 down to 583BC, didn't last long, founded the religion of Persia. Where was Daniel, the second kingdom Daniel was in? Persia. What kind of circles did Daniel circulate in, socially speaking? The rulers. Did Zoroaster ever run across Daniel? Who else later influenced Persia? We mentioned her last week; Esther. Did Esther bring

biblical ideas into that culture? Sure she did. Persia expanded far into the east into India. Could the biblical ideas have spread to the Far East? Yes, they could have, probably did.

In India Mahavira (Vardhamana) 599-527BC started Jainism. Gautama, 560-480BC introduced Buddhism. Hindu reformers began Vedanta Monism with the Upanishads, same period. In China Lao-Tzu, 604-517BC founded Taoism, and Confucius, 551-479BC pioneered Confucianism. You'll always hear it thrown at you; there are all these religions and therefore nobody can know which one is right. What I'm trying to point out is that all these world religions have Biblical origins, that ultimately they're distortions of biblical thought permeating their regions. Why else do you have this correspondence? What else explains the rise of seven world religions?

Let's go back briefly. This isn't new; this isn't the first time this happened. We said earlier in our class that when Noah's family got off the boat they all had the Noahic Bible. Every family on earth stepped off the boat with Gen 1-9. So they all knew of the God of Creation, they knew about the Fall and they knew about the Flood, one way of salvation, all of that was common knowledge. But very rapidly it was distorted, it was twisted. That's what the pagan mind at enmity with God does to truth, it suppresses it and distorts it. And you can trace two groups of people coming out of the original Noahic family. There were those who stayed true to the truths of the Noahic Bible, mainly we'd say they were represented in the time of Abraham by Melchizedek, priest of Salem. He was apparently one of the last vestiges of those who held to biblical beliefs which is why God called Abraham out. God didn't call Abraham out because He's an arbitrary unfair God. He did it to salvage truth for the human race. If He didn't call out Abraham the truth would have been so maligned and distorted that no one ever could have been saved, the information would have just been completely lost. So you have that one branch through Melchizedek that was dying out and he represents the last of the biblical priesthood and he passes the torch on to Abraham. On the other hand, the mass majority were suppressing the truths of Gen 1-9, they were distorting and twisting these truths and this gave rise to polytheism, the gods and goddesses, the ancient mythology, the pagan priesthood. John Pilkey, who we quoted earlier in this period, who studied Gen 9, 10 and 11 for 40 years, wrote his dissertation on it, argues that the gods and goddesses were faint remembrances of the people of old who had the powers of

longevity. He isolates them to men who lived after the Flood, men who lived 4, 5, 600 years, but probably some of them were rooted in the pre-Flood period. In any case he says it was nothing more than these men who could outlive everybody, outthink everybody, and who accomplished tremendous feats, those are what ancient pagan man amplified into the gods and goddesses. And this ancient pagan religion began to rule the world. Here's a quote by Mircea Eliade, a famous authority on ancient religions, he argues, "The genuine "religions" appear after [the Supreme Being] has vanished. The richest and most dramatic myths, the most extravagant rituals, gods and goddesses of the most various kinds...all this is found in cultures...in which the Supreme Being is either absent (forgotten?) or amalgamated with other Divine Figures to the point where he is no longer recognizable." The only clear remaining remnant of this early polytheism that broke out after the Flood is Hinduism. Hinduism combines the elements of ancient polytheism in its purest expression with all its priesthoods and rituals, through time, attracting to itself certain elements of Christianity, Judaism and Islam, and in intellectual strands has morphed into modern monism. But our point here in going back to the Flood is to show that there was a rapid deterioration from the original Noahic Bible to paganism and now when we come to the Exile of 600BC we are seeing a repeat of that kind of thing, another sudden surge forward in the origin of pagan religion. Seven world religions in the same century.

If you look at this seriously, all these religions that people ask about - what about Buddhism, what about Jainism, all arose within seventy years of one another, and all of them arose during the period of the Exile when the Jew was thrown out of Israel and walked into these countries. Tell me that's a coincidence! Tell me that there wasn't some sort of influence going on there, because if you look particularly at these four religions; Zoroastrianism, Jainism, Confucianism and Judaism, they all share one thing in common, they're all ethical religions. Confucius was an ethicist, dealt with political ethics, what is right and what is wrong. He wasn't interested in theology. He was interested in ethics. Same with Jainism. So they're emphasis was ethics. Even Judaism, the legalistic system arose in the sixth century. Judaism never went back to a thoroughly OT religion. It broke away and never returned from the time of the Exile. Judaism is the movement that eventually wound up being identified as the Pharisees in the NT, it began right there in the Exile.

The other three, if you look at those names; Buddhism, Vedanta Monism and Taoism, they developed the ancient pagan idea of the Continuity of Being. They identified God as the creation. And they pursued that line of thinking to its logical end. There's always a marring of the basic truth of the Creator-creature distinction into this smear.

So these are all the religions. They have some differences, but they replace, for the most part, the previous mythological polytheism from the time after the Flood. The other thing that rises is Greek philosophy.

So let's think what they all have in common. While they differ in emphasis, they all have one thing in common; pay close attention to what it is.

“Although differing in details these seven religions and philosophy all had one thing in common: they emphasized man as Savior.” That was different, the early pagan religion had gods in the background, those gods were amplified distortions of the people of great longevity after the Flood but by the 6th century those gods began to drop back into the background very much. And in their place man arises. Man is going to solve his problems, man is great.

If you want a picture of man as great - several years ago I had someone give me a bookend called the “thinker.” It's a man in deep thought; it's a man relying solely upon his brain. If you take his arm and extend it up that's what these religions and philosophy were saying. Almost all these religions and philosophy were saying that I don't need God, I am sufficient so don't bug me with all that religious talk and all of them still say that.. This is so prevalent, it just comes natural, most people don't even know there doing it. If you want an example of this just from modern thought I was watching a documentary on abortion and they were interviewing the well known Harvard professor Alan Dershowitz. Dershowitz was pro-choice all his life and then his wife got pregnant and they went in at 14 weeks to do an amniocentesis and so he's watching the sonogram going while they stick this needle in to take this cell sample and one of his friends asked him what he thought after seeing the baby in the sonogram and he said, there's no question that baby is a person, it's alive. And so you think, oh, he changed! Dershowitz is pro-life. But then he said this:. However, we were planning on having the child. I don't know what I would have thought if we weren't planning on having the child. And

that's what we're saying autonomy is. I decide. I decide what is true, I decide what is real. That's autonomy, when we're dictating the terms. And that's what all these religions ultimately are about, they emphasize the unchallengeable proposition that man is ultimate, man is autonomous.

Let's go through a few more things here. Whatever these religions and philosophy that developed in the Exilic period taught, they promoted man to a more active role than the older pagan religions. And in that sense they mirrored the transfer of political supremacy to the Gentiles and rise of an imperialist spirit of the age. What that means is that as man raised himself in political supremacy as Nebuchadnezzar had done, so also man raised himself in religious and philosophical supremacy. That is the imperialist spirit of the age.

Let's review a little philosophy. We've talked a little bit about some major world religions; we're saying they appear to be distortions of biblical truth as Jews went into foreign countries with Torah. Now we want to talk about philosophy. Greek philosophy is the intellectual repercussion of the rise of Gentile supremacy; the supremacy of the human intellect. If we go back 2-300 years before the golden era of Athens and Greek philosophy we come to the golden era of Jerusalem and Hebrew thought. We said Solomon was the finest biblical culture the world has ever seen. That's why they called it the Golden Era. It's not just because they had a lot of gold, they did have a lot of gold, it was a very stable economy, but they also had tremendous investigation in botany, music, mathematics, science, astronomy, music, every area of life was dominated by biblical thought forms. They built a tremendously biblical culture. That culture of Solomon wasn't generated in a single generation. It took generations of men, from back well into the period of the Conquest and Settlement, studying and thinking through Torah and the implications of Torah to develop that culture. That culture was the period when Israel's wisdom literature flourished; a wisdom that we argued then has some very exciting implications.

We went through Prov 8 to show that what enabled Hebrew thought to get off the ground and really move was that Prov 8 showed that there was an underlying wisdom under all creation that brought a unity to all of life, that underlying wisdom was ultimately a Person and today we want to review that underlying wisdom, that basic premise that ultimately was borrowed by

Greek philosophy. We said there were five features of biblical wisdom. First, **Biblical wisdom gave unity to all the details of life** because God created all things by His creative genius. Therefore God is not master of one trade or a specialist as we have in our day and therefore Solomon and his followers studied and enjoyed every area of life, every corner of creation not as separate entities divorced from one another, but as diversities in the one great unity God had created. Dr Whybray said, “The interest of the men who surrounded David and Solomon were not confined to politics. These men constituted the cultural elite of the nation, and the educational system by which they had been trained prepared its pupils not merely for a professional career,” watch this now, think of our educational system, it prepared “not merely for a professional career,” it would be great if we could even prepare them for a professional career in most cases. Not merely for a career, “but for the enjoyment of life in all its aspects.” “For the enjoyment of life in all its aspects, making no distinction between the ethical, social, political, and cultural...” Yes, you could train in math, you could train in literature, you could train in politics, you could train in science, but the idea was that these weren’t compartments, these were just aspects, you could walk from one room to the other, and there’s a sense they are interconnected, they are all facets of one unified system.

I think one of our problems today is that we’ve grown up in a fragmented culture. We’ve had this idea that I go to school and I’ve trained to be an biologist, I’ve trained to be a musician, I’ve trained to run a business, I’ve trained to be a lawyer, and we think well, I do this, I can’t do that other stuff. Worst of all, we brainwash ourselves into thinking, this has nothing to do with God. You know, math is math whether or not God exists; biology is biology whether or not God exists. That’s the pretended neutrality game; that’s the game the world is playing all the time to shield themselves from God. If we really had a profound idea it would be that we could walk into any area of life, not as an expert, but we could at least have a discussion and know where it fits in the bigger picture. That’s the idea; it gives unity to the details of life. What do we call a college when it gets big? Where’s the unity? It’s very interesting. If there’s no absolute truth and there’s nothing to hold it together, why do we call it a university. The reason we call it a university today is because it’s under one administration. But that’s not the old-fashioned way. The idea of the university originally was seeing the unity in

the diversity, that's where the word comes from. But ask an average college student where the unity is today. Everybody's an ant doing specialty work.

The Biblical wisdom literature reflects a full-orbed thought life, what we're saying here is the Bible reflects this. Job deals with suffering, Ecclesiastes with philosophic questions on life, Song of Songs faces sex and marital love, Psalms and Chronicles, musical expression of praise, Daniel with political strategy and Proverbs with attitudes toward work and social life. See what wisdom did? There was no dichotomy between the sacred and the secular, and there weren't specialists, they were renaissance people. One of the things this does is it radically transforms your whole idea of what it means to be an educated person. See, being an educated person biblically doesn't mean you have a lot of degrees after your name. You may never even go to college. Some of the finest educated people never went to school, they were self-educated. They read, they thought, they disciplined themselves to study and learn. I'm not saying don't go to college, I'm just saying that people have made it fine without degrees.

Let's look at a second characteristic of wisdom: **Biblical wisdom applies to all men.** We're not just saying it was Jews who had wisdom in the OT We're saying that the underlying wisdom of creation was discovered, utilized and perfected by others who recognized it. Let's remind ourselves, when Solomon went to build the Temple, when he went to build a navy who did he borrow to get started? The Tyrians and Sidonians, they were all part of the Phoenician empire. Why is Solomon importing these guys into his kingdom? Because these people know how to build ships. They know lumber. They have carpentry skills. How could he import all that stuff? Because wisdom is universal? Who designed the trees? Who made the men who are made in God's image who cut the trees? There's a higher order to this, and because there's a higher order that's why wisdom can be found in others, even non-believers. He didn't import everything. Of course, later he does over-import. But it's all right to go to non-Christian scholarship if you filter it. We'll never be able to investigate all the details of the cell, let the university researchers study it, they're the one with all the grant money, they're the one's with all the expensive analysis machines, let them do they're work and then we can take the data and re-work it in a biblical framework. Can we bring science in? Can we bring music in? Non-Christian music? Music that originated outside of the believing community? Yes, if it's filtered. The problem is we don't filter

and we bring in elements inconsistent with Christianity and then we're in a mess. We didn't have to import the whole thing. We should have filtered. But the problem is most Christians don't have the filters in place and they suck up the pagan elements and then you're accommodating which is what Solomon later got into. We want to avoid that. But biblical wisdom is found in all men because all men inevitably show forth they are made in the image of God. That's our second point, wisdom is found in all men, even unbelievers.

Third point about wisdom, **Biblical wisdom when followed brought blessing and when rejected brought cursing.** This is a principle Paul picks up in Rom 1. Paul says that when a person is negative toward God and suppresses the truth they know about God what happens to the mind of this person? It progressively darkens and they begin to suck up pagan thought forms. And the more consistent they get with their pagan thoughts the more progressively foolish they become.

That's what we're seeing in the political community right now. The basis for freedom, which is the word of God, is what resulted in a Republic. Yet the very people that formed the concept of the Republic back at Plymouth, the Puritans, are one of the most maligned and hated groups in American History class. But we can't have that in the classroom; gotta be religiously neutral. What a joke. Anyone who knows their history knows that the freedoms our country were founded on were biblical in origin. They were all built on the idea of a covenant. Don't sit here and give me this line that the underlying current of our country wasn't Christian. Baloney. The Puritans brought it. It wasn't the Hindus. It wasn't the Muslims. So our point here is that biblical ideas in a culture bring blessing but when those biblical ideas are rejected and replaced by pagan ideas it always brings cursing.

The fourth truth, **Biblical wisdom gives a framework for creativity.** It's like this. Back in Gen 1 God spoke things into existence, and He called the darkness night, and then it says "and God called," God sets up a structure. Then about the fourth day God just stops naming. What does He tell Adam to do? Name. Who started the naming? God did. Who finishes the naming? Man does. Man gets his framework from God, God tells him the frame then God brings the little animals to Adam and says what do you call this? God didn't name everything in creation. God said, go ahead, I've given you the frame, now I want you to name it. That's a tremendous picture of the creative license

of man. God thinks enough of you and me to entrust us with the right to create in a limited area out of the tools He has given us. The idea here is that there is room for human creativity within the form of God's creation that was brought about by God's wisdom.

It's when we get out of that form and start using the intellect autonomously that we still create. It's just that now we've rejected the frame, we have elevated ourselves and we define the frame and then begin to create in that frame and when things are done that way, out from under God's authority, you run into problems. That's why in the 70's the medical community seriously considered controlling population growth by injecting birth control into the water supply, controlling what neighborhoods, what households could have children, and so forth, all under the purview of science. So, the fourth thing about Biblical wisdom is it gave those men in Solomon's time a springboard for creativity and out of that came all the great literature of the wisdom section of the OT, all the great Levitical choirs, all the great art, all the great mathematics, all that creativity burst forth from the womb of biblical wisdom.

The fifth point, **Biblical wisdom spread throughout the world.** What we mean here is that the wisdom God injected into Israel did not stay within Israel's borders. "It is well known that King Solomon had very intimate contacts with the Phoenician civilization along the Palestine coastal areas near Tyre (1 Kgs 5:1-12; 9:11-27). After Solomon, King Ahab later married into Sidonian royalty (1 Kgs 16:31). Not unexpectedly, Israel's literary movement shows definite signs of intercourse with Phoenicia. Although he dated much of the OT wisdom literature later than Bible-believing scholars, the famous Johns Hopkins archeologist, W. F. Albright discovered an ideological and literary link between Israel and Phoenicia." Here's why this is so crucial. Those of you who have gone to college or you've read Plato or Aristotle, you've read a little bit about philosophy. Do you remember that when you got in that course the first thing that was usually said was we don't know what started this movement, there's not a sign of it in Greek history until 600 BC and then all of a sudden you have theoretical thought. Before that it was all pre-theoretical, tribal thought, and now all of a sudden we have theoretical thought. Where did it come from? Did a Martian bring philosophy to Athens? Here is what Albright found: "In a forthcoming book... I shall deal with the origins of the new ways of thinking which seem suddenly

to appear among the Greeks in the early sixth century, B.C.... The roots of this movement can be traced in the earlier literature of Israel.... We have in Queheleth (Ecclesiastes) some of the raw material on which the earliest Greek philosophers built their metaphysical structures....”

A profound observation. Western philosophy may well have been rooted in King Solomon, not Socrates, not Plato, but Solomon. Why? Why is this? Here’s the dilemma, and it’s not just an academic point, it sounds academic. Theoretical thought, to get off the ground, requires that the universe be an intelligible place. Somehow Plato knew this. He knew that the universe was a rational place. Where did he get the idea that the universe was a rational place? What have we been studying with the Exile? The fact that ideas went out into the Gentile world. And they weren’t just any ideas. They were God’s ideas. What Gentiles did to God’s ideas is another thing; they developed all kinds of religion. Now what did we just review about the Golden Era of Solomon? Did he have correspondence with foreign nations? We know he had contact with the King of Tyre. We know he had contact with the Queen of Sheba. 1 Kgs tells us his wisdom was known universally in the ancient world. So these ideas were going on. What key idea went out that eventually reached Plato? That there was an underlying wisdom under all of nature. Look at what Frankfort says, he’s commenting on the rise of Greek philosophy. He says, “[The early Greek philosophers] proceeded, with a preposterous boldness, on an entirely unproven assumption. They held that the universe is an intelligible whole. In other words, they presumed that a single order underlies the chaos of our perceptions and, furthermore, that we are able to comprehend that order.” The question is where did Plato get that idea? Nobody has a clue. Before Plato they weren’t even sure you could add 2 and 2 and get 4. What I’m simply suggesting to you is that the concept of a stable universe, a rational universe, assumed, wholly assumed by Greek philosophy, was probably borrowed from the wisdom of Solomon during the Golden Era and later taken out by these Jewish exiles.

So what does this tell you about the structure of our civilization? It’s rooted in what? If we go back to how we got started we’d have to say ultimately Gentile culture got it from Israel. Israel got it from the Bible, because God spoke. And so what is Gentile culture? It’s an aberration of the word of God. It appreciates the underlying unity but it hates the God who gives the unity. So it steals the base and begins to build in an autonomous fashion a kingdom of

man. And that's what Daniel is getting at. That's what Ezekiel is getting at. That's what the Book of Revelation is getting at. Gentile systems are corruptions of biblical wisdom. They're not original; they're distortions of the original. Gentile religions are not original; they're distortions of the word of God. That's what we're getting at and that's what we want to see.

Alright, next time we'll get into the doctrinal consequences. With an autonomous religious and philosophical spirit of the age dominating the thought patterns in Gentile culture how do we live in a Gentile culture without reflecting the same thought patterns. This raises certain questions about civil disobedience that we'll deal with under the doctrine of separation, because that's something that becomes a major issue as we see in the book of Daniel. How do individual believers live in a society that is officially pagan... officially autonomous? Before they were living inside Israel, it wasn't officially pagan, it was officially biblical. Now they're living out in a hostile environment and since by parallel we also live inside a society that is officially pagan we want to learn how to live in the hostile environment.

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