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The Book of Daniel: Cultures in Conflict

Living as a Christian in a Post-Christian World



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¹ Miller, Stephen R. *The New American Commentary: Daniel*. (United States: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 52-53. The outline contained herein is based largely upon Dr. Miller's outline of the book. Minor changes have been made to fit the scope and sequence of this study.

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INTRODUCTION

“The Book of Daniel is not only one of the most intriguing works in the Bible, but it is also filled with timeless truths that are just as relevant to modern believers as they were to those who first heard them. Yet too often this beautiful prophecy is neglected or deliberately avoided by believers because some of its passages seem strange and difficult. Upon careful examination, however, Bible students will find the principal message of Daniel clear and a study of the book extremely profitable.”²

Authorship and Date

In recent years, there has been much debate as to the date and authorship of the Book of Daniel. This debate is a divisive factor in the overall understanding of the book. As you study this book, it is imperative to clarify your understanding on this issue because of the impact it will have upon your interpretation.

Two Opposing Views³

VIEW #1: THE TRADITIONAL VIEW

- Daniel is the author of the book as we have it today, and its history and prophecies are accurate and reliable.
- It was by special revelation from God that Daniel was able to predict the events that have already taken place in history.
- Daniel wrote the book as an old man—sometime around 536 B.C.

VIEW #2: THE MACCABEAN THESIS

- The author of the book as we have it today was an anonymous Jew during the second century B.C.
- This theory purports that the book was written to encourage the Jews who were suffering under the rule of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-163 B.C.), during the Maccabean period—thus the reason for its name.
- Understanding that it was written some 400 years after the events described, scholars believe that Daniel consists of ‘non-historical accounts and pseudoprophecies.

As one who believes that the Bible is “God’s inerrant revelation, complete in the Old and New Testaments, written by divinely inspired men as they were moved by the Holy Spirit,”⁴ it is imperative that we hold to the Traditional View of authorship and date for the writing of the Book of Daniel.

² Miller, 22.

³ Ibid.

⁴ “Doctrinal Statement”, <http://www.templerogers.org/im-new/doctrinal-statement/> (accessed Jan 9, 2016).

Compelling Evidence Regarding Authorship and Date

- If the late date of authorship is accepted, “it would make the author of Daniel a deceiver, and... both Ezekiel (14:20) and Christ (Matt 24:15) give testimony to the trustworthiness of this book, identifying the author as God’s prophet.”⁵
- “the author of Daniel exhibited a more extensive knowledge of sixth-century events than would seem possible for a second-century writer.”⁶
- In the second century B.C., the government was hostile toward the Jews, but in Daniel’s time, he was highly regarded and given positions of authority.
- Archeological Discoveries:
 - Some claimed that Daniel had historical errors because of the discrepancy between Daniel 1:1 and Jeremiah 25:1, 9 and 46:2; however, archeologists have discovered that the Hebrews and Babylonians used different systems of counting to number the years that a leader was in power.

“The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah (that was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon)... behold, I will send for all the tribes of the north, declares the Lord, and for Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants, and against all these surrounding nations. I will devote them to destruction, and make them a horror, a hissing, and an everlasting desolation.” (Jer 25:1, 9)

“The word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah the prophet concerning the nations. About Egypt. Concerning the army of Pharaoh Neco, king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates at Carchemish and which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon defeated in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah” (Jer 46:1-2)

- “Daniel portrays Belshazzar as ruler when Babylon falls. But cuneiform records show Nabonidus on the Babylonian throne... But further Babylonian record show Daniel is correct! Belshazzar was made co-regent with his father Nabonidus, who was in Syria when the city of Babylon fell.”⁷
- Linguistic Considerations:
 - “An unusual feature of the book is that it is written in two languages. Daniel 1:1 – 2:4a and 8:1 – 12:13 (157 ½ verses) are written in Hebrew, whereas 2:4b – 7:28 (199 ½ verses) are in Aramaic.”⁸
 - Some have argued that Daniel’s choice of languages—as well as specific words—indicate a late authorship, but these arguments fail to withstand criticism.

⁵ Richards, Lawrence O. *Illustrated Bible Handbook*. (United States: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 361.

⁶ Miller, 26.

⁷ Richards, 362.

⁸ Miller, 47.

In short, the concern over date and authorship of the Book of Daniel rests on the biblical world view of the interpreter. If an individual believes in the supernatural ability of God to reveal the future to His prophet, then he also has no problem accepting Daniel as the author in the sixth century B.C. If, however, an individual does not believe in the supernatural work of God among man, he must find an alternative means of explaining the authorship of Daniel.

Historical Background

“An understanding of the historical background of the Book of Daniel is essential for a proper understanding of its message.”⁹ This is a brief overview of the historical events that are important to the life of Daniel.

KEY HISTORIC EVENTS SURROUNDING THE LIFE OF DANIEL¹⁰

- 612 B.C. - Fall of Nineveh, capital of Assyria
 - Assyria had ruled the world for over 200 years, since the days of Tiglath-Pileser (845 B.C.)
 - Nabopolassar came to the throne in Babylon and rebelled against the Assyrians in 625 B.C.
 - Nebuchadnezzar, son of Nabopolassar, was the general who led the Babylonian army against Nineveh, defeating it in 612 B.C.
- 605 B.C. - Battle of Carchemish, establishing Babylonian domination
 - Pharaoh-Necho of Egypt came to fight the Babylonians at Carchemish
 - Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptians, chasing them south through Judah
 - At Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar heard of his father’s death; he returned to assume the throne in Babylon, taking with him the first group of Jewish captives, along with Daniel and his friends - Dan 1:1-4
- 597 B.C. - A second group of captives taken to Babylon
 - Jehoiachin followed the reign of his father, Jehoiakim
 - He lasted just three months, when Nebuchadnezzar took him, Ezekiel, and 10,000 artisan Jews to Babylon - 2 Kin 24:8-16
 - Zedekiah was installed as king in Jerusalem, but was weak and vacillating
- 586 B.C. - Fall of Jerusalem and the temple destroyed
 - Eleven years later, Jerusalem was totally devastated by Babylonian forces - 2 Kin 25:1-10
 - A third group was taken into Babylonian captivity, but Jeremiah was among those who stayed behind - 2 Kin 25:11-12,22; Jer 39:11-14; 40:1-6
- 539-536 B.C. - Babylon falls, and the first remnant returns to Jerusalem
 - Cyrus, king of Persia, sends the first remnant back under the leadership of Zerubbabel - Ezra 1:1-5; 2:1-2

⁹ Miller, 43.

¹⁰ Copeland, Mark. “The Book of Daniel.” http://www.biblestudyguide.org/ebooks/copeland/dan_so.pdf (accessed Jan 9, 2016), 4.

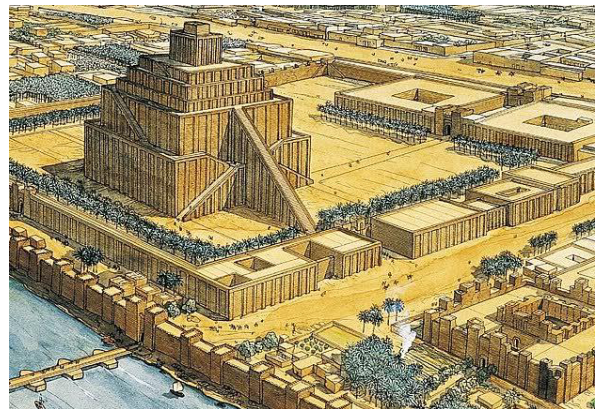
- The foundation of the temple was soon started, but the temple was not completed until 516 B.C. - Ezra 3:8-13; 6:14-16
- 457 B.C. - A second remnant returns to Jerusalem
 - Ezra the priest returns with this group - Ezra 7:1-8:36
 - He leads a much-needed revival - Ezra 9:1-10:44
- 444 B.C. - A third remnant returns to Jerusalem
 - This group is led by Nehemiah - Neh 1:1-2:20
 - Under his leadership, the walls of Jerusalem are rebuilt - Neh 3:1-7:73
 - Together with Ezra, they restore much of the religion - Neh 8:1-13:31

HISTORIC EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF DANIEL

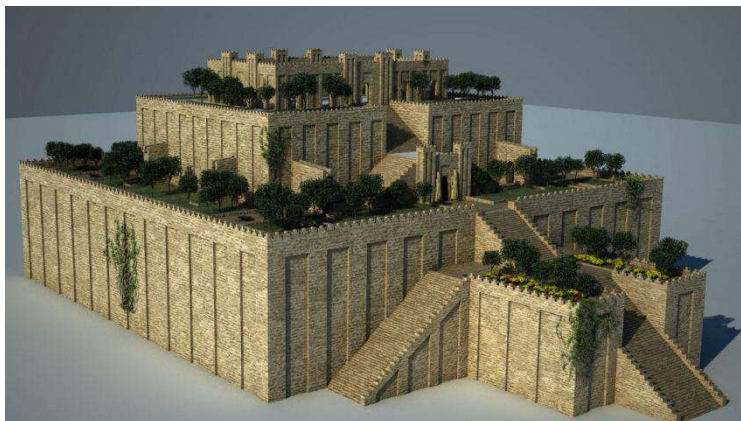
- Daniel lived through many of these historical events.
- Daniel was born (circa 620 B.C) in Israel during the last days of the kingdom of Judah.
- Daniel was taken captive to Babylon in 605 B.C, at the age of 15, with the first group of captives taken by Nebuchadnezzar.
- Daniel continued serving God as a prophet for all of the 70 years of captivity.

Cultural Background

“What kind of a world was this new home of theirs? Compared to the poor little country of Palestine it was a big, rich, and prosperous country. Here the Jews found an advanced culture, big business and material splendor. Babylon, the chief city, was one of great wealth and magnificence. It was the center of a vast empire including all of Mesopotamia and the highlands beyond, as well as Syria and Palestine. The city of Babylon was on the monotonous plains of the

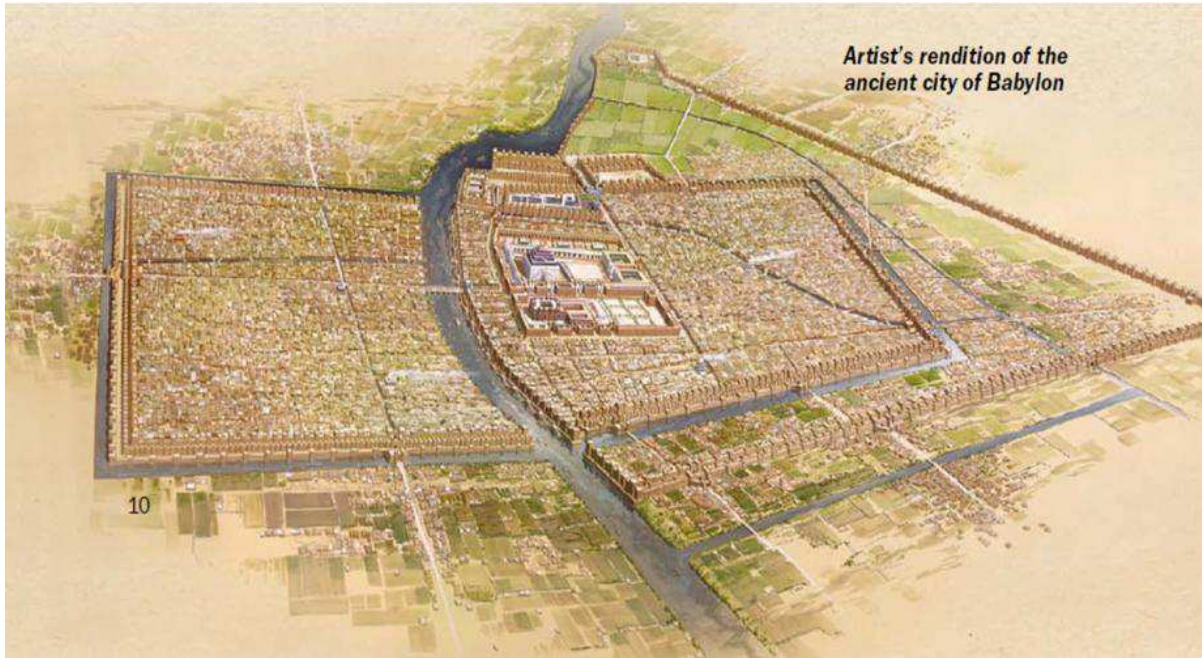


banks of the Euphrates River. Ancient writers describe it as a city surrounded by four walls, each fifteen miles in length. Twenty four streets ran north and south and the same number east



and west. In this way each street terminated at a gate in the wall (100 of these) and the city was thus made up of more than six hundred square blocks. It is said that in the center of each square was a garden. The city contained many elaborate and expensive buildings such as palaces and temples. To relieve the homesickness of his wife for her

native hills Nebuchadnezzar constructed, at great expense, the famous hanging gardens. In reality these were immense terraces placed on top of each other until they reached the height of the city walls. On these were planted beautiful shrubs and flowers. Even if this ancient description be exaggerated, we may be sure that this great city was one of the most beautiful and famous of ancient times.”¹¹



“This kingdom was famous also for the advanced stage of culture and learning which its people had attained. The Magi were learned men with a wide reputation for wisdom. The people were skilled in astronomy and astrology. They had libraries and a well-developed literature. They were advanced in the art of making pottery and in textile work. In such a wealthy, cultured and prosperous kingdom the captive Jews were to make their home. The new world forced upon them the necessity of adjustment to new situations and of testing their own faith and ideals. How little and insignificant was their own poor kingdom back in Judah compared to the extent and wealth of this kingdom.”¹²

Theological Emphases

The theology of the Book of Daniel centers on several different themes:

- The Sovereignty of God in the affairs of the world.
- God’s love and care for His followers.
- The person and work of the Messiah.
- The eschatology of the tribulation, the last days and the new earth.

¹¹ Hester, H.I. *The Heart of Hebrew History*. (Liberty, MO: The Quality Press, 1962), 251-252.

¹² *Ibid.*, 252.

Part One: The Stories of Daniel in Babylon

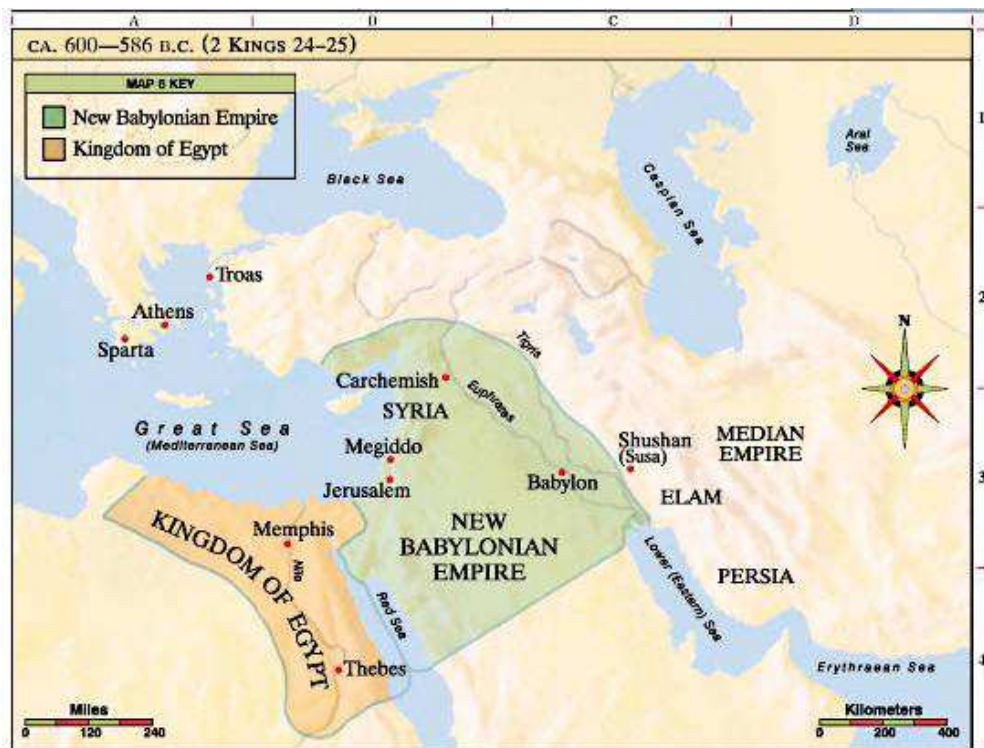
“The first half of Daniel features five events selected from the prophet’s long life in Babylon. Each account has much of value for application to our lives today. There is also a report of an experience of his three Hebrew companions...”¹

The first event described here relays the story of how Daniel and many others find themselves living in a strange, new land with strange, new cultures and religious beliefs. Daniel’s character is tested as his home culture clashes with his new, host culture.

I. Daniel’s Identity and Character (1:1-21)

The Historical Setting (1-2)

The two superpowers of the Middle East in the late 7th century were Egypt and Babylon. Each country was vying for power, and it was only a matter of time until they would finally clash. The decisive battle that would determine the fates of each empire finally came in the early summer of 605 B.C. in Carchemish, on the upper Euphrates River, in modern day Syria.



¹ Richards, *The Illustrated Bible Handbook*, 363.

After being defeated at Carchemish, the Egyptian armies retreated to their homeland which left Palestine undefended to ward off the Babylonian attackers. “As a result, by August of 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar took control of the city of Jerusalem. On August 15 or 16 Nebuchadnezzar’s father, King Nabopolassar, died in Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar rushed home to claim the throne. He was crowned king of Babylon on the day of his arrival, September 6 or 7, 605 B.C. On this trip home, Nebuchadnezzar carried captive with him some of the sacred vessels of the Temple of Jehovah in Jerusalem and the cream of the Jewish young men. Daniel and his companions were among those captives.”²

Introduction of Daniel and His Friends (3-7)

Who are they?

- Israelites from either the royal family or nobility.
- All four were from the tribe of Judah, from families of high social standing.

What are their names?

- Daniel – ‘God is my judge’
- Hananiah – ‘Yahweh is gracious’
- Mishael – ‘who is what God is?’
- Azariah – ‘Yahweh has/will help’

What new names did they receive from Ashpenaz—the chief Eunuch? What did they mean?

- Daniel ⇨ Belteshazzar – ‘Bel, protect his life’ (Bel is another name for Marduk)
- Hananiah ⇨ Shadrach – ‘command of Aku’ (the moon god)
- Mishael ⇨ Meshach – ‘who is what Aku is?’
- Azariah ⇨ Abednego – ‘servant of Nebo’ (second greatest god in Babylonian pantheon)
- Ashpenaz “assigned the young captives Babylonian names in order to assimilate them more readily into their new culture. There probably was no intention on the Babylonians’ part to degrade or humiliate these captives by this name change.”³
- In each case the Hebrew appellation [or name] contains a reference to the true God, whereas its Babylonian counterpart involves an allusion to a pagan deity.”⁴

When were they taken and where were they taken to?

- They were taken captive in 605 B.C. with the first group of Jewish captives.
- They were all teenagers at the time of their capture.
- The ‘land of Shinar’ is another name for Babylon. It is likely that Daniel used this word deliberately because Shinar was the site for the Tower of Babel.

² Showers, Renald E. *The Most High God*. (Bellmawr, NJ: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, 1982), 1-2.

³ Miller, *The NAC: Daniel*. 64.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 66.

Why were they chosen? Qualifications for Eligible Trainees in Babylon

- ‘youths’ – may refer to children, boys or young men; the education of Persian youths began in their 14th year, so it is reasonable that the Babylonian system was about the same; Daniel was likely 14 or 15 when he was taken captive;
- ‘without blemish, of good appearance’ – no physical defects and handsome;
- ‘skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning’ – intelligence was very important to Nebuchadnezzar
- ‘competent to stand in the king’s palace’ – competent here denotes ability and refers to “a proper manner, poise, confidence, and knowledge of social proprieties’ expected at the royal court.”⁵
- ‘to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans’ – this can refer ethnically to the Babylonian people as a whole, but “in Daniel the word is also used in a restricted sense to delineate a class of priests, astrologers, magicians, soothsayers, or wise men.”⁶

How long was their training supposed to last?

- ‘They were to be educated for three years’
- “After the successful completion of the three-year training period, the young men were to enter royal service. Evidently the level of government responsibility was determined by the king’s examination of the trainees at the end of the program.”⁷

What difficulties did the Hebrew children face when they were taken to Babylon?

- “The pressure to conform to Babylon’s pagan culture was severe upon Daniel and his friends. They belonged to a conquered, humiliated people. They had been uprooted from families, friends, familiar surroundings—from everything that had given them security and meaning in life. They had been transported hundreds of miles to a totally strange environment to live among total strangers. In this new setting they were a small minority. They were only teenagers subjected to the authority of the most powerful adult ruler on earth.”⁸
- “They were put under the instruction of elite but ungodly teachers, men who were regarded as the world’s top scholars—a situation that could be deadly for the faith of impressionable teens. Their education exposed them to such anti-God subjects as astrology and pagan mythology.”⁹
- “They were placed in the enviable position of gaining favorable government posts, if they would cooperate fully with their rulers. They were afforded what many would have regarded as a great privilege—the eating of the king’s fare.”¹⁰

⁵ Miller, 61

⁶ Ibid., 79.

⁷ Ibid., 64.

⁸ Showers, 4.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

The Moral Test (8-16)

What was Daniel's decision when faced with this moral dilemma?

- 'Resolved that he would not defile himself' – the word 'defile' refers to moral or ceremonial defilement as outlined in the Law. In this case Daniel would have been defiled on both counts.¹¹
- Resolved to honor God with his life.
- Daniel made up his mind before he left Israel that he would follow God—no matter the consequences.

What were they supposed to eat?

- They were given the privilege to eat the same food that the king was eating.
- Literally translated the word 'food' refers to 'rich food.'
- "It was an oriental custom to feed officers of the royal court the choice food and wine from the king's table."¹²
- Eating the king's food was problematic for Jews for two reasons.¹³
 - It contained food that the Jews were forbidden by the Mosaic Law to eat.
 - The food had been offered to Babylonian gods before it was eaten.
 - Both of these issues were negated in the New Testament.
 - Peter's Vision in Acts 10 allowed the Jews to eat meat of all types.¹⁴
 - Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 8 releases the Jew to eat meat that has been sacrificed to idols because 'an idol has no real existence.'
However, Paul encourages the Corinthians to not be a stumbling block to someone who has a problem with meat sacrificed to idols. Verse 13 says, "Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble."

Why was this decision difficult?¹⁵

- To refuse the royal diet could have been taken as an insult to the king and as an act of direct disobedience to Nebuchadnezzar's orders.
- Pressure from Daniel's peers certainly made the decision difficult. By doing this, Daniel and his friends were setting themselves apart from the others.
- This could have jeopardized their chance for advancement.
- The quality of food would have been tempting.
- Their new location and new culture—and the anonymity that came with that—would have made it easier to be unfaithful.

¹¹ Miller, 66.

¹² Showers, 3.

¹³ Ibid., 5.

¹⁴ See Acts 10:9-16

¹⁵ Miller, 67.

- It would have been natural to decide to forsake God and His commandments, especially since it seemed that He had forsaken them.

How did the king's men respond to Daniel's resolution?

- He was compelled by God to respond with 'favor and compassion' (9) toward Daniel.
 - In this context, this can be understood that Ashpenaz had feelings of goodwill toward the Hebrew children.
 - He shows them 'sympathy'—which is an outpouring of common grace.
 - "Common grace is the grace of God by which he gives people innumerable blessings that are not part of salvation."¹⁶
 - Since people are created in the image of God (*imago dei*), they also possess the God-given ability to show a measure of (non-saving) grace to others.
- "Ashpenaz was not a follower of Yahweh, but he was impressed with Daniel. By stating that God caused Ashpenaz to have a favorable attitude toward Daniel, the writer again emphasized the fact that God was in control of the situation. He was able to direct the hearts of the captors to accomplish his sovereign will."¹⁷
 - Proverbs 21:1 says, "The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will."
- "He wanted to grant it but could not, for to do so might cost him his head. He feared that if the four Jewish youths abstained from the king's fare, they would appear more unhealthy than the other students when it was time to be examined by the king."¹⁸

Who is Melzar? What is so confusing about who this is?

- In verse 11, the KJV names the person to whom Daniel is speaking—Meltzar.
- Meltzar is a transliteration of the Hebrew *mešár*, which only occurs this one time in the Old Testament. "The KJV rendered the term as if it were a proper name, but the presence of the article in the Hebrew makes this unlikely."¹⁹
- Scholars argue "that this word is an Akkadian or Aramaic loan word for 'guard.'"²⁰
- Sample renderings from different translations:²¹
 - KJV – "Meltzar"
 - ESV – "steward"
 - HCSB – "guard"
 - NLT – "attendant"
 - NASB – "overseer"
 - GW – "supervisor"

¹⁶ Common Grace. <https://carm.org/dictionary-common-grace>. (accessed January 17, 2016).

¹⁷ Miller, 68.

¹⁸ Showers, 7.

¹⁹ Miller, 69.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Bible Gateway. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=dan%20%3A11&version=ESV;GW;HCSB;NLT;NASB> (accessed January 17, 2016).

What proposition did Daniel make to their supervisor?

- Daniel “proposed that they might be allowed to eat only vegetables and drink water rather than receive the king’s meat and wine for ten days... “Vegetables”... would include not only vegetables but fruits, grains, and bread that is made from grains. Daniel’s diet was similar to many so-called health food diets today.”²²
- This is the origin of *The Daniel Plan* healthy lifestyle program. Their website says:
 - “The Daniel Plan is not just another “diet”. It’s a healthy lifestyle based on the Old Testament story of Daniel, who rejected the king’s rich food in order to honor God’s best for him and his friends...
 - “Daniel’s request was not about a diet plan; rather, he understood God wanted him to live a healthy lifestyle so he could serve God no matter where he was located. Healthy living requires faith as the foundation, trusting that God’s way is the best way, while following his prescription for your health.”²³

What was the outcome of this proposal?

- “At the end of the ten days the four Jewish youths were more healthy in appearance than the others. As a result, they were excused from the requirement of eating the king’s fare.”²⁴
- “Nutritional experts today advocate a diet of mostly fruits and vegetables for optimum health. It is therefore no surprise that Daniel and his friends looked visibly healthier after following this menu, even for only ten days.”²⁵

God’s Blessings on Daniel and His Friends (17-21)

How did God continue to bless Daniel and his friends for their faithfulness?

- He gave them gifts (17).
- He gave them favor in the king’s court (18-20).
- He gave Daniel a long life (21).
 - Daniel was still alive when the Persian Empire overthrew the Babylonians.
 - He lived to be 85 to 90 years old (ca. 620-535 B.C.).

²² Miller, 69.

²³ *The Daniel Plan: Daniel’s Story*. <http://www.danielplan.com/start/about-us/daniels-story/>. (accessed January 17, 2016).

²⁴ Showers, 7.

²⁵ Miller, 70.

Excellence in Exile

FAITHFUL LIVING IN A FALLEN WORLD

Daniel 1:1-21

Introduction ☞

'When in Rome, do as the Romans do!'

'What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas!'

Dangers of Travelling (Bahamas Senior Trip)

With anonymity comes enticement,
but with accountability comes discernment. ☞

Daniel's Dilemma

- Read Daniel 1:1-4 ☞

¹ In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ☞ ² And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the vessels of the house of God. 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. ☞ ³ Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility, ☞ ⁴ youths without blemish, of good appearance and 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. ☞

- Historical Setting
 - 605 B.C. – Pharaoh-Necho of Egypt came to fight Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians at Carchemish; the Babylonians won establishing Babylonian domination;
 - After defeating the Egyptians, Nebuchadnezzar chased them south through Judah.
 - At Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar heard of his father's death, so he returned to assume the throne in Babylon, taking with him the first group of Jewish captives, along with Daniel and his friends - Dan 1:1-4
- Read Daniel 1:5-7 ☞

⁵ The king assigned them a daily portion of the food that the king ate, and of the wine that he drank. They were to be educated for three years, and at the end of that time they were to stand before the king. ☞ ⁶ Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah. ⁷ And the chief of the eunuchs gave them names: Daniel he called Beltshazzar, Hananiah he called Shadrach, Mishael he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego. ☞

- His Current Situation
 - Everything is NEW!
 - New names...
 - New culture...
 - New temptations...
 - New school...
 - H. I. Hester explains,

“This kingdom was famous also for the advanced stage of culture and learning which its people had attained... The people were skilled in astronomy and astrology. They had libraries and a well-developed literature. They were advanced in the art of making pottery and in textile work. In such a wealthy, cultured and prosperous kingdom the captive Jews were to make their home. The new world forced upon them the necessity of adjustment to new situations and of testing their own faith and ideals. How little and insignificant was their own poor kingdom back in Judah compared to the extent and wealth of this kingdom.”
 - How would these young men respond?
 - Would they submit to the temptations placed before them?
 - Would they give in, excusing themselves due to youth and inexperience?
- APPLICATION
 - How would you have reacted if you were in their place?
 - Would you think, ‘When in Rome...’?
 - How do you react when you find yourself in a new situation? ☞

Daniël's Decision

- Read Daniel 1:8-10 ☞

⁸ But 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. ⁹ And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs, ☞ ¹⁰ and the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, “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 you would endanger my head with the king.” ☞

- Resolved to honor God with his life.
 - Daniel made up his mind before he left Israel that he would follow God—no matter the consequences.
 - The chief eunuch told him that there were two options—it would be either his head or Daniel's if he did not eat. Daniel thought to himself, “I'll take option #3!”
- Read Daniel 1:11-13 ☞

¹¹ Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had assigned over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, ¹² “Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to

eat and water to drink. ¹³ 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.”

- Negotiated with the Steward
- **APPLICATION – WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM DANIEL’S EXAMPLE?**
 - We must make up our minds before we find ourselves in the middle of difficult situations.
 - Getting up earlier to have more time with the Lord.
 - Watch the end of the game, or go back to church.
 - Spend time praying before bed, or binge watch Netflix.
 - Laugh at an inappropriate joke at work.
 - Join my colleagues for happy hour.
 - Accept the invitation to spend more time with that person who ‘finds me fascinating.’
 - We will be resolved!

Daniel’s Discipline

- Read Daniel 1:14-17

¹⁴ So he listened to them in this matter, and tested them for ten days. ¹⁵ At the end of ten days it was seen that they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king's food. ¹⁶ So the steward took away their food and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

¹⁷ As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

- Physical Discipline – He was physically excellent.
- Mental Discipline – He was mentally superior.
- Spiritual Discipline – He was spiritually discerning.
- **APPLICATION**
 - How can we accomplish these things? DISCIPLINE
 - Discipline is something that will affect every aspect of your life—if you are disciplined in one area then it will positively affect all other areas of your life.
 - The inverse is also true! If you struggle to be disciplined in one area of your life, then it will negatively affect all other areas of your life.

Daniel’s Distinction

- Read Daniel 1:18-21

¹⁸ At the end of the time, when the king had commanded that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹ And the king spoke with them, and

among all of them none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Therefore they stood before the king. ²⁰ And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom. ²¹ And Daniel was there until the first year of King Cyrus.

- He stood out above all the rest.
 - Living a life of excellence will be noticed. You will stand out!
 - This does not mean that life will always be easy, as we will find out as this story goes on.
- Daniel's distinction is a direct result of God's blessings, which is interconnected with his absolute commitment to Him and to living a disciplined life.

Conclusion

- Will you commit 2016 to God? Will you resolve to stand for Him?
- Will you commit to a disciplined lifestyle today?
 - 1 Timothy 4:7-8 say, ⁷ "Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; ⁸ for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come."

II. Nebuchadnezzar's Dream (2:1-45)

The Circumstances of the Dream (1)

How could Daniel have completed three years of training by Nebuchadnezzar's second year?

- This is taking place during Nebuchadnezzar's second year as king.
 - Considering that Daniel's training was three years, it might seem that this would conflict with the time table describe in this verse.
 - We must remember the difference in the Babylonian and Hebrew systems for counting the number of years that a leader was in power.¹
 - "Daniel probably used the Babylonian system which did not count a king's year of accession... by Babylonian reckoning Daniel's second year of training occurred during what was considered the first year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign [604-603 B.C.]. Therefore, the king sought interpretation of his dreams in 602 B.C., shortly after Daniel had completed his three-year education."²
 - Chart from *The NAC: Daniel* by Stephen Miller³

Years of Training	Year of King's Reign	Date
First	Accession year	From Sept. 605 (the time Nebuchadnezzar assumed the throne) to Nisan (Mar-Apr) 604 B.C.
Second	First year	Nisan 604-603 B.C.
Third	Second year	Nisan 603-604 B.C.

- The dreams "disturbed him so much that he could not continue to sleep."⁴
 - The phrase 'his spirit was troubled,' could also be translated "his spirit was struck."⁵
 - "The root [paam] means 'to strike' as with a hammer on an anvil or as a bell. It probably connected with the rapid beat of the heart due to extreme agitation."⁶
 - Has this ever happened to you? You experienced a dream so disturbing that you were unable to go back to sleep? Nebuchadnezzar is 'freaked out.'

¹ See page 6, *Archaeological Discoveries*.

² Rydelnik, Michael. "Study Notes on Daniel" *HCSB Study Bible*. (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), 1435.

³ Miller, *The NAC: Daniel*, 76.

⁴ Showers, Renald E. *The Most High God*, 12.

⁵ Miller, 77.

⁶ Slotki, J.J. *Daniel-Ezra-Nehemiah*. (London: Soncino, 1978), 8.

The Futility of the Pagan Interpreters (2-13)

Who were all these pagan interpreters? What are the characteristics of each?

- Magicians
 - The word literally means “engraver, writer, only in a derivative sense of one possessed of occult knowledge, diviner, astrologer, magician.”⁷
 - “Strictly speaking, *hartom* seems to describe persons who wrote with a stylus on clay tablets, in this case the religious scribes or sacred writers who recorded and preserved the materials used in the Babylonian religious activities. These wise men meticulously chronicled, for example, the movements of the heavenly bodies in order to gain religious wisdom from them.”⁸
 - In our culture today, magicians are seen as people who do ‘tricks’ and entertain crowds, but in Babylonian culture, “magicians performed serious functions. Supposedly in touch with the world of the spirits and the gods, these individuals were the advisers to the king on virtually every matter.”⁹
- Enchanters
 - Also translated as ‘astrologers’ (NRSV), ‘conjurers’ (NASB).
 - The word literally means “conjurer, necromancer,” and is probably a loan word from Akkadian (aka Babylonian).¹⁰
 - “Thus ‘enchanters’ with their magic spells and incantations were believed to be able to communicate with the spirit world... With the rise of certain modern religious movements, communicating with the spirit world through mediums or channels (called witches and sorcerers in the Bible) is again becoming popular.”¹¹
- Sorcerers
 - This word “likely refers to the religious group known from Akkadian texts as *kashshapu*.”¹²
 - This is an Akkadian loan word and the Akkadian root “*kasapu* means ‘to practice sorcery’ or ‘witchcraft.’”¹³
- Chaldeans
 - “Sometimes the term is employed in an ethnic sense as a general designation for the Babylonian people... In Daniel the word is also used in a restricted sense to delineate a class of priests, astrologers, magicians, soothsayers or wise men.”¹⁴ Soothsayers is another term for fortune-tellers.
 - The word Chaldeans can also be translated as ‘astrologers,’ ones who studied the movements of stars and planets. They believed that the movement of ‘heavenly bodies could somehow determine one’s destiny.

⁷ Brown, Driver & Briggs. *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (BDB)*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 355.

⁸ Miller, 72.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *BDB*, 80.

¹¹ Miller, 73.

¹² Wood, L. *A Commentary on Daniel*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 50.

¹³ Miller, 78.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 79.

- “Study of the movements of the heavenly bodies was not performed primarily as a scientific enterprise, but this led the Chaldeans to record carefully the movements of the moon, stars, planets, and comets, an exercise that did have scientific value. Whitcomb points out that such accurate were kept that ‘the Babylonian astronomer Naurimannu (c.a. 500 b.c.) was able to calculate the length of the year at 365 days, 6 hours, 15 minutes, 41 seconds—only 26 minutes and 55 seconds to long!’ Although the individual wise men may have had different duties, the various names given for these persons probably should not ‘be pressed as to their technical distinctions.’”¹⁵

What did the king say to these men when he called them?

- He told them that he had a disturbing dream.

How did the Chaldeans, or astrologers, respond?

- “Tell us the dream and we will interpret it for you.”

What happens here with the original text that is important?

- The language switches in the middle of verse 4. Remember, the Book of Daniel is written in two different languages—Hebrew and Aramaic.
- “Then the Chaldeans said to the king in Aramaic” – Hebrew
- “O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation.” – Aramaic

Why two different languages?

- Aramaic – sections include Daniel’s memoirs, the story of the three Hebrew children, Nebuchadnezzar’s experiences, and the prophecy of the four kingdoms.
 - Written in the common language (*lingua franca*) of the day.
 - Chapters 2-7 are written in a language that non-Jews could understand because it concerns Gentile kings and empires and messages from God to these Gentile kingdoms.
- Hebrew – written in Hebrew because it was a message to the Hebrew people.
 - Chapter 1 tells the story of exiled, Jewish youths who were sent to Babylon during the final days of the kingdom of Judah.
 - Chapters 8-12 are written in Hebrew because they “speak particularly of the fate of the Jews under tyrannical rulers (Antiochus IV and the eschatological Antichrist) and would not have been relevant to the Gentile world of Daniel’s time... Thus Aramaic was reserved for the parts of the book that had universal appeal or special relevance to the Gentile nations, and Hebrew was employed for those portions that most concerned the Jews.”¹⁶

¹⁵ Miller, 79-80.

¹⁶ Ibid., 48.

What ridiculous expectation did the king have of the interpreters? Why

- He is not just asking his 'wise men' to interpret the dream—He is requiring them to tell him what the dream is too! He wanted a divine answer—not something that someone made up that sounds believable.
- It is safe to say that Nebuchadnezzar probably believed that the statue in the dream was somehow representative of him or his kingdom.
- He was likely afraid that it represented the fall of his kingdom, which often happened when someone near to the king turned on him (i.e. an advisor).

What did the king say would happen to them if they could or could not interpret the dream?

- Verses 5-6
- “Dismemberment of enemies was a practice widespread throughout the ancient Orient... This was no idle threat by Nebuchadnezzar, whose harsh treatment of King Zedekiah (2 Kgs 25:7), two Jewish rebels named Ahab and Zedekiah (not King Zedekiah; Jer 29:22), and Daniel’s three friends (chap. 3) proved that he would have no qualms about carrying out this cruel threat upon his counselors.”¹⁷

Why would Nebuchadnezzar be so willing to annihilate his wise men?¹⁸

- Verses 7-9
- Their inability to acquire the necessary information to interpret the dream proved that they were not in touch with the gods as they claimed.
- The king believed that the dream foretold some sort of disaster upon him and his kingdom. He didn’t want to reveal the secret of his dream to his advisors because they might be the ones trying to kill him.

What excuse did the 'wise men' give the king as to why they could not do what he asked?

- Verses 10-11
- Their excuse was it was humanly impossible to do what he asked!
- Their excuse revealed that they were not really 'in touch' with 'the gods' like they advertised themselves to be. In fact, their excuses reveal that they do not truly believe that there is any way to access 'the gods.'

How did the king react when the 'wise men' failed to interpret the dream?

- Verses 12-13
- “[This was] more than Nebuchadnezzar could tolerate. In a fit of rage he ordered all the wise men of Babylon to be killed.”¹⁹

¹⁷ Miller, 81.

¹⁸ Ibid., 82.

¹⁹ Showers, 19.

Daniel's Intervention (14-30)

Who was Arioch? What did Daniel say to him?

- He was the king's captain, or commander, of the king's guard.
 - "The root of *tabbah*, 'guard,' means 'to slay.' Hence the 'king's guard' consisted of the executioners of the king, and Arioch apparently was the chief executioner."²⁰
- He asked for two things: 1) a reason for the 'urgency' and 2) for extra time.
 - In most 'literal' translations of the Bible, the idea conveyed is that the king's decree was 'urgent,' or 'hasty.'
 - "The idea that this meant *hasty* seems to derive from its use in 3:22. The root, however, denotes harshness or stiffness, so 'harsh' here... [is] appropriate."²¹

What was the result of Daniel's intervention?

- He met with the king to request more time to interpret the dream. It is interesting to note that he did this before the dream was revealed to him.
- Evidently, Daniel was granted a 'stay of execution' from the kill squad.

What was Daniel's plan of action for discerning the contents and interpretation of the dream?

- He went home and enlisted his fellow countrymen who had remained faithful to God to have a devoted time of prayer together.
- "Here is a beautiful picture of four young men, possibly still in their teens, united in prayer. This was a life-and-death crisis, and they pleaded with God to have mercy on them and to preserve their lives."²²

How did God respond to their pleas? What did Daniel do next?

- "God answered their prayer by revealing the matter to Daniel. Daniel responded by uttering a great prayer of thanksgiving. In this prayer Daniel emphasized the wisdom, power and sovereignty of God."²³
- "When God answered his prayer, Daniel praised and thanked God for his **wisdom and might** before he went to see King Nebuchadnezzar."²⁴
- Read 2:20-23 – He is praising God for...
 - Verse 20 – His wisdom and power,
 - Verse 21 – that He controls the world and everything in it,
 - Verse 22 – revealing the deep hidden things to someone like him,
 - Verse 23 – and answering their specific request.

²⁰ Miller, 84.

²¹ Ibid., 84-85.

²² Ibid., 85.

²³ Showers, 14.

²⁴ Deguid and Wegner, "Study Notes on Daniel" *ESV Study Bible*. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 1589.

The Dream Revealed (31-35)

What did the king see in his dream?

- A **statue** that was mighty and exceedingly bright.
- It was frightening.
- Anatomy of the Statue
 - Head – gold
 - Chest & Arms – silver
 - Middle & Thighs – bronze
 - Legs – iron
 - Feet – iron and clay
- A **stone** that was hewn by God that struck the statue's feet and broke them into pieces, destroying the statue completely. That stone became a great mountain.
- A **strong wind** that blew away all the remnants of the broken statue.



The Interpretation of the Dream (36-45)

Before telling Nebuchadnezzar the interpretation of the dream, what did Daniel articulate?

- “He declared that it was the God of heaven, not the Babylonian gods nor the king himself, who had made Nebuchadnezzar the top ruler of the then-known world.”²⁵
- “Daniel was determined, however, not to sacrifice the truth of God on the altar of expediency.”²⁶

In general terms, what was the meaning of the dream?

- “Daniel explained the dream as a panorama of four great Gentile empires. Virtually all scholars agree that the different parts of the statue represent empires or kingdoms, although there is disagreement concerning their identification.”²⁷
- “It is important to note that in the interpretation Daniel moved progressively from the top to the bottom of the image. This downward movement represented the passage of time. Thus, the upper parts of the image portrayed earlier history, and the lower parts portrayed later history.”²⁸

²⁵ Showers, *The Most High God*, 17.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Miller, 92-93.

²⁸ Showers, 17.

- “God tells Daniel this statue represents succeeding kingdoms, each inferior to the previous one. The rock represents a kingdom which God will set up and which will never be destroyed.”²⁹

What was the meaning behind the ‘head of gold’? (37-38)

- Nebuchadnezzar is identified as the “king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory... the head of gold.”
 - “Frequently in Scripture the terms ‘king’ and ‘kingdom’ are employed interchangeably since the king was considered to be the embodiment of the kingdom.”³⁰
 - The reference is not merely “to the king as an individual, since it is immediately stated that another kingdom (not king) will stand in Neb’s place, but to the empire itself.”³¹
 - “In a very real sense, however, Nebuchadnezzar was the Neo-Babylonian Empire, for after his forty-three-year reign the kingdom endured only about twenty-three years... For sixty-six years (605–539 B.C.) the Neo-Babylonian Empire ruled the Near East.”³²
- Why did God represent Babylon with gold in the dream?³³
 - The primary god of Babylon, Marduk (aka Bel), was called the god of gold.
 - The Babylonians used gold extensively in its art and architecture.

What was the meaning behind the ‘chest and arms of silver’? (39a)

- The silver represented the next great kingdom to ascend to dominance on the world scene—the Medo-Persian Empire—led by King Cyrus in 539 B.C.
 - “This empire is symbolized by the silver chest and arms of the great statue, the two arms conceivably representing the two parts or divisions of the empire. Medo-Persian dominance continued for approximately 208 years (539–331 B.C.).”³⁴
 - “Two distinct peoples, the Medes and the Persians, were united together in 550 B.C. under the same king to form one great power.”³⁵
 - “In ancient times silver signified money, for silver was the standard of value and the medium of exchange. Medo-Persia became noted for basing its power on money which was collected through an extensive tax system.”³⁶



²⁹ Richards, *The Illustrated Bible Handbook*, 364.

³⁰ Miller, 93.

³¹ Young, E.J. *The Prophecy of Daniel*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 73.

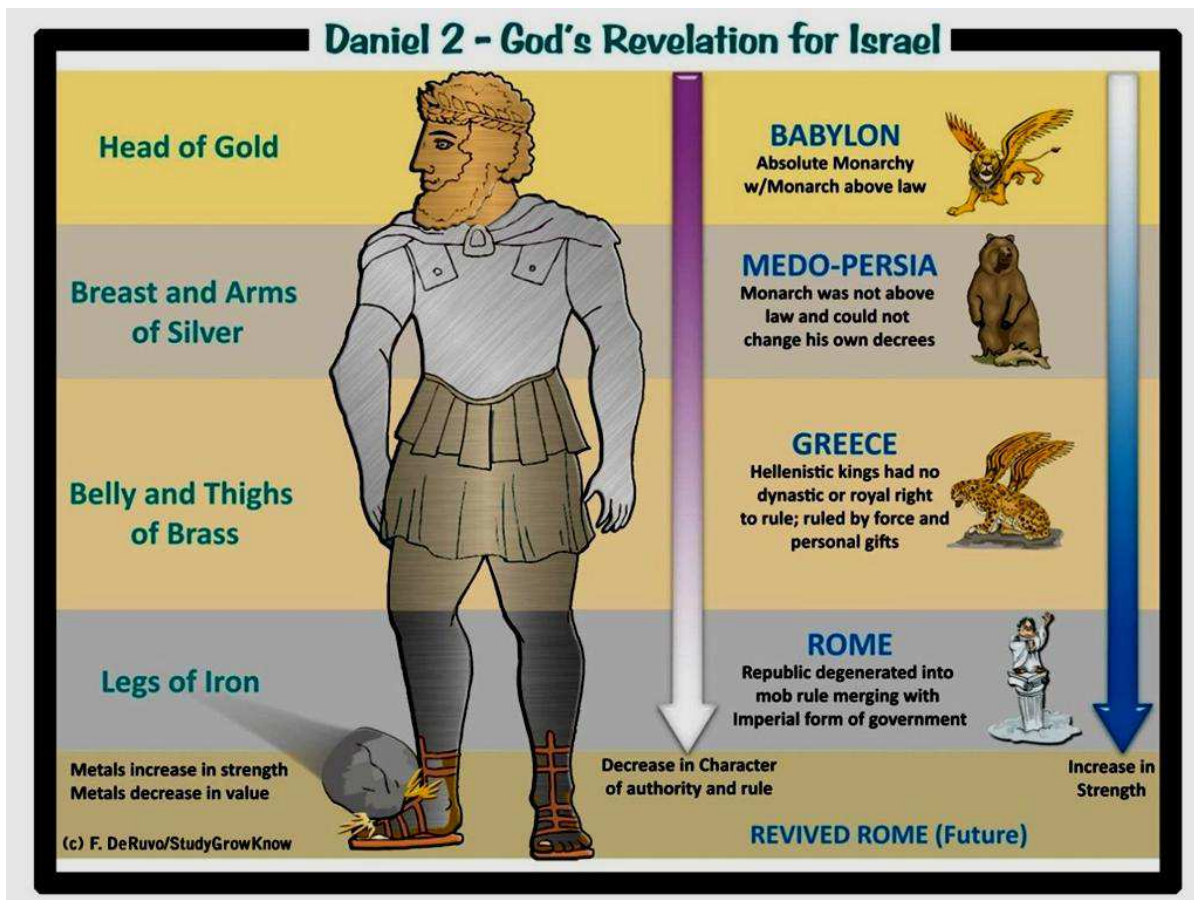
³² Miller, 93.

³³ Showers, 17-18.

³⁴ Miller, 93.

³⁵ Showers, 18.

- In what ways were the Medo-Persians inferior to the Babylonians?
 - Not in military strength—they conquered the Babylonians.
 - Not in size—they controlled much more territory than Babylon.
 - “Through the portrayal of each subsequent empire as inferior to its predecessor, Daniel seems to have been suggesting that the sinfulness of the world would continue to increase until the culmination of history. Certainly the last phase of the fourth empire, described in detail later in Daniel, reaches the height of blasphemy, cruelty, and evil. According to Daniel, the world’s kingdoms are not moving toward utopia but in the opposite direction.”³⁷
 - See chart for overview:



What was the meaning behind the ‘middle and thighs of bronze’? (39b)

- The bronze belly and thighs represented the Grecian Empire.
 - “In 332 b.c. the armies of the great conqueror Alexander the Great marched against the Medo-Persian Empire and defeated it in a series of decisive battles. The Greek Empire dominated for approximately 185 years (331–146 B.C.)”³⁸

³⁶ Showers, 18.

³⁷ Miller, 94.

³⁸ Ibid., 95.

- “One belly sub-divided into two thighs was an excellent way for God to portray the Grecian kingdom ahead of time. After Alexander had unified his kingdom, he died at a young age. His kingdom was divided among his four leading generals. However, only two of the divisions played an important role in history. Those two divisions headquartered in Syria and Egypt.”³⁹
- Just as the Medo-Persian Empire was geographically larger than the Babylonian Empire, the Greek Empire was larger still—yet it was still inferior. Why?
 - As we discussed earlier (see note 37), the sinfulness of the world continued to increase as each generation and kingdom passed.
 - Note the progression of empires in the graphic on page 27. As the empires increase in strength, they decrease in character of authority and rule.
 - This is still true today... each generation that passes becomes more and more ensnared by their sin nature.
- Why did God represent Greece with bronze?
 - “The Greeks developed this metal highly and used it extensively in their implements of war.”⁴⁰

What was the meaning behind the ‘legs of iron’? (40)

- The ‘legs of iron’ represented the Roman Empire.
 - Miller notes, “Five terms are utilized in this verse (“breaks,” “smashes,” “breaks to pieces,” “crush,” “break”) [from the NIV] to emphasize the tremendous power this fourth kingdom would exert. Rome ruled the nations with an iron hand and like a huge iron club shattered all who resisted its will.”⁴¹
 - Walvoord added, “God’s portrayal of Rome with two legs was very apt, for the ancient Roman Empire ruled extensive areas of both the western and eastern divisions of the world. In fact, in 364 A.D. the Roman Empire was divided politically into two divisions—the Western Roman Empire with Rome as its capital and the Eastern Roman [or Byzantine] Empire with Constantinople as its capital.”⁴²
 - However, Miller asserts, “Such an identification is not specifically expressed in the text and seems unlikely. Montgomery argues vigorously that no interpretative significance should be attached to the fact that the statue has two legs...”⁴³
- Why did God represent the Roman Empire with iron? There were two reasons.⁴⁴
 - Rome was known for using iron for its weapons and military.

³⁹ Showers, 18-19.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 19.

⁴¹ Miller, 95.

⁴² Walvoord, John F. *Daniel*. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 73.

⁴³ Miller, 95-96.

⁴⁴ Showers, 19.

- Iron is a much stronger metal than gold, silver or bronze, so it had the strength to crush all those. In the same way, the Roman Empire crushed the ancient world.
 - This prophecy was fulfilled when they conquered Greece at the Battle of Carthage in 146 B.C.
 - The Western Roman Empire continued to rule until 395 A.D. (over 500 years). The Eastern Roman [or Byzantine] Empire lasted until 1453 A.D. (approximately 1600 years).⁴⁵

SUMMARY OF THE MEANING OF THE COLOSSUS FOR THE FIRST FOUR KINGDOMS

TRADITIONAL VIEW: AUTHORSHIP BY DANIEL

Gold – Babylon
 Silver – Medo-Persia
 Bronze – Greece
 Iron – Rome

MACCABEAN THESIS: AUTHORSHIP ANONYMOUS

Gold – Babylon
 Silver – Median
 Bronze – Persia
 Iron – Greece

What was the meaning behind the ‘feet of iron and clay’? (41-43)

- What are the characteristics of the Fourth Kingdom found in verses 41-43?
 - It will be a divided kingdom (41a).
 - It will be a powerful kingdom as a whole (41b-42a).
 - Some of the divisions of the empire will be strong, while others will be weak (42b).
 - The nations represented by the iron and clay toes will make up a singular empire, but that empire will be fractured and will not remain united (43).
- What is the meaning of the ten toes? How does this correlate with Scripture?
 - “The number of the statue’s toes would be assumed to be ten since the image had human form. The vision of chap. 7 confirms the number and identification of these toes, for scholars are in near unanimous agreement that the four beasts of chap. 7 represent the same empires as those denoted by the four parts of the statue. In chap. 7 ten horns grow out of the fourth beast (7:7,24), and this symbolism corresponds to the ten toes proceeding from the fourth division of the statue. Daniel 7:24 specifically states that the ten horns that protrude from the fourth beast represent “ten kings” (i.e., kingdoms or nations), and the ten toes of the statue may be assumed to signify the same... Thus this final empire will consist of ten kingdoms (or nations) ruling jointly at the time of Christ’s return. John the apostle also speaks of this eschatological ten-kingdom confederacy (cf. Rev 13:1; 17:12).”⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Miller, 95.

⁴⁶ Miller, 98-99.

- “In summary, shortly before the second coming of Christ, ten (a literal or symbolic number) kingdoms (or nations) of unequal strength will unite to form a coalition that will rise out of the ruins of the ancient Roman Empire. Since Rome is part of Europe and the activities of that ancient empire centered in Europe, it is reasonable to assume that this area of the world will play a leading role in this future regime. In Dan 7 the prophet indicates that from this empire will come the evil world leader of the last days commonly known as the Antichrist.”⁴⁷

What was the meaning behind the ‘divinely made stone?’ (44-45)

- “The key to understanding the passage rests on the interpretation of the rock that fills the earth. That the rock symbolizes the kingdom of God is specifically declared in the text (cf. 2:44-45). When the rock is interpreted as representing the kingdom of God, there is disagreement concerning the nature of the kingdom.”⁴⁸
 - Some scholars believe that the rock represents Christ’s spiritual kingdom in the hearts of believers that began during His earthly ministry, or First Advent. These scholars believe the feet and toes to be a further allusion Ancient Rome.
 - Other scholars believe that the rock represents a kingdom that will be set up in the future when Christ returns (the Second Advent) and reigns over all the earth. These scholars believe that the feet and toes represent an earthly empire that will exist immediately before Christ’s return.
 - We generally adhere to the second view—the rock is a future kingdom where Christ will rule and reign on the earth, and the feet and toes refer to the world powers just before His return, a revived Roman Empire of sorts.⁴⁹
- What are the characteristics of the Fifth Kingdom found in verses 44-45?
 - It was established in the ‘time of the kings.’ This refers to the coalition of nations that will be ruling the world just before Christ’s Second Advent.
 - It has a divine origin. On two occasions (34 & 45), Daniel clarifies that this rock was not cut from a mountain by human hands, but by God.
 - It will be eternal. Verse 44 says that it will ‘never be destroyed or conquered.
 - It will begin when Christ returns (the Second Advent). The most compelling evidence of this is that when this kingdom is established, “It will crush all these kingdoms into nothingness, and it will stand forever” (Daniel 2:44b). All the evidence of the Gentile kingdoms will be blown away by a divine wind (2:35).
 - It will be triumphant over all the kingdoms of the world (2:44; ‘crush’).
 - It will certainly come (2:45) and will be ruled by God the Son, not by a human man. “There is indeed coming a day when ‘the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea’ (Hab 2:14), for Messiah’s reign of righteousness will extend to the ends of the earth.”⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Miller, 99.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 97.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 98-99.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 102.

What became of the stone after it destroyed the statue? Why is this significant?

- The rock (cf. verse 35) became ‘a great mountain that covered the whole earth.’ “The Babylonians called their chief god, Marduk, “The Great Mountain.” They believed that their gods came from the sacred mountain of the earth—the mountain they called “the Mountain of the Lands.” The temples of Babylon were intended to be imitations of mountains. All of this indicates that to the Babylonian way of thinking, mountains were associated with what is divine. Because of this Babylonian mind set, God purposely portrayed His future kingdom first as a stone cut out of a mountain and second as a stone that becomes a great mountain (v. 35). This was His way of getting Nebuchadnezzar to understand that the fifth kingdom would be divine rather than human in origin... But to prevent Nebuchadnezzar from concluding that this divine kingdom would be set up by Babylonian gods, Daniel made it clear that the God of heaven would establish.⁵¹
- The rock is representative of Jesus Christ. “Other prophetic portions of the Bible indicated that that King would be the person who is called the Messiah (Ps. 2:2), the Son of God (Ps. 2:4-12) and the Son of Man who comes with the clouds of heaven (Dan. 7:13-14)... It can be concluded, then, that the stone represented both the Kingdom of God and Jesus Christ. Significantly, more than once the Bible referred to Jesus as the Stone (Mt. 21:33-45; 1 Peter 2:4-8).”⁵²

Nebuchadnezzar’s Response (46-49)

What was the king’s response to Daniel’s interpretation of the dream?

- He fell down and worshipped Daniel.
- He commanded his people to worship Daniel also.
- He recognized Daniel’s god as “the greatest of gods, the Lord over kings, a revealer of mysteries” (2:47). “...he did not recognize God as the only god. The king was still a polytheist.”⁵³

How did this event change the course of Daniel’s life?

- We must not forget that Daniel has just finished his training. Most likely, he has not yet celebrated his twentieth birthday, and he was made the chief over all the wise men!
- And since he was able to interpret the king’s dream, Daniel also became the governor of the province of Babylon. “Out of all the provinces of the kingdom this would have been the most important one, for it would have contained the capital city of Babylon.”⁵⁴
- Daniel did not forget about his friends—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. He requested that they be appointed as administrators in the province of Babylon.

⁵¹ Showers, 21-22.

⁵² Ibid., 23.

⁵³ Ibid., 26.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

Trust in Trials

Faith in God to Do the Impossible

Introduction

Last week, we talked about Daniel and his friends being taken captive by the Babylonians. We talked about “Excellence in Exile: Faithful Living in a Fallen Land.”⁸ We saw how that their commitment to God and commitment to live according to God’s standard propelled them to the forefront of the young leaders in Babylon. We watched as God blessed them in amazing ways because of their commitment to live a disciplined life.

I challenged each of you to make a similar commitment to God as we begin this New Year. I asked you to make a commitment to stand for God in 2016... to spend time in His Word every day... to live a life of excellence in every way! And the key to this challenge is that I have to make up my mind to live by God’s standards before I find myself in a difficult situation. If I am not resolved in my heart, I will not honor God with my decisions. So let’s get real for just a minute... what does this look like in your life? It means:

- I won’t cheat on the test I forgot to study for.
- I won’t let my friend cheat off of me when he forgot to study.
- I will decide how far I will and won’t go before I get in the car with my date.
- I will do what’s right, even if it costs me my job.
- I will not take anything from work, even if I am underpaid.
- I will tell the truth on my time card.
- I will only expense items that are truly business related.

This is what it means to live faithfully in a world that is fallen!

Daniel was blessed because of his decision. Isn’t it easier to live by God’s standards when everything is going right? What about when the storms come?⁹ Will we continue to stand for God in the midst of trials? Will we trust Him in the middle of our suffering?

Anytime we think of suffering in the Bible, our minds always go to the Old Testament to the story of Job. Job was a man who was blessed! In fact, he was so blessed that Satan challenged God to a bit of a wager. Listen to these verses...

⁸ Then the Lord asked Satan, “Have you noticed my servant Job? He is the finest man in all the earth. He is blameless—a man of complete integrity. He fears God and stays away from evil.”

⁹ Satan replied to the Lord, “Yes, but Job has good reason to fear God. ¹⁰ You have always put a wall of protection around him and his home and his property. You have made him prosper in everything he does. Look how rich he is! ¹¹ But reach out and take away everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face!” (Job 1:8-11, God’s Word Translation)

So how did this story end? Did Job ever curse God when he went through difficulties and suffering? NO! He trusted God in his trials, and God enabled him to endure. As I mentioned a few weeks ago:

If your life was perfect, then what would you need God for? ☞

Read Daniel 2:1-11

² In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his spirit was troubled, and his sleep left him. ☞ ² Then the king commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans be summoned to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king. ☞ ³ And the king said to them, “I had a dream, and my spirit is troubled to know the dream.”

⁴ Then the Chaldeans said to the king in Aramaic, “O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation.” ☞

⁵ The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, “The word from me is firm: if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you shall be torn limb from limb, and your houses shall be laid in ruins. ☞ ⁶ But if you show the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. Therefore show me the dream and its interpretation.” ☞

⁷ They answered a second time and said, “Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show its interpretation.” ☞

⁸ The king answered and said, “I know with certainty that you are trying to gain time, because you see that the word from me is firm— ⁹ if you do not make the dream known to me, there is but one sentence for you. ☞ You have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words before me till the times change. Therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can show me its interpretation.” ☞

¹⁰ The Chaldeans answered the king and said, “There is not a man on earth who can meet the king’s demand, for no great and powerful king has asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or Chaldean. ☞ ¹¹ The thing that the king asks is difficult, and no one can show it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.” ☞

Ridiculous Expectation

- The king's ultimatum was ridiculous!
 - He is not just asking his 'wise men' to interpret the dream—He is requiring them to tell him what the dream is too!
 - Verses 5-6 from *God's Word*:

⁵ But the king said to the astrologers, "I am serious about this. If you don't tell me what my dream was and what it means, you will be torn limb from limb, and your houses will be turned into heaps of rubble! ⁶ But if you tell me what I dreamed and what the dream means, I will give you many wonderful gifts and honors. Just tell me the dream and what it means!"
- Why would the king insist on something so ridiculous?
 - He wanted a divine answer—not something that someone made up that sounds believable.
 - Have you ever tried to interpret a dream for someone?
 - I promise you that if you tell me the contents of one of your dreams, I can tell you what it means! Balderdash!
 - We find out later in the chapter what the dream is.
 - It is safe to say that Nebuchadnezzar probably believed that the statue in the dream was somehow representative of him or his kingdom. ☹
 - He was likely afraid that it represented the fall of his kingdom, which often happened when someone near to the king turned on him (i.e. an advisor).
 - He didn't want to reveal the secret of his dream to his advisors because they might be the ones trying to kill him. This is why he does not hesitate to threaten to kill them if they could not interpret the dream.
 - Verses 8-9 (GW)

⁸ The king replied, "I know what you are doing! You're stalling for time because you know I am serious when I say, ⁹ 'If you don't tell me the dream, you are doomed.' So you have conspired to tell me lies, hoping I will change my mind. But tell me the dream, and then I'll know that you can tell me what it means." ☹
- **Application**
 - Have you ever found yourself facing an ultimatum that just seems ridiculous?
 - Have you ever had a boss or a teacher who had such high expectations that no mere human could ever meet them?
 - I believe that it is important for us to realize that these things are not a surprise to God. In fact, God is allowing this to happen to you for a reason! ☹
 - Don't ask, 'Why?' Instead ask, 'What next?' ☹

Reasonable Excuse

¹⁰ The astrologers replied to the king, “No one on earth can tell the king his dream! And no king, however great and powerful, has ever asked such a thing of any magician, enchanter, or astrologer! ¹¹ The king’s demand is impossible. No one except the gods can tell you your dream, and they do not live here among people.” ☞

- To whom was the king making this demand?
 - Verse 2a – “Then the king commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans be summoned to tell the king his dreams.”
 - The word Chaldeans, in verse 2 and verse 10, can also be translated as ‘astrologers.’
 - Sometimes this word is used in an ethnic sense as a general designation for the Babylonian people.
 - Other times this word is used in a restrictive sense to describe a class of priests, astrologers, magicians, fortune-teller or wise men.
- Their excuse was reasonable! ☞
- Their excuse was revealing!
 - They revealed that they were not really ‘in touch’ with ‘the gods’ like they advertised themselves to be.
 - In fact, their excuses reveal that they do not truly believe that there is any way to access ‘the gods.’
- **Application**
 - Astrology is still prevalent today. Tarot cards, horoscopes and psychic readings are all very popular.
 - Something you need to know... they are all a hoax!
 - There is no divine power in these things.

Request for Extra Time

¹² The king was furious when he heard this, and he ordered that all the wise men of Babylon be executed. ¹³ And because of the king’s decree, men were sent to find and kill Daniel and his friends.

¹⁴ When Arioch, the commander of the king’s guard, came to kill them, Daniel handled the situation with wisdom and discretion. ¹⁵ He asked Arioch, “Why has the king issued such a harsh decree?” So Arioch told him all that had happened. ☞ ¹⁶ Daniel went at once to see the king and requested more time to tell the king what the dream meant.

- As soon as Daniel heard about the king’s decree to kill all the wise men of Babylon, he formed a plan of action.
 - He listened to Arioch as he explained what happened.
 - He went to the king to request more time to interpret the dream.

- Evidently, Daniel's request for more time was granted.
- **Application**
 - Daniel believed that Yahweh could reveal the dream and its interpretation to him.
 - So what did Daniel do next?

Ridiculous Expectation?!?

¹⁷ Then Daniel went home and told his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah what had happened. ☞ ¹⁸ He urged them to ask the God of heaven to show them his mercy by telling them the secret, so they would not be executed along with the other wise men of Babylon. ¹⁹ That night the secret was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven.

- Was Daniel arrogant to claim that God would reveal the dream?
 - Was he demanding of God?
 - Was he just lucky that God agreed?
 - Why was he so confident that God would answer? TRUST ☞
- How do you define 'trust'? (*Holman Bible Dictionary*, 469)
 - "Standing firm in one's convictions."
 - "...to trust His word that He alone was God and to commit one's life to His promises for the present and the future." ☞
- What was Daniel's motivation for interpreting the dream?
 - The obvious answer is 'to save his own skin.'
 - But I think the real answer can be found in verse 19.
 - "That night the secret was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven."
 - It was Daniel's desire to bring honor and glory to God.
 - When our heart is right, God answers prayer. ☞
 - Hebrews 10:19, 22 says,

"¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus... ²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience..."
- What did Daniel do to understand the dream?
 - Picture this...
 - Daniel (approx 16 years old) went home to his three friends (16-21 years old) and asked them to pray. ☞
 - Four teenagers having the prayer meeting of their life.
 - God revealed the dream to Daniel and he praised God.
 - Daniel and his friends experienced revival!

- Almost every spiritual awakening in modern history has started among students and usually on campuses rather than church buildings.
 - Charles Finney recognized the essential elements for revival: corporate prayer and repentance.
- **Application**
 - Was it a ridiculous for Daniel to expect God to answer his prayer? Why do we struggle with 'expectant prayer'? 🙏
 - Mark 11:22-26

²² Jesus said to them, "Have faith in God! ²³I can guarantee this truth: This is what will be done for someone who doesn't doubt but believes what he says will happen: He can say to this mountain, 'Be uprooted and thrown into the sea,' and it will be done for him. ²⁴That's why I tell you to have faith that you have already received whatever you pray for, and it will be yours. ²⁵Whenever you pray, forgive anything you have against anyone. Then your Father in heaven will forgive your failures."

Conclusion

- Do we really trust Jesus when we experience trials in life?
- When trouble comes our way, is our first instinct to run home to our family/friends to pray—asking God to reveal Himself to us?
- I don't know what you are facing today, but God wants you...
 - To entrust it to him in prayer.
 - To share it with your family/friends. 🙏
 - To pray together with others—believing He will answer.

III. The Trial of the Three Hebrews (3:1-30)

“No specific time is given for this incident... Yet the position of the chapter in the book, the probability that the king received the idea for the image from the dream in chap. 2, and the likelihood that the image was constructed to test the loyalty of the king’s officials to his new administration all appear to support a time nearer the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign. The episode did not occur before his second year (603-602 B.C.), however, for it was not until then that Daniel interpreted the dream (cf. 2:1) with the subsequent appointment of the Hebrew young men to their positions as officials “over the affairs of the province of Babylon” (3:12; cf. 2:49).”¹

Where was Daniel when all this happened?

- According to Daniel 2:48-49, King Nebuchadnezzar appointed Daniel as the ruler over the whole province of Babylon. However, Daniel requested that the king appoint Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to be over the province of Babylon.
- It seems that Daniel was asking this of the king so that he would not have that duty; thus, he would be able to remain in the palace as a part of the king’s court.
- “With the king and other important officials absent, someone was needed to govern in the city. Thus Daniel was unable to leave Babylon and travel to the plain of Dura for this event. His absence may also have been due to other factors, but it is certain that Daniel would never have bowed to the image.”²

The Occasion (1-7)

What were the circumstances surrounding the events of this chapter?

- King Nebuchadnezzar erected a 90 foot tall golden image in the Plain of Dura.
 - “The best explanation is that... the “ninety feet” includes the height of a base upon which the image rested. Such a proposal seems reasonable since a foundation of some kind would have been needed to support the massive structure. As much as thirty or forty feet of the height may have been taken up by the base, producing measurements more proportional to a human figure.”³
 - “Nebuchadnezzar probably built this image to represent the world power that he had built and to honor the Babylonian gods whom he thought had given him his power. No doubt he got the idea for his image from the image in the dream of chapter 2. However, whereas only the head of the image in the dream was made of gold, Nebuchadnezzar had this image made entirely of gold. This was an expression of rebellion against God’s revelation.”⁴
 - Essentially, Nebuchadnezzar was proclaiming that his kingdom would rule the earth forever, no matter what Daniel prophesied from the Lord.

¹ Miller, 107-108.

² Ibid., 108.

³ Miller, 110.

⁴ Showers, 30.

- “Large statues constructed by kings of ancient times were not uncommon.”⁵
 - Examples include...
 - The Great Sphinx in Egypt
 - Statues of pharaohs in Egypt (i.e. Rameses II)
 - Statue of Zeus in Greece
- Government officials were summoned to this spot for the dedication of the statue.
 - Seven different classes of government officials are listed in verse 2, and it can be assumed they are listed in order of importance. These officials include:⁶
 - Satraps – (“princes” in KJV); rulers over large divisions of the empire;
 - Prefects – (“governors” in KJV); high ranking officials directly responsible to the satraps;
 - Governors (“captains” in KJV); administrators of smaller regions, districts or provinces;
 - Counselors – (“judges” in KJV); (“advisors” in NIV);
 - Treasurers
 - Justices – (“counselors” in KJV); (“judges” in NIV);
 - Magistrates – (“sheriffs” in KJV);
 - Other dignitaries were also present and referred to as “all the officials of the province.”
 - “All of these government officials were brought out to the plain of Dura, where their loyalty was to be demonstrated to the king by bowing before the colossus.”⁷
 - It is important to remember here that when Nebuchadnezzar had his first dream, it is likely that he believed some of his government officials were plotting to topple him and end his reign in the empire. This is an opportunity to test the loyalty of each official.

Once the officials gathered, what was the proclamation from the king?

- In Daniel 3:4-5, the Bible says,

⁴ And the herald proclaimed aloud, “You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, ⁵ that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up.” (ESV)
- It is interesting to note that “Verse 4 indicates that many different nationalities (“peoples, nations and men of every language”) were present. This reflects Nebuchadnezzar’s policy of appointing native rulers to govern the provinces.”⁸
 - This is the reason that Aramaic was used for this portion of Scripture.

⁵ Miller, 109.

⁶ Ibid., 111-112.

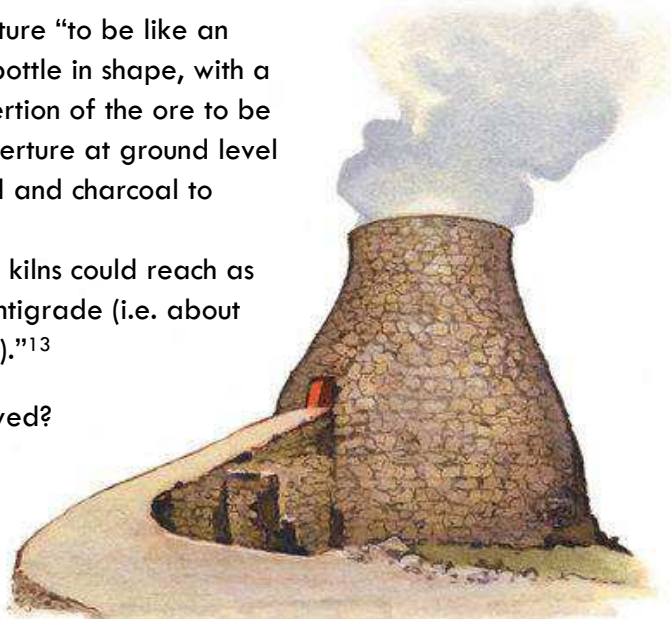
⁷ Ibid., 112.

⁸ Ibid., 113.

- At the sound of all the musical instruments being played, all of the government officials were to bow down and worship the statue of gold.
 - There are many musical instruments listed here; however, verse 7 seems to indicate that this was just a partial list and that many other instruments were used as well.
 - The Aramaic word used here for worship “denotes worship of deity... Though their loyalty was being tested, it is clear that these persons were actually being required to worship this image (cf. 28), something that no God-honoring Jew could do.”⁹

What were the consequences of disobeying this command?

- “Refusal to worship would be regarded as treason and would bring immediate punishment—death in a furnace of blazing fire. The kings of Babylon were noted for roasting alive people who disobeyed their commands (Jer. 29:22).”¹⁰
- Why would Nebuchadnezzar choose this as a punishment?
 - “Nebuchadnezzar probably chose this means of punishment not only because it was a horrifying way to die but because it was convenient. A huge kiln would necessarily have been available to smelt metal for the gold plating and for manufacturing the bricks to construct the base and possibly the inner parts of the statue itself.”¹¹
 - Archer describes the structure “to be like an old-fashioned glass milk bottle in shape, with a large opening for the insertion of the ore to be smelted and a smaller aperture at ground level for the admission of wood and charcoal to furnish the heat.”¹²
 - The “temperature in these kilns could reach as high as 1000 degrees centigrade (i.e. about 1800 degrees Fahrenheit).”¹³



What happened when the musicians played?

- According to verse 7, “all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.”
- However, verses 8-12 explain that there were three exceptions. Three stood alone!

⁹ Miller, 115.

¹⁰ Showers, 30.

¹¹ Miller, 115.

¹² Archer, G.L. “Daniel” *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 56.

¹³ Miller, 115.

The Accusation (8-12)

Who accused the three Hebrews of disobeying the king's command? (8)

- Verse 8 says that “certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews.”
- Why did they have to accuse them? Why was it not obvious? (Like this picture portrays)
 - “In so vast a crowd the king evidently could not see that three men were left standing, so certain individuals came to the king and reported the fact... In all likelihood “astrologers” is correct, and the accusation reflects jealousy on the part of certain wise men.”¹⁴
 - “Daniel and his three friends had received leadership positions in this group, and some of the native Babylonian astrologers resented it. At the first opportunity they attempted to rid themselves of these foreign intruders.”¹⁵



What were the charges that were brought against the three Hebrews?

- The astrologers addressed the king in a respectful manner (9).
- Before stating the charges against them, the astrologers reminded the king of his decree to worship the golden image and to punish any who did not comply (10-11).
- When they finally state the charges against the three Hebrews, they reminded the king that he was the one who put them in positions of authority (12a). This seems to be “a veiled assault on the king’s judgment—Nebuchadnezzar had made a mistake in assigning these foreigners positions over native Babylonians.”¹⁶
- The charges were:
 - They did not pay attention to the king’s commands.
 - They did not serve the gods of Babylon.
 - They did not worship the golden image that the king himself set up.

The Inquisition (13-18)

What was Nebuchadnezzar’s reaction to this accusation?

- He reacted ‘with fury’ and ‘with rage.’
 - “These two words for a hendiadys [a figure in which a complex idea is expressed by two words connected by a conjunction] and give the sense of ‘extreme danger.’ Beside himself with rage, the Babylonian despot immediately had the three Jews brought before him.”¹⁷
 - In local vernacular, ‘He was so mad he couldn’t see straight!’

¹⁴ Miller, 116.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 117.

¹⁷ Ibid.

- When he confronted the Jews, he questioned them. The tone of the question almost seems as if he is in disbelief.
- 'Is it really true? Did you actually refuse to bow down to the image I set up?'

What options were the three Hebrews given by the king?

- The king gave them a second chance to 'do the right thing' as he saw it.
- They had two options:
 - Bow down and worship the image when the musicians played.
 - Do not bow down and be thrown into the fiery furnace.

In what way did Nebuchadnezzar make an inadvertent challenge toward God?

- In verse 15, he asked, "And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?"
- He said, "Who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?" Do you remember the meaning of Meshach's name? What about his Jewish name—Mishael?
 - Meshach means 'who is what Aku is.'
 - Mishael means 'who is what Yahweh is.'
- "Nebuchadnezzar boasted of the certainty of the Gentile punishment which would be administered—the furnace would be so hot that no god would be able to deliver them. Without realizing it, through that boast the king had afforded the God of heaven a splendid opportunity to display His sovereign power."¹⁸

How did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego respond to the king? (16-18)

- They were unwavering in their stance.
 - "The young men responded that they did not need to present a defense (lit., "return [an answer]") to the king concerning this decision (v. 16). No apology was to be given for their stand. This was not a "proud reply"... it was a "firm" reply. Their minds were made up."¹⁹
 - "Realizing that this pagan king could never comprehend the reason for their stand, Daniel's friends gave up all attempts to justify their disobedience to the king. Instead, they simply entrusted themselves to God."²⁰
- They were unyielding in their faith.

"Here is a pertinent lesson for believers today. Does God have all power? Yes. Is God able to deliver believers from all problems and trials? Yes. But does God deliver believers from all trials? No. God may allow trials to come into the lives of his people to build character or for a number of other reasons (Rom 5). The purpose for trials may not always be understood, but God simply asks that his children trust him—even when it is not easy."²¹

¹⁸ Showers, 32.

¹⁹ Miller, 119.

²⁰ Showers, 33.

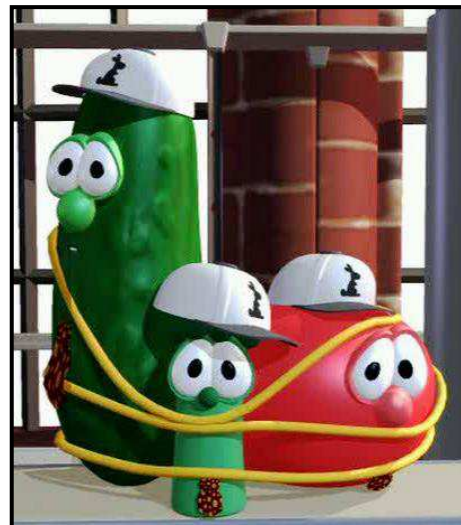
²¹ Miller, 120.

- They were unrivaled in their courage.
“Some of the most courageous words ever spoken are recorded in v. 18. Christ told his followers: “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt 10:28)... Even if they had to suffer a horrible, painful death in a burning oven, these three young men refused to forsake their God and worship idols.”²²

The Sentence (19-23)

How did Nebuchadnezzar react to their continued stand?

- His facial expression changed.
 - This phrase is “literally ‘the image of his face was changed,’ referring to the king’s facial expression. His countenance became harsh...”²³
- He ordered the furnace to be made 7 times hotter than normal.
 - This could be a proverbial expression such as is found in the book of Proverbs.
 - Proverbs 24:15-16
Lie not in wait as a wicked man against the dwelling of the righteous; do no violence to his home; for the righteous falls seven times and rises again, but the wicked stumble in times of calamity.
 - Proverbs 26:16
The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can answer sensibly.
 - This could be “an idiomatic way of saying ‘as hot as possible,’ ... Thus the expression signifies that the furnace was heated to maximum intensity.”²⁴
- He had them bound—while still wearing their clothes—and thrown into the furnace.
 - Their clothing was left on them because it “would have rapidly caught fire and engulfed the three in flames, a horrifying spectacle.”²⁵
 - The guards bound them “to prevent any possibility of escape or rescue.”²⁶
 - “Probably the choice of *men of strength* was also intended to forestall any intervention, either of human or of Divine power.”²⁷



²² Miller, 120.

²³ Ibid., 121.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 122.

²⁶ Showers, 33.

²⁷ Young, 92.

- He acted with harshness and impatience.
 - “[T]he soldiers were forced to carry out the command so hurriedly that they did not have time to protect themselves from the fire. When they threw the victims into the furnace, the extreme heat (or a shift in wind direction) killed them.”²⁸

The Deliverance (24-27)

What did the Babylonians see in the fire?

- “Nebuchadnezzar was prepared to watch Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego disintegrate in the flames, but he was not prepared for what he saw.”²⁹
- Verse 24 says that the king “was astonished and rose up in haste.”
- What was it that startled Nebuchadnezzar?³⁰
 - There were four persons in the furnace, not three.
 - The people in the furnace were no longer bound.
 - All four of the people were walking around in the furnace.
 - None of them seemed to be hurt in any way.
 - The fourth person looked like “a son of the gods.”

Who was the fourth person in the fire?

- According to Showers, it was his conviction that “the fourth person in the fiery furnace was the Son of God, Jesus Christ, in a preincarnate appearance, sent by God to deliver miraculously His three faithful saints.”³¹
- Miller concurs, “Most likely the fourth man in the fire was the angel of the Lord, God himself in the person of his Son Jesus Christ... It is certainly true that when believers go through fiery trials Christ is with them.”³²
- Nebuchadnezzar then recognized Yahweh as “the Most High God.” This designation, however, was well within the scope of pagan, polytheistic religious concepts, for the king merely considered Yahweh the great God... among many.”³³

The Result (28-30)

What did Nebuchadnezzar do as a result of this experience?

- He called the Hebrew men to come out of the furnace.
- He acknowledged God as “the Most High God.”
- He blessed the Hebrews and recognized Who had delivered them.

²⁸ Miller, 122.

²⁹ Miller, 122.

³⁰ Showers, 35.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Miller, 124.

³³ Ibid.

- He made a decree that no one speak against the God of the Hebrews.
- He promoted the three Hebrews in the province of Babylon.

What were the evidences of God's miraculous power? ³⁴

- No one was burned
- No hair was singed
- No clothing was scorched
- No smell of smoke.

What was the ultimate purpose of this miraculous deliverance?

- "Babylon had defeated Judah in battle, and pagans commonly held that victory over another nation was proof that their god was greater than the deity of the conquered foe. Yahweh wanted to dispel any such notion. Through this miracle and others recorded in the book, Yahweh made it clear to Nebuchadnezzar (who blatantly challenged Yahweh's power by his actions in this incident) and to all the world that Judah's defeat was not because their God did not exist or was anemic."³⁵
- "God also desired that through the witness of this incident, many persons (both Jews and Gentiles) of Daniel's generation and those to follow would turn to him in faith for salvation."³⁶

³⁴ Showers, 35-36.

³⁵ Miller, 125-126.

³⁶ Ibid., 126.

Standing in Solidarity

Standing for God No Matter the Consequences

Daniel 3:1-30

Introduction

Five Elements of a Story

A story has five basic but important elements. These five components are:

- the characters,
- the setting,
- the plot,
- the conflict,
- and the resolution.

These essential elements keep the story running smoothly and allow the action to develop in a logical way that the reader can follow.

The Characters

- KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR
- GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS
- PEOPLE OF THE EMPIRE
- CHALDEANS (ASTROLOGERS)
- SHADRACH, MESHACH, AND ABEDNEGO

The Setting

- The Dream (2:31-34)
- The Interpretation - will be discussed in the evening service
- The King's Humble Response (2:46-47)
- The King's Expanding Ego (2:37-38 and 3:1)

The Plot – Conspiracy against the Hebrews

- Read Daniel 3:8-12
- Why would these 'Chaldeans'--or astrologers-- want to have these young men killed?
 - They were different than everybody else--better even! (1:19-20)
 - Rapid advancement in the government - (2:48-49)
 - Anti-Semitism has existed for thousands of years!

- Read Daniel 3:13-15
- How did Nebuchadnezzar respond?
 - He was angry, but willing to give them a second chance.
 - He said, “Who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?” Do you remember the meaning of Meshach's name? What about his Jewish name—Mishael?
 - Meshach means 'who is what Aku is.'
 - Mishael means ' who is what Yahweh is.'

The Conflict – Refusal to Bow Down to the Statue

- Resolve of the Hebrew Children - Daniel 3:16-18
 - They had no need to answer because their decision was unwavering.
 - They believed that God would deliver them from his hands, but if God chose not to, they still would not comply with his command.
- Rage of King Nebuchadnezzar - Daniel 3:19-23
 - This infuriated the king!
 - How did he react?
 - His facial expression changed.
 - He ordered the furnace to be made 7 times hotter than normal.
 - He had them bound so the guards would be able to execute the punishment.
 - He acted with harshness and impatience.
 - His actions (reactions) resulted in the deaths of some of his bravest soldiers.
- Rescue of the Hebrew children - Daniel 3:24-25
 - They were thrown in and fell down.
 - "The same word used in v. 6 (see note) to indicate an act of worship. The three Hebrew youths “fall” into the fire because they would not “fall” before the image" (Faithlife Study Bible notes).
 - Is it possible that they fell because they saw the Lord in the furnace and wanted to 'fall' down and worship Him?
 - Bound going in, unbound and walking around inside.
 - Others were killed because they got too close, but they didn't even smell like smoke!
 - They encountered the Lord in the midst of their trial, and he protected them!

The Resolution – Risk/Reward

- Read Daniel 3:26-30
- It does not matter whether God delivers us out from under our circumstances. All that matters is that we STAND!
 - Stand together in solidarity...
 - Stand for what is right...
 - Stand no matter the consequences...

IV. Nebuchadnezzar's Second Dream & God's Judgment (4:1-37)

In Daniel 4, we find Nebuchadnezzar's second dream and his third encounter with Jehovah God. The timeframe for this event is not written explicitly in the text, but the events described here in chapter four describe a time toward the end of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. Stephen Miller notes...¹

- Nebuchadnezzar's building operations seem to be concluded (4:30).
- There was peace throughout the Babylonian Empire (4:4).
- The seven-year illness that Nebuchadnezzar experienced (4:29) was right at the end of his life and started a year after his second dream.
- In summary, it is likely that about 30 years has passed since the events of chapter three, meaning that Daniel is now approximately 50 years old.

This chapter is unique from the rest of Scripture. G.L. Archer observes that this "is the only chapter in Scripture composed under the authority of a pagan."² Miller points out that chapter four "is written from Nebuchadnezzar's viewpoint... [and] is the king's testimony of Yahweh's operation in his life."³ And Showers explains that there are two reasons for us to recognize that chapter four are the words of Nebuchadnezzar. He writes, "First, the literary style of chapter four resembles the style of Nebuchadnezzar's ancient inscriptions. Second, the character of the king revealed in this chapter agrees with ancient descriptions of this man."⁴

This chapter is written as a letter from the ruler of the Babylonian Empire to all the people "that dwell in all the earth."

The King's Proclamation (1-3)

What is the purpose of this letter?

- "After the events recorded in this chapter had taken place, Nebuchadnezzar had a royal proclamation about them circulated. He did this in order to teach all his people the lesson which God had taught him—the fact that the Most High God has a kingdom that is sovereign over man and will last forever in contrast to man's kingdoms."⁵
- "The purpose of this letter is set forth in v. 2, namely, to tell of the greatness and power of the 'Most High God' (the God of Israel) that had been exhibited in Nebuchadnezzar's life. Emphasis is placed on God's 'miraculous signs and wonders' by the word order, the terms being positioned first in the Aramaic."⁶

¹ Miller, 127-128.

² Archer, 58.

³ Miller, 128.

⁴ Showers, 39.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Miller, 129.

- “At last Nebuchadnezzar had come to realize that Yahweh (‘the Most High God’), not himself or the gods of Babylon, was sovereign.”⁷
- “The king was now an old man and must have been acutely aware that soon death would bring an end to his life and thereby to his reign. Yet he acknowledged that Yahweh’s kingdom is ‘eternal’ and ‘endures from generation to generation.’”⁸

The King’s Dream (4-18)

What was happening when the king had this dream? (4-5)

- The king was ‘at ease’ and ‘prospering’ in his palace.
 - ‘at ease’ gives the ideas of contentment and security.
 - ‘prosperous’ refers to something that is luxuriant or flourishing.⁹
- “The king was experiencing peace and prosperity on every hand. His opposition (including the Egyptians) had been subdued, and there was no serious threat to his authority.”¹⁰
- The state of prosperity and contentment was interrupted by the visions/dreams that he was experiencing. In fact, he was terrified of what he saw.

Who did Nebuchadnezzar initially call upon to interpret the dream? (6-7)

- He called all the wise men of Babylon, but none could explain the dream to the king.
- “No explanation is offered for his late arrival, but Daniel may have deliberately delayed his coming in order to give the pagan wise men an opportunity to prove their inability before Yahweh again demonstrated his reality and power.
- “It might also have been that Daniel, as leader of the wise men, only considered matters the others could not manage.”¹¹

Why was the king confident that Daniel would be able to interpret the dream? (8-9)

- The king recognized that ‘the spirit of the holy gods’ was in him.
 - Showers explains, “Nebuchadnezzar realized that only a supernatural being could interpret this dream, and Daniel had demonstrated before that he had contact with such a being.”¹²
- What is significant about the fact that Daniel is referred to here by his Babylonian name—Belteshazzar?
 - Nebuchadnezzar’s understanding of Daniel’s giftedness is skewed. In verse 8, he said, “At last Daniel came in before me—he who was named Belteshazzar after the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods...”

⁷ Miller, 129.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 130.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 131.

¹² Showers, 41.

- "Another noteworthy fact is that after thirty years Daniel was still 'chief' of the king's counselors ('magicians'), which evidences that he must have performed his duties admirably."¹³

In what way was his confidence misplaced?

- "Daniel was addressed by his Babylonian name, Belteshazzar, which may have been the only name most people in Babylon knew... Nebuchadnezzar declared that Daniel was 'called Belteshazzar, after the name of my god,' indicating that the name of a dity was either implied or more likely... an abbreviated form that originally included the name of a Babylonian god, probably Marduk."¹⁴
- "Nebuchadnezzar was convinced that the gods spoke through his faithful counselor. Daniel's qualification for interpreting dreams was that God dwelt within him, and this is the prerequisite for spiritual understanding today."¹⁵



What did the king dream? What things were in his dream? (10-17)

- A large tree that was visible to the whole earth.
- The tree provided beauty, shade, food and shelter.
- The tree was cut down by a holy messenger from heaven.
- The tree was stripped bare and provided nothing for humans or animals alike.
- The stump of the tree was left visible, and bound with iron and bronze.
- In verse 15b, the analogy changes from a tree to a man with the mind of an animal.
- The man will live in the fields and eat grass with the animals for seven years.

After sharing his dream, what did Nebuchadnezzar request of Daniel? (18)

- He asked Daniel to explain the interpretation of the dream to him.

The Interpretation of the Dream (19-27)

Why did Daniel hesitate to tell Nebuchadnezzar the meaning of the dream? (19)

- "Daniel was visibly shaken when he heard the dream, so much so that the king attempted to comfort the prophet by telling him not to let the dream or its meaning alarm him."¹⁶
- "As Daniel became aware of the meaning of the dream, he was shocked and greatly perplexed. He did not want to tell the bad meaning of the dream to the king, but Nebuchadnezzar insisted. Daniel expressed the wish that the tragedy portrayed by the dream would fall upon the king's enemies instead of upon the king."¹⁷

¹³ Miller, 132.

¹⁴ Ibid., 131.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 136.

¹⁷ Showers, 42.

What was the meaning behind the tree that ‘was visible to the end of the whole earth’? (20-22)

- The tree was representative of Nebuchadnezzar and the Kingdom of Babylon (22).
 - Daniel “explained that the great tree represented Nebuchadnezzar and his vast kingdom, which had afforded prosperity (‘abundant fruit’ and ‘food’) and protection (‘shelter’) to all the peoples of the earth.”¹⁸
- This analogy of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign was appropriate because:
 - “First, in several of his inscriptions Nebuchadnezzar had boasted about the peaceful shelter and abundance of food that he had provided for his subjects through Babylon. Indeed, in these boasts he used language descriptive of a tree when referring to his rule through Babylon.”¹⁹
 - “Second, as a result of military campaigns that took him several times through the forests of Lebanon, Nebuchadnezzar became greatly captivated by the huge cedar trees of that land... [Based on his inscriptions,] One gets the impression that the king exalted in the fact that he could cut down such a towering giant of strength.”²⁰

What was the meaning behind the second half of the dream? (23-25)

- Daniel explained that the watcher conveyed a ‘decree of the Most High,’ and that decree was against the king (24).
- “This king who delighted in cutting down trees would himself be cut down. Daniel indicated that the cutting down and destruction of the tree in the dream symbolized the fact that God would remove Nebuchadnezzar from his office of king.”²¹
- “Nebuchadnezzar is specifically named as the person who would behave like an animal. The king would ‘be driven away from people’ because of his strange behavior and... would live outside in the fields among grazing animals, particularly cattle (‘eat grass like cattle’).”²²
- “At night Nebuchadnezzar would not come inside like a man but would remain in the open field. Consequently in the mornings he would be ‘drenched with the dew of heaven.’”²³ This is symptomatic of the mental disorder called lycanthropy—“a form of madness involving the delusion of being an animal... with corresponding altered behavior.”²⁴



William Blake Nebuchadnezzar

¹⁸ Miller, 137.

¹⁹ Showers, 43.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 44.

²² Miller, 137.

²³ Ibid.

- “Although this insanity causes a person to act like a wild beast, the victim still retains an inner consciousness. This would explain the king’s ability to change his attitude while suffering this madness.”²⁵
- Daniel explained that this “insane behavior would continue for seven years (‘seven times’) until the king repented of his pride and acknowledged (‘comes to know’) that the Most High God is sovereign.”²⁶

What was the meaning behind the ‘stump of the roots of the tree’ being left? (26)

- In verse 26, the NLT says, “Since I said that the stump and the tree’s roots were to be left, your kingdom will be restored to you as soon as you realize that heaven rules.”
- This meant that Nebuchadnezzar would be restored once he repented and acknowledged that Yahweh is sovereign over everything.

What did Daniel encourage the king to do in response to this dream? (27)

- In verse 27, the NLT says, “That is why, Your Majesty, my best advice is that you stop sinning, and do what is right. Stop committing the same errors, and have pity on the poor. Maybe you can prolong your prosperity.”
- Had Nebuchadnezzar repented and acknowledged Yahweh as sovereign, God would have relented and not carried out this punishment (e.g. Jonah 3:10).

The Fulfillment of the Dream (28-36)

When did all this happen to Nebuchadnezzar? (28-29) Why did it not happen immediately?

- According to these verses, the punishments stipulated in this dream were not carried out until twelve months later.
- “In his mercy God had graciously allowed Nebuchadnezzar a full year to repent of his sins, but he had not done so. Now a great outburst of pride on the part of the Babylonian monarch became the catalyst for the dream’s fulfillment.”²⁷

What was happening at the moment that this dream was fulfilled? (29-31)

- Nebuchadnezzar was walking upon the roof of his royal palace looking out over the magnificent city he had built. Lacocque suggest that the king’s location may have been the famous ‘hanging gardens.’ From this high vantage point he had an impressive view of the area.”²⁸
- “As Nebuchadnezzar looked out over the city of Babylon his heart swelled with pride. He boasted that he himself had made Babylon the greatest city on earth by the might

²⁴ “Lycanthrophy” (http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/lycanthropy accessed on February 28, 2016).

²⁵ Showers, 47.

²⁶ Miller, 137.

²⁷ Ibid., 139.

²⁸ Ibid.

of his own power. He declared that he had made Babylon so magnificent in order to glorify himself. The king was on an ego trip. He was a classic illustration of man exalting over what he can do himself apart from God.”²⁹



- What was so special about the city of Babylon?³⁰
 - The city was a rectangular shape surrounded by a deep and wide, water-filled moat and then by an intricate system of double walls up to twenty-five feet thick and forty feet tall (estimated).
 - Access to the city was through one of eight, enormous gates.
 - It contained a seven-level ziggurat that rose 288 feet into the air (almost the same height as the Statue of Liberty at 303 feet).
 - A four-hundred foot long bridge that spanned the Euphrates River.
 - Fifty-three temples within the city walls.
 - At least three palaces, with the principal palace being approximately 630,000 ft².
 - The city also contained the famous “hanging gardens” which the ancient Greeks considered one of the Seven Wonders of the World. This structure included a series of hoists by which to raise water to the high terraces.
 - Almost all of the bricks that have been discovered by archeologists have an inscription upon them that says, “I am Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon.”
 - It was a magnificent city!

²⁹ Showers, 45.

³⁰ Miller, 140-141.

- “Many outstanding achievements may be attributed to Nebuchadnezzar, but sadly he failed to give God the glory for his blessings. His heart was filled with pride and self-importance, and he began to boast of his own greatness and ability.”³¹
- It was in this moment of pride that God chose to carry out his punishment upon him.

What actually happened to Nebuchadnezzar? (32-33)

- “Immediately the mental illness foretold in the dream seized the king, and he was driven from his throne to live in the open field like a wild animal.”³²
- “Nebuchadnezzar fell under the strange delusion and began to act like an animal. Because of this bizarre behavior, he ‘was driven away from people.’ He lived outdoors with the beasts, ‘ate grass like cattle,’ and was exposed to the weather (‘drenched with the dew’). The king’s ‘hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird.’”³³

How did this compare to what Daniel predicted?

- This matches Daniel’s interpretation exactly.

How long did Nebuchadnezzar live like this?

- Seven years

By the end of this time, what had changed about the king’s perspective of God?

- Nebuchadnezzar recognized God as sovereign.
- “...the king raised his eyes toward heaven, an act of submission, surrender, and acknowledgment of his need for the Most High God. Yahweh had proven he was truly the sovereign Lord and could humble the greatest king on earth.”³⁴

Did the king return to ruling over the Babylonian Empire as Daniel predicted? (36)

- “God observed Nebuchadnezzar’s simple gesture of humility and repentance and graciously restored his ‘sanity’... When the king repented, God restored his kingdom and his honor, demonstrating the principle that God honors those who honor him.”³⁵

Conclusion (37)

After all that Nebuchadnezzar went through, what was his attitude toward God? (37)

- NLT – “Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, will praise, honor, and give glory to the King of Heaven. Everything he does is true, his ways are right, and he can humiliate those who act arrogantly.”

³¹ Miller, 141.

³² Showers, 46.

³³ Miller, 142.

³⁴ Ibid., 143.

³⁵ Ibid.

Sorrow in Shame

Responding to God When We Hit Rock Bottom

Daniel 4:4-37

Introduction

The Boll Weevil

In the center of Main Street in Enterprise, Alabama, there is a monument celebrating the town's history. This edifice stands one of the strangest monuments in the world. It's a memorial to an insect! Handsomely carved in stone is the likeness of a boll weevil. Many believe that divine providence was involved in the circumstances that led to the erection of this unusual statue.

In early plantation days almost everyone in the community raised cotton. But as the years rolled on, a serious pestilence infested the area in the form of a small beetle that punctured the boll of the plant. As a result, it became almost impossible to bring a season's growth to maturity.

George Washington Carver, along with several other scientists, became deeply concerned about the situation and began intensive studies to see if any substitute crop could be grown in that part of the country. Raising peanuts was the answer, for they could be planted and harvested with very little loss.

In time, cotton gins were forgotten in that region, and it became known as an outstanding peanut center of the world. Soon the farmers' profits far exceeded what they had earned from their best cotton yield. In the end, they realized that the destructive insect they had feared had actually triggered the research that brought them prosperity. George Washington Carver enabled needy people to live above the circumstances.

The Lord often allows trials to unsettle our lives for a blessed purpose. Perhaps we are trying to "grow cotton" when we should be "raising peanuts." If so, the delays and disappointments we experience are just the gracious "boll weevils" sent to redirect us so that we will plant the crop of God's choosing!

Read Daniel 4:4-18

Nebuchadnezzar's Quality of Life (4-9)

- How does the Bible describe Nebuchadnezzar's life?
 - At ease and prospering... in his palace.
 - Advisers at his beck and call...
 - He was a rich and powerful man!
- How does his quality of life affect his outlook on life?
 - It skewed his worldview!
 - He refers to Daniel by his Babylonian name—Beltshazzar—and refers to him as the greatest of his wise men because the 'spirit of the gods' is in him and he is named after his god—Bel.

- In verse 18, he proudly proclaimed that ‘Beltshazzar’ would be able to interpret the dream.
 - He is full of pride... consumed with power... full of himself!
- **APPLICATION**
 - The book of Matthew refers to two different men as being ‘rich’—the rich young man (Matt 19:16-24) and Joseph of Arimathea (Matt 27:57-60).
 - The rich young man was unwilling to give away his possessions to follow Jesus.
 - Joseph of Arimathea gave his ‘final resting place’ to Jesus.
 - When a person’s quality of life is ‘good,’ he rarely thinks about God—in fact, he might even think of himself as a god.
 - This is why Jesus said:

“Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” (Matt 19:23b-24)

Nebuchadnezzar’s Second Dream (10-18)

- What did Daniel see in his dream? (Daniel 4:10-12)
 - A tall tree in the middle of the earth
 - Able to be seen from anywhere
 - Provided food for all
 - Provided shade for the animals
 - Provided homes for birds
- What happened to the tree? (4:13-15a)
 - It was destroyed by the proclamation of an angel from heaven.
 - All that was left of the tree was a stump, bound with a band of iron and bronze.
- What happened next in the dream? (4:15b-16)
 - Notice that the third person pronoun changes in the middle of verse 15 from a neuter pronoun to a masculine pronoun. God puts an end to the use of the tree as a symbol in the dream. From this point forward, the dream is about a specific man.
 - The man is sentenced by the angels from heaven to live in the fields as a wild animal.
- What was Nebuchadnezzar told was the purpose for this punishment? (4:17-18)
 - So that everyone may know: 1) the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world, and 2) He empowers whomever He chooses to rule over those kingdoms.
 - Based on the arrogance displayed in verse 18, it seems that the king was oblivious to the dream’s implications.
 - He may be assuming that the interpretation of the dream will be favorable because of the interpretation of the first dream.
- **APPLICATION**
 - Don’t miss this point... Nebuchadnezzar is the one speaking in these verses. He is conveying the contents of the dream to Daniel for interpretation.

- May I say to you today that we are often very much like Nebuchadnezzar? We hear the truth—sometimes very directly from God—and yet we are still oblivious to its implications on our lives!
- Life—for the king—was good! He had no need for God!

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream Interpreted (19-27)

- Upon hearing the dream, Daniel knew immediately that the meaning of the dream was not good news for the king. He said, "I wish the events foreshadowed in this dream would happen to your enemies... and not to you!" (verse 19, NLT)
- What was Daniel's interpretation of the dream?
 - Daniel explained that Nebuchadnezzar is the 'tree' in the dream (4:22). The Babylonian Empire was the great and mighty power that was visible throughout the world.
 - In the next few verses (23-24), Daniel repeats the details of the dream. His interpretation is in verses 25-27.
 - Interpretation – Nebuchadnezzar will...
 - Be driven from human society,
 - Live in the fields with the wild animals,
 - Eat grass like a cow,
 - Sleep outside and wake up with dew on him.
- How long would this punishment last? Why?
 - He would live this way for seven years!
 - This extended experience would bring him to the place where he learns that the God of heaven is the Most High and is in control of all the kingdoms of the world!
- **APPLICATION**
 - When life is going good—we think we don't need God.
 - But God uses difficult seasons in our lives...
 - To teach us dependence upon Him,
 - To teach us that He is in control, and
 - To bring us to the point of repentance.

Nebuchadnezzar's Humiliation (28-33)

- What happened to Nebuchadnezzar that humiliated him? (31b-33)
 - A voice from heaven spoke out and said, "You are no longer ruler of this kingdom. You will be driven from human society. You will live in the fields with the wild animals, and you will eat grass like a cow. And you will do this until you really learn who I am—even if it takes seven years!"
 - Verse 33 tells us that this all happened within the hour.
 - Read Daniel 4:33 (NLT)

"That same hour the judgment was fulfilled, and Nebuchadnezzar was driven from human society. He ate grass like a cow, and he was drenched with the dew of

heaven. He lived this way until his hair was as long as eagles' feathers and his nails were like birds' claws."

- Why was God punishing him? (30-31 a)
 - Look at what Nebuchadnezzar said in Daniel 4:30 (NLT)

"As he looked out across the city, he said, 'Look at this great city of Babylon! By my own mighty power, I have built this beautiful city as my royal residence to display my majestic splendor.'"

 - It's not only what he said, it's the attitude that he projects in the process!
 - Imagine with me for a moment. King Nebuchadnezzar is standing there in the penthouse suite of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon (one of the seven wonders of the ancient world) looking out over the city and saying, "Look what I have done!"
 - What arrogance!
 - The Bible says that God spoke from heaven 'while the words were still in the king's mouth' to inform him that his time as king was finished. Now it's time to be a madman for a while.
 - God was the one who had placed Nebuchadnezzar in power over Babylon. He did not acknowledge this so God removed him from power.
 - He did not recognize God's supremacy, so God brought judgment upon him.
- Was it fair to punish Nebuchadnezzar in this way? (28-29)
 - Notice what verses 28-29 say,

²⁸ All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. ²⁹ At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, ³⁰ and the king answered and said, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?" ³¹ While the words were still in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven...
 - This event took place about thirty years after Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's first dream. But it was a full year later before God brought this punishment upon him.
 - God is the God of grace and mercy! He does not want to allow bad things in our lives, but it is more important to him that we are 'holy' instead of 'happy.'
- **APPLICATION**
 - You may be here today with full knowledge and understanding that you are living outside the will of God and His Word, and it may seem like you are 'getting away with it' somehow.
 - Numbers 32:23 (ESV) says, "But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the Lord, and be sure your sin will find you out" or "your sin will catch up with you" (HCSB).

- God demonstrates grace in each of our lives to allow us the opportunity to repent of our wickedness.
 - He chose to give grace to the people of Nineveh because their response to Jonah's message was repentance.
 - He promises to give grace to us today if we repent.

"If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land." (2 Chronicles 7:14)

Nebuchadnezzar's Repentance (34-37)

- Once he 'hit rock bottom,' how did he respond to God? (34-35)
 - At the end of the seven years, Nebuchadnezzar...
 - Blessed the Most High,
 - Praised and honored Him,
 - Recognized His everlasting dominion,
 - Recognized His worthlessness,
 - Recognized God's almighty power to do as He pleases,
 - Recognized his inability to stop Him or question Him.
 - Nebuchadnezzar finally experienced true repentance!
- What did God do in return? (36)
 - God gave him back his sanity.
 - God restored him to his previous position as king.
- **APPLICATION**
 - What can we learn from Nebuchadnezzar's story?
 - What can we take home today and apply to our lives? (37)
 - God's works are right!
 - His ways are just!
 - Whoever walks in pride, God is able to humble!

V. Belshazzar's Feast and the Fall of Babylon (5:1-31)

In Daniel 5, we are introduced to a new king. Nebuchadnezzar has died and now a new king is ruling over the Babylonian Empire. "King Nebuchadnezzar died on October 7, 562 BC. After three other men had ruled and passed from the scene, Nabonidus became king of Babylon in 556 BC. Nabonidus was king when the events of Daniel chapter five took place."³⁶ This is problematic because the first few verses of Daniel 5 introduced Belshazzar as the king. Many liberal scholars use this seeming discrepancy as evidence against the historical accuracy of the Book of Daniel. In fact, some believe "Belshazzar to be a fictional character invented by the author of the book."³⁷ These are the same liberal scholars that believe the book to have been written by an anonymous Jew in the second century BC.

Who is Belshazzar? Was he real or imaginary?

- Miller points out that "Until the last half of the nineteenth century the name Belshazzar was unattested except for the Book of Daniel and works dependent upon it... From other sources Nabonidus was known to have been the last king of Babylon..."³⁸

If Nabonidus was the last king of Babylon, why does Daniel identify Belshazzar as king?

- "...during the 1920's, the deciphering of more recently discovered Babylonian documents solved the mystery. These documents indicated that Belshazzar was the son of King Nabonidus."³⁹
- "Since that time abundant evidence has come to light that demonstrates not only that Belshazzar did live but that he was both the son of and coregent with Nabonidus."⁴⁰

If Nabonidus was still alive, why would he name his son as the coregent of the empire?

- "Some Babylonian documents... indicated the following: in 555 bc Nabonidus marched an army westward to conquer rebels who had revolted against Babylonian rule since the death of Nebuchadnezzar. Before he left Babylon on this expedition, Nabonidus entrusted 'kingship' to his oldest son, Belshazzar."⁴¹
- "Although the author of Daniel was aware of Nabonidus (as evidenced by the phrase, 'the third highest ruler in the kingdom' in 5:7, 16, 29) he did not mention him by name because he played no part in the events described and for all practical purposes Belshazzar was the only king the people served."⁴²
- Thus, Daniel was accurate in calling Belshazzar king.

³⁶ Showers, 49.

³⁷ Miller, 147.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Showers, 49-50.

⁴⁰ Miller, 147.

⁴¹ Showers, 50.

⁴² Miller, 148.

The Feast (1-4)

What is going on in the Babylonian Empire at the time of this party?⁴³

- Only days before this feast, Belshazzar's father and co-regent of Babylon, Nabonidus, had been defeated by the Persians at Sippar, just 50 miles north of Babylon.
- This celebration could have been held to build morale and encourage the Babylonians in the wake of this defeat.
- But another possibility for this seemingly ill-timed party might have been Belshazzar's attempt to proclaim himself as the one and only king of Babylon.
 - This would have been his coronation feast.
 - Having 1,000 nobles at a coronation feast would be reasonable, but that is a large number for just an ordinary feast.

What is happening at this party?

- Belshazzar 'drank wine' with his guests.
 - 'Drank' is a rendering of an Aramaic participle that in this context probably refers to continuous drinking.
 - Going against the cultural custom of the king being separated from his guests, King Belshazzar became inebriated in front of his guests.
- The feast became a drunken orgy.
 - The king's actions encouraged all the guests to consume large amounts of alcohol too. With inhibitions relaxed, it is likely that the feast degenerated into a drunken orgy.
 - This is supported by verses 3-4 which state that even the women—the wives and the concubines—were becoming drunk. The concubines were considered the inferior class of women from the royal harem and would be present for the purpose of sexual entertainment.
- The king commanded the sacred vessels from Jerusalem to be brought out and used.
 - "Baldwin comments that the idea of intoxication is most likely since 'superstition alone would normally guard a man from putting sacred vessels to a common use'... It is safe to conclude that the king was intoxicated, and his judgment had become impaired."⁴⁴

Considering that the Temple of Marduk held vessels of the gods of other conquered peoples, why did Belshazzar specifically request the vessels of Jehovah for this desecrating purpose?

- The people that Daniel proclaimed would overthrow the Babylonian Empire were camped just outside the city, so it seems that this act was in defiance to God (5:22-24).

⁴³ Miller, 151-152.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 152-153.

- The king believed that it was impossible to conquer the city of Babylon because (1) the Euphrates River ran through the middle of the city providing continual, fresh water; (2) the people of Babylon had enough food stored in the city to last more than twenty years. Babylon was the ‘unconquerable city.’⁴⁵
- The king is so confident in the city’s defenses that he decides to challenge Jehovah God and His prophecies.
- “In vv. 22-24 Daniel indicates that this was a deliberate act of defiance against Yahweh’s authority and power. Belshazzar knew that Yahweh had humbled Nebuchadnezzar, yet he deliberately defied the God of Israel. By his blasphemous actions the king was saying, ‘Yahweh, you may have humbled Nebuchadnezzar, but you will never conquer me!’”⁴⁶
 - “... it is a fact that Belshazzar as a boy had association with the royal court of Nebuchadnezzar. He would have been about 14 years of age when Nebuchadnezzar died. Thus, he would have been old enough to have known and understood some of God’s dealings with Nebuchadnezzar... [and about his] image dream recorded in chapter two.”⁴⁷
 - “Furthermore, in the third year of Belshazzar’s reign Daniel had prophesied Babylon’s fall to the Persians (cf. 8:1-4, 15-20)”⁴⁸

The Handwriting on the Wall (5-6)

What is different about the way that God spoke to Belshazzar compared to Nebuchadnezzar?

- “‘Suddenly,’ at the height of Belshazzar’s blasphemy, drunkenness, and immorality, the revelry ceased; and a deathly silence swept over the room. Belshazzar and his guest quickly sobered up, for ‘the fingers of a human hand appeared’ and began to write a message on the wall.”⁴⁹
- God always spoke to Nebuchadnezzar through dreams or visions.
 - “A mere vision of the king could not possibly be intended, for the writing was visible later when the wise men arrived and later still when Daniel was called. No doubt exists that the writer of this story intended to relate a miracle, not a vision.”⁵⁰
 - This miracle caught the attention of everyone (more than 1,000 people) in the banquet hall.

How is it possible that everyone would be able to see this take place?

- “According to the text, the surface of the wall was ‘plaster’ that was composed of chalk or lime. Koldewey, who led a number of excavations at Babylon beginning in March 1899, commented that the walls of the throne room ‘were washed over with

⁴⁵ Showers, 52.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 154.

⁴⁷ Showers, 51.

⁴⁸ Miller, 154.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 155.

white gypsum.’ Against this white wall any writing (and the moving hand) would have stood out clearly. The message also was written near the ‘lampstand,’ rendering the script visible to all in the room.”⁵¹

How did Belshazzar react when he saw the handwriting on the wall?

- Verses 5-6 (CEV) – “⁵ Suddenly a human hand was seen writing on the plaster wall of the palace. The hand was just behind the lampstand, and the king could see it writing. ⁶ He was so frightened that his face turned pale, his knees started shaking, and his legs became weak.”
 - “This latter expression means that his hip joints and upper legs went limp, a symptom of extreme panic.”⁵²
- “This was a drastic change for the man who moments earlier had been defying almighty God.”⁵³

The Wise Men of Babylon Called (7-9)

After calling his wise men, what did the king offer to the one who could interpret the writing?

- Be clothed with purple and have a gold chain around his neck.
 - These are “symbols of high rank. These articles may have belonged to the king himself and thus may have been marks of royalty... [Ancient sources indicate] that purple was the royal color in antiquity and that during the Persian period the gold chain could be worn only by persons of rank, [it] was given by the king as a special compliment, and could be worn only if presented by the king.”⁵⁴
- Be the third ruler in the kingdom.
 - The idea here is that the interpreter will be promoted to the third position of authority in the kingdom.
 - “Such a reward was quite reasonable under the circumstances. The king had received a divine message from a deity, surely the God whom he had just blasphemed. The Persian armies were outside the walls, and Babylonian forces already had suffered defeats at their hands. He was in desperate straits and would have been willing to give all within his power to anyone who could help him. Third position in the kingdom was the highest honor he could confer.”⁵⁵

Were the wise men able to interpret the writing?

- Verses 8-9 (CEV) – “8 All of King Belshazzar’s highest officials came in, but not one of them could read the writing or tell what it meant, 9 and they were completely puzzled. Now the king was more afraid than ever before, and his face turned white as a ghost.

⁵¹ Miller, 155.

⁵² Ibid., 156.

⁵³ Showers, 53.

⁵⁴ Miller, 157.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 158.

- “One might wonder why these counselors, or for that matter the king and his nobles, could not read the writing. The message was written in Aramaic, as vv. 25-28 make clear, and that language was well-known in Babylon. According to Jewish tradition, the letters were not comprehensible because they were written vertically instead of horizontally.”⁵⁶
- “Most likely the words were understood, but they ‘simply did not convey any intelligible meaning.’”⁵⁷

Daniël Summoned (10-16)

In verse 10, word of this dilemma reached the queen. To whom is this referring?

- This queen is not Belshazzar’s wife because the text clearly states his wives were with him at the feast (verse 2), “yet she must have been a highly prestigious individual to enter the banquet hall uninvited, and when she arrived, she seemed to take charge.”⁵⁸
- Most commentators (since Josephus in the first century AD) have “identified her as the queen-mother, either the wife of Nebuchadnezzar or the wife of Nabonidus... Most likely she was the wife of Nabonidus, and a daughter... of Nebuchadnezzar.”⁵⁹
- “At any rate, this woman displayed firsthand information concerning the affairs of Nebuchadnezzar that would not have been known by a younger wife of Belshazzar, and she seems to have observed Daniel’s ministry in Nebuchadnezzar’s court.”⁶⁰

What was the queen’s message to Belshazzar?

- In verses 10-12, she said, “Long live the king! Don’t be so pale and frightened. ¹¹ There is a man in your kingdom who has within him the spirit of the holy gods. During Nebuchadnezzar’s reign, this man was found to have insight, understanding, and wisdom like that of the gods. Your predecessor, the king—your predecessor King Nebuchadnezzar—made him chief over all the magicians, enchanters, astrologers, and fortune-tellers of Babylon. ¹² This man Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar, has exceptional ability and is filled with divine knowledge and understanding. He can interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve difficult problems. Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means.” (NLT)
- “The very fact that the queen mother knew so much about Daniel’s supernatural abilities and dealings with Nebuchadnezzar would seem to indicate that this woman had had a close relationship with that king. In light of Daniel’s past record of interpreting dreams and solving problems, the queen mother urged that he be summoned to read and interpret the writing.”⁶¹

⁵⁶ Miller, 158.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 159.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 160.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Showers, 55.

What did King Belshazzar say to Daniel when he arrived? What was Daniel's reply?

- The king recounted what he had heard from the queen mother, and then made the same offer to Daniel that he had made to the other wise men.
- Daniel replied to the king, "Keep your gifts or give them to someone else, but I will tell you what the writing means..." (17, NLT)

A Refusal and a Rebuke (17-24)

Why did Daniel refuse the gifts and honors that the king was offering to the interpreter?

- There are several explanations offered by commentators on this issue.
 - Showers noted, "Daniel refused the king's rewards to make it clear that he wouldn't invent a reading and interpretation in order to get personal gain."⁶²
 - Miller asserts, "Daniel likely refused Belshazzar's gifts not out of pride or rudeness but in order to alleviate any misconception that God's services could be bought and to avoid obligation to the king."⁶³
- My personal opinion is that Daniel saw the inconsequentiality of the reward from a king who was about to be deposed. What good is it to be third in command below a king that has lost his kingdom? Daniel—literally—saw the writing on the wall!

Daniel uses verses 18-21 to remind Belshazzar of the ways in which God had worked during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar and the consequences of pride in Nebuchadnezzar's life. In short, Daniel gave King Belshazzar a history lesson. What did he share in this history lesson?

Who gave Nebuchadnezzar his kingdom? (18)

- The Most High God

Why was Nebuchadnezzar deposed from his kingly throne and his glory taken from him? (19-20)

- Pride
- "Nebuchadnezzar received so much from the hand of God, and yet like many people today he did not give God the glory but became proud."⁶⁴

When was Nebuchadnezzar's throne returned to him? (21)

- God did not restore him to his throne "until he recognized the sovereign rule of God."⁶⁵

What charge did Daniel bring against Belshazzar? (22-24)

- "Daniel applied the example of Nebuchadnezzar to Belshazzar. In spite of the fact that Belshazzar knew about the humiliation of Nebuchadnezzar, he hadn't learned humility from it. Instead, through his desecration of the vessels of Jehovah, he had exalted himself against the very God who abased Nebuchadnezzar."⁶⁶

⁶² Showers, 56.

⁶³ Miller, 162.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Showers, 56.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 56-57.

- “Daniel concluded his ‘sermon’ by telling Belshazzar that it was because of his blasphemous, defiant actions that the hand was sent from the living God (v. 24). The old prophet’s words demonstrated great courage in the face of a monarch who held the power of life and death over him.”⁶⁷

The Handwriting Explained (5:25-28)

What were the words written on the wall and what was the interpretation Daniel offered?

- Only four brief words were written on the wall.
 - MENE, MENE – numbered
 - TEKEL – weighed
 - UPHARSIN (or PERES) – divided
- Interpretation
 - MENE was “written twice to stress that the divine decision was certain of fulfillment. So the message literally read ‘Numbered, numbered, weighed, and divided.’ As explained previously, these Aramaic words probably were recognized, but their significance was a mystery, which Daniel proceeded to solve.”⁶⁸
 - “The word MENE meant numbered or reckoned. It indicated that God had numbered the days of Belshazzar’s kingdom and had reckoned that those days had come to their end.”⁶⁹
 - “The word TEKEL meant weighed. It signified that God had weighed Belshazzar in His balance and had found him deficient in moral worth.”⁷⁰ “God’s moral laws were placed on one side of the scales and the king’s wicked life on the other. Belshazzar did not measure up to God’s standard of righteousness, and the king never repented of his sins and humbled himself before God and asked for salvation.”⁷¹
 - “The word PERES meant broken or divided. It implied that God had determined to shatter Belshazzar’s kingdom and give it to Medo-Persia.”⁷²

Daniel’s Exaltation and the Fall of Babylon (29-31)

Did Daniel receive the rewards initially offered by Belshazzar? (29)

What happened to Belshazzar that very night? (30) Who took the kingdom? (31)

- “With only a few words the writer of Daniel reported one of the most significant events in world history, the fall of the Babylonian Empire and the beginning of the Medo-Persian Empire... Belshazzar was executed only a few hours later.”⁷³

⁶⁷ Miller, 164.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 165.

⁶⁹ Showers, 57.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 57-58.

⁷¹ Miller, 165.

⁷² Showers, 58.

Insolence in Indulgence

Identifying Idols that Pull Us Away from God

Daniel 5:1-30

Introduction

As we continue our study this morning in the Book of Daniel, we are introduced to a new king—King Belshazzar. Several years have passed since Nebuchadnezzar was king, and now one of his descendents has risen to rule over the empire.

Because of no historical or archeological evidence that Belshazzar existed, it was long thought that King Nabonidus was the final king of the Medo-Persian Empire, not Belshazzar. Many critics of the Book of Daniel used this seeming inconsistency as a means to discredit the book's validity. However, in the 1920's, "the deciphering of more recently discovered Babylonian documents solved the mystery. These documents indicated that Belshazzar was the son of King Nabonidus." (Showers, 49-50)

During King Nabonidus' reign, he led an army westward to squelch a rebellion against the empire. But before he left, he entrusted his son, Belshazzar, with the responsibility of 'kingship' and thus the two men served as co-regents over the empire—an assignment that young Belshazzar was not yet ready for.

Belshazzar, like many 'privileged kids, was a spoiled brat who got what he wanted, when he wanted it and did not care how rude or disrespectful he was in the process of getting it. 🗑️ He was insolent (arrogant and rude) in his indulgence (gratifying of his every desire).

Insolence – (adj.) boldly rude or disrespectful; contemptuously impertinent; insulting;

Indulgence – (noun) the act or practice of yielding, satisfying or gratifying a desire; the act of following one's will;

In case you are still unclear as to the type of person we are talking about here, please watch this short video which will attempt to characterize an insolent youth with a proclivity toward indulgence. 🗑️

[Video – Varuca Salt (3:11)]

⁷³ Miller, 166.

Read Daniel 5:1-12

Belshazzar's Immorality (1)

- King Belshazzar is hosting a 'great feast,' or party, where 1,000 of his nobles were in attendance.
- What is going on in the Babylonian Empire at the time of this party?
 - Only days before this feast, Belshazzar's father and co-regent of Babylon, Nabonidus, had been defeated by the Persians at Sippar, just 50 miles north of Babylon.
 - This celebration could have been held to build morale and encourage the Babylonians in the wake of this defeat.
 - But another possibility for this seemingly ill-timed party might have been Belshazzar's attempt to proclaim himself as the one and only king of Babylon.
 - This would have been his coronation feast.
 - Having 1,000 nobles at a coronation feast would be reasonable, but not for just an ordinary feast.
- What is happening at this party?
 - Belshazzar 'drank wine' with his guests.
 - 'Drank' is a rendering of an Aramaic participle that in this context probably refers to continuous drinking.
 - Going against the cultural custom of the king being separated from his guests, King Belshazzar became inebriated in front of his guests.
 - The king's actions encouraged all the guests to consume large amounts of alcohol too. With inhibitions relaxed, it is likely that the feast degenerated into a drunken orgy.
 - This is supported by verses 3-4 which state that even the women—the wives and the concubines—were becoming drunk. The concubines were considered the inferior class of women from the royal harem and would be present for the purpose of sexual entertainment. ☞
 - This feast is a perfect example of things that God hates—idolatry, drunkenness and sexual immorality.
- **APPLICATION**
 - We are a nation of people consumed with idolatry! ☞
 - Idolatry – anything that takes you away from God is idolatry.
 - Physical things – (i.e. living to eat and drink, focus on satisfying bodily appetites, addictions to sex, Rx and illegal drugs, alcohol, nicotine, pornography, etc.) ☞
 - Material things (i.e. clothes, electronic gadgets, cars, homes, boats, any kind of property etc.) ☞
 - Intangible things (i.e. degrees, letters and titles, security that comes from wealth) ☞

- Financial priorities (i.e. buying cars, houses and other stuff, but not able to afford to 'tithe') ☞
- Recreational things (i.e. hunting, fishing, vacations, picnics, outings, sports of all kinds, etc.) ☞
- Social standing (i.e. power, prestige, influence, etc.) ☞

Belshazzar's Arrogance (2-4)

- In his inebriated condition, Belshazzar commanded that the sacred vessels taken from the temple in Jerusalem be brought out and used for their drunken orgy.
- Considering that the Temple of Marduk held vessels of the gods of other conquered peoples, why did Belshazzar specifically request the vessels of Jehovah for this desecrating purpose?
 - The people that Daniel proclaimed would overthrow the Babylonian Empire were camped just outside the city, so it seems that this act was in defiance to God (5:22-24).
 - He would have been about 14 years old when Nebuchadnezzar died, so he would have memories of how God humbled him in his last days, and so he said, "You won't humble me!"
 - The king believed that it was impossible to conquer the city of Babylon because (1) the Euphrates River ran through the middle of the city providing continual, fresh water; (2) the people of Babylon had enough food stored in the city to last more than twenty years. Babylon was the 'unconquerable city.' ☞
- The king is so confident in the city's defenses that he decides to challenge Jehovah God and His prophecies.
 - Once again, a pagan king is providing God with a splendid opportunity to display His sovereignty. ☞

Belshazzar's Anxiety (5-12)

- What did Belshazzar see and how did it affect him?
 - The 'fingers of a human hand' writing on the wall.
 - The king was visibly shaken. The Bible describes his response in verses 6 and 9. ☞
- Who did Belshazzar call upon to interpret these words? What did he promise to the one who was able to interpret this?
 - He called in the wise men of Babylon. ☞
 - The one able to interpret this sign would be given great prestige, wealth and power (7b).
- Who provided Belshazzar with hope of discerning the message?
 - 'The queen' heard of what was going on and came to speak to Belshazzar.
 - It is most likely that this is not his wife, because his wives were already at the party.
 - This person is either the wife of Nabonidus, Belshazzar's mother, or the widow of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar's grandmother.

- She pointed him to Daniel to help him because she remembered how that Daniel had helped Nebuchadnezzar.
- **APPLICATION**
 - Just as it helped with Belshazzar's anxiety, we must also seek out God in our anxiety.
 - When life is confusing, we must find our hope in him. ☞

Daniël's Introduction (13-21)

- Belshazzar welcomes Daniel and asks for his help. (13-16)
- Daniel replies to the king's request. (17-21) ☞

Daniël's Interpretation (22-28)

- ☞ Belshazzar...
 - ...is arrogant.
 - ...blasphemed God.
 - ...praised the Babylonian gods for his power and position.
- His rule has been "weighed and measured and found wanting."
- **APPLICATION**
 - If God were to 'weigh and measure your life today, would it be found wanting?
 - Are you, like Belshazzar, living an arrogant, idolatrous life of indulgence? ☞

Belshazzar's Annihilation (30-31)

- The day will come when each of us will be judged!
- What will God say about the way you are choosing to live?

Conclusion

- ☞ The only hope that we have is found in Jesus Christ!
- James 4:4, 6 – "4 You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God... 6 But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."
- 1 Peter 5:5b – "Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

VI. Daniel in the Lion's Den (6:1-28)

This is one of the most familiar and beloved stories of the Bible, but critics have attacked the historical accuracy of Daniel because of this story. In Daniel 5:31, at the demise of King Belshazzar and the Babylonian Empire, the author names the new king of the Medo-Persian Empire—Darius the Mede. “Those who subscribe to the Maccabean thesis... generally consider Darius the Mede to be literary fiction... [However,] The theory that Darius was a fictional creation of the author of Daniel must be rejected as unproven and unlikely. The return from captivity was one of the most significant events in Jewish history. To suggest that any semi-educated Jew of the Maccabean period could be ignorant of the fact that it was Cyrus the Persian who conquered the great Babylonian Empire and allowed the Jewish captives to return to their homeland is not reasonable.”¹ Besides, the Book of Ezra—which clearly names Cyrus the Persian as the conqueror of Babylon and releaser of the Jewish captives (Ezra 1:1 ff)—would have been available to a second century Jew if he were the author of the Book of Daniel.

So how can we reconcile this seeming discrepancy between the Old Testament books of 2 Chronicles, Ezra and Daniel? Who was the first king of the Medo-Persian Empire? Was it ‘Darius the Mede’ or ‘Cyrus the Persian’? The answer is... YES.

“Dual titles were not uncommon. Cyrus and Darius were both titles... Since he was king of both Median and Persian territories, it might be expected that Cyrus the Persian would have had another title, such as Darius the Mede, that pertained particularly to the Medes. This would have satisfied peoples in both divisions of his domain.”²

“Dual Median and Persian titles also would accurately reflect Cyrus’s ancestry. The title ‘Darius the Mede’ (5:31) indicates that Darius was of Median lineage, and later in the book the author specifically states that Darius was ‘a Mede by descent’ (9:1). How can this be explained if Cyrus was a Persian? Cyrus’s father was a Persian, but his mother was the daughter of Astyages, the king of Media; thus Cyrus was half Median.”³ It seems that Daniel attempted to clarify this concept of dual title at the end of chapter six when he said, “So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.”⁴

Beyond this evidence, “Dual titles for the Medo-Persian king would not seem out of place in the Book of Daniel. The prophecy was written in dual languages, and Daniel and his three friends had two names.”⁵

As compelling as this evidence is, there is no archeological evidence beyond the Book of Daniel and works dependent upon it that acknowledge the existence of Darius the Mede. But there is also no evidence against it except arguments of silence. So just as with Belshazzar, hopefully more historical evidence will be found to clarify the matter.

¹ Miller, 173-174.

² Miller, 175.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Daniel 6:28, English Standard Version

⁵ Miller, 176.

So how did the Medo-Persian armies penetrate the impenetrable city of Babylon?

- At the conclusion of Daniel 5, Belshazzar was slain and the Babylonian kingdom was given to the Medes and the Persians. Cyrus the Persian (aka Darius the Mede) became the ruler of the two kingdoms, forming the Medo-Persian Empire.
- The city of Babylon was laid out in a square and built on both sides of the Euphrates River. Descriptions of the fortifications vary among historians, but the city was encircled by double walls. “The inner... was twenty-one ft. thick and reinforced with towers at sixty foot intervals. The outer... was eleven ft. in width and also had protruding watchtowers.”⁶
- Herodotus, a Greek historian of the fifth century BC, noted the city of Babylon was taken by changing the course of the Euphrates River thereby enabling the army of Cyrus to enter by the bed of the river.⁷
- The first item of business was the reorganization of the governmental system.

The New Government (1-3)

What did the new king do to reorganize the system of government?

- “Darius was a good administrator. He appointed 120 officials [also referred to as ‘satraps’] under him to help him govern the former kingdom of Babylon... The king appointed three men to be heads over the 120 officials. It was the responsibility of these heads to supervise the work of the officials—especially their work of collecting taxes for Darius.”⁸
- Daniel was one of the three heads designated to supervise the other officials.
- “The satraps [or officials] gave an account of their activities to the three administrators in order to ensure that the Persian government ‘might not suffer loss’... Evidently this means that the administrators watched over the satraps so that all tax moneys were properly collected and so that none of these lesser officials could steal from the king.”⁹
- “How Darius came to know of Daniel is not stated, but certainly the handwriting on the wall episode was told to the Persians. Daniel also had been an important government official during the reign of one of the greatest kings in history, Nebuchadnezzar, and had demonstrated exceptional wisdom and ability in that capacity. Such qualified personnel from among the local citizens would have been sought out by the Persian government.”¹⁰
- Regardless of the manner in which Daniel rose to power in the new administration, Darius was extremely impressed with him and planned to set him over all the other officials in the kingdom. (Daniel 6:3)

⁶ Wiseman, D.J. “Babylon OT,” *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), I, 440-441.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 446.

⁸ Showers, 63.

⁹ Miller, 178.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

A Treacherous Plot (4-9)

What were the reasons for the other officials plotting against Daniel? What did they discover?

- “Because the king planned to set Daniel over all the satraps and administrators [‘officials’ in ESV], the jealousy of some of the other officials was aroused.”¹¹
- “Typical of Gentiles, they could not tolerate a Jew being in such a high position. They began to plot to get him removed from office.”¹²
- NOTE – “Certainly all 120 satraps were not involved in this plot, and the number probably was limited to a small handful. However, both of the other administrators [aka ‘officials’ and ‘presidents’] did attempt to prevent Daniel from being appointed to this high position.”¹³

What was their conclusion concerning Daniel and his integrity?

- Verse 4
- “They began to examine Daniel’s governmental activities in order to discover some flaw in his character or professional ability in order to bring a charge against him to the king, but none was found. Daniel handled his duties in a faithful manner (‘trustworthy’)—he was neither politically ‘corrupt’ (dishonest) nor ‘negligent’ in the performance of his work.”¹⁴
- Daniel was found to be above reproach!

Since they were unable to find fault or error in Daniel, what did they do to entrap him?

- Verse 5
- “Daniel’s untarnished government record forced his opponents to look elsewhere for something that could be used against him. Because Daniel had a reputation for being devoted to Jehovah, the God of Israel, these men decided to use the Law of God as a weapon against him.”¹⁵
- “They hoped that there might be something in Daniel’s religious beliefs (‘the Law of God’) that might disqualify him from serving in Darius’s court. Daniel was a strict monotheist, and therefore they planned to ensnare him by forcing him to refuse to worship other gods.”¹⁶

How did they get King Darius to agree to their proposal?

- Verse 6 – ‘came by agreement’ or ‘went as a group’; this phrase in the Aramaic has the idea of ‘being in tumult.’ The verb means ‘to come thronging’ denoting a mob scene rather than a group casually appearing before the king.¹⁷

¹¹ Miller, 179.

¹² Showers, 64.

¹³ Miller, 179.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Showers, 64.

¹⁶ Miller, 179.

¹⁷ Ibid., 180.

- Montgomery is probably correct that in this context it signifies “‘they acted in concert, harmony,’ here practically, ‘in conspiracy’”¹⁸
- “Once these men had devised their scheme, they obtained an audience with King Darius.”¹⁹
- Verse 7a – Lies and Deceptions
 - “They told the king that all his officials had made a unanimous decision after consultation together. That statement was a lie, for Daniel had not been involved in this consultation.”²⁰
 - “Probably the large majority of these rulers were not even in the city of Babylon but were in the outlying areas and would have been totally unaware of the scheme. As previously explained, likely only a few persons were involved.”²¹
- Verse 7b-8 – Flattery and Vanity
 - The officials try to use flattery as a means to get King Darius to pass this decree without giving it much thought.
 - “The men purposely appealed to the king’s vanity through this suggestion, hoping to dupe him into putting their scheme into effect... as soon as they had presented the suggested decree, the officials pressed the king to sign the document.”²²

What was the proposal and what were the consequences of disobeying?

- The proposal was “that the king should pass and enforce a decree that anyone who would make a religious request of any god or man except the king for thirty days should be cast into the lions’ den. In other words, they were suggesting that Darius should be regarded as the only representative of deity for one month.”²³
- “A gruesome fate awaited anyone who broke this law. The guilty parties were to be thrown into a den of lions, where they would be torn to pieces and devoured.”²⁴

What is meant in verse 8 when it says that the law could not be revoked? Why not?

- “The officials were anxious for the king’s signature because of the unique nature of the Medo-Persian law. *‘For it was a proud boast of Persia that its laws never changed, and that a royal promise or decree was irrevocable. In his edicts and judgments the king was supposed to be inspired by the god Ahura-Mazda himself; therefore the law of the realm was the Divine Will, and any infraction of it was an offense against the deity.’* The men knew that, once the decree was put into effect, no one, including the king himself, could revoke it.”²⁵
- According to the laws of the Medes and Persians, Darius’ decree could not be altered.

¹⁸ Montgomery, 273.

¹⁹ Showers, 65.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Miller, 180.

²² Showers, 65.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Miller, 181.

²⁵ Showers, 65.

The Accusation and Condemnation of Daniel (10-18)

What did Daniel do in response to this decree from King Darius?

- Verse 10
- “The text states that Daniel’s custom was to pray and give thanks (or ‘praise’) God three times a day. When this law was passed, he did not change his religious behavior, nor did he hide it. Daniel was a man of courage and conviction who was willing to stand for God even if it meant death.”²⁶
- “Daniel refused to take the easy way out... He was convinced that his daily relationship with God should take precedence over the will of man. As a result, when he learned about the decree, he continued his normal prayer practice. He went to his roof chamber and prayed to God three times a day. He didn’t even avoid the open windows or pray silently in order to escape detection, and he continued to thank God in spite of the decree. Once again he was doing what was right and trusting God for the results.”²⁷

How did those conspiring against Daniel react to his blatant disregard for the decree?

- Verse 11 – “These dignified officials went to spy on Daniel. Like little children, they were peeking around corners and looking into windows. Within a short time they observed what they had hoped, Daniel ‘praying’ (‘making petition’) to his God.”²⁸
- Verse 12 – Just like a child going to ‘tattle’ on another, these officials go to King Darius and say, “Didn’t you say we’re not supposed to do that?”
- Verse 13 – “...they informed Darius that Daniel had violated it. They carefully pointed out that Daniel was a conquered foreigner—a Jew—thereby insinuating that his disobedience had been prompted by political unfaithfulness.”²⁹
- Miller sees three significant aspects in how this accusation was made:³⁰
 - He was referred to as a captive to humiliate him.
 - He was not just disrespecting the King’s law, but the king himself (‘Daniel... pays no attention to you, O king’)
 - He did not merely forget the decree, because he ‘makes his petition three times a day.’

When the accusation was made against Daniel, what was King Darius’ reaction?

- Verse 14 – “When the king heard the charges against Daniel, ‘he was greatly distressed’ (‘it grieved him’). However, Darius was not upset because Daniel had been praying (as

²⁶ Miller, 182.

²⁷ Showers, 67.

²⁸ Miller, 183.

²⁹ Showers, 67.

³⁰ Miller, 184.

the king's later actions demonstrate) but because for the first time he realized the real purpose of the law. It was not to honor him but to eliminate a rival of the jealous officials. The monarch understood that he had been duped by these evil men..."³¹

Why couldn't the king 'change his mind' and not punish Daniel?

- Remember what we learned earlier about Medo-Persian law.
- "The king had the law books searched to discover if there might be some legal loophole that could render the law nonenforceable. Evidently the law prescribed that the sentence be carried out the same day as the crime, and so Darius had only until sundown to solve the dilemma."³²
- "According to Oriental custom, a punishment must be executed 'on the evening of the day in which the accusation was made.'"³³

When the king pronounced Daniel's sentence, what did he say and why?

- Verse 16
- "Darius's concern for his friend is touching... Since Darius was an unbeliever, the king would not have had sufficient faith in Yahweh to affirm that Daniel would certainly be delivered, and verse 20 indicates that the king was not positive Daniel would be saved. The words express the king's hope."³⁴
- "Daniel must have set an outstanding example. Darius characterized Daniel as 'serving' his God 'continually.' He had noticed Daniel's lifestyle. In order for believers to impress the world, they must live a consistent Christian life."³⁵

What was done to the opening, or mouth, of the lion's den?

- Verse 17
- "A stone was placed over the opening of the den and sealed with the signet rings of the king and his nobles so that no one would dare attempt to rescue Daniel."³⁶
- Showers points out: "The stone was sealed first by the king to assure that the officials would not go beyond what the decree demanded in order to guarantee Daniel's death. Then the officials sealed the stone to prevent the king from interfering to rescue Daniel."³⁷

According to the description in verse 18, how did the king feel about what he had done?

- Verse 18

³¹ Miller, 184.

³² Ibid.

³³ Showers, 67.

³⁴ Miller, 185.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Showers, 68.

- “Darius must have admired (and liked) Daniel a great deal. When he returned to the palace, he began to fast and presumably to pray (possibly to Daniel’s God) for the prophet’s safety. Darius refused all ‘entertainment’... and could not sleep.”³⁸

The Deliverance of Daniel (19-23)

The next morning, what did the king find at the den of lions?

- Verses 19-21
- “Darius came to the opening of the den and cried out to Daniel in anguish and hope. The king’s actions demonstrate that he held out the hope that Daniel’s God could deliver him, but his ‘anguished’ voice betrayed the fact that he did not believe it was likely.”³⁹

What explanation did Daniel give as to how he was saved from the lions?

- Verse 22
- “Daniel explained that God had sent his angel to protect him against the lions because he was ‘innocent’ in God’s sight and added that he was also innocent of ‘any wrong’ against the king.”⁴⁰
- Who was this angel that was sent to protect Daniel from the lions?
 - It is possible that this was just a member of the ‘angelic host.’
 - Miller notes that “it is more likely that this heavenly being was the divine angelic messenger, the angel of the Lord”⁴¹ which is another name referring to the preincarnate Christ, because the LXX⁴² “interpreted the text to mean that ‘God’ saved Daniel from the lions.”⁴³
 - It is reasonable to believe that this is “the preincarnate Christ, who had delivered Daniel’s three friends from the fiery furnace many years before.”⁴⁴

How did the king react?

- Verse 23
- “Darius ‘was overjoyed’... and ordered his servants ‘to lift’ Daniel from the den. When God’s faithful servant emerged from the pit, they found no mark of injury (‘wound’) on him. The reason for Daniel’s miraculous deliverance is stated: ‘He had trusted in his God.’”⁴⁵

³⁸ Miller, 186.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 187.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² LXX refers to the Septuagint, which is an ancient translation of the Hebrew Bible into Koine Greek.

⁴³ Miller, 187.

⁴⁴ Showers, 69.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

The Results (24-28)

What did the king command to be done to those who accused Daniel?

- Verse 24
- “Darius had those officials who had accused Daniel thrown into the lions’ den together with their wives and children... These victims were dropped into the den through the top air opening. Before they hit the bottom of the den, the lions attacked and began their terrible work of devouring them.”⁴⁶

What decree did King Darius proclaim to all people?

- Verses 25-26a
- “Darius was so impressed with the miracle Jehovah had performed that he issued a new decree. In this decree he commanded all his subjects to have reverent respect for Daniel’s God.”⁴⁷

How did Darius describe the God of Daniel?

- Verses 26b-27
- “He described Jehovah as the living God who is eternal and forever sovereign and who works all sorts of miracles. This was a remarkable decree from a pagan ruler, but it should be noted that Darius did not call Jehovah the only God.”⁴⁸

What happened to Daniel as a result of this encounter?

- Verse 28a

Why does the author reference Darius the Mede and Cyrus the Persian in verse 28?

- “Dual titles were not uncommon. Cyrus and Darius were both titles... Since he was king of both Median and Persian territories, it might be expected that Cyrus the Persian would have had another title, such as Darius the Mede, that pertained particularly to the Medes.”⁴⁹
- “Dual Median and Persian titles also would accurately reflect Cyrus’s ancestry... Cyrus’s father was a Persian, but his mother was the daughter of Astyages, the king of Media; thus Cyrus was half Median.”⁵⁰
- Beyond this evidence, “Dual titles for the Medo-Persian king would not seem out of place in the Book of Daniel. The prophecy was written in dual languages, and Daniel and his three friends had two names.”⁵¹

⁴⁶ Showers, 70.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 71.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Miller, 175.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Miller, 176.

Obedience in spite of Outcome

Obeying God No Matter the Consequences

Daniel 6

Introduction

We're going to begin at the beginning of chapter 6. It's a narrative text—a story. So we don't need to spend a lot of time on each section. We want to get to the climax and then draw some practical applications this morning. But we're going to use some key words just to help us keep our place as we go.

Key Word #1 - Promotion (6:1-3)

- Historical Backdrop
 - Daniel was taken into captivity as a teenager (ca. 605 BC).
 - He served the Babylonian Empire until its downfall (ca. 539 BC).
 - Now in his 80s, Daniel survives the transition to the Medo-Persian Empire and begins serving Darius as a wise man.
- He distinguished himself above all others. (Read verses 1-3)
 - Darius appointed 120 satraps over the 120 provinces, then he appointed 3 high officials (KJV “presidents”) over them.
 - Daniel was one of these three; and Scripture says that he “became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him.” (3)
- What made Daniel different from all the others?
 - His ‘excellent spirit’ – This is referring to his attitude. And to quote the great philosopher—Donnie Parish—“Attitude is everything!”
 - His experience – He had lived through the last regime and the regime change. His experience was invaluable.
 - His wisdom – Now we know that this was given to him by God, but the government officials had no concept of this.
 - His leadership ability – His influence upon Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego was undeniable.
 - His administrative ability – There was a reason that the leaders of these empires kept promoting Daniel.
- **APPLICATION**
 - God placed Daniel right where He wanted him, and allowed Darius to recognize Daniel's gifts so that he would place Daniel in a very strategic place of influence.
 - Where has God placed you? What does God desire for you to do with the influence you have? Who do you need to influence for him?

PROMOTION ⇒

Key Word #2 - Plot (6:4-9)

- Daniel's success led the other officials into feelings of jealousy and revenge. Daniel was almost 90 years old. Is it reasonable to think that he never had any controversy or scandal?

- Can you imagine that? An 85 year old government official that didn't have any skeletons in the closet?
- Daniel was a man of principle, honor, and respect.
- There was 'no error or fault' found in him. (4)
 - Error – sins of omission
 - Fault – sins of commission
- John MacArthur said, "They couldn't find anything he did that he shouldn't have done, and anything that he didn't do that he should have done... They couldn't find anything."
- They knew that the only way to find fault was to trap him (5).
- There was a conspiracy against Daniel.
 - In the Aramaic, the phrase in verse 6, 'came by agreement' (or 'assembled together' in KJV) means they "came hastily and tumultuously." It is a very strong verb. And it implies that a large group of people conspired in this plot.
 - The plan was to 'stroke the ego' of the king and get him to 'establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction, that whoever makes petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to [the] king, shall be cast into the den of lions." (8)
 - We don't know much about the laws of the Medes and Persians, but it is clear that even the king was subject to the laws and they could not be changed.
- **APPLICATION**
 - How many of us here today could withstand the scrutiny that Daniel went through at the hands of this throng?
 - The New Testament challenges us to be above reproach:

“²¹ And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²² he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, ²³ if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel...” (Colossians 1:21-23a)

PROMOTION ⇒ PLOT ⇒

Key Word #3 - Perseverance (10)

- Daniel continued in what he knew was the right thing to do!
- John MacArthur said, "In other words, men may make their laws, but when the laws intersect and violate the rules that God lays down, we don't worry about those laws. And we come to that point in Acts, don't we, where Peter says we ought to obey God rather than men."
- **APPLICATION**
 - How many of us would have the guts to do what Daniel did?
 - How many of us would have at least closed the window?

PROMOTION ⇒ PLOT ⇒ PERSEVERANCE ⇒

Key Word #4 - Prosecution (11-15)

- Read verses 11-13.
 - "Let's assume the thing was signed in the morning. They hustled out to see what Daniel would do at noon. Daniel was there praying. They ran back and told the king..."
- Read verse 14.

- They ran back and told the king, and now he had all afternoon because execution, according to their custom, was to come before nightfall. And so, he had all afternoon. And he exhausted every legal means possible. He went every way.
- That's the implication of verse 14. The king "set his mind to deliver Daniel. And he labored till the sun went down to rescue him."
- What was Daniel's response to all of this?
 - He never said a word. He never defended himself.
 - We find a prophecy concerning Jesus in Isaiah 53. It says:

⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions;
 he was crushed for our iniquities;
 upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
 and with his wounds we are healed.

⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray;
 we have turned—every one—to his own way;
 and the LORD has laid on him
 the iniquity of us all.

⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
 yet he opened not his mouth;
 like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
 and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
 so he opened not his mouth.

PROMOTION ⇒ PLOT ⇒ PERSEVERANCE ⇒ PROSECUTION ⇒

Key Word #5 - Penalty (16-18)

- Daniel was cast into a den of lions.
 - Now these are real lions, folks, real lions. Lions that were purposely starved to be used as executioners.
 - I don't know how many there were in there, but there were more than just a couple, like the pictures always show.
 - I know this because when you get to the end of the chapter and everything starts coming down on the heads of the people who made the plot, they throw all of them in there, and they throw all their families in together, and they get eaten up before they hit the ground.
- Darius tried to encourage Daniel with what we must assume are Daniel's own words. (16)
- In verse 17, Daniel fate—and the den of the lions—was sealed. And at this point, we really do not know what is happening to Daniel.
- The king couldn't stand it (read verse 18).
 - Diversions could have been music, women, dancers, whatever they used to divert the king. But he didn't want any of that: No music, no dancers, no food, nothing.
 - "His sleep fled from him." And he just paced around.
- **SO WHAT HAPPENED TO DANIEL?**

PROMOTION ⇒ PLOT ⇒ PERSEVERANCE ⇒ PROSECUTION ⇒ PENALTY ⇒



Daniel in the Lion's Den
by Britton Riviere Date painted: 1872

Key Words 6-9

#6 - Preservation (Read 19-23)

#7 - Punishment (Read 24)

#8 - Proclamation (25-27)

#9 - Prosperity (28)

What can we learn from Daniel's act of obedience?

- God wants us to obey Him in spite of the outcome we expect!
 - The fact is, many believers throughout the centuries have given their lives as a result of their faith in Christ.
 - Just as the three Hebrews did not know the outcome of their impending punishment, Daniel did not either.
 - The issue isn't the outcome... the issue is obedience!
- A good friend of mine has been struggling over the past couple of months to determine what obedience to God's will looks like in his life. I want to invite him here now to share with you what obedience in spite of the outcome means to him. [John O'Connor's testimony]