

The Holy Book of the Prophet Daniel



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Servants' preparation:

English sermons by Fr. Matthias Shedad

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<https://soundcloud.com/stpaulhouston/daniel-13-story-of-susanna>

<https://soundcloud.com/stpaulhouston/daniel-14-bel-the-dragon-bible>

The Book for every believer

- The book of Daniel has a special significance in the life of believers, for it is not a record of Daniel's life nor to an era of the history of the Israelites during the Babylon captivity, but rather it is a divine book, which the Holy Spirit offers us to instill hope in the hurt souls. Sometimes, God allows throwing us in the fiery furnace of trials, yet He changes the nature of fire for our comfort and peace.
- From one aspect, this book reveals to us that God is the Controller of all history, who does for the edification of his faithful believers in any place. From another aspect, this book reveals to us that God is glorified in the very few who are sincere to Him.
- Since God allows his believers to go through tribulations, as He allowed Daniel while still a youth, yet He elevated him to the highest level so that the greatest king at that time came and worshipped him, realizing that the Spirit of the Holy One is inside him.
- God enlightened his vision to grant him not only wisdom so he may know the king's dreams and explain it to him, and not only to conduct all the matters of the kingdom wisely, but rather to enjoy the surpassing mysteries of God, so the Spirit may reveal to him the future and eternal work of God with humanity.
- Lastly, this book is directed to every believer to realize his living role in the church life as well as the life of all the human race, for Daniel was not devoted for the ministry and prophecy, but rather he was like the prime minister in a country which dominated the whole world. He knew how to give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.
- Daniel did not go back to Jerusalem like those who came back from the captivity, and did not restore building the temple with Zerubbabel, but he was the first man who worked in secret in these matters. He influenced the kings of Babel and Persia; he offered a great service through his holy life and his faithfulness in his work.

Introduction to the book of Daniel

Daniel was contemporary to Ezekiel the prophet, and younger in age. Ezekiel offered us Jerusalem with its temple, which became desolate due to corruption. At the same time, he saw with the spirit of prophecy, not only the return from the captivity but the erection of a new temple, the temple of the New Testament where the divine grace overflows.

However, Daniel offered us not only the return from the captivity, but also the encounter with the true Liberator the Lord Jesus Christ, who can liberate us from the bondage of sin and makes us enter into His glories. Moreover, He opens the eyes of our hearts to see Him coming at the end of ages to form, from his believers, shining stars on His image. The two captive prophets agreed to reveal God's care for His believers, assuring them that He will never forget them, no matter how long the period is.

Who is Daniel?

- Daniel was born in Jerusalem.
- While still a young man, Daniel travelled to Babylon with a group of young Israelite nobles.

- Once Daniel arrived, the leadership in Babylon renamed him Belteshazzar in an effort to more closely identify him with his new home (1:7). They wanted to brain wash him and the other Jews to forget their origin.
- Daniel lived there throughout the Jews' seventy-year captivity (1:21; 9:2), eventually rising to become one of only three administrators over the provincial governors throughout the kingdom (6:1).
- Daniel recorded his experiences and prophecies for the Jewish exiles during his time in the Babylonian capital, where his service to the king gave him privileged access to the highest levels of society.
- His faithful service to the Lord in a land and culture not his own makes him unique among almost all the people of Scripture.
- Daniel stands as one of the only major figures in the Bible to produce a completely positive record of his actions.

This book offers us Daniel's unique character:

1. He was a prophet occupied with administration. However, he knew how not to mix between the administration and his prophetic spiritual work, for his position in administration did not make him lose his heavenly vision and his concern for the salvation of his soul and the salvation of his people, and even the salvation of the kings who dealt with him.
2. His high position in the largest pagan empire did not prevent him from witnessing to the true God and from keeping His commandments, not violently but with the spirit of wisdom, love and courage.
3. He served his people, not with the spirit of fanaticism, but with the spirit of holiness and humility, with love to all people. He supported them in the land of captivity where he found grace in the eyes of the kings. He also opened the doors of hope before the captive people, and before all the Gentiles.
4. He is the father of the history of the Gentiles. He recorded many precise prophecies about the kingdoms which follow one another, through God's plan. The book of Daniel is the only book in the Old Testament which prophesied in detail about kings and kingdoms, which he had declared by name like Persia and Greece.
5. He is the prophet who determined the times for the events of salvation, the end of the world, and was occupied with the times of the Gentiles.
6. Josephus, the Jewish historian, mentioned that Daniel was very skillful in architecture, for he is the one who designed the building of the famous tower of Shushan in Persia, where the kings of Persia lived.
7. Probably, he was born in Jerusalem, and was captive in Babylon like Ezekiel (Dan. 1:1-2).
8. However, Daniel was captive in the first captivity, during the days of Jehoakim, the year 606 B.C., while Ezekiel was captive in the second captivity.
9. He was captive to Babylon, while he was a youth, and he was from the tribe of Judah. (Dan.1:7) Although he was not from the royal house from the descendants of David (Dan. 1:3), he learned the Chaldean language with the three youths. Some say that he lived about 84 years from 618 to 534 B.C.
10. God granted him wisdom and grace, thus he served during the times of the kingdoms of Babylon, Medes, and Persia.

Where are we in history?

The Babylonians exiled the group containing Daniel and his three friends to Babylon, in 605 BC. This move was part of the first of three deportations (605, 597, and 586 BC) carried out by the Babylonians in Israel after they subdued Jerusalem and the unfaithful King Jehoiakim (2 Kings 23:36–24:2). Daniel was taken in the 1st deportation, but the destruction of the temple was done on the 3rd deportation, that is why 586 BC is marked as the official date of the exile.

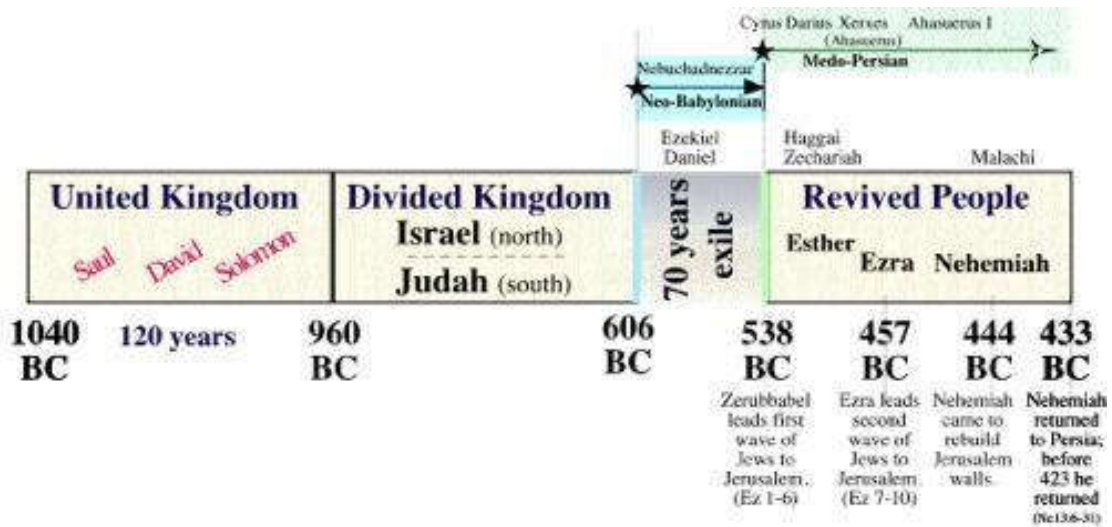
The teenaged Daniel [taken when he was 15 years old to Babylon] found himself in the midst of a strongly polytheistic religious culture, meaning he had ample opportunities to fall into error. However, he stood firm in his faith among the Babylonian people on several significant matters—including dietary regulations and worship practices (Daniel 1:8–16; 6:6–12).

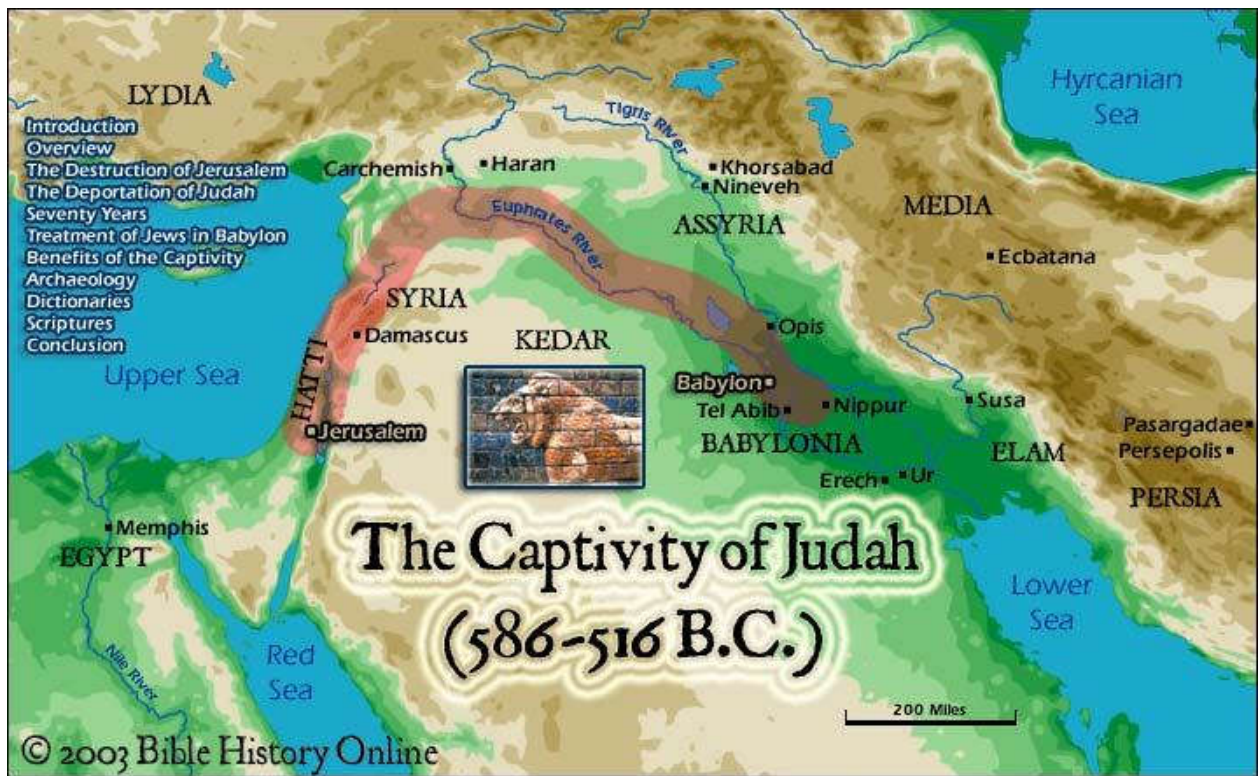
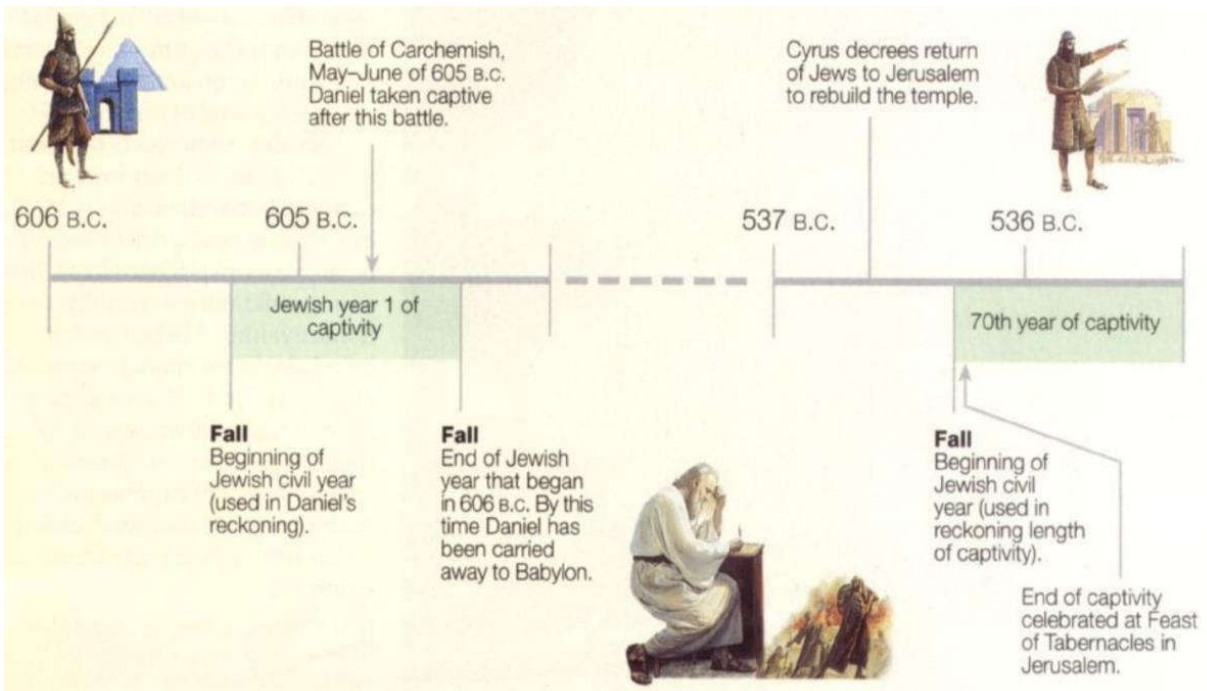
Timeline of the book of Daniel:

- ❖ 620 - Birth of Daniel.
- ❖ 609 – King Josiah killed by the Egyptians at Megiddo.
- ❖ 605 - Babylonians defeat Pharaoh Neco of Egypt. The Babylonians hold the balance of power in the region.
- ❖ 605 - The Babylonians besiege Jerusalem; some of the royal family and nobles, including Daniel, are taken to Babylon. [Daniel 15 years old 620-605 BC]
- ❖ 604 - 603 - Daniel and his Hebrew companions are trained to serve Nebuchadnezzar.
- ❖ 602 - Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the colossal statue and Daniel's interpretation.
- ❖ 586 - Jerusalem falls to the third Babylonian siege and the temple is destroyed.
- ❖ 573 - 566 - Nebuchadnezzar's seven years of insanity.
- ❖ 539 - Daniel interprets the handwriting on the wall for Belshazzar. Cyrus captures Babylon without resistance. Gabriel visits Daniel with the message of 70 weeks.
- ❖ 538 - Cyrus issues a decree allowing the Jews to return to Judah.
- ❖ 536 - Daniel is thrown into the lions' den.
- ❖ 535 - Daniel receives vision of future events.
- ❖ 530 – Daniel completes his book

The Book of Daniel

Focus	Judgment upon the Gentiles				Hope for the Jews			
Divisions	Daniel's Friends in the Furnace		Daniel's Faith in the Lion's Den		Beasts, Kings & Seventy Weeks		Previews of Israel's Future	
	1	3	4	6	7	9	10	12
Topics	Convincing Gentiles of God's Power				Convincing Jews of god's Purpose			
	Daniel Interprets Other's Dreams				Angels Interpret Daniel's Dreams			
Place	Babylon & Persia							
Time	At Least 70 Years							
Author	The Prophet Daniel							





Daniel in Context



Book outlines:

- I. The Godly Remnant in the Times of the Gentiles (1:1–21)
 - A. Daniel and his friends in the Babylonian captivity (1:1–7)
 - B. Daniel and the king's food (1:8–16)
 - C. Daniel and the Lord's reward (1:17–21)
- II. God's Sovereignty over the Times of the Gentiles (2:1–7:28)
 - A. Daniel and the king's dream (2:1–49)
 - B. Daniel's friends and the fiery furnace (3:1–30)
 - C. Nebuchadnezzar's pride, madness, and repentance (4:1–37)
 - D. Belshazzar's feast and the writing on the wall (5:1–30)
 - E. Daniel in the lions' den (6:1–28)
 - F. Daniel's vision of the four beasts, the Ancient of Days, and the Son of Man (7:1–28)
- III. God's People in the Times of the Gentiles (8:1–12:13)
 - A. Daniel's vision of the ram and the male goat (8:1–27)
 - B. Daniel's prayer and vision of the seventy weeks (9:1–27)
 - C. Daniel and his final visions (10:1–12:13)

Unit 1 [Chapters 1-6]

The Historical Side: Chapters 1 - 6

In this part, the Holy Spirit presents a true picture of the practical faith in the life of Daniel and his companions in Babylon, during the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius and Cyrus.

Chapter 1 [Strangers in the Palace]

Judah was made captive in three stages. This period until the end of the captivity was the darkest period for all the people in that region. They lived in humiliation, strangers from their country, deprived of their group worship in the temple and lost all dignity in the eyes of the Gentiles. However, during this darkness, Daniel and his three companions were like shining lights. God took care of them and used them for His kingdom as witnesses for the truth throughout all the generations.

Servants' preparation:

English sermons by Fr. Matthias Shedad

<https://soundcloud.com/stpaulhouston/daniel-1-bible-study-fr>

Chapter Outline:

1. The youth in the captivity: verses 1-4
2. Their choice to serve the king: verses 5-7
3. Their rejection to the king's delicacies: verses 8-14
4. The result of the test: verses 15-16
5. Their enjoyment of wisdom and understanding: 17
6. They surpass all the wise men verses 18-21

Chapter details:

Nebuchadnezzar, the king, renamed Daniel "Belteshazzar", which means "Baal's prince". Baal was the main god to whom the Babylonians worshiped.

The names of the four youths from the tribe of Judah were to remind them of their belonging to God and His presence with them.

1. Daniel means "The Lord is my judge."
2. Henaniah means "kind and gentle."
3. Mishael means "who is like God or who resembles God."
4. Azariah means "Jehovah helps him"

He renamed Hananiah "Shadrach", which means "Inspired by the god of the sun" and renamed Mishael "Meshach", which means "Through Shak", because the Babylonians worshipped Venus, under the name

Shak. He was the god of beauty and earth. Nebuchadnezzar renamed Azariah “Abed-Nego” which means “the god of fire”. The king may have changed their names but was unable to change their hearts and their holy natures in the Lord.

The goal of changing their names was to let them forget all about their Jewish origin and God and to brainwash them and get them embedded into the Chaldean’s culture using their gods’ names.

The Youth in the Captivity

The book starts by mentioning the first captivity of the tribe of Judah in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, that is around the year 605 B.C., by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, where he besieged Jerusalem and humiliated its king. He took some of the vessels of the house of God.

The king came to Jerusalem and besieged it and made captive some of its inhabitants, of whom Daniel were and his companions.

The Babylonian captivity was accomplished on three stages:

1. The first deportation: in the year 606 B.C. or 605 B.C., after the battle of Karkamish in which Nebuchadnezzar had conquered Pharaoh of Egypt, then he went to Jerusalem, where Daniel and his companions were made captive. Nebuchadnezzar left Jehoiakim on the throne as his successor and submitted to his authority.
2. The second deportation: in the year 598 B.C. or 597 B.C. Ezekiel was made captive. The king came and took the rest of the vessels and treasures of the temple and captured King Jehoiakim with other noble men.
3. The third deportation: in the year 588 B.C. or 587 B.C., where the king came for the third time to punish King Sedakia for his rebellion. “He burned the house of the Lord and the king’s house: all the houses of Jerusalem.

Read (v.3,4)

The king established an institute in his palace under the direction of Ashpenaz. Probably this institute had many departments, one of which related to the education of the sons of the Jewish nobles, according to their language.

In spite of their physical health, wisdom, and experience, yet the king wanted them to learn the language and culture of his country, so they may lose the sense of belonging to their own country. He did not destroy their talents but wanted to direct their energies for the benefit of his palace.

Their rejection to eat the delicacies of the king:

Daniel lived in a strange country (the land of the captivity), and he could have an excuse so he does not fast. Daniel was in a corrupt environment which encourages sin, for he was in the king’s palace, and he had to eat from the king’s delicacies and wine.

Note that in Daniel’s fasting:

A. Daniel fasted not by just abstaining from food, but he “purposed in his heart” (v.8) Spiritual life is enjoying an inner treasure.

B. Daniel asked from the chief of the eunuchs, not to defile himself. This request was considered impossible, because it put him in trouble and may cost him his life.

Daniel considered the king's delicacies defilement. Why?

What were offered on the table were unlawful food according to the Mosaic Law, like the strangled and the meat of some unlawful animals. Another reason could be that the first portion of the food was offered to idols. Partaking in this food would have been tantamount to idol worship.

Are there activities run by our government that we, as Christians, cannot in good conscience partake in? Name some examples and explain why Christians ought not participate in said activities.

Daniel and his friends fasted with seriousness and weariness, for ten days: thus, the Lord rewarded them ten times. He gave them a better countenance, and they became in much better health than all the others.

He gave them knowledge, understanding and wisdom, for the moderate spiritual fasting does not weaken the mind but rather strengthens it and makes it grow.

This book presents us a living picture about the fasting of Daniel, who used to eat only beans, (v.12), and not eating any meat. (Dan.10:3) He abstained from every luxury; he did not drink any wine nor anointed himself. (Dan. 10:3)

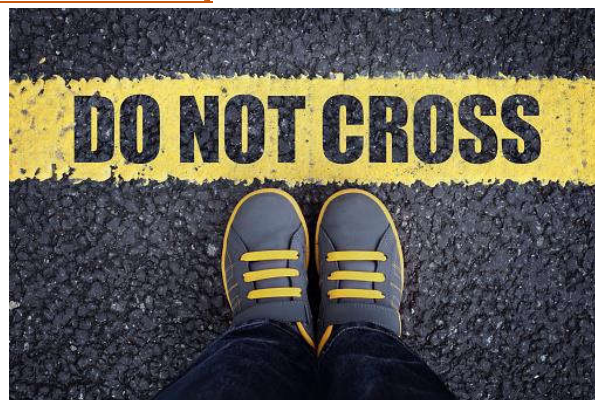
The results of the test

Read (v. 15,16)

We do not know the number of youth who served the king, however only the four names, Daniel and his 3 friends were mentioned. Since they were serious in their faithfulness to God, in spite of the difficult circumstances, then they were the only ones who deserve to have their names mentioned in the Holy Bible and engrave them in the book of life.

God had selected Daniel, not only from the rest of the people but also from his peers, because He was preparing him for an important prophetic task. St. Jerome mentioned that God had given the four young men knowledge and skill, but He added another gift to Daniel, which was the understanding in all visions and dreams. Daniel was distinguished with the spirit of prophecy, for God revealed to Him His plan

Life Application: [DO NOT CROSS THE LINE]



- This is the situation Daniel and his friends faced. On the one side, you have the right and strength of the most powerful empire in the world. On the other side, you have a few teenage boys alone far from home and everything they are familiar with. It doesn't seem like they have much of a chance to resist the inevitable, does it?
- We chose this book because it very practical to our lives today. Daniel lived in a place that had no respect for God. There were temptations all around him. The education system was brainwashing people to believe in lies instead of the truth from God. There was great pressure to conform to society and be like everyone else. We too live in a society like this. God is not honored. The education system not only here but around the world brainwashes people to accept lies, lies of evolution and atheism. There is great pressure to conform and be like everyone else. We will see from Daniel how to face these pressures and live as a light in a dark place.
- Daniel did not hide himself, embarrassed by being different but he showed God's light to everyone.

Daniel's Resolve:

- When he is faced with a temptation, he draws a line in his mind, and resolves himself that he will not cross it. He was commanded to eat this food. Why would he refuse? He did not object to the schooling he would refuse. He did not even object to his name change. Both of these things were external, and neither was technically forbidden in the Mosaic law. He did refuse to eat the food.
- So, notice where Daniel draws his line in the sand. It is not based on his own opinion. It is based on tradition or customs or culture. He made up his mind to do what was right without compromise and without offering excuses. Even in the face of overwhelming pressure, he stood on the truth and wouldn't budge. Exodus 23:2 says, "Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong." So, he didn't.

Was this an easy decision for Daniel?

I am sure he knew that the potential consequence of disobedience is death. Think about what kind of justifications/excuses a person may come up with for eating this food. Here are some potential excuses he could have offered:

1. Bitterness toward God – God abandoned me to this foreign country. Maybe He isn't real or maybe I don't need to serve Him anymore.
2. I have no choice. If I don't eat it, they will kill me.
3. I am willing to die for it, but if I don't eat it, they will get angry with all of us Judah boys, and then I will be responsible for the punishment the rest of them receive.
4. It's not really that big of a deal. It's only food. God knows my heart.
5. The spiritual justification – God must have brought me here for a reason. He wants me to be an influence for Him. If I don't fit in, I will never have the position or the chance. Once I get to power, I can use my influence for Him.

You know what would have happened if Daniel made an excuse and ate the food? We wouldn't even have the book of Daniel. Eating the food would be the first foot going down the slippery slope. One compromise would have led to another and would have led to another, and Daniel would have been just one more of the flattering, manipulation wise men we will see around the king's court later in this book.

What would you do if you were in Daniel's situation?

- Many people would say, "I have to do it." "I have no choice." There is no choice, right? You are alone in a foreign country. They have all the power, and you have none. Your life is in their hands.
- Daniel had a choice. We always have a choice. Are you listening? You always have a choice!!!! No one can make you sin. No pressure can cause you to cross the line. The world desperately needs believers like Daniel, believers who will refuse to give in to peer pressure. Believers who will make up their minds and resolve in their hearts that they will not do the same sinful thing as those around them.
 - When your classmates cheat on their exams, resolve that you will not.
 - When the people around you are telling lies and view lying as normal, resolve that you will not.
- From a worldly perspective (your bosses' perspective), a Christian employee has both some negative and positive sides. The negative is that the Christian employee will not blindly obey everything, even sinful things he is asked to do. The Christian accountant should not be willing to change the numbers. The Christian salesman should not be willing to exaggerate how good the product is. The employee who loves Jesus most may not be a slave of his work and work as much overtime as others. If your boss only sees the negative side, you will not last long in your job. But there is a positive side too. An employee who follows Jesus should be trustworthy. That means he will be honest to his boss and company. Just as he will not cheat the customer, he will not cheat the company either.
- Have any of you ever seen the movie "Flywheel?" It is made by the same people who produced "Fireproof" "Courageous" and "Prayer room." Briefly share the story of the employee who was promoted because of his trustworthiness. Does your boss only see the negative side of your belief? You should be showing him the positive side. A follower of Jesus makes a good employee. Later in this book we will see that Daniel was a very good official for the king and helped the kingdom.
- What is the temptation that you are struggling with? Is anyone pressuring you to do something you know you shouldn't? Think about it for a minute. Does anything come to mind? Perhaps no one knows but you. Perhaps no one will find out if you give in.
- Perhaps you may try to justify it in your mind. Today my message for you is simple. Resolve before God right now that you will not give in.
- Make up your mind that no matter how much pressure is put on you, you will never cross that line. Then pray for strength. And consider telling a brother and sister so that they can encourage you. Even Daniel wasn't alone. He had three good friends around him who supported him.

Memory Verse:

Daniel 1:8: "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies"

Chapter 2 [The Vision of the Statue]

Servants' preparation:

English sermons by Fr. Matthias Shedad

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Remember last chapter:

We talked about Daniel and his 3 friends drawing a line for themselves as soon as they arrived at Babylon, refusing to conform to the pagan's culture that tried to brainwash them by changing their names and giving them all kinds of food. They proved that they were honest in the little, that is why God will entrust them with the bigger deal when they are asked to worship idols.

Chapter Outline:

God wanted to assure Daniel that all what had happened to him was not coincidence. The world, establishing kingdoms and destroying them, even man's dreams are all under God's control. Therefore, God allowed that Nebuchadnezzar see a terrifying dream, and all the human race was unable to interpret it. But God revealed it only to Daniel, and it is summarized in one statement, that "God controls the history and is concerned about the salvation of the world."

God wanted to reveal that Daniel was distinguished with the spirit of prophecy, clarifying that God's mercy was working in him.

1. The forgotten dream v. 1-12
2. The order to kill the wise men v. 13
4. Daniel's behavior v. 14-18
5. Revealing the secret v. 19-24
6. Encounter with the king v.25-30
7. The Statue explained v.31-33
8. The strange stone v.34-36
9. Interpretation of the dream v.37-45
10. Daniel's friends v.49

Chapter details:

The forgotten Dream

Verses 1-10:

"Now in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was so troubled that his sleep left him." (v.1)

"Then the king gave the command to call the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king." (v.2) "And the king said to them, I have had a dream, and my spirit is anxious to know the dream.

The Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic, "O king live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will give the interpretation." (v.3,4)

However, when they made aware that the king had forgotten the dream "The Chaldeans answered the king, and said, "There is not a man on earth who can tell the king's matter; therefore, no king, lord, or ruler has ever asked such things of any magician, astrologer or Chaldean."

(v.10)

It is obvious that the king felt that this dream carried a heavenly divine message. He had previously dreamt a lot, but never cared. But this time, he felt terrified and could not sleep, for he felt that the

heaven is revealing to him something important, that is why he called all the wise men, magicians, and Chaldeans.

They presented a just excuse to the king, that no one could ever interpret what he was asking, and that this had never happened in the history of mankind. Thus, everyone had witnessed that if anyone could interpret that dream, it would be a divine gift from God, for God is the only One who can interpret dreams and inner thoughts. They had witnessed for the God of Daniel, before Daniel even uttered a word about God.

The king was not comforted from the answer of the wise men, but rather he became very furious. His threats increased to a royal order to kill all the wise men of Babylon.

Daniel's Behavior

The verdict to kill Daniel did not worry him because he felt that his life, his heart, and his thoughts were all under God's control and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He asked the king to give him sometime so that God may reveal to him the secret. He knew that this request was risky, for if he would not know the answer, then his punishment would be multiplied. Then Daniel went to his house and told Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this secret, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon" (v.16-18).

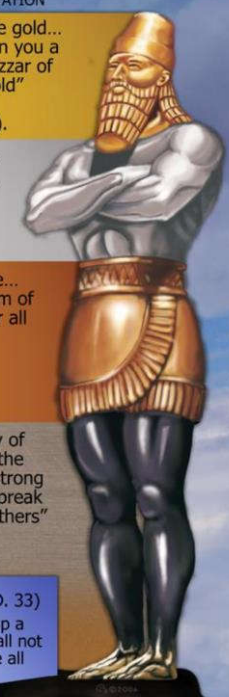
God had allowed Daniel to go through this tribulation so that he may meet Him.

God answered Daniel's prayers very fast, and the first thing that Daniel did, even before going to the king, was to thank God. In the captivity, Daniel felt God's abundant care, for He the Almighty decides the times.

The Statue explained



The Book of Daniel & God's Kingdom		(The Church)
ANCIENT EMPIRES OF MESOPOTAMIA AND THE MEDITERRANEAN		DANIEL'S PROPHECY & INTERPRETATION
GOLD	Babylonian (625 B.C. - 539 B.C.)	"This image's head was of fine gold... The God of heaven has given you a kingdom...you [Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon] are this head of gold" (Daniel 2:32, 37, 38; cf. 1:1).
SILVER	Medo-Persian (539 B.C. - 331 B.C.)	"Its chest and arms of silver... after you [Nebuchadnezzar] shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours" (Daniel 2:32, 39; cf. 8:20).
BRONZE	Greek (331 B.C. - 63 B.C.)	"Its belly and thighs of bronze... then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth" (Daniel 2:32, 39; cf. 8:21).
IRON & CLAY	Roman (146 B.C. - A.D. 476)	"Its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay...and the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, ...that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others" (Daniel 2:33, 40, 42, 43).
Kingdom of God Established (approx. A.D. 33)		"And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever" (Daniel 2:44).



The strange stone

The most important thing in the dream was this strange stone which was able to crush the kingdoms to establish a spiritual kingdom that fills the earth—a kingdom which lasts forever. Here, he talks about a new kingdom which the stone without hands will establish. It is referring to the Lord Jesus who was incarnate from a virgin. Without hands refer to the kingdom being heavenly without beginning.

Daniel's friends & The glorified Daniel

Daniel and his friends did not desire any temporal matters, but rather desired the kingdom of God and its righteousness. God gave them more than what they expected-- the temporal and the heavenly gifts.

Life Application: [God is in control]

Opening game: Cracking the Code

Prepare in advance a copy of the following coded message for each child:

WGBOVDWGRAEVXEDDGAUNRITEULCWYIRSCDEOJMJ

I have a coded message here, but I cannot work it out. I hope you can help me. Give them a few minutes to try, then give them the code. "If you cross out the first letter and then every other letter, you will discover the message". The message is "God gave Daniel wisdom."

Debriefing

Ask: How did you feel when you could not figure out the code? (Frustrated, challenged) How did things change once you did know the code? (It was easy.)

Imagine what it would be like if someone told you that you would die if you did not figure out the answer to this code! In our story today the king ordered that all his Wise Men be put to death because they could not tell him the meaning of his dream. But Daniel knew a way to save them. God wants us to help others too

Faith under pressure and God of the impossible:

A bad dream:

Have you ever had a dream so vivid and real that you wake up startled, sweating, or with a pounding heart? Well King Nebuchadnezzar had one of those. But it came with a small twist - it was totally God given and it shook this king to his very core. Nebuchadnezzar saw a great and impressive statue that was smashed to pieces by a stone. That stone became a great mountain that filled the whole earth.

Now this had the king completely freaked out! ... Was the statue a representation of him? Was it his kingdom? When is it going to be smashed? You can imagine the thoughts that swirled in his head. He has all the power and wealth of the then known world but faced with the pressure of his possible death the king demands answers! Nothing else matters!

Well Nebuchadnezzar was 'terrified with warnings' alright! So, he summons his 'wise men' - Basically a bunch of Spiritists and New Agers! The only ones not asked to consult were the Bible believers. Seems things haven't changed! But this motley bunch of 'wise men' are pretty confident saying 'O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will interpret it .' Like most mediums, they are probably thinking that they can just be clever and make up some vague waffly answer and get away with it... But the king has other ideas.

And you thought you were grumpy in the mornings!

He told them: "tell me the dream and interpret it for me."

The king isn't ready to play the wise men's little games, however. He is grumpy. Very grumpy. Obviously likes a good night's sleep! In fact, if the wise men can't tell him both the dream itself and the interpretation then they will be cut into pieces and their houses will be turned into piles of rubble. Nice. So, quite literally, life and death stood before all involved.

With the king dictating such extreme outcomes it is good to ask why he would do this. On a natural level the king is probably sick of 'wise men' that make it up as they go along. He is probably sick of their greasy advice that just tells him what he wants to hear. But on a more spiritual level it is God again who is behind this. And be assured that when God causes extreme things to happen (then or now), it is so He can act extremely.

God sometimes allows things to happen in our lives that are completely out of our control, as it was to become for Daniel, so that God HAS to act! And then God, and only God, can get the glory.

Daniel, the man of God.

So, King Nebuchadnezzar has asked the impossible, which the king's magicians and astrologers openly acknowledge. Only the 'gods' can provide an answer for this and 'they do not live among men.' Well, the real God does dwell with His people, and this shall soon be shown true.

What I really liked about this passage though is Daniel's response when he finds out that he is about to be put to death (along with his friends). Does he panic? Does he freak out? Not at all! This boy (and remember, Daniel is still a teenager or possibly early 20's at this stage) knows God.

And, as Major Ian Thomas said, 'It is the presence of the Lord Jesus that allows a man to be gloriously detached from the pressure of circumstance!' Well, Daniel seems to be gloriously detached from the pressure of having his life on the line! That is the presence of God. Nothing else can do that.

Someone once asked Einstein's wife if she understood the theory of relativity. She replied that she didn't, but that Albert did, and he could be trusted. How much more should we trust God! We may not know what is going on, but God does, and he can be trusted!

In our day the pressure is on more and more. There is pressure with jobs, health, relationships... far more strain upon families and associated anxiety are increasing. Things are getting harder. There is a shaking going on so that those things that are unshakable may remain. So, are you convinced of the faithfulness of God? Daniel was able to remain calm when the pressure came on because of his close relationship to the Lord. May we be the same!

Best be organizing that prayer meeting though!

Dan 2:18-19 Then Daniel urged his friends to plead for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery. During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision.

Nothing like a good old trial to get the prayer life firing though! Daniel's first action is to get on the blower and call for a prayer meeting! He swings straight into action and organizes his three friends to begin praying to 'plead for mercy'. There is no doubt that in these days we need prayer, we need each other, and we need to be praying for each other! No doubt about it. Make sure you have people around you that you can ask to pray in times of trial. Daniel did. And make sure you take things straight away to the Lord instead of stewing on them for a while!

Glory and praise to where it belongs!

I like how Daniel said, 'He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him.' Obviously, Daniel was thinking about the king's dream that had been revealed to him. But God reveals more than this. He can reveal the reasons concerning the dark times that we go through.

In our age the pressure is on, but God knows what lies in the darkness. May we be like Daniel and commit all things unto the one who holds our lives in His hand. He is still the God of the impossible. He reveals deep and hidden things. And He gives wisdom and power to those in need.

No need to worry God is in control:

The statue:

1] Babylon [Gold]

- Daniel told the king that he is the head of Gold.
- King Nebuchadnezzar II ruled 605-562 BC, most significant pagan King in Bible.
- Saturated with gold, even more after plundering the Temple in Jerusalem.

2] Medo-Persia [Silver]

- Daniel 2:39 Another kingdom inferior to you shall arise after you,
- Conquered Babylonian Empire.
- The 2 arms in the statue are the divided empire into Medes & Persians

3] Greece [Bronze]

- Daniel 2:39 and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth.
- Ruled by Alexander the Great who conquered Persia
- Called the Bronze Age – soldiers bronze helmets, breastplates, shields, swords

4] Rome

They took over 60 years before Christ and became the world superpower.

Overtook many nations, cultures, peoples

Ruled in Jesus day, crucified the King of Kings

Eventually fell apart into 10 toes -scattered nations and cultures (AD 476)

The point was that God allowed the Roman Empire to exist so that Jesus would be born into that world with peace and free travel to go global

= The God who wrote the Word rules the world

We can once again learn many things from Daniel in how he handles this situation:

1. **He is extremely confident.** He doesn't cringe or fret or worry. He has the answer from the Lord. The Lord is on his side. He has nothing to worry about and no reason to fear. If the Lord is for me who can be against me?

2. **He gives the credit to the Lord.** The Lord had given Daniel a great gift, but like Joseph before him, Daniel uses his gift for God and not for personal gain. He gives all the honor and glory to God. He uses the chance to preach about the true God and exalt Him. He had his moment in the sun, his day in the spotlight, and he didn't use it selfishly, he seized the chance to share the truth about God. I can tell you, all the sorcerers and magicians would have milked the moment for all it was worth. They would have tried to get as much reward as possible. But not Daniel. He was using his gift and his position for the Lord.

3. **He remained humble.** He recognized it was not through any talent or wisdom of his own. He was only a tool to accomplish God's purposes.

Memory Verse:

Daniel 2:47-The king said to Daniel, "Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery."

Chapter 3 [The Three Youths in the Fiery Furnace]

Servants' preparation:

English sermons by Fr. Matthias Shedad

<https://soundcloud.com/stpaulhouston/daniel-3-bible-study-fr>

Remember last chapter:

We talked about Daniel interpreting the King's dream in which God told him the future of kingdoms coming after him till the kingdom of God is established as a mountain forever. We saw how God is in control of all nations as well as planning the future, so, we should not worry.

Chapter Outline:

God talked to Nebuchadnezzar through the language of dreams, for his spirit was troubled (Dan.2:3). Daniel interpreted the dream for him, warning him from pride, for he became like a golden head (Dan. 2:8) to a metal image which is destroyed. The king bowed before Daniel and witnessed that God is the God of gods and the King of kings. (Dan. 2:46,47) But soon, the king forgot all that and erected an image for his person, not with a golden head, but it was all made of gold, (statue from wood or metal but all of it is gold plated). He ordered that all should bow down to it or else will be thrown into a fiery furnace. (Dan. 3:6)

Nebuchadnezzar's heart was like a thorny ground, for he had heard the interpretation of the dream by Daniel and had glorified God and had appointed Daniel above all the wise men of Babylon, as well as appointing his three friends over all the affairs of Babylon. But soon, the thorns had choked the word. The king was polytheist which means he believes in many gods at the same time, he truly believed in the heavenly God of Daniel after he interpreted the dream for him, but he added God to the list of gods he believed in. He was still fine thinking of himself as god to be worshipped.

- 1. Building a golden image v. 1-7
- 2. Complaint against the three youths. v. 8-12
- 3. Debate with Nebuchadnezzar v. 13-18
- 4. The three youths in the fiery furnace v. 19-23
- 5. Deliverance of the three youths v. 24-30
- 6. The praise of the three youths [It is only in the Orthodox bible version and Coptic reader as it was omitted by the Jews a long time ago]

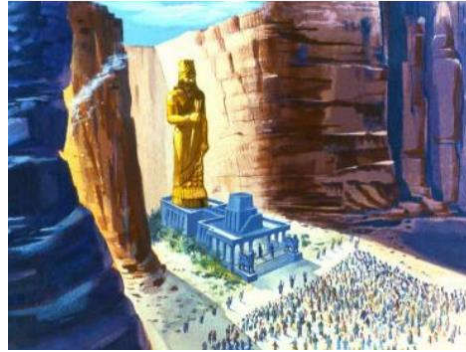
Chapter details:

Complaint against the three youths

- It is obvious that the movements of the three youths were under strict supervision, especially after the issuing of the order to worship the image.
- Probably some of the king's advisers have notified the king that these strangers do not participate with the rest of the people in the Babylonian religious rites. Some have envied those, whom the king elevated from the slavery to occupy high positions in the country and accused them of being rebellious and not worshipping the gods.
- The Chaldeans, whom Daniel and the three youths have rescued from death (Dan. 2:2) complained to the king about those who saved them and asked that the three youths be cast in the fiery

furnace. The Chaldeans gave back hatred instead of love, envy instead of doing good. This is the nature of the sinful man who likes to annoy the righteous and persecute them.

- Nothing excites those who are in authority except the feeling that someone does not obey them, even if their orders are unjust. He gave them a last chance to rescue their lives, if they worship the image only once. What troubled him was not worshipping the image but rather defying his authority.



Debate with Nebuchadnezzar

The three youths could have some excuse to justify worshipping the image:

1. They were young in age and captives.
2. They were under the authority of a brutal king.
3. The king had absolute authority over them, being captives of war. They were required to worship only once, without forbidding them from worshipping God.
4. They were in a strange country, and they could have easily done what the people are doing.
5. Their predecessors worshiped the idols even in the temple in Jerusalem
6. By refusing to worship the idols, they lose every chance to do something to help their people; however, they were confident that God can rescue them.

The furnace was made from red bricks, with an opening from top, as a side door, through which the king had seen the three youths and the Son of God.

They believed that God could save them even if He does not save them from the temporal fire. They were not afraid of the king's threatening, for they believed that:

- a. God can save them, and that He is the Guardian of their lives, and that He does not allow them to die.
- b. They believed that if God allows them to die, they will accept that courageously, offering their lives as a sacrifice of love to God.

Maybe some may ask: Why no one complained that Daniel did not worship the image?

The answer is that perhaps Daniel was in a mission outside the region. And second, those who complained against Daniel were afraid that the king may accuse them, for they knew how the king appreciated and highly regarded Daniel.

The three youths in the fiery furnace: What did the fire of persecution do to them?

- A. The Word of God appeared, the form of the fourth is like the Son of God. He who was inside them protected them and embraced them.
- B. The flames unbound the ties; however, it could not touch their hair nor their clothes.
- C. The king confessed their God, that He is the Savior and honored them in the region of Babylon

Deliverance of the three youths

St. Basil the Great said: {The three youths have manifested themselves above all the lusts of the flesh and despised the wrath of the king. They were very courageous and did not fear the fire but proved that the golden image is a worthless god. How did the three youths have victory over the power of fire? By their persistence.}

Before those who accused the three youths find anything to justify themselves, the king had issued a decree to abolish anyone who stand against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. However, he did not forsake the pagan worship, and did not ask to be with the God of the three youths and to enjoy His presence.

The praise of the three youths

The three youths started praising God and glorifying Him in the fiery furnace. This praise was used in our midnight praise third canticle.

Life Application: [Do not negotiate]



The accusation against the Jews (8-12)

Discussion Questions

- What kind of temptations have you faced where the vast majority of your peers were all engaging in a behavior that is wrong?
- What kind of reasons do we sometimes give for why we “have” to do the same as everyone else?
- What will happen if we don’t?
- What should we do? Why?
- Proverbs 27:4 – Who can stand before jealousy?

Key Observations:

1. The Chaldeans were jealous and sought every chance to accuse the Jews.
2. They made the accusation as harsh as they could, hoping the king would punish them and they could get even more reward/position.
3. Satan often uses threats/rewards to try to lure believers to do wrong. He also tries to get us to compromise and worship false things because what you worship is what you will become like.
4. The same methods are still used today because they are effective. Excuses like “everyone is doing it” and “I have no choice” are still commonplace.

Neb furiously threatens their life and defies the Lord (13-15)

Discussion Questions

- How did Neb feel about the situation?
- Was he ready to forgive them?
- Did he have any real belief in any gods?
- Did he respect the God of the Jews?

Observations:

1. Neb once again showed the height of his pride. Someone didn't immediately cater to him, and he threw a furious fit.
2. He was willing to give them another chance, I believe more to satisfy his own pride and show the world he could force anyone to do anything than because he wanted to show mercy.
3. He defied their God. This happens a lot in Scripture and out of it and the punishment for this attitude is normally swift and complete.

The three Jews refuse trust in the Lord and refuses to give in (16-18)

Discussion Questions

- Did the 3 Jews consider giving in? Why not?
- What enabled them to stand firm, even in the face of faith?
- Were they willing to give their lives for it, or did they just expect God to save them?
- What should this teach us about the motivation to do right?

Observations:

1. They didn't even consider giving in. It was never an option. In like manner, we should never consider the rewards or threats for us to compromise. Have the right principles and make up your mind to do it ahead of time and never negotiate. There is no negotiation on God's clear commands. Once you start to negotiate, you've already lost the battle (Eve).
2. It's not necessary to give a reasoning or defense. It's not necessary to try to talk others into agreeing with us. We need to just do what is right.
3. They were willing to give their lives for it. They knew God could save them, but even if they knew 100% ahead of time, God wouldn't, then they would still stand up for the belief. They weren't like all of the others, merely pragmatically motivated. It wasn't about what they could get. It was about what was right. I've met many believers who are willing to obey God as long as God blesses them and rewards them. But when trouble comes, they just give up. It's not worth it to them. They are in it for the materials.
4. Their faith was deep. They had rock solid faith in the Lord and in His power. They knew who was really in control. Knowing that the people in front of us are under the authority of God and that the final sovereign authority is God Himself is half the battle. Our teacher, parents, boss, friends, may seem powerful or important now, but they won't once we face the Lord. Our primary responsibility is to serve the Lord, not men. Give recent example of Shem. This is something that many Chinese believers will face.

Neb raises the heat and carries through with his threat (19-23)

Discussion Questions

- Did Neb respect their decision?
- Do you think people in the world will respect our decision if we stand up for what is right?

Observations:

1. It wasn't a false threat. With Daniel it was "worked out", but sometimes these things cannot be worked out. Sometimes there is no recourse, but to refuse and let the chips fall where they may.
2. Neb's anger slaughtered the people who were serving him.

The Lord completely protects them from the fire (24-27)

Observations:

1. The Lord Himself was with them in the flames. When we have faith in God, He will always honor that. Regardless of what we face, He will be with us in it. He will show us His compassion and mercy. His plans are best.
2. Those who defy God are setting themselves up for defeat.
3. God's miracles are not halfway done. They are complete. There could be no doubt about the miraculous nature of this event because of the evidence of the clothes, hair, ropes. The fire burned the part holding them and didn't touch the rest. God's miracles leave no room for coincidences.

Neb acknowledges the Lord and blesses the three men (28-30)

Observations:

1. Neb acknowledged the Lord, but it was still as one impressive God among many gods. He wasn't repentant yet.
2. God had a plan in this for the whole kingdom. The decision of the three to stand up for their faith for a time made life easier for the rest of the believers scattered across the kingdom. *Our right decisions can help others and can help break bad policies and bring shame to bad actions. If everyone goes with the status quo nothing will change. But through the faithful, God can bring change.*
3. What once again looked like not only a career killer, but a life killer, for the three men, ended up being a career booster. They prospered more than ever before. Neb may have thought it was he himself doing it, but God was holding the strings!

Bottom line:

In our study in the book of Daniel, we had seen Daniel and his friends refused to negotiate with the evil when they were asked to eat from the king's food, which was an easier deal. In this chapter, they were offered to take it easy and act as if they are bowing down to a statue but again, they refused to negotiate nor find excuses for why they had to obey. They did not even think before answering the king because they were prepared to never negotiate when sin is offered to them.

We should learn from them to never negotiate when people around us tempt us into joining or sharing in what we do not feel is appropriate in God's eye even if it seems as if it is a simple thing, we need to be firm and diligent because one day the simple temptation might turn into a life changing deal and this is when we lose our eternity, God forbids.

They were so confident in God to the extent that they told the king that even if God doesn't rescue them, they would be happy to die for His name and be honored in heaven.

Let us put the 3 youth in front of our eyes every day and learn from their firm attitude.

NO NEGOTIATION WITH THE EVIL

Memory Verse:

Daniel 3:16-17: "we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷ If that *is the case*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver *us* from your hand, O king"

Chapter 4 [The haughty tree]

Servants' preparation:

English sermons by Fr. Matthias Shedad

<https://soundcloud.com/stpaulhouston/daniel-4-bible-study-fr>

Remember last chapter:

Last chapter, we learned from the 3 youth to never negotiate when people around us tempt us into joining or sharing in what we do not feel is appropriate in God's eye even if it seems as if it is a simple thing, we need to be firm and diligent because one day the simple temptation might turn into a life changing deal and this is when we lose our eternity, God forbids.

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NO NEGOTIATION WITH THE EVIL

Chapter Outline:

The Decree of Nebuchadnezzar or the Haughty Tree

This chapter is unique in the Holy Bible where Daniel, the prophet, presents a royal decree revealing to the pagan king a divine talk God had with him in a dream. God talked with him twice in dreams before (ch.2) where He showed him the haughtiness of Babylon and its fall, and during the fiery furnace (ch.3) where God revealed to him that He defies the oppression of His people. In this chapter, God talks with him in a second dream to put him down, and to break his haughtiness. The book of Job states, "For God may speak in one way or in another, yet man does not perceive it. In a dream, in a vision of the night when deep sleep falls upon men while slumbering on their beds, He opens the ears of men and seals their instruction." (Job 33:14-16)

In this royal decree, the old king confesses his pride and is not ashamed to witness to God who broke his pride by chastising him until He lowered him to the level of animals. He admits that he was under God's chastisement, and though it may appear severe, that he deserved it. Everything that happened to him was a natural fruit of his evil life, for now he is reaping from what he had sown and drinking from the cup which he had filled with his own hands.

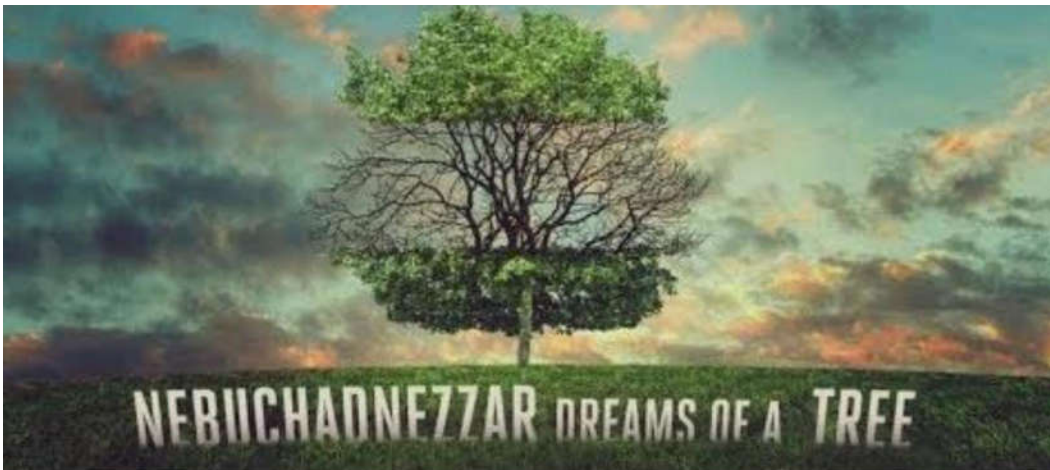
Daniel presented the decree in its original language.

- 1. The decree of Nebuchadnezzar; v. 1-3
- 2. Calling the wise men to interpret his dream: v. 4-8
- 3. The haughty tree v. 9-18
- 4. Daniel interprets the dream v. 19-27
- 5. Fulfilling the interpretation v.28-36
- 6. Nebuchadnezzar glorifies God v. 37

Chapter details:

1- The decree of Nebuchadnezzar

- The chapter begins with the king of Babylon praising the Most High God. The way this chapter begins is similar to stepping into Nebuchadnezzar's office while he opens up his journal and begins to write. He begins his entry with words of praise for God. And then we are invited to learn from his experience how he came to the point in his life.
- We have been learning about Nebuchadnezzar in our study of Daniel and we have seen a king who has witnessed amazing miracles that only God could perform. (Allow students to recall the miracles Nebuchadnezzar has seen in Daniel 1-3.) Unfortunately, the goodness of God (when God reveals Himself to any person it should cause them to turn from sin (repent) and turn to God) did not lead Nebuchadnezzar to repentance.
- Nebuchadnezzar presented a royal message from his heart, after going through a period of divine chastening because of his pride. He was not ashamed to direct this message to all nations, and peoples living in all the earth, where he declares: Even if God had chastised him, yet he deserves all that. He glorified God for His care and confessed his sins and that he deserved God's chastisement.
- Daniel was in the palace, but the king had completely ignored him, for he called the wise men. When they failed in interpreting his dream, the king sought Daniel.
- The king did not call Daniel, although he knew that he is able to interpret the dream, because he knew that the dream meant chastisement for him. That is why he did not seek Daniel's interpretation except at the very end.



2- The haughty tree

- God warns King Nebuchadnezzar declaring to him in a dream that he is under severe chastisement because of his pride.
- He compared him to a useful tree which provides a shade for the animals of the wilderness, and food for man and animal, and shelter for the birds.
- When Nebuchadnezzar fell in pride, he deserved chastening.

In this chastisement, we notice the following:

- A. Whatever happened to the pagan king was not through a human plan, but through God's permission, for he sent His watchful angel to implement this plan.

- B. There is mercy at the same time there is chastisement. God ordered that the roots remain in the earth so that the tree may grow once more in humility and repentance
- C. He did not appoint a king instead of him, but appointed his son until he came back to his mind.
- D. The purpose of the chastisement was to benefit others. (v.17)

3- Daniel interprets the dream:

- Here, Daniel's amazing wisdom appears, for though his love to the king and his humility before him and his desire to rescue him from the disaster, yet he talked with him frankly and uttered the divine truth. Daniel is giving a practical lesson in service, for the true servant is compassionate toward sinners and desires their salvation. If he rebukes sinners, he does not forget that he himself is weak and at the same time, he does not agree with sinners, at the expense of the truth and does not cover up God's wrath on sin.
- Daniel wished that Nebuchadnezzar would repent so he would not fall under such severe chastisement. Therefore, he advised him to show mercy to the poor, thus turning from violence and selfishness to love and giving, he may find grace in the eyes of God.
- St. Jerome said: { God postponed the punishment for twelve months to give Nebuchadnezzar a chance to do merciful deeds, but instead, in great haughtiness, he used to walk in his palace saying, "This is the great Babylon which I have built."

4. The fulfillment of the interpretation:

- Often, the tyrants think that God has no control over the affairs of men, and they can do whatever they like, and no one can attack them. But now, the king admits that God is in control; He leads, guides. and controls everything on the earth., as well as in heaven.
- God, who moved Nebuchadnezzar to chasten His people, now declares to him that everything happen with His permission. He permitted that his statesmen arrested him because of his insanity; now He directs them to restore him to the kingdom, without realizing God's hidden hand.

Life Application: [Replace pride with praise]

Learning Activity:

Role play with students by asking them what they feel they are gifted at (if they don't know ask them what have others say they do really well?) Using their answer ask the class to role play what a person who is filled with pride says when a compliment is given. Then allow them to share ways they can respond that point others to God who has given them ability.

Bible Lesson: Nebuchadnezzar learns to replace pride with praise:

- Everything you and I have or can do is given to us by God. The aim of every man, woman, boy and girl should be to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.
- People glorify God when they acknowledge that He is ruler over all things. We glorify God by praising Him for all that He has done and is doing in our lives.
- Unfortunately, when sin entered the world people do not naturally use the life God has given him/her to glorify God. We use our lives for our own pleasures and believe that we are in charge of

our lives. Instead of praising God and acknowledging that everything He has given us is from Him we become prideful and believe we are the masters of our own destiny.

- Before anyone can fully glorify God, he/she must become a new creation in the Lord Jesus Christ. Otherwise, people are incapable to praise God and truly glorify Him because they are dead spiritually. (Ephesians 2:1)

Can a puppet move without a hand inside of it?

- (Use a puppet as a visual aid by placing it on the floor and ask the puppet to get up and greet the students. Of course, the puppet cannot do that without someone placing his hand inside and animating the direction of the puppet. This is similar to the life of a person before God. Without faith in Christ, a person is completely incapable to obey God. Only when he/she believes in Jesus by faith does the Holy Spirit come to live within his/her life and empowers them to live according to God's ways.)
- To be able to please God and live according to His Word, you must acknowledge that you are a sinner and hopelessly lost/separated from God because of your sin. When you place your faith in Jesus; that He died on the cross for your sins, was buried and raised to life three days later, you become a new creation empowered by the Holy Spirit to live a life that pleases God and ultimately glorifies Him.
- A life that has been raised to life through the Lord Jesus should be one that is filled with thankfulness and praise. When God is praised by His creation, He is glorified.

Let's turn to Daniel 4.

- (Daniel 4:4-9) Once again Nebuchadnezzar has a dream that troubles him. Similarly, he calls for his wise men minus Daniel and asks for their help. This time he tells them what he saw but they could not interpret it for him. When he realizes they can't help him, he turns to Daniel.
- Who we turn to first for help, reveals who we trust. After all that Nebuchadnezzar has experienced so far with Daniel and his three friends, it seems as though he would be at the place in his life that he automatically calls on Daniel for help.
- Read Daniel 4:8-9. Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges that the spirit of the gods in Daniel and that nothing baffles him or is too difficult for him.
- Many times, people turn to other people or things for help because if they turn to God, they will have to give up sin. Nebuchadnezzar worships many gods and is not in a place where he is ready to give up his gods to follow the One and only True God.
- What sin are you clinging to that keeps you from turning to God in every situation?
- (Daniel 4:10-18) Nebuchadnezzar tells Daniel that he saw an enormous tree that touched the sky and could be seen by everyone. It was a fruitful tree where animals and birds came for shelter and food.
- (Daniel 4:19-27) Daniel interprets the king's dream.
- What is Daniel's reaction to the dream? (Daniel 4:19) He was alarmed, and his thoughts terrified him.
- What is Daniel's attitude toward a king who still worships many gods instead of the Only God? (Daniel 19) He has compassion and concern.

If you are a Christian, what is your attitude toward people who are not believers?

- Who is the tree in Nebuchadnezzar's dream? (Daniel 4:20-22)
- Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar that his dream is about how God is going to take Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom away and humble him for seven years.
- What does Daniel say Nebuchadnezzar will be doing for 7 years? (Living with wild animals and eating grass like a cow) God was going to punish him because he was prideful and did not praise the One who had given him the authority to be a ruler over Babylon. The stump that is left means that once Nebuchadnezzar repents of his pride and acknowledges that God is the ruler over all he will be given back his kingdom.
- Read Daniel 4:27. Daniel urges Nebuchadnezzar to repent and do what is right.
- Daniel 4:28-33 Nebuchadnezzar doesn't listen to Daniel's warning.
- How much time passes after his dream does Nebuchadnezzar boast of his greatness? (Verse 29-12 months)
- At the beginning of our lesson, we talked about the purpose or aim for every human being is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Who is Nebuchadnezzar glorifying with his words? (Himself) If Nebuchadnezzar would have followed Daniel's advice and chose to praise God, his heart would have been protected from pride.
- Pride is sin because it is a false idea that what we believe about ourselves places us in a higher position than we deserve.

An example would be that if a person is intelligent, he might say, "I have straight A's because I study for hours each day. I have earned all that I have because I am a good student." It is true that we must study and do our part to do well but ultimately any wisdom and intelligence is from God our creator. We should always remember to thank Him for any gift or talent we have to, guard our hearts from pride.

- God always does exactly what He says He is going to do. As soon as Nebuchadnezzar uttered his prideful words a voice from heaven speaks to him.
- After 7 years of living like an animal, Nebuchadnezzar humbled himself before God. Let's read verses 34-35.
- God kept His word to give Nebuchadnezzar his kingdom back once he acknowledged that God is ruler of all.
- As we close, we are going to read verse 37 together. (Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything He does is right, and all His ways are just. And those who walk in pride He is able to humble.)

Nebuchadnezzar learned the hard way that God will humble those who are prideful. Let's learn from Nebuchadnezzar to choose to give God the credit/praise for all things and turn away from pride.

Pride steals glory that belongs to God alone.

- Close in prayer.

Review Questions:

1. True or False: King Nebuchadnezzar has a dream about 7 fat cows and 7 skinny cows. (False)
2. True or False: King Nebuchadnezzar asked Daniel to help him after he asked his own wise men. (True)
3. True or False: King Nebuchadnezzar would be like an animal for 9 years. (False)
4. True or False: Daniel was thrilled that God was finally going to punish this wicked king. (False)
5. True or False: Daniel warned Nebuchadnezzar to turn from his sins so God would not have to punish him. (True)

6. True or False: Two months after the dream King Nebuchadnezzar boasted about his power.
(False)
7. True or False: God punishes Nebuchadnezzar immediately while his boastful words are still in his mouth. (True)

Memory Verse:

Daniel 4:37 "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right, and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble."

Chapter 5 [The handwriting on the wall]

Servants' preparation:

English sermons by Fr. Matthias Shedad

<https://soundcloud.com/stpaulhouston/daniel-5-bible-study-fr>

Remember last chapter:

We talked about Nebuchadnezzar who learned the hard way that God will humble those who are prideful. We learned from him to choose to give God the credit/praise for all things and turn away from pride. Pride steals glory that belongs to God alone.

Chapter Outline:

The seventy years of the captivity, of which Jeremiah had prophesied (Jer. 25:11) came to an end.

The new king, Belshazzar [Nebuchadnezzar's grandson], with his weak personality, came and with him the kingdom deteriorated.

Nebuchadnezzar was proud and sinful man, and God gave him many opportunities to examine himself. His grandson, Belshazzar did not learn from the lessons of his fathers, but defied God Himself and deliberately insulted God. Therefore, God chastised him.

Daniel did not pity King Belshazzar, as he did with his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar, for he was known with injustice and corruption.

1. The banquet of Belshazzar: 1.1-4
2. The handwriting on the wall: v. 5-9
3. The queen suggests Daniel v.10-16
4. Daniel preaches to the king (17-24)
5. Daniel interprets the writing and is rewarded (25-29)
6. The Babylonian kingdom falls (30-31)

Chapter details:

The banquet of Belshazzar (1-4)

Belshazzar was busy arranging a banquet for thousands of great people with their wives, concubines. He thought that it was impossible for Cyrus to attack the great walls of the city.

They brought the vessels, not for mere enjoyment of the drinking, but rather for insulting God and defiling the vessels which were sanctified for the service of His temple.

This was a calculated and planned ritual symbolic of his defiance of God. It was a foolish thing. It's kind of like a kid who is dared to light firecrackers on somebody's porch. All the kids nervously watch, wondering if he can do it. Finally, he does it and runs away and all of them laugh at the good joke together, until of course the owner of the house comes and catches them.



The handwriting on the wall (5-9)

1. Suddenly at the height of Bel's pride and defiance, God sent His judgment. Defiance of God never ends well. Just when he thought everything was great, he was surprised. God intervened. It often appears that the wicked will go unpunished and get away with their evil and they do for a while. But eventually, and suddenly, God's judgment will fall, and it will be too late to avoid it.
2. The hand appeared to the king only and not to the other dignitaries; that is why he was confused and terrified. The dignitaries became terrified like him, without seeing anything.
3. The king turned once again to the ineffective diviners and wise men, who once again were unable to help.
4. He once again offered great promises of reward. This was the system they dealt with. People did favors for the king because they wanted reward or wanted to avoid punishment. Threats of punishment or promises of reward are the tools used by the world.

The queen suggests Daniel (10-12)

Discussion Questions

Who might this queen have been?

Why do you think Bel did not know about Daniel?

How old was Daniel when all of this happened?

Why do you think Daniel was no longer around the palace scene?

Key Points

- The queen reminded the king of Daniel, who was most probably retired. The king was preoccupied in his desires which made him ignore God's man or resist God Himself.
- The queen was probably a young wife of Nebuchadnezzar [Neb].
- Daniel would have been around 85 years old at this point.
- It seems that when Bel's administration took over, Daniel wasn't a major part of it. Bel probably reversed the decrees Neb had made promoting worship of the Most High. His attitude shows a defiance of the Lord, that most certainly wouldn't have welcomed Daniel to be around. The other possibility is that Daniel himself largely withdrew from the affairs because of the evil direction it was headed.

- Daniel's influence had had a profound impact on many people, including the queen. He had been very visible and very influential for God for a long time. We see that here there is some fruit of that.

Daniel's interpretation: The king asks Daniel to interpret the writing (13-16)

Why would Daniel be made the "third ruler"?

Third ruler behind Nabonidus [Bel's father who was still alive] and Bel.

Daniel preaches to the king (17-24)

- Daniel took the opportunity to preach.
- Daniel, like Abraham before, refused to take the gifts. He was showing that materials and rewards were not important to him. He wasn't like the others. This wasn't his purpose. He stood for the truth and for right.
- Daniel reviewed Neb's lesson and said that Bel should have learned from that.
- Bel and his kingdom would be punished because they were prideful and didn't trust in the Lord.
- This time Daniel doesn't seem sorry or upset, as he was when he found out Neb would be punished. He doesn't have this same close relationship with Bel.
- The punishment was sent when Bel's pride reached a climax.

Daniel interprets the writing and is rewarded (25-29)

- Daniel explained to the king that the fingers of the hand were sent from God. This is the inscription that was written: Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin.
 - Mene means: God has numbered your kingdom and finished it.
 - Tekel means you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting.
 - Peres means: Your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians.
- Then Belshazzar gave the command and clothed Daniel with purple and put a chain of gold around his neck and made a proclamation concerning him that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom" (v. 23-29).
- Belshazzar was killed shortly after, and the kingdom was transferred from the hands of the Babylonians to the Persians, and thus we move from the golden head of the statue to the silver chest and the shoulders, as mentioned in the second chapter of the book.
 - Our lives too will be measured on some "scales" and all of will be found wanting, unless Christ's righteousness is imputed to us.
 - Every kingdom in the history of the world has been found wanting. None of them have been perfect and most have degenerated into being very evil and corrupt. Don't place your faith in kingdoms or nations.
 - The only kingdom that will never be found wanting is Christ's kingdom, which will be a permanent one.
 - Sometimes if you don't want gifts, God will see to it that you still get them. This is not our motivation. Sometimes it is an added bonus.

The Babylonian kingdom falls (30)

- History tells us the city fell through a brilliant military strategy of diverting the Euphrates River so that they could go into the city under the walls.
- It was a miraculous "one day" defeat for the impregnable city brought about by God.

- Babylon fell as fast as it rose up. God had used it to accomplish His purposes and now its task of punishing Israel was done and it in turn would be punished.
- The king died the same night. He and his kingdom were punished for their pride.

Life Application: [In God's economy, does payday always come at the end of the week? in other words, right away?

Opening Activity

Start the lesson off by playing hangman! Use the phrase "Humble yourself before the Lord" as the phrase. When the puzzle has been solved, ask: What does it mean to humble yourself before the Lord? Discuss that question and then say: Today we are going to learn about someone who didn't humble himself and the disastrous consequences.

Lessons from the Handwriting on the Wall

- This morning I'd like to begin, as I often do, by asking you a question....
 - In God's economy, does payday always come at the end of the week?
 - in other words, we know the biblical principle of sowing and reaping....whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap.....so we know that payday comes....
 - We know that God rewards those who are faithful and judges those who are not but the question I'm raising has more to do with the issue of timing.
 - In God's economy, does payday always come at the end of the week? in other words, right away?
 - what's the answer to that question?..(no)
 - in fact, in some cases, there are long periods of times between the sowing and the reaping....between the actions and the consequences.
 - do you agree with that....both biblically and experientially?(yes)
- now, let me ask you this.....since that's true.....for what kind of people does that become especially challenging?

- 1) It's a challenge for those who are living faithfully for God.....
 - because you may be trying to do what's right, trying to obey the Scriptures, trying to please God.....and there have not been any evident blessings or rewards, humanly speaking.....
 - in fact, your attempts to obey and please God may have resulted in grief and heartache, humanly speaking.....
 - and then you couple that, with people who seem to ignore God, or clearly violate His principles, appearing to prosper.....
 - and you're tempted to think or say...as you survey the fact that in God's economy, payday doesn't always come at the end of the week.....
 - maybe God doesn't **see**....or maybe God doesn't **know**, or maybe God doesn't **care**...
 - and the temptation is to become, what the Bible describes as, "**weary in well-doing.**"
- 2) So, this presents a challenge to those who are living faithfully for God....it also presents a challenge for those who are living in disobedience to God.

- why is that true?.....that because payday does not always come at the end of the week, it's a challenge for those who are in disobedience???
 - because they too, may be tempted to conclude..... maybe God doesn't **see**....or maybe God doesn't **know**, or maybe God doesn't **care**...
- we're not simply having an intellectual chat here.....I'm wanting you to come down a particular road with me.....
- and the trip will be most beneficial if you are already thinking about which one of these categories do you fit in?
- 1) Is there any sense in which you are weary in well-doing, because you are trying to live for God but don't seem to be reaping much in the way of immediate human rewards.....while at the same time those who are unrighteous around you are prospering?
 - 2) Is there any sense in which you are disobeying God.....but you're been slow to take steps to change, because so far, there's been no negative consequences?
- there's no question that in God's economy, payday does not always come at the end of that weekthe consequences are not always automatic.
 - the question then is.....what should we do about that?
 - one of the answers is.....how about studying an example from the word of God, where, in someone's life, the consequences did finally come.
 - and to add to it, let's say that the example is so famous, that it has even led to the use of a phrase today that is commonly known in our culture....even better than the story itself.....
 - let's say an expression like-----the handwriting on the wall.
- I'd like to invite you to open your Bible to Daniel chapter 5, where we're going to study this great event in the life of God's prophet and talk about "**Learning lessons from the handwriting on the wall.**"

Names and relationships clarified:

- By time we get to chapter 5, Nebuchadnezzar has died.....in fact he's probably been dead about 20 years...we date the events of chapter five to have occurred about 539 BC
 - the person who now is the king of Babylon is named Belshazzar.
 - now there's a couple of things about this that might be confusing, and I'd like to clear them up before we read.....
- 1- One is, the names.....
 - Belteshazzar.....he's the good guy.....
 - but now we have this king named Belshazzar---whether he's a good guy or not remains to be seen.
 - 2- Also there's the issue of how Belshazzar is related to King Nebuchadnezzar.....
 - in our text, he's called Nebuchadnezzar's son....
 - if you have a study Bible, it probably points out that the word father was used to describe any relative....because there language didn't have a word for grandfather, or great-grandfather.....
 - Belshazzar was actually Nebuchadnezzar's grandson.

- we're studying a situation that illustrates the principle....that in God's economy.....payday does not always come at the end of the week.....

READ Daniel chapter 5.

Three lessons from the handwriting on the wall.

I. Choose to be Controlled by the Spirit of God.

The city had very thick walls, and some scholars believe that they could have had provisions for as long as 20 years inside the city walls.

- but Belshazzar is in trouble and the question is.....how is he going to handle the stress and difficulty in his life?

- and his answer is the same as many back in that culture, and ours today.....

- break out the booze.....and turn up the music.....we're going to have a great party.....and try to drown out the pain, and drown out the uncertainty.....

- that's the way he's handled life up to the point and there hasn't been any negative consequences....so why not have another big bash.

Comparing the king to Daniel:

- the critical lesson comes when comparing the king....to Daniel.
- remember, Daniel has to be how old by now?
- in his 80's....and he's lived faithfully for God, where's he still living? in Babylon....serving yet another wicked boss.
- if anyone had reason to be drunk, it'd be Daniel.....
- if anyone had reason to be discouraged and ready to quit....it's be Daniel.....
- but Daniel hasn't become weary in well-doing.....how do we find him described repeatedly in this text?
- **"One in whom is the Spirit of the Holy Gods"**
- we are living in a time where there are not always immediate consequences for doing wrong...and there are not always immediate blessings for doing right.....
- so how are you going to handle the **freedom** that comes from that kind of economy?...and how are you are going to handle the **frustration** that might come from that kind of economy?
- what's going to control you?
- what's going to be your source of joy, happiness, and satisfaction?
- where are you going to turn if times get tough?
- You have a clear choice before you, you can be like Belshazzar, or you can be like Daniel.
- you can be controlled by booze, drugs, food, entertainment, pleasure, or things our world offers up to take your mind away from reality or you can be controlled by the Spirit of God.
- you can choose to trust Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and when that happens, the Bible says that the Holy Spirit takes us residence inside of you.....you become a temple of the Holy Spirit.....

- Daniel was able to remain faithful to God even though the blessings were not immediately evident because he was determined to be controlled by the Spirit of God.
- Daniel was able to avoid all of the sinful habits of the culture in which he was immersed because he was determined to be controlled by the Spirit of God.
- have you taken steps this week that could be described with the Biblical phrase “walking in the Spirit?”
- The king dared to defile the vessels of the temple, no one had dared do that in nearly 70 years....but Belshazzar did.....and mark it down.....you are either walking in the Spirit and growing in your relationship to God....or you are getting harder....
- Nowadays some people ignore God in their life, believing they could play church.....believing they could stop before things really got out of hand....
- and they ending up doing things, or saying things, or taking steps of gross disobedience to God that they would have never believed possible.
- and wise is the person who stays right with God, or gets right with God, before they have to see the handwriting on the wall.

II. Strive to Be a Learner.

- if you're at all in the habit of writing in your Bible, I would encourage you to underline a key phrase in your Bible...at the end of verse 22- **“even though you knew all of this.”**
- Belshazzar could not claim the excuse.....“but I didn't know”.
- God had given him plenty of opportunities, through the lives of his own ancestors, to learn about the person of the true God.
- this man had not truly been a learner because he hadn't done anything with the information.
- this man hadn't truly been a learner because he hadn't changed.
- faith without works is dead.....that kind of faith cannot save.
- what a haunting phrase in the Word of God..... - **“even though you knew all of this.”**
- Belshazzar, you knew how God humbled your grandfather Nebuchadnezzar....yet still, you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven.
- Belshazzar got to the place where he was because he failed to be a learner **“even though you knew all of this.”**
- God has given you all of these people in your past, and God has given you all of these experiences in your past....and God has given you a Bible filled with stories of men and women who have gone on before us.....
- and one of the lessons from the handwriting on the wall is.....God wants us / God expects us....to learn from those who have gone before us.
- I wonder if you don't take cultivating a relationship with Christ as seriously as your parents and grandparents did and you're quick to look at some of their standards as being old-fashioned and legalistic.....maybe they were----but have you asked about the reasons for those positions before discarding them?

- we can either benefit from the story of the handwriting on the wall in this text, or we can face the handwriting on the wall in our own lives.

III. Be Motivated by the Omnipresence of God.

- we can really benefit from these words, mene, mene, tekei, upharsin.
- you have been weighed in the balance and found wanting.

- all these years, Belshazzar believed he was getting away with something.
- all these years, he had ignored the lessons he should have learned from the experiences of his grandfather.....but he hadn't.....
- perhaps he thought God didn't know.....or that God didn't see....or that God didn't care...
- he mistook the long-suffering of God...for indifference.
- he mistook the patience of God.....for ignorance.

- mark it down, when God writes something on the wall....its going to happen.
- for that matter, when God writes something in His book, its going to happen.

Memory Verse:

Daniel 5:22 "But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this"

Chapter 6 [Daniel in the Lion's Den]

Servants' preparation:

English sermons by Fr. Matthias Shedad

<https://soundcloud.com/stpaulhouston/daniel-6-bible-study-fr>

Remember last chapter:

Last week we mentioned that there's no question that in God's economy, payday does not always come at the end of that weekthe consequences are not always automatic. The obedient Christian feel worried, thinking that God forgot about them and the disobedient consider that there is no punishment, but in the previous chapter, we realized that God is watchful and picks the right time.

Chapter Outline:

This chapter presents the story of throwing Daniel in the lion's den.

Daniel became very old; however, he was not old in his spirit; and the longtime of captivity did not change his heart nor his faithfulness to God. He remained as a youth, and he grew in the faith, despite him being deprived from the spiritual atmosphere surrounding him.

Daniel represented the church, especially during the end of the ages when people reject worshipping the anti-Christ and the beast. Daniel was a captive, and God demonstrated his love through his faithful prophet Daniel, even during the chastening.

- 1. Daniel's position during the reign of Darius. v. 1-3
- 2. The enemies plotting against Daniel. v. 4-9
- 3. Daniel's faith v. 10-15
- 4. Daniel's tribulation and salvation v.16-24
- 5. The declaration of Darius v. 25-28

Chapter details:

INTRO:

Back in the late 19th century, there was no Internet. There was no TV, there were no movies, and they didn't even have radio! Once a year, the whole town lit up with excitement when the circus came to town!

From the very beginning, one of the most popular attractions was the lion tamer. Fans received a chill as the giant cage was set up in the center ring, preparing the stage for man and beast. The lions and tigers would be released into the cage, and the bold, brave lion tamer would thrill the fans by getting the vicious killers to sit up and roll over like kittens. It took nerves of steel for a man to train these wild beasts, to step into the cage with them every night, and in the dramatic finale, to stick their hand or head into the lion's mouth!

Today, we begin our Bible Circus series with a lion's tale. This isn't the story of a brave lion tamer, but a man who was tossed into a den of lions expecting to die. This is the story of a man of great faith who looked death in the face and discovered that God is stronger even than the king of beasts!

1. Daniel's position during the reign of Darius

No doubt that King Darius had heard of Daniel the prophet, and probably he had seen him when Belshazzar king of Babylon was killed, and he was clothed with purple and golden chain around his neck. The king knew that he was the one who interpreted the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar and the writings on the wall. Darius had honored him and trusted him, and he became the tool which God had used to release his people from captivity. However, the devil did not stay quiet, for the more God was glorified in Daniel, the more the devil was stirred to destroy Daniel.

Okay, so last week, our lesson was about someone that wrote on the walls... God, right? God wrote on the walls and warned the people that the kingdom was going to be sieged, and then it WAS! Daniel was the one to interpret it, and it wasn't even a day later that Babylon was under the control of a new man, King Darius.

King Darius decided he was going to completely redo the way Babylon was run. He moved the government around and selected three people to serve as the bosses. These people oversaw everything, and they worked together to do it. One of them was Daniel.

Now, we already learned that Daniel was pretty smart, right? When he ate the right foods, the Bible said that Neb gave him control over everything because he was so much smarter than the other guys. Then, he had a good track record of being successful, so his reputation was probably pretty good at that point.

2. The enemies plotting against Daniel

Well, when Daniel went into his new job, King Darius quickly found that Daniel was just as his reputation said he was... super smart, and super successful. So, he promoted Daniel to be one of the bosses of all the other bosses. Now, Daniel was over the other two guys that he had just recently been on the same level with.

So, let's stop and think for a moment... How would you feel if you were Daniel in this scenario? How would you feel if you were one of those other bosses?

If you think you would feel jealous that Daniel got promoted over you, you're probably right. After all, you'd worked hard for your position, and all of those guys probably wanted to have more power too, you know?

Well, they did. They were mad. They went up to one another and started venting. So, they devised a plan...

King Darius is gullible. He's really. So, you can tell him pretty much anything, and he'll believe you. Those guys convinced him, saying "we decided that there should be a rule that everyone must pray only

to you and nobody else... After all, you're the King! For punishment we were thinking you could... oh, I don't know... throw anyone who disobeys in with the lions. That seems fitting."

"Okay!" King Darius said, and a law went out that people could only pray to him, and not to anybody else or any other God. Well, remember when I told you Daniel had a reputation?

These guys all knew Daniel's reputation. They had good reason to believe that Daniel, who had been faithful to his God for over 70 years now, would continue to be faithful.

Darius was the new guy. He hadn't had the privilege of knowing all about Daniel's faith, or how he would refuse to obey the new law.



3. Daniel's Faith:

The enemies knew when Daniel prayed, and they were easily to watch him from the open windows. The Jews used to pray three times daily.

Daniel, not regarding the king's commands but confident in God, did not pray in an obscure place but went in the upper room and opened the windows toward Jerusalem, so that he may feel the peace of God. Moreover, he used to pray according to the commandment of God and according to what King Solomon had said that they should worship toward the temple.

Daniel could have stopped praying for the thirty days, until the period of the decree was over, and he could have prayed secretly in his house with the windows closed, or he could have pretended that he worshiped the idols. However, Daniel found this a good opportunity to declare his faith, therefore, he opened the windows and challenged evil, not to show off but as a testimony to his faith.

Others perhaps considered it risky for Daniel to pray as was his custom. Daniel knew that the safest thing he could do was radically obey God.

It isn't hard to see why people are men-pleasers; it seems as if people have the power to hire or fire us, to break our hearts, to slander us, to make our live generally miserable. [The power to obey God and stand for Him comes from a settled understanding that God is really in control.](#)

4. Daniel's Tribulation and Deliverance

The king failed in rescuing Daniel for he had already signed the decree and sealed it, but God Himself has saved him.

“Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you”: Darius had faith, and it was faith born out of Daniel's trust in the Lord. You serve continually: This made Daniel's testimony.

Many of us occasionally display godly character and wisdom before the world, but counter-act the good by then being bad. Daniel's testimony was made by continual service.

The king was depressed in his castle, and he could not sleep.

But Daniel was living as if in Paradise befriending the animals, as he experienced the deposit of heaven. When the angel descended and shut the mouths of the lions, this was the happiest night that Daniel had ever lived.

The king's sleep went from him: Undoubtedly, Daniel had a better night's rest than Darius. We can be sure that Daniel prayed in the lions' den, because it was simply his habit to pray. He did not need to start praying on this remarkable occasion because the habit of prayer was well ingrained in his life.

After God saved Daniel, the king decided to punish the evil people and their families who plotted against the righteous Daniel.

5. The declaration of Darius

The declaration of Darius was stronger than the declaration of Nebuchadnezzar (3:29), for it was positive and not negative. Darius was touched by the miracle that had happened and realized that the true God is the God of Daniel, and that He is the eternal, the immortal, who controls heaven and earth to deliver His believers. But this did not mean that Darius became righteous because he still had the pagan worship in his palace. He glorified God temporarily for a period only, but he remained in paganism.

Life Application: [Wanted: Men & women Who Are Above Reproach]

Can we be men and women above reproach?

- The bible says they could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful: Daniel was such a faithful man that those who looked for a flaw in his actions or his character came up empty.
- Sometimes today a candidate or nominee for political office is set under this kind of scrutiny but imagine looking as hard as you can at a public servant in office some 50 years and finding nothing wrong. No fraudulent expense accounts. No intern scandals. No questionable business deals. No gifts from lobbyists. No accusations from his staff.
- Simply, there were no skeletons in Daniel's closet. His enemies examined his life and found nothing to attack – so they had to make up something. Nor was there any error or fault found in him: This wasn't to imply that Daniel was actually sinless, but that he was a man of great integrity. We could also say that Daniel was especially blameless in the conduct of his professional life.

“If we spent less time on our feet and more time on our knees; and if we spent less time talking with men and more time talking with God; and if we spent less time caring about our neighbors' thoughts and more time meditating in prayer on God's Word, we would be more holy, consistent, and

reputable. We must be men and women who are above reproach, and in order for this to be the case, we must be men and women on our knees.”

- Daniel was an exemplary young man. He was not the average teenager, Daniel was a youngster without reproach.
- Daniel remained an exemplary worshiper as he walked through middle age. It mattered not the situation or the king; for better or for worse; for richer or for poorer; Daniel remained the Lord's man.
- Daniel, in his old age, remained faithful. All around him changed, kings had come and gone. Daniel's faithfulness before his God changed not. He was above reproach.
- Daniel's enemies wished to take him down a notch. They wished to see him executed. However, upon fully vetting their opponent, no weak points could be found. No sexual indiscretion could be uncovered, or hidden interns found in the closet. He had not misused corporate or public funds. He was not noted for being a power-hungry bully. One could “read his lips” and count on him keeping every word. Daniel was a gracious servant leader who for decades modeled a love for God and his fellow man. Any accusations would be laughable, unless someone accused him of faithfully worshiping his God and spending too much time and energy in prayer. He was a man above reproach.



- Wouldn't it be wonderful to marry such a man? How happy would be the wife whose husband loved God more than her?
- Wouldn't it be wonderful to be fathered by such a man? He would spend himself providing well for his household, and any act of discipline would not be to safeguard his reputation, but to sanctify his children. Because he was regularly found on his knees asking for wisdom, he would be given such wisdom in abundance.
- And wouldn't it be wonderful to work for such a man? His business would be more likely to thrive due to his work ethic, honesty, and charity. He would keep his word with his customers and his employees.
- And wouldn't it be wonderful to elect and be publicly served by such a man? Oh, that God would give us political leaders who are political servants who are petitioners of the Most High God. Aren't we weary of men removing the Scripture from public schools and offices, and wouldn't we rather have men known for getting on their knees for prayer? What we need are men above reproach!

- And wouldn't it be wonderful to be such a man? Wouldn't we like this to be said about us? Wouldn't this make an incredible praise on our gravestones? This may not be our history, but it can be our future. We can do nothing about the horrible inconsistencies and transgressions of yesterday, but we can honor the Lord and love our neighbor by seeking to be such men of integrity today and tomorrow.
- And how might we make progress towards such a noble end? Daniel's prayer life is the key. If we spent less time on our feet and more time on our knees; and if we spent less time talking with men and more time talking with God, we would be more holy and reputable. We must be men and women who are above reproach, and in order for this to be the case, we must be men and women on our knees.

Compared to Jesus: [if there is time to point this out, use it]

Daniel prospered: One of the greatest blessings to come from Daniel 6 is to see the story unfold and point to Jesus Christ. Consider this:

1. A man without blame, faithful to God in all his ways, a man noted for prayer, was sent to his death because of the jealousy of those who wanted to prevent his exaltation.
2. He was condemned to death by plotting of his enemies and the law of the land and thrown into a stone room meant to be his tomb.
3. A stone was rolled over the opening. But in all its power and ferocity, death couldn't touch him.
4. On a morning the stone was rolled away, he came out victoriously; he glorified God, the pagans gave honor to God, and his enemies were judged.

That's a pretty good story – the story of both Daniel 6 and Jesus the Messiah.

Another takeaway from this chapter: [Facing hard times]

We've noticed a bit of a theme here with Daniel, haven't we? No matter what happens to Daniel, he ends up trusting God. He knows that God has a better plan for him than anyone else, and he trusts God. And when God tells him to do something, Daniel obeys.

In our lives, we are sometimes faced with times when it's hard to trust God, or to obey him. Maybe we are having a really hard time in school, or there's a bully on the playground, or our parents are fighting all the time. Maybe we are hungry, or are made fun of, or don't feel like we have any friends.

Whatever is going on in our lives, though, we can trust God that He will take care of us. And when we trust God, we find it easier to obey Him, too.

The story of Daniel is a very timely one for us. We're living in a time when the world is not so friendly to those who believe in our God. There are people who would want us to shut our mouths about our faith. You will find as you grow older that some of your classmates will challenge you to go against what you believe and make some choices that go against God's Word. True, no one is ever likely to threaten you with being tossed into a den of lions, but peer pressure can be a very, very difficult challenge to overcome.

No one wants to feel like an outcast. That's almost worse than being fed to the lions. But if you have the faith to stand up to peer pressure, God will give you the strength to stand firm.

God can use your faith to make you a witness to others. God will reveal Himself to your friends just as he did to King Darius. When you have the courage to stand strong, you may give another friend that same courage. You can set an example in faith and in purity for others to follow.

Standing up for God may seem scary at times. I am sure Daniel was quite terrified as he was led off to face the lions. But we can rest assured that if we are following God's lead, He will not leave us to face our fears alone. The King of Kings was stronger than the king of beasts and greater than the king of Persia. He stands with those who stand for Him, and when we are in danger, He is mighty to save.

Don't be afraid of the lions. Have faith, and God will be your strength!

Memory Verse:

Daniel 6:22: "My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you."



Unit 2 [Chapters 7-12]

Visions and Prophecies Chapter 7 – 12

This section of Daniel contains four visions,

1. The vision of the four beasts - Dan 7:1-28.
2. The vision of the ram and the goat - Dan 8:1-27.
3. The vision of the seventy weeks - Dan 9:1-27.
4. The vision of the time of the end - Dan 10:1-12:13.

In which God reveals to Daniel many things about His purpose and plan in history, regarding the nation of Israel and the everlasting kingdom to come

1. Daniel's 1st prophecy in chap 7 was during the reign of the last Babylonian king.
2. Daniel's 2nd prophecy in chap 8 was during the same Babylonian king but 2 years later.
3. Daniel's 3rd prophecy in chap 9 was during the 1st year of Cyrus [1st Persian king]
4. Daniel's 4th prophecy in chap 10-12 was during the 3rd year of Cyrus [after return of Exile]

Chapter 7 [Nebuchadnezzar's dream and Daniel's vision]

Servants' preparation:

English sermons by Fr. Matthias Shedad

<https://soundcloud.com/stpaulhouston/daniel-7-bible-study-fr>

Remember last chapter:

Last week we saw that they could find no charge or fault against Daniel, because he was faithful: Daniel was such a faithful man that those who looked for a flaw in his actions or his character came up empty. He was above reproach till the end of his life. How might we make progress towards such a noble end? Daniel's prayer life is the key. If we spent less time on our feet and more time on our knees, we could get there.

Chapter Outline:

- In general, this vision carries the same meaning of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar mentioned in the second chapter, but with different meanings and some additions. He saw the transfer of the kingdom from the Assyrians to Babylon (612 B.C.), and from Babylon to Persia (year 530 B.C.), and from Persia to Alexander the Great (year 331 B.C.), and from Macedonia to the Roman Empire which started in the year 63 B.C.
- What Nebuchadnezzar saw represented the human vision to the four kingdoms, for they concentrated on wealth, authority, greatness. However, what Daniel saw represented God's outlook to those kingdoms, where he sees them all as wild beasts who want to devour the previous ones.
- Nebuchadnezzar saw Christ as a small stone growing little by little, but Daniel saw him as the glorious son of man (v.13,14) who came to establish His spiritual kingdom in the lives of the people.
- Nebuchadnezzar did not see the antichrist, but Daniel saw him as the evil king who will appear at the end of days.
- The two sets of dreams and visions were about 50 years apart; but as we will see, they both describe four world empires. The vision of the four beasts and the little horn found in Daniel 7 reveals more information about the same four empires that are first described in Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a great image.

- Both visions present God as the supreme Sovereign over the entire world. He not only ruled over men during the time of Nebuchadnezzar, but He would also judge the empires that followed. The end result is that all worldly kingdoms will be destroyed and replaced by God's eternal kingdom

1. The history of the vision v. 1
2. The big sea v. 2
3. The first beast: Babylon v. 3,4
4. The second beast: Medes and Persians v. 5
5. The third beast: The Greek Empire v. 6
6. The fourth beast: The Roman Empire v. 7
7. The small horn v. 8
8. The Ancient of Days v. 9-12
9. Like the Son of Man v. 13,14
10. The interpretation of the vision v. 15-18
11. The kingdom of anti-Christ and the kingdom of the saints v. 19-27
12. Daniel's worry v. 28

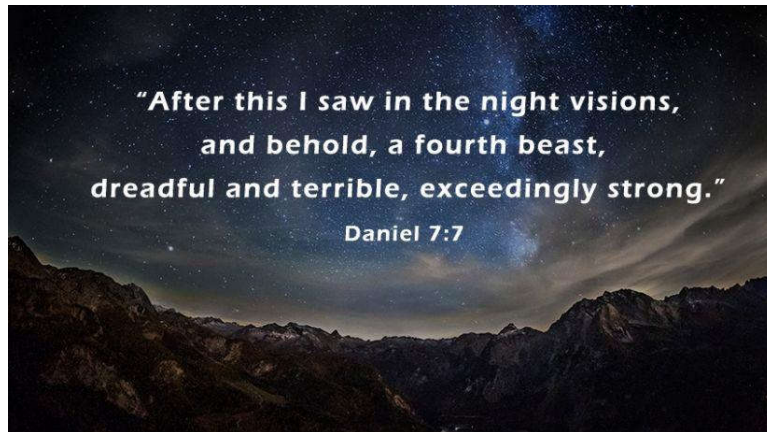
Four Beasts in Daniel 7

 <p>1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like a Lion • With eagle's wings • Wings plucked later • Lifted up from earth • Man's heart given 	 <p>2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like a Bear • Raised up on its side • Had 3 ribs in its mouth • Was told to arise and devour much flesh
 <p>3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like a Leopard • With 4 fowl's wings • Had 4 heads • Given dominion 	 <p>4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exceedingly dreadful, terrible beast • Iron teeth, brass nails • Had 10 horns • A little horn, which plucked 3 horns

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Daniel 2	Daniel 7
	<p>Babylon 605-539 BC</p> 
	<p>Medo-Persia 539-331 BC</p> 
	<p>Grecia 331-168 BC</p> 
	<p>Rome 168 BC-476 AD</p> 

Chapter details:



1. The history of the vision

Daniel was granted this vision during the first year of the reign of King Belshazzar, the last of the Babylonian kings (year 556 - 539 B.C.).

From the historical point of view, this chapter comes before chapters five and six, that is the timing of this vision was in the year 555 B.C. But all his visions were grouped together in the second half of the book.

2- The big Sea

Four beasts come up out of the Sea!
Daniel Chapter 7

- ◆ ² Daniel spoke, saying, 'I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea.
- ◆ ³ And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other. (Dan 7:2-3)


The 4 winds of heaven → is the Holy Spirit

The Great Sea → the Mediterranean Sea.
The boundary of the four great kingdoms was the Mediterranean Sea, and the capital of the last kingdom was Rome, on its coast, thus it is fit that the four animals appear in it



3- The First Beast: Babylon


**The first beast: the Babylonian Empire
605-539 BC**



1

- Like a Lion
- With eagle's wings
- Wings plucked later
- Lifted up from earth
- Man's heart given

The golden head



Nebuchadnezzar represented the kingdom of Babylon.

The Babylonian kingdom was represented by a lion with eagle's wings, that is, he is distinguished by power, pride and the speed of motion, for the Babylonian kingdom dominated the whole world in a very short period


Since Nebuchadnezzar repented, he was given a heart of a man

The wings were plucked= the kingdom started to decline

Lifted up from earth= When Nebuchadnezzar was filled with pride and was punished for 7 years until he repented


4- The second beast: Medes and Persians

**The second beast: the Medo-Persian Empire
539- 331 BC**



2

- Like a Bear
- Raised up on its side
- Had 3 ribs in its mouth
- Was told to arise and devour much flesh

The silver chest & arms 

Cyrus represented the kingdom of Persia.

The Persians did not depend on military skill nor on swift motion, but conquered the countries through invading by large numbers of army

This beast's being "raised up on one side" represents the Persians being greater than the Medes.


The Persians dominated over the Medes

The three ribs that are devoured represent three empires conquered by Persia's first great king

This Empire lasted for 200 years. At one point, the Persian Empire covered parts of Asia, Africa and Europe. But, like the Babylonian Empire, they finally came to an end. A new beast was rising in the west, and its appointed time had come.


5- The third beast: The Greek Empire

**The third beast: the Greek Empire
331-168 BC**



3

- Like a Leopard
- With 4 fowl's wings
- Had 4 heads
- Given dominion

The bronze belly 

Alexander the great represented the Greek kingdom

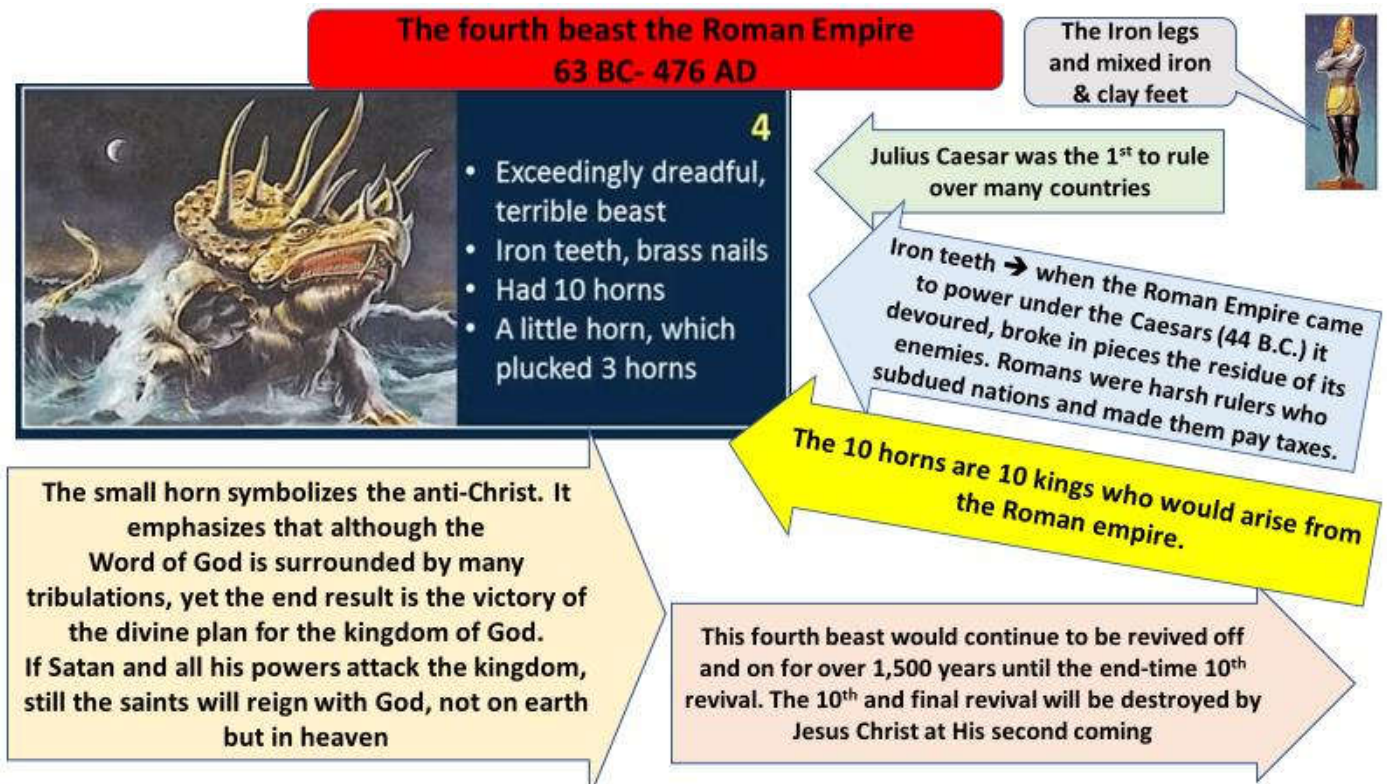
The Leopard is smaller than the bear but has 4 wings → The Greek empire was smaller than the Persian but spread out so fast.

The four heads refer to the four divisions of the kingdom, after the death of Alexander the Great

He was given dominion [authority] → reveals that the empire was not due to his bravery but to the will of God

Approximately two centuries later, the fourth beast conquered all these kingdoms and expanded far beyond the lands conquered by the previous beasts.

6- The fourth beast [The Roman Empire] & the small horn:



7- The Ancient of Days:

- After talking about the four empires which ended by the coming of the Lord Christ to establish His kingdom in the hearts, he talked about condemning those wicked empires. He saw the eternal God sitting on the throne and He had dethroned all the empires with their authorities, for He had prolonged their lives for a season and a time. (v.12)
- He states that God is a Judge, whom he calls the “Ancient of Days” to assure that all the past events are not overlooked. He is the eternal Judge, but because He is patient, He waits for the appropriate time. Since He created us, He offers us many opportunities to enjoy His mercies. Since our fall, He waits for our return, but time will come when He sits on the seat of judgment to judge according to His justice and righteousness.
- Probably the thrones here refer to what the Lord Jesus promised His disciples that they would judge the twelve tribes of Israel.
- St. Origen said: {When Daniel described God’s judgment, he referred to the books which were opened. (Dan. 7, 10) No doubt that these books contained sins of people. We are the ones who write these books which will judge us on the last Day.}
- No one can see God, but He declares Himself to us according to our ability and in a manner that will edify us. Here the revelation presents the conflict between the kingdom of the Lord Christ with His saints and the kingdom of the anti-Christ.
- God appeared in a white robe, white like snow and his hair like pure wool. White refers to purity and the heavenly life.

- In front of Him flows a river which quenches our thirst, not with water but with holy fire, thus changing our depths to a paradise carrying the fruits of the inflamed spirit. If the anti-Christ is scary and dreadful, yet the children of God, in whom the heavenly river flows, become so powerful before whom the devil cannot stand!



8- One like the Son of Man

(v. 13,14)

- He comes to reign forever, where the saints enjoy fellowship of glory with Him.
- Tertullian the scholar, in his debate with the Jews, clarified that Daniel had prophesied that there are two comings for the Lord Jesus; He comes as a small rock which knocks the statue of temporal kingdoms, He comes incarnate emptying Himself, however in His Second Coming, He, in His heavenly royal glory, will come on the clouds.

9-The explanation of the revelation

- Daniel was worried when he saw this vision, so he approached one of those standing, most probably an angel, asking him to give him an explanation of what he had seen.
- However, Daniel was peaceful when he realized that all these kingdoms, with their brutality and dominion, will one day end with the kingdom of the saints in heaven, which is preceded by the great tribulation of the anti-Christ.
- This motivates us to serve Him like the heavenly host.

10-The kingdom of anti-Christ and the kingdom of the saints:

- The other king beside the ten kings is the small horn who is known as the anti-Christ. He reigns for a time and times and half a time. (v.25)
- St. Jerome thinks that a time means a year, that is, the anti-Christ will reign for three and a half years. (v. 16-23)
- The four kingdoms are earthly kingdoms, "all are from the dust, and all return to dust." (Ecc. 3:20) But the saints will be granted not an earthly kingdom but a heavenly one.}

Daniel could not bear the vision, so he became sick, unable to leave his bed. He was scared about what will befall the church whether during the times of Antiochus or the times of the anti-Christ. Daniel could not comprehend all the mysteries of the vision and therefore, he was astonished by the vision.

Life Application:

The world is like a raging sea, out of which comes wild beasts to devour and dominate! But your kingdom is definitely coming to reign over your saints forever, not on transient earth but on new eternal heaven!

This is the last hour! You are certainly coming to rule! The anti-Christ is entering a decisive battle, it is a battle of life or death!

May the evil be mortified, and the darkness be abolished, and may the kingdom of light shine inside us!

May the anti-Christ come. He is very violent and destroyer to the souls! But You are much stronger and greater! May Your church be protected until the end of the ages!

Memory Verse:

Daniel 7:14- "His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed."

Chapter 8 [The Ram and the Goat]

Servants' preparation:

English sermons by Fr. Matthias Shedad

<https://soundcloud.com/stpaulhouston/daniel-8-bible-study-fr>

Remember last chapter:

In Daniel chapter 2, God gives Daniel the interpretation for King Nebuchadnezzar's statue. This interpretation is a building block of knowledge that helps Daniel as he receives more revelations from God.

Last week as we studied Daniel 7, we saw how Daniel's vision of the four beasts was symbolic of the different parts of the statue in King Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Let's review what we remember from the beasts in Daniel's dream:

1. First Beast: Lion with wings, represents the Head of Gold of the statue → The Babylonian Empire
2. Second Beast: Lop-sided bear with 3 ribs in his mouth, represents the Chest and arms of silver of the statue → The Medo-Persian Empire
3. Third Beast: Leopard with four wings and four heads, represents the stomach and thighs of bronze of the statue → The Greek Empire
4. Fourth Beast: Unidentified beast with 10 horns, represents the Legs and feet of iron and clay of the statue → The Roman Empire/Future kingdom ruled by antichrist



Chapter Outline:

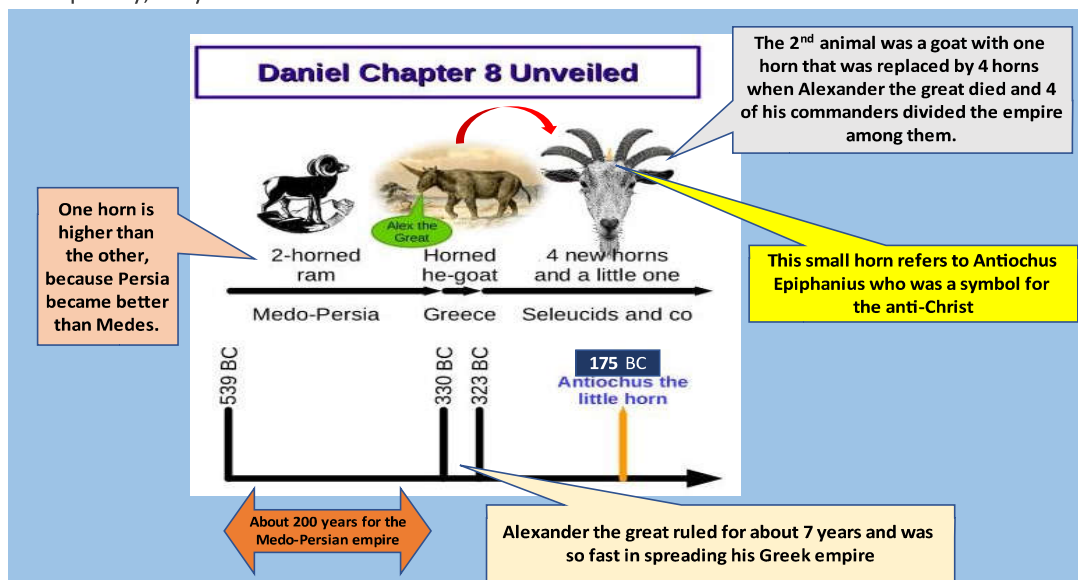
In the last year of the reign of Belshazzar, when the Babylonian kingdom was about to end, God showed Daniel a new vision about the destruction of old kingdoms so he may not be astonished when he sees the destruction of Babylon soon. Many thought that Belshazzar would mock Cyrus and Darius, but God revealed, more than once, to Daniel the destruction of Babylon and Persia. Daniel enjoyed seeing a new vision which confirmed what came in the first vision and which explained it in more detail by revealing the extremely evil role which Antiochus Epiphanes played in the Old Testament and the antichrist in the end of days.

1. Introduction of the vision v. 1-2
2. The vision of the ram v. 3-4
3. The vision of the goat v. 5-8
4. The small horn v. 9-14
5. The explanation of the vision v.15-27

Chapter details:

Learning Activity:

- ✚ Prediction Game: Before class, have someone write a message on a note and fold it up and put it in a sealed envelope.
- ✚ We are going to play a prediction game. In this envelope is a message. I need you to predict what is written.
- ✚ Allow students to 'predict' what the note says. Write their responses on the board. Have someone open the envelope and read the message.
- ✚ Did anyone predict the exact wording that is found on the message?
Have you ever heard a person make a prediction that is detailed that came true exactly as they predicted?
- ✚ The more we read and study God's Word, we will be amazed at the detailed predictions God has made and how they came to pass exactly how He said they would. Only the One True God could say something would happen and hundreds of years later could that very thing happen to the exact detail.
Knowing that God does exactly as He says should cause people to love and trust Him. When a person believes God completely, they have no fear of the future.



1. Introduction of the vision v. 1-2

- Two years had passed since God gave Daniel the vision of the four beasts. It doesn't tell us in the Bible what Daniel did in those two years. If you were Daniel, what would you be doing after you had such an amazing vision from God? Do you think a day went by that Daniel didn't think about the vision? I wonder if he thought about what God revealed to him and in his prayer time, he talked to God about the different things he understood and asked about the things he didn't understand.
- Daniel had been faithful as a captive in Babylon. He was known for having an excellent reputation by others.
- The majority of the visions were going to take place long after Daniel died.
- Are you being faithful to Jesus where He has placed you? As you are faithful with the small things God gives you to do, He will trust you to have bigger responsibilities as you serve Him.
- Let's read Daniel 8:1-4. Who was the king of Babylon when Daniel had this vision? Where was Daniel in his vision? What did he see?

- It was during the time of King Belshazzar, the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, he was the king who brought the vessels of the temple to drink wine in and the same day, he saw a handwriting on the wall and the Babylonian empire fell into the hands of the Persians.
- Daniel in this vision was in the palace in Babylon, but because he saw himself in the vision by the River Ulai, some thought that Daniel was in the city of Shushan. But this is unacceptable, because it is impossible for Daniel the captive to leave Babylon and go to Shushan in Persia. However, that is how he saw himself in the vision. Perhaps God had permitted so that he may know that as he served God's people during the Babylonian reign, he will serve him also during the Persian reign. Most probably the palace in Shushan was not built yet, for the Persian Empire had not flourished yet.

2- The vision of the ram v. 3-4

- In great accuracy, the kingdom of Persia was likened by the ram with two horns, one higher than the other, because Persia became better than Medes.
- The two horns here correspond to the two sides of the bear in the previous revelation [chapter 7] where it was raised up on one side (7:5) and correspond to the shoulders of the great metal statue in the second chapter.

3. The vision of the goat v. 5-8

- The prophet saw him coming from the west, where Greece is located west of Persia. The goat was very swift so that his legs did not touch the ground.
- The kingdom of Persia was compared to the ram while the Greek Empire was compared to the goat; for the goat is swifter than the ram, and thus was Alexander the Great, faster in his movements.
- This was a true vision for it was fulfilled after 200 years. Here God revealed to his prophet the victory of Alexander the Great who dominated the whole East. He went through many battles especially against Persia which had dominated many countries, and which was compared to the ram who pushed in all directions.
- After the goat was glorified, his horn was broken, and four horns appeared instead. This was to symbolize Alexander the Great who became ruler over all Persia, but after he died, his kingdom was divided among four rulers.

4. The small horn v. 9-14

- Who is this small horn except the antichrist of the Old Testament, Antiochus Epiphanius, who is a symbol of the antichrist in the end of the days?
- The small horn prophecy has 2 fulfillments, one happened when Antiochus appeared around 175 B.C., while the other fulfillment is still to come at the end of days referring to the anti-Christ as there are a lot of similarities between Antiochus and the anti-Christ.
- Antiochus was called the small horn, not because he was compared to the rest of the kings in his era, but because no one expected him to reign after his father, but he ruled because of his craftiness.
- Antiochus Epiphanius ruled over Syria (the kingdom of the North for the Greek Empire), in the year 175 B.C.
- Out of the Seleucus family, Antiochus Epiphanes IV came to power [He emerged from one of the 4 kingdoms that came after Alexander the great].

- He was cruel to God's people. He tried to destroy the Jewish faith. He didn't allow them to sacrifice in the temple. He put an image of Zeus in the temple and sacrificed pigs [unclean] on the altar. (Pigs were forbidden to be offered to God as a sacrifice)
- God raised up a Jewish family named Maccabee. They rose up and fought against this evil ruler and were able to restore the proper worship of God in the temple.
- Antiochus was called the most defiled person in the Old Testament who persecuted the Jews.
- After the death of his brother, he met the people and pretended to be very gentle, so he deceived them, so they appointed him king. He killed a pig and sprinkled his blood on the altar and on the holy vessels and prohibited offering the daily sacrifices, lest they be killed.
- As Antiochus attacked the church of the Old Testament and killed many, likewise the antichrist will exert all his efforts to attack the stars of the New Testament.
- Remember the small horn in chapter 7? Are they the same symbol? Some scholars say yes. The small horn in chapter 7 referred to the anti-Christ while in chapter 8, it refers to Antiochus who in turn refers to the anti-Christ. So, in chapter 7, the small horn refers to the anti-Christ in a direct way, but in chapter 8, in an indirect way.
- **Regarding the period of cleansing the sanctuary which is 2300 days**, St. Jerome says that this represents 6 years, 6 months and 20 days, which is the period since Antiochus attacked the worship until Judas the Maccabite conquered him. St. Hippolytus of Rome thinks that 2300 mornings and evenings mean 1150 days (2300 divided by 2) where the morning and evening daily sacrifices were prohibited during the persecution; this is equal to three and a half years, where Judas the Maccabite cleansed the temple, after Antiochus had defiled it

5. The explanation of the vision v.15-27

- The archangel woke Daniel up from his deep sleep and calmed him that the small horn will be destroyed. It was said that Antiochus died, and the worms ate his body. Likewise, the anti-Christ will be destroyed and his kingdom.
- Daniel prophesied that Antiochus would destroy many in their prosperity (v.25). → This was fulfilled when he sent his commander with 22,000 men to Jerusalem, as if it was a mission of peace. The soldiers used to go in and out until the Jews were used to them and they treated the people very gently. On a Sabbath while the Jews were worshiping in the temple, a command was issued to slaughter them all. Thousands were killed on that day, thus he destroyed many in their prosperity.
- He remained like that for 6 years (2300 days). The Maccabees attacked him and through them, the temple was cleansed, and victory was proclaimed. Under the leadership of the Maccabees, the statue of the idol was removed from the temple.
- The anger of Antiochus was aroused, and he decided to eradicate all the Jewish race, but he had severe pain in his bowels and instantly died. Hence, he died by the divine providence and without human hand.
- Daniel also prophesied that he would rise against the Prince of princes and shall be broken without human hand (25) → This was fulfilled when Antiochus Epiphanius attacked God Himself, the King of kings. He died naturally, not killed by someone.
- Daniel could not bear the vision, so he became sick, unable to leave his bed. He was scared about what will befall the church whether during the times of Antiochus or the times of the anti-Christ.

- The Angel Gabriel instructed Daniel to seal up the vision not for the purpose of hiding it meaning from faithful readers of Scripture but rather to secure the document for safekeeping into the distant future, meaning the time of Antiochus (some four hundred years after the vision was given) and the time of the antichrist which is yet future and is typified by Antiochus.

Life Application: [How would the Anti-Christ be like?]

The characteristics of an Anti-Christ and the nature of evil and sin are revealed in this chapter.

The description here is specific to a coming figure who will assault God's people but can in many ways describe the nature of sin in our own hearts as we transgress and cross God's given limits.

What do we expect of the anti-Christ when he comes?

1- He will make people not desire what is right:

The anti-Christ has used what God has given him, his intellect and wisdom and used it to rebel against God. Our problem is not always one of understanding what is right but desiring what is right. This man calls evil, good and delights in what is against God. He is attracted to what God finds offensive. Evil is unrepentantly opposed to God and His kingdom. Evil is making yourself great in your own mind and denying the greatness of God. Do you feel the world is already going in that direction now?

2- He will make people independent from God:

"His power shall be great, but not by his own power." Evil desires independence from God but fails to recognize it cannot have freedom from God. All that we have in our lives is from God and yet we can believe wrongly we do not need Him. Evil denies what is true and lifts up what is false. Evil is self-centered and is never God glorifying.

It is important to not merely focus on what is anti-Christ "out there" but to look how our own hearts can reflect the attitudes of this wicked king.

At this time, we don't need to worry about external forces persecuting the church; we need look at the anti-Christ tendencies in our own hearts. Let's be clear some of us have lived as anti Christs in our own lives. Because of our sin, we have a little Antiochus inside us who wants to war against God's design of us and His desires for us.

Without a work of the Holy Spirit to bring evil to a definitive end in our hearts, we can neglect having anything that looks like a regular relationship with God or his word.

Unchecked sin, pride will spread, addictions will take hold, selfishness and pride leads to beastly conflicts that will destroy our marriages and families and relationships trampling the saints for days and have an impact for generations.

People's conflict is not usually with other people, it is with God. They will war against Him, desiring evil, and wonder why they look at the world question if God is really at work, if He cares for His people or if He is worthy to follow and worship.

3- He will deviate people away from God gradually:

The antichrist would not be the one who everyone would obviously know and point at as the antichrist and run away from him. On the contrary, people would want to go after him because he would say what they want to hear.

Notice how the media is attacking Christian beliefs, tempting us to accept sin under the cover of love.

The antichrist will not appear as a person hated by everyone or else no one would follow him. He will appear to be attractive in his talks and opinions to deceive many, that is why Satan is gradually changing

the way the world looks at sin now to prepare for the coming of the anti-Christ, he is trying to let everyone accept sin so that when the antichrist comes, his claims against God would be easily accepted as it would be considered the normal way of thinking by then.

We are talking about deception over thousands of years because new ideas could be easily attacked but slight changes slip through. People would be indoctrinated with the same beliefs as the antichrist so they will follow him naturally.

There is an analogy saying if you put a frog in hot water, it will jump right out but if you put it in cold water and slowly add heat, it won't feel it until it dies from it.



Let us pray to stay firm in our faith and let it grow every day and be careful not to go after ideas that oppose what Jesus taught, so we are always prepared for the antichrist even if we do not live when he comes in person, but his helpers are already working and paving his path before him.

Memory Verse:

Daniel 8:24- "He shall even rise against the Prince of princes; But he shall be broken without human means."

Chapter 9 [The Seventy Weeks]

Servants' preparation:

English sermons by Fr. Matthias Shedad

<https://soundcloud.com/stpaulhouston/daniel-9-bible-study-fr>

Remember last chapter:

Last lesson, we saw Daniel's second vision of future events, it was about the ram and the goat, then the small horn referring to Antiochus in OT as well as referring to the anti-Christ who is to come before the end of the world. We realized how he would be deceiving the people gradually to accept him but then finally God will win over him.

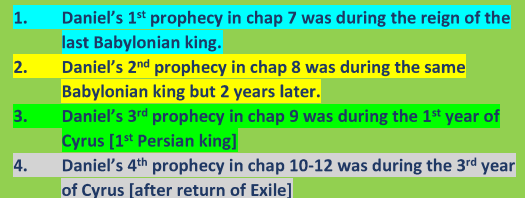
Chapter Outline:

Since Daniel had great love for all humanity, God granted him wisdom and the gift of prophecy. He interpreted the dreams for the kings as well as the visions pertaining to the future of the whole world. Now in his old age, as he noticed that God had promised the return of God's people from captivity after seventy weeks, as was mentioned in the book of Jeremiah, he started asking God, with humility, to forgive his people.

God granted him to see the vision of the seventy weeks, where God revealed to him not only the return of the people to Jerusalem, but also the return of all the human race to the divine bosom, by determining the time for the divine incarnation and the offering the unique Sacrifice of Christ.

This prophecy was to correct the Jewish misinterpretations, for the Jews thought that after the captivity, they would establish a Jewish nation. However, the Word Incarnate was coming to establish a kingdom by His own sacrifice to grant the believers inner glory and not a temporary kingdom.

1. Daniel who studies the prophecies v. 1-2
2. Daniel a man of prayer v. 3-19
3. The answered prayer v. 20-23
4. The vision of the seventy weeks v. 24-27

- 
1. Daniel's 1st prophecy in chap 7 was during the reign of the last Babylonian king.
 2. Daniel's 2nd prophecy in chap 8 was during the same Babylonian king but 2 years later.
 3. Daniel's 3rd prophecy in chap 9 was during the 1st year of Cyrus [1st Persian king]
 4. Daniel's 4th prophecy in chap 10-12 was during the 3rd year of Cyrus [after return of Exile]

Chapter details:

1. Daniel who studies the prophecies

The events of this chapter were fulfilled after the fall of Babylon, in the first year of the reign of King Darius the Persian king, around the year 537 B.C., one year before Cyrus allowed the Jews to go back to Jerusalem.

Daniel spent about 69 years in the captivity from year 606 B.C. to 537 B.C. (until the moments of this vision). That is why he was wondering when the 70 years of exile ending as 69 years passed already.

2. Daniel a man of prayer: [read v 3-19]

- To Daniel, prayer was not a matter of routine or a duty he must perform but rather an enjoyment of seeing God's face.
- Daniel's feeling of sharing the sins of his people: He does not blame them alone, but he blames himself too. He presents the subject of his prayer and confession by mingling the greatness of the

awesome God and His mercy and at the same time confessing his sins and the sins of his people. He started his prayer by glorifying God and His surpassing care for His people.

- Daniel knew that God fulfills His promises to those who keep His commandments.
- When we approach God by confessing our sin, we have to feel that we are guilty, and we are pleading to win His mercy and love.
- He concludes his prayer by asking God to speedily interfere, not because he deserves it but because of His grace.

3. The answer of the prayer

Daniel has not yet finished his prayer when the angel appeared to him, for it is written “While I was speaking in prayer” (v.21), this means that God has answered his prayer before he even finished it.

4. The vision of the seventy weeks

The prophecy of the 70 weeks is complex and amazingly detailed, and much has been written about it. Of course, there are various interpretations, **but we will present one of them only.**

- God has determined a specific time for the coming of the Word of God, Jesus Christ.
- In great wisdom, He has determined the hour in which the Messiah would be born and the moment in which He will offer His life Sacrifice for the sins of the world.
- In God’s eyes, the coming of the Lord and His redemption are the center of the history.
- Nothing is done haphazardly, but everything is done in great accuracy and according to God’s providence.
- The Holy Bible has ascertained the coming of the Savior in the fullness of time and at the end of ages.

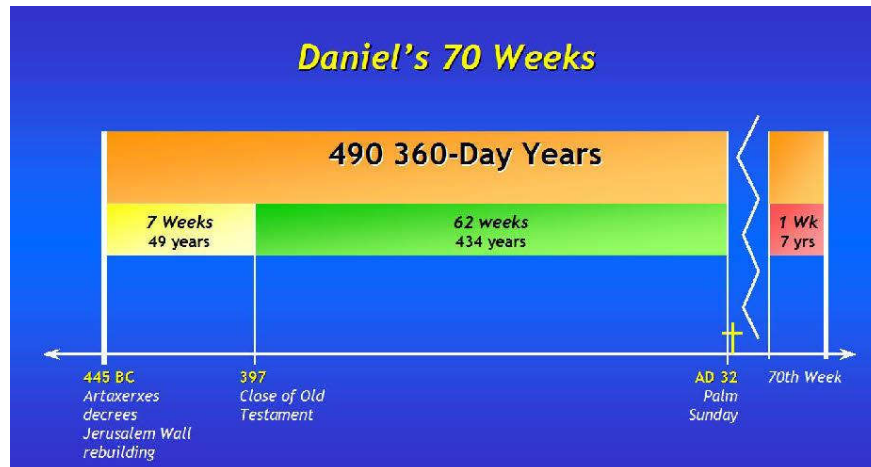
What is the meaning of week?

In Hebrew, the word “week” means “shabua” derived from “seba”, not meaning seven days, but a unit out of seven. The Jewish and Christian interpreters have agreed in their explanation that “seventy weeks” means seventy units of seven.

With faith, Daniel had asked God to fulfill His promise, which is the return of His people after the seventy years of the captivity. **[1st fulfillment of the prophecy]**

However, God gave him a much greater promise, which is fulfilled not after 70 years but after $70 \times 7 = 490$ years to let him, and all the human race, enjoy a complete rest in God’s righteousness.

There are 2 fulfillments for this prophecy, the actual 70 years of the exile which were about to end towards the end of Daniel’s life when the Persian king allowed the Jews to go back to Jerusalem and a future fulfillment where the 70 weeks, mean $70 \times 7 = 490$ years till the time of the Messiah. The year was calculated as 360 days at that time not 365 days. **[2nd fulfillment of the prophecy]**



For the 490 years, the period was divided into 3 sections:

First: Seven weeks: that is, $7 \times 7 = 49$ years, which is the period that started by issuing of the decree to rebuild the temple and the wall by the decree of Artaxerxes I in the year 445 B.C. and appointing Nehemiah a governor for Jerusalem. This period ended in the year 397 or 396 B.C., when Nehemiah died.

The seven weeks (that is 49 years) is the period of rebuilding Jerusalem.

Second: 62 weeks ($62 \times 7 = 434$ years) is the period of four centuries, which represents the darkest periods of the people, spiritually, for there were no prophets until the coming of John the Baptist.

During this time, two important events happened:

1. First: The appearance of Antiochus Epiphanes (167 – 164 B.C.) who is the antichrist of the Old Testament. He stopped the offering of the permanent sacrifice for three and a half years. He defiled the temple and murdered thousands of Jews. However, the Maccabees attacked him until the temple was liberated and the sacrifice was returned. [we talked about that in chap 8]
2. Second: During the Roman Empire, when Herod the Great reigned and he wanted to win the approval of the Jews, he started building the new temple around the year 20 B.C., and it took about 46 years to build.

Last week of the 62:

- In verse 27, it was mentioned that the abolishing of the animal sacrifice during the week, that is in the middle of the last week of the 69th week [62+7].
- That means that the crucifixion will be accomplished in the week number 68.5, that is, (68.5×7) which is 479 years after the issuing of the decree of rebuilding the temple by Nehemiah (year 445 B.C.). If we count 479 years from 445 B.C., we get to the year 34 AD.
- Thus, crucifixion was 33.5 years after the birth of Christ and this was fulfilled, for the Lord was crucified at that age.
- The end of the 69th week was 35 years after the crucifixion, that is around year 70 A.D. when the temple was destroyed by the hands of Titus the Roman.

Another explanation: [do not mention if higher than kids' level]

Adding the 7 to the 62, we have 69, then $\times 7 = 483$. Using the Jewish custom of a 360-day year, 483 years after 445 B.C. places us at A.D. 32, which would coincide with Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The

prophecy in Daniel 9 specifies that after the completion of the 483 years, “the Anointed One will be cut off” (verse 26). This was fulfilled when Jesus was crucified.

Daniel 9:26 continues with a prediction that, after the Messiah is killed, “the people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary.” This was fulfilled with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The “ruler who will come” is a reference to the Romans who destroyed Jerusalem.

Unit week year (7 years)	Unit		#of Units		Total
Year of "Artaxerxes' decree of building the Temple"					457 BC
First 7-week year	7	X	7	=	+ 49
Second 62-week year	7	X	62	=	+ 434
Total	14	X	69	=	= 483
EQUALS -Year of Jesus Baptism (beginning of His Mission)					(457-483) =26 AD
PLUS -Last 1 week year (3.5 - Jesus Ministry)	7	X	1	=	+ 3.5
-Last 1 week year 3.5 (Apostolic Ministry -Stephen Martyrdom)					+ 3.5
Grand Total -Year of Stephen Martyrdom- Apostolic Missions out to the globe	15		70	=	= 33 AD

Third: The seventieth week or the last week: “Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week, He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.” (v.27)

Some see that the 69th week has ended by the Lord Jesus offering Himself a unique Sacrifice of love.

Now, Daniel’s vision will bring us to the end of the world, which is the period of the seven last years [70th week] when the antichrist will come to rule for three and a half years. This is when the great tribulation, which the Lord Jesus has mentioned, would happen before the 2nd coming.

Of the 70 “sevens,” 69 have been fulfilled in history. This leaves one more “seven” yet to be fulfilled. Most scholars believe that we are now living in a huge gap between the 69th week and the 70th week. The prophetic clock has been paused, as it were. The final “seven” of Daniel is what we usually call the tribulation period.

<p>Summary: 7 weeks=49 years [from 445BC to 396BC] 62 weeks = 434 years [antichrist of OT and rebuilding the temple] Adding 7+62=69 weeks, in the middle of the 69th week, which 68.5, Jesus was crucified [68.5x7=479][445BC + 479= 34 AD] → [Crucifixion], 35 years later was the destruction of temple and the end of 69th week. The 70th week did not start yet; it is a period of 7 years at the end of the world when the antichrist will rule for 3.5 years and there will be the great tribulation then the world will end.</p>

Life application:

Lessons from Daniel's prayer:

1. **Acknowledges God's character:** he describes God as Great, awesome and that He keeps His covenant.
2. **Confesses sin:** Daniel uses the word "we" including himself as he confessed sin to God. What are the sins that Daniel confessed? (We have been wicked, rebelled, turned away from God's commands and laws, did not listen to God's servants)
3. **Remembers God's past deliverances:** As a student of God's Word, Daniel knew how God rescued His people from slavery in Egypt. The nations heard about God's mighty power to deliver His people and His Name became famous throughout the land.
4. **Asks God to forgive sin and act for the reputation of His Name:** Daniel knew that his life purpose was not to focus on himself but to bring glory to God

As we pray, we should have these elements as part of our conversation with God.

Conclusion:

- Many times, we can get confused and do not know what to do with hard passages of Scripture like this prophecy. As you continue to study and learn from God's Word, He will build upon what you do understand. His Word is true, and everything will happen just as God says. Instead of focusing on what we don't understand fully, we need to focus on what we do.
- From this lesson we see how Daniel understood the times according to what God's Word said and did the one thing he knew to do with that information → He turned to God in prayer.
- His prayer wasn't self-focused but God-focused. Daniel was concerned about God's reputation and wanted God's Name to be lifted up.
- From those lessons, we can apply God's Word to our own life. God placed us exactly where we are at this time of God's history. What do we know about the times we live in and what do we know from God's Word is going to happen in the future? Whose reputation is the focus of our prayers? As I close in prayer let's be still and allow God to show each of us what He is asking us to change in our life from this lesson in Daniel.

Review Questions:

1. Which king was reigning in Daniel's life in chapter 9? (Darius)
2. What did Daniel realize as he studied God's Word? (The 70 years of captivity were almost complete)
3. What Book of the Bible was Daniel studying? (Jeremiah)
4. What did Daniel do when he understood the time in history in which he was living? (Turned to God, prayed)
5. What are the elements of Daniel's prayer that believers should have as they pray? (Confession of sin, acknowledging God's character, remembering God's past works, God-focused prayer)
6. How did God answer Daniel's prayer? (Sent Gabriel the angel)
7. What do the sevens represent? (Years)
8. Which seven has not taken place yet? (The final 7)

Memory Verse: [all or part of it]

Daniel 9:18 "O my God, incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies."

Chapter 10 [Seeing the Glory of God]

Servants' preparation:

English sermons by Fr. Matthias Shedad

<https://soundcloud.com/stpaulhouston/daniel-10-11-21-bible-study-fr>

Remember last chapter:

Last chapter we had the beautiful prayer of Daniel when he asked God for guidance on when the exile would end. We learned the parts for this nice prayer to use on our daily prayers. Daniel acknowledged God's character, confessed his sins, remembered God's past deliverances, and asked God to forgive the sins and act for the reputation of His Name.

His prayer was answered quickly with a special vision of the seventy weeks which determined the time of the coming of the Lord Jesus to liberate the believers, as well as directing our attention to His second coming [the 70th week].

Ch. 2	Ch. 7	Ch. 8	Ch. 9	Ch. 10	Ch. 11	Ch. 12	
BABYLON	BABYLON		70 W E E K S	A N G E L			
MEDO-PERSIAN	MEDO-PERSIAN						
GREECE	GREECE	GREECE				GREECE	
ROME	ROME					ROME	ROME
KINGDOM OF GOD	KINGDOM OF GOD						KINGDOM OF GOD

Chapter Outline:

Daniel presents this chapter as an introduction to the following two chapters, where he shows the concern of the heavenly creatures for the human world. (1 Chron.1:7, 2:1; Zech.3:1; Rev.12:7). He also presents the conflict between the angels and the evil powers for the salvation of the human race or their destruction. As the angels do not cease to work for the sake of those who will inherit the salvation (Heb. 1:14), likewise the devils do not cease to attack the truth and to perish the souls.

In the previous chapter, he presented to us a special vision of the seventy weeks which determined the time of the coming of the Lord Jesus to liberate the believers, as well as directing our attention to His second coming. Now in this vision, Daniel is confirming the main events from the time of the return of Babylon until the coming of the Lord Jesus in a precise way and in details.

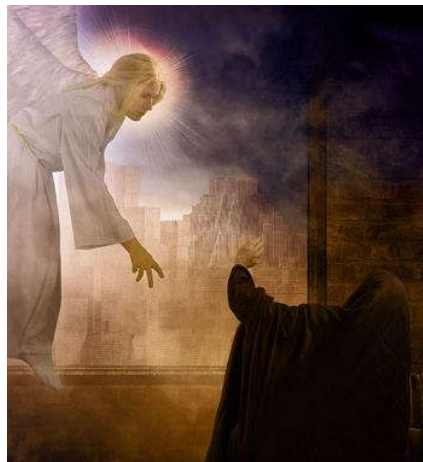
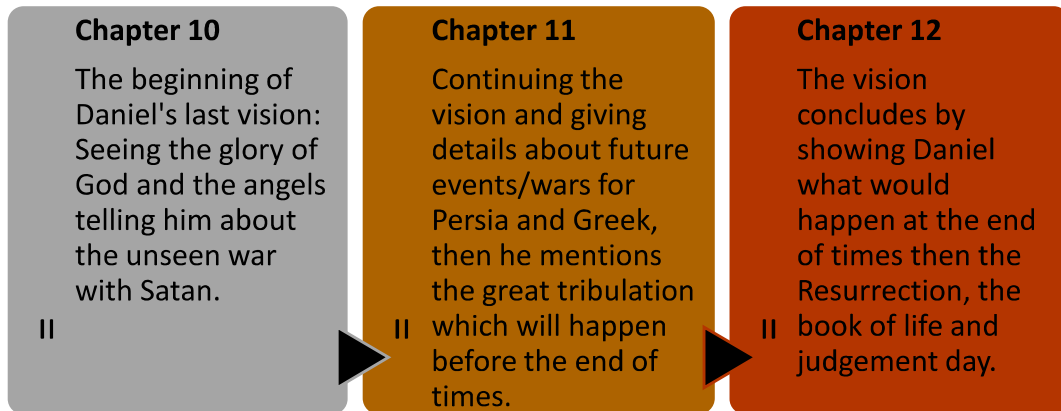
1. The date of the vision: v.1
2. His enjoyment with the vision: v.2-9
3. The angelic ministry: v.10-14
4. Divine Ministry v15-21

Chapters ten through twelve cover the last of Daniel's visions.

- ✓ Chapter Ten: Introduction of the vision which describes the appearance of the angel or probably the Word of God Himself.
- ✓ Chapter Eleven: The vision itself presents special prophecies regarding the relationship between

the Ptolemies of Egypt and the Selukians of Syria and ends by the death of Antiochus.

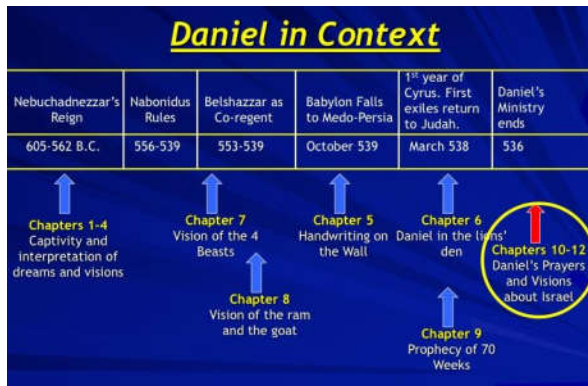
- ✓ Chapter Twelve: The conclusion of the vision which talks about the great tribulation and the end of times.



Chapter details:

1. The date of the vision:

- In the third year of the reign of Cyrus the king of Persia. It was mentioned in chapter 1 that Daniel continued working till the first year of king Cyrus, so he had retired at the age of 80, after King Cyrus had ruled for one year. This vision is 2 years after his retirement.
- Even though king Cyrus had allowed the Jews to return to their country, Daniel did not return.
- The reason for Daniel not returning to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel, but his staying in Babylon was by God's order to fulfill a special mission to serve his people in the captivity.
- He saw this vision two years after he forsook his work before his death. He was sure that God will fulfill what he had seen (Rev.22:6), for he said that the message was true.
- Daniel knew that the appointed time for the vision was long. Some see that it was a long time because the fourth vision (ch. 10-12) extends until the resurrection of the dead and the life to come.
- Daniel fully understood this vision, although he did not understand the previous vision.



1. Daniel's 1st prophecy in chap 7 was during the reign of the last Babylonian king.
2. Daniel's 2nd prophecy in chap 8 was during the same Babylonian king but 2 years later.
3. Daniel's 3rd prophecy in chap 9 was during the 1st year of Cyrus [1st Persian king]
4. Daniel's 4th prophecy in chap 10-12 was during the 3rd year of Cyrus [after return of Exile]

2. His enjoyment with the vision: v.2-9

- Daniel fasted for three whole weeks; he did not eat any pleasant food, nor did he anoint himself with perfume.
- Daniel refused to eat meat, wine, and every pleasant food; likewise in all our fasting, we should not only stop eating meat, but we should not eat any food with lust, even if it is vegetarian or some dry bread.
- What saddened Daniel was the negligence of those who returned to Jerusalem in building the temple of the Lord and caring only for building their houses.
- Daniel saw the exact description of what St. John saw in the Revelation (Rev. 1:13-15).

3. The angelic ministry: v.10-14

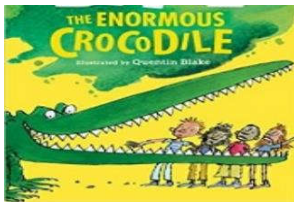
- The angel justified the reason for his delay twenty-one days or three weeks, which are the three weeks that Daniel was fasting and entreating God.
- Daniel did not know that until the three weeks had passed, the angel was working to help the prophet without him knowing. Often, we think that God does not hear our prayers or that he is slow in answering, but He is concerned about us, and He hides his work from us until we discover it in the appropriate time, and then we are able to understand God's plan for us.
- The angel is confirming to Daniel that he came to declare to him that his prayers were answered and that he was doing all he could for the advantage of his people attacking the evils of the king of Persia. He came to declare that God's care is extended for many years. He must wait, with the spirit of prophecy, to see the coming events, not only until his departure, but until the coming of the Lord Jesus the Savior of the world
- Archangel Gabriel clarified why God was late in answering his prayers, because for three weeks he was attacking the prince of the Persian Kingdom, until Archangel Michael, the intercessor of God's people, came and helped him.
- Whom does he mean by the prince of the kingdom of Persia? Does he mean the king or an evil angel attacking God's work? He does not mean a man, but he means an evil angel who moves the kings of Persia against God's people.
- Therefore, archangel Gabriel supported archangel Michael to destroy the evil deeds against the believers.

4. Divine Ministry

- Because Daniel was unable to go in a dialogue with God, the angel supported him, not only by encouraging words, but also by touching him.

- Some think that the One who appeared is the Son of God who always touches us by His divine love and gives us power to be in dialogue with Him.
- The angel confirmed that God had a divine heavenly plan for him, and He gradually reveals it to him. God entrusted Michael, the archangel, to protect His people from Satan and his evil powers.
- God sent him to the Persian King Cambyses, but his mission has not yet been completed. The attack is continuing during the Greek era, as well as the Persian.
- That is why he works among the kings who attack the truth, in order to protect the simple believers. God's care for His church never stops in any age nor generation, and his mission of sending angels is continuous to attack the evil powers.

Life application: [The unseen battle]



Hook:

- In a fictional story for children called “The enormous Crocodile”, a huge crocodile sets his plans to eat little children in this town and he tells other animals about his intention, the children were unaware that they had an enemy that was trying to destroy them. The other animals that knew of the crocodile’s plans, fought to protect the children from his evil schemes.
- Did you know that there is an unseen enemy in our life that is out to destroy us? Do you know who? (Satan/devil/evil one)
- We live in a world that God created. We can see some of the things God has created with our physical eyes. However, we cannot see all His creation. Angels are created by God and are mentioned many times in the Bible. As we have been studying Daniel, have we heard of any encounters he has had with angels? (Angel shut the mouths of lions; Gabriel came to explain God’s visions).

Facts about angels:

- Angels do not have bodies because they are spirits. If God wants people to see angels, he gives them bodies.
- Angels never die. They do not marry. All the angels God created are still living today.
- There are two groups of angels. Angels that worship and praise God in heaven and fallen angels. When Lucifer (Satan) wanted to be like God he was cast out of heaven. Many angels left heaven to follow Lucifer. These angels can also be referred to as demons/evil spirits.

Knowing these facts about angels is going to help us understand that there is an unseen world that exists. As believers we may not see this unseen world, but we need to live always remembering it exists.

Let’s turn in our Bibles to Daniel 10. Our focus is going to be what happens in this unseen world.

Read Daniel 10:1-3.

- Who was given a revelation? (Daniel) When? (Third year of Cyrus) What was message about? (A great war) What emotion did Daniel feel after receiving this vision? (Mourning) How long did Daniel fast? (Three weeks)

Read Daniel 10:5-9. Describe what Daniel saw. Let's turn in over to Revelation 1:12-17. (Discuss the similarities of each passage.)

Description in Daniel 10	Description in Revelation 1
Clothed in linen	Clothed with a garment
Waist girded with gold	Girded about the chest with a golden band
Body was like beryl	
Face like . . . lightning	Head and hair were white like wool
Eyes like torches of fire	Eyes like a flame of fire
Feet like burnished bronze	Feet were like fine brass
Sound of his words like the voice of a multitude	Voice as the sound of many waters

- Many Bible scholars believe Daniel sees a Theophany. A Theophany is an appearance in the Old Testament of Jesus before He came into the world as the Son of Man (in the New Testament).
- Another word used for this is the word of God before the incarnation. Emphasize that Jesus is God and has always existed. John 1:1-4)
- How did Daniel react when he saw this Man? (Verses 7-8)
- Daniel 10:10-11:1 Arch angel Gabriel encourages Daniel.
- "O Daniel, man greatly beloved": This was the second time Daniel was called greatly beloved (Daniel 9:23 before this). Each time it was in relation to Daniel's being favored with a great and significant revelation of the future.
- The angel tells Daniel that at the very moment he humbled himself before God and prayed God sent this angel to him.
- As the angel was coming to Daniel he got involved with a battle with the prince of the Persian kingdom. This prince battled with him for 21 days. While this battle was taking place an angel named Michael who was in charge of protecting God's people Israel came to help the angel held back by the prince of Prince of Persia.
- To put this in simple terms a spiritual battle was taking place while Daniel was fasting and praying. The prince of Persia is a demon.
- God created angels to worship and serve as His messengers. The ruler of this world Satan has demons (evil spirits, fallen angels) that serve in his kingdom.
- Satan and his demons are enemies of God. They fight against Him and try to destroy His people. Satan fought all throughout history trying to stop God's plan of salvation.
- No matter how hard Satan tried, he was not and will not be successful in keeping God from keeping all of His promises.
- Daniel is overwhelmed with his guests and the information he is receiving. Let's read how he responds in verse 15.

- Once again Pre-incarnate Jesus touches Daniel's lips. (Verse 16) Daniel is able to speak, and he speaks to the angel. Let's read what he says in verse 17. Jesus touches Daniel again and gives him strength.
- The angel encourages Daniel and says, "Do not be afraid, O man highly esteemed. Peace! Be strong now; be strong."
- The angel tells Daniel he is going to explain what is written in the Book of Truth and then must return to fight with the prince of Persia. "I must return to fight with the prince of Persia".
- Daniel was about to receive the answer to his prayer, but the battle was not over for his heavenly messenger. First, he must battle the prince of Persia, then the prince of Greece. God watched out for Israel, working behind the scenes in the spiritual realm.
- "No one upholds me against these, except Michael your prince": Michael seemed to be an angelic guardian of Israel, battling against the demonic representative of Persia or any other who opposed God's people. On earth, Israel seemed lowly and weak; but in the heavens, Israel had the mightiest representative of all.

The unseen battle:

Let's think about what the angel told Daniel about being retained by the prince of Persia for 21 days. While Daniel was praying an unseen battle was taking place that he was unaware of.

Maybe before this lesson you were unaware that there continues to be an unseen battle taking place.

- If you are a Christian, there is a battle going on in the unseen world between Satan and his demons who are trying to keep you from living the life that God has for you. He knows if you follow the Lord Jesus, you will have power to say no to sin and be victorious over him.
- If you do not believe in Jesus, Satan and his demons fight to keep you blinded to the truth that Jesus died on the cross for your sins, was buried and rose again. He wants to keep you from having eternal life.
- The lesson we need to apply from Daniel is the power of prayer. When we pray God's angels fight against the demons.

Why wait 21 days? → PERSISTENT PRAYER

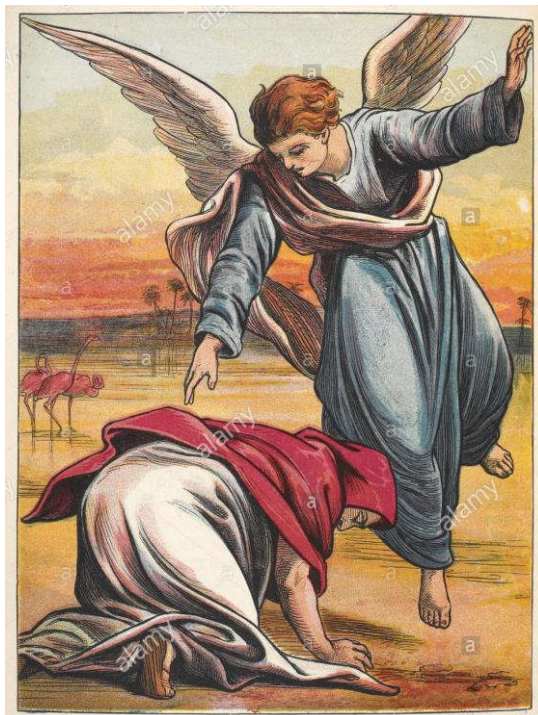
- Since the angel was dispatched immediately and Daniel's period of prayer and self-denial was 21 days (the three full weeks of Daniel 10:2), we see that the answer to the prayer was delayed by the prince of the kingdom of Persia.
 1. The correlation between Daniel's time of self-denial and prayer and the duration of the battle between the angels and the prince of the kingdom of Persia establishes a link between Daniel's prayer and the angelic victory. Since the angelic victory came on the 21st day, we can surmise that if Daniel would have stopped praying on the 20th day, the answer may not have come.
 2. "There may be hindering factors of which a praying Christian knows nothing as he wonders why the answers to his requests are delayed. Nevertheless, he is to keep on praying. It may be that he will not receive an answer because he has given up on the twentieth day when he should have persisted to the twenty-first day."
- "Now I have come": God allowed this kind of conflict because He had a purpose in allowing it. He certainly could have blasted away in a moment any demonic opposition. God's plan probably was to use the time of delay to develop Daniel as a man of persistent prayer.
 1. Persistence in prayer is not necessary because God's reluctance needs to be overcome; rather, it is necessary to train us.
 2. Daniel's success makes us reflect on our failures. How much angelic assistance or insight has never been realized, or greatly delayed, because of a lack of persistence in prayer?

Review Questions:

1. What does Daniel see in his vision? (A great war)
2. How long did Daniel fast? (3 weeks)
3. Who was the man dressed in linen with a belt of finest gold? (Pre-incarnate Jesus)
4. Who was in a battle with the prince of Persia for 21 days? (An angel God sent in answer to Daniel's prayer.)
5. Which angel came to help him? (Michael)
6. How are spiritual battles fought? (Prayer)
7. How will this lesson affect your time of prayer?

Memory Verse:

Daniel 10:12 Then he said to me, "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words.



Chapter 11 [The Last Vision of Persia, Greece and the end of times]

Servants' preparation:

English sermons by Fr. Matthias Shedad

<https://soundcloud.com/stpaulhouston/daniel-11-12-bible-study-fr>

Remember last chapter:

Last chapter [10] was the start of the last vision Daniel saw before he died, the vision extended from chapter 10 to 12. In Chapter 10, he saw the glory of God in heaven and met the angels who explained to him that there is an unseen war between them and Satan and that was the reason his prayer was answered 3 weeks later. We learned how to be persistent in our prayers, having faith that God and his angels are fighting on our behalf without us seeing them.

Chapter Outline:

“The Last Vision of Persia, Greece, and the end of times”

This chapter contains amazing prophetic details about the events of the world for a period of three centuries, which corresponded exactly to the historical events. It corresponded exactly to the history of kings of Egypt and Syria for more than 350 years. Verses 5 through 31 presented us prophecies about the wars which erupted between the kings of the North (Syria) and the kings of the South (Egypt).

1. Prophecies about Persia: v. 1-2
2. Prophecies about Greece: v. 3-4
3. Prophecies about the conflict between Egypt and Syria: v. 5-35
4. The end of times, the antichrist: v. 36-45

Learning Activity:

Play an indoor version of [Red Rover](#). Set limits to avoid injury. Adapt the game by explaining that the team calling the student are believers in Jesus. They are calling for others to believe in the Lord Jesus and join His team. The obstacle of having to break through is from God's enemy Satan who fights to keep people from being on God's winning team. After playing a few rounds of the game adapt again by choosing a student to stand in the middle. When a name is called out, he/she will join the person and help them get through the obstacle to join the team that called them over. The person helping represents prayer (praying for others defeats the enemy and loosens his grip), and a believer who encourages and shares God's truth with unbelievers etc.

Chapter details:

1. Prophecies about Persia: v. 1-2

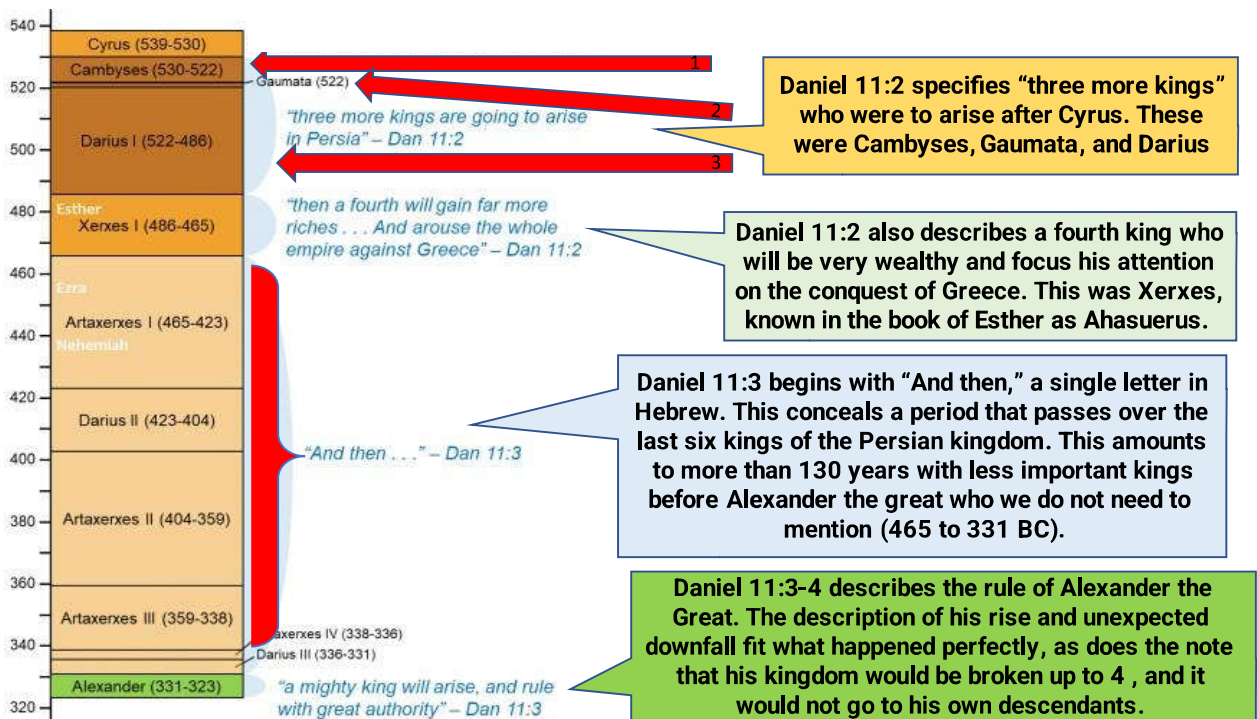
Verse 1 refers to arch angel Gabriel who stood beside Darius the king and strengthened him to support Cyrus the king of Persia against Babylon 2 years before this prophecy when the Persian empire was established.

All the prophecies in this chapter pertain to the kingdoms of Persia and Greece, then the conflict between Egypt and Syria. All these were to declare God’s care for His church and urges the believers to trust in the Lord and His divine care, even during the critical times.

Now God was going to reveal to Daniel some amazing details about major world powers, beginning with the Medo-Persian Empire and continuing through the time of the end just prior to Christ’s second coming.

The Babylonian Kingdom was taken over by Medo-Persian Empire. Let’s read Daniel 11:2. History records these as the men who rule in Persia:

1. Cambyses from 529 BC
2. Pseudo-Smerdis [Gaumata] from 527 BC
3. Darius from 521 BC
4. A fourth and far wealthier king Xerxes (Esther’s husband), reigned from 485-465 BC



2. Prophecies about Greece: v. 3-4

In seven- or eight-years Alexander the great the founder of the Greek empire accomplished the most dazzling military conquest in human history. But he lived only four years more; and after one of his drunken bouts, he died of a fever in 323 in the imperial capital of Babylon. Verse 4 foretells the division of Alexander’s domains among four smaller and weaker empires. They are:

- i. Eastern-Turkey (Lysimachus)
- ii. Western-Greece (Cassander)
- iii. Northern-Syria (Seleucus)
- iv. Southern-Egypt (Ptolemy)

The angel told Daniel, “And when he has risen, his kingdom shall be broken up...”. This means that after he became the only king over all the East, by his sudden death, his kingdom was demolished and divided.

The angel has declared all that to Daniel the prophet, even before the birth of Alexander the Great by many years

3. Prophecies about the conflict between Egypt and Syria: v. 5-35

The remainder of Daniel 11:5-39 documents the actions of the last two of these kingdoms—Egypt to the south of Jerusalem and Syria to the north of Jerusalem.

In this section of Scripture, the rulers and their successors are referred to as the “king of the North” and the “king of the South.”

It is amazing how detailed the description is and how it occurred hundreds of years later. We will not get into all details but will take one example.

Who is the king of the North?

So, in Daniel 11, the king of the North refers to the successors to Seleucus [Syria] ruling north of the Holy Land. As we will see, the Seleucid kingdom was later defeated by the Roman Empire.

Who is the king of the South?

In Daniel 11 the king of the South refers to the successors to Ptolemy who ruled from Egypt, south of the Holy Land.

Before getting to the end-time prophecies, consider the amazing, detailed prophecies fulfilled during the centuries after Daniel wrote.

We will only get one example to show how accurate the prophecies were: Read Verse 6:

“And at the end of some years they shall join forces, for the daughter of the king of the south shall go to the king of the North to make an agreement; but she shall not retain the power of her authority, and neither he nor his authority shall stand; but she shall be given up, with those who brought her, and with him who begot her, and with him who strengthened her in those times.”

(v.6)

- ✓ An agreement was accomplished between the kings of Egypt and Syria in the year 250 B.C., when the king of Syria married the daughter of the king of Egypt. Let us see how!!
- ✓ Antiochus Theos, the third king of Syria, divorced his wife Laodice to get married to Berenice the daughter of Ptolemy II [king of Egypt]. [This is not Antiochus Epiphanes the famous antichrist of the OT who will come later]
- ✓ The purpose of Ptolemy [king of Egypt] letting his daughter Berenice marry the king of Syria was for him to dominate over Syria and all the kingdom of Antiochus, however, the plan failed because Laodice, whom Antiochus had divorced, was kept as a concubine and not as a queen. She did not take kindly to being divorced. ... She therefore organized a successful conspiracy. We will see how.
- ✓ “Shall not retain the power of her authority” → Once the king of Egypt died, Antiochus put away Berenice and took back his former wife, Laodice. [“She” refers to Berenice]
- ✓ “Neither he nor his authority shall stand” → Laodice didn’t trust her husband Antiochus; so, she had him poisoned. [“he” refers to Antiochus Theos]

- ✓ “She shall be given up, with those who brought her” → After the murder of Antiochus, Laodice had Berenice and her infant son from Antiochus killed. Laodice set her son on the throne of Syria instead. In this manner, the prophecy was fulfilled concerning Berenice, that she would be ‘given up,’ along with the nobles who supported her.
- ✓ The prophecy was literally fulfilled, for the plan of the king of Egypt completely failed, for the king’s daughter [Berenice], her husband [Antiochus Theos] and her son were all murdered.

Antiochus Epiphanes, the Maccabees, and the abomination of desolation: V21-35

- Daniel’s vision of a great battle continues and focuses on a king that will come who will be the Antichrist. There have been many battles in history and every one of them God knew about before they ever happened. He knows about the battles that are taking place in the unseen world. We can stand firm against the enemy because God is fighting for us and always wins.
- Verses 21 – 35 concentrated on Antiochus Epiphanes, mentioned earlier in chapter 8, and who was the antichrist of the Old Testament.
- These verses document the tyrannical oppression of the Jewish people by Antiochus Epiphanes, who by force tried to make the Jewish people forgo their religion in favor of all things Greek.
- This was the time of the Maccabees, who resisted this influence and later on would defeat him.
- Antiochus viciously slaughtered Jews who continued to obey biblical instructions, and he desecrated the temple.
- God’s people were being attacked by a physical enemy, but they firmly resisted him because they knew God. Believers currently will be attacked by God’s unseen enemy and the only way they can resist him is if they know God (by reading and studying His Word) and stand firm in God’s truth.
- The angel said that the end will be at the appointed time (v.27), meaning that all what happened was within certain limits so that God’s plan will be fulfilled, for the end has not yet come because God had appointed a time for everything.

4. The end of times, the antichrist: v. 36-45

- Some thought these verses referred to the Antiochus Epiphanes again, but our church fathers think he meant the future antichrist and not Antiochus, because what was mentioned after that does not apply to him. Antiochus Epiphanes put a statue of Zeus in the temple, not of himself. This statement will be far more precisely fulfilled in the Antichrist, who sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God
- Here he talks about the antichrist, the god whom his fathers did not know, and he means himself. The antichrist refers to himself that he is god and seeks all the riches and the authority for himself. Thus, he is the strange god who presents gifts to all who submit to him and are deceived by him.
- The center of the antichrist will be in Jerusalem and his dominion will extend across the seas, especially the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea. He will be stationed over the glorious holy mountain, which is Mount Zion.
- In spite of all the power and authority he has, yet no one can support him. He will collapse before Elijah and Enoch who support the church at that time and who prepare the believers for the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus.

- St. Jerome said: {Our school of thought insists that the antichrist will perish in the same place where the Lord Jesus ascended to heaven, the Mount of Olive.}

Life application:

Significance of Daniel 11 for us today

When we consider the many prophetic details of Daniel 11 that were fulfilled as predicted, we can have confidence that the remaining prophecies of this chapter and others in the Bible that are yet to be fulfilled will likewise occur as God has ordained.

Through a dream, God revealed to ancient King Nebuchadnezzar and us today that eventually the kingdoms of this world will be replaced by the Kingdom of God.

From our memory verse 11:32, we learn that our prayer is that we continue to be strong in the Lord and to make our aim to know God and make Him known.

May God position YOU this year for mighty exploits. The good news is that we don't have to figure out what to do on our own; our work is to abide and to just keep being faithful to take the next step. He leads us step by step. We just have to say "Yes, Lord. Whatever you have for me today, Lord. I'm at your command."

Memory Verse:

Daniel 11:32- the people who know their God shall be strong and carry out great exploits.



Chapter 12 [The Great Tribulation and the Resurrection]

Servants' preparation:

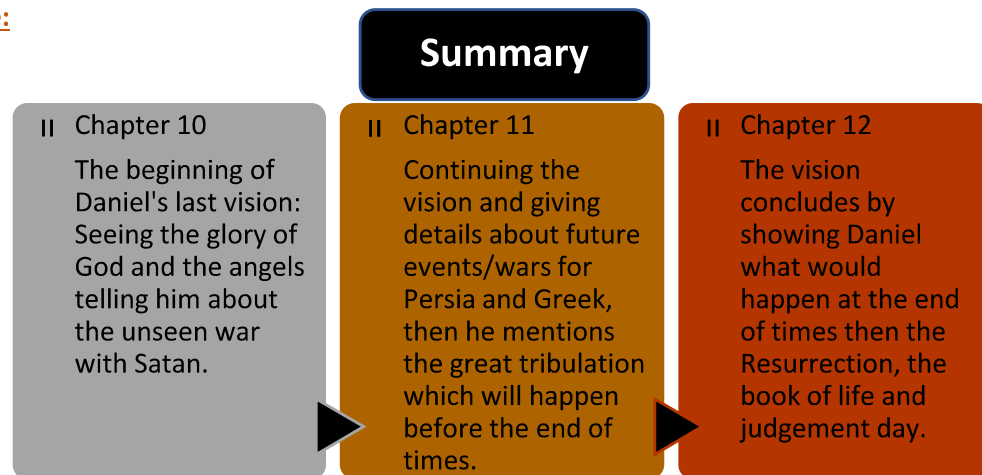
English sermons by Fr. Matthias Shedad

<https://soundcloud.com/stpaulhouston/daniel-11-12-bible-study-fr>

Remember last chapter:

Last chapter [11] was part of the last vision that Daniel saw before he died, the vision extended from chapter 10 to 12. In Chapter 11, he saw a vision about the events of the world for a period of three centuries, which corresponded exactly to the historical events. It matched with the history of kings of Egypt and Syria for more than 350 years. He also saw a vision about the end of times and the great tribulation which will continue in chapter 12 as well.

Chapter Outline:



Daniel talked about the great tribulation or the abomination of desolation which was partially fulfilled on a local level during the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, and will be fulfilled in all the world during the days of the antichrist at the end of times. Many of the fathers, especially St. Jerome, see that the words here are very clear and that they refer to the antichrist at the end of times.

1. The great tribulation v. 1
2. The resurrection v. 2,3
3. Conclusion v. 4-13

Chapter details:

1. The great tribulation V1:

- Starting with “At that time”, is obvious that he is continuing the previous chapter.
- At the peak of the authority of the antichrist, archangel Michael will arise to work for the benefit of the church, as was mentioned in the book of Revelation chapter 12. This was during the great tribulation which the Lord Jesus talked about in the book of Matthew 24: 15 –22.

- During the trouble, God delivers the people of Daniel, that is the church of the faithful, whose names are written in the Book of Life.
- In chapter 11, we talked in verses 20-35 about a great tribulation that happened during the time of Antiochus Epiphanes [Antichrist of the OT]. But at the end of chapter 11 [V36-45] and in chapter 12, we have another great tribulation, not on the local level but worldwide level, among all Christians which is yet to come at the end of the world.

2. The Resurrection V2,3

- The book of Daniel is considered the first book in the Old Testament which clearly mentions the resurrection, when the Day of the Lord comes and the wise who obeyed God shine like eternal stars. This seemed to be above Daniel's comprehension, for he said, "Although I heard, I did not understand." (v.8)
- St. Jerome said: {After the antichrist is demolished and perishes by one breath of the Savior, the people in the Book of God will be judged according to their deeds, some will go to eternal life and others will go to eternal reproach. It is not enough that one becomes wise, but he has to teach this wisdom to others. The one who can teach and remains silent and does not edify others is not rewarded.}



3. Conclusion V4-13:

- St. Irenaeus said that the divine inspiration asked Daniel to seal the prophecy, for no one can comprehend it until the Lord Jesus comes who is the goal of all the prophecies.
- To conclude the book, Daniel saw two angels and One wearing linen, who is the Word of God before the incarnation.
- One of the two angels asked him about how long the tribulation will be. The answer was for one time, two times and a half time, that is, for three and a half years. This is half the week of which Daniel had talked previously, the period of severe persecution which ended by the defeat of the violent king.
- St. Jerome said that the time, the two times and a half time were not meant the three and a half years which Antiochus had defiled the temple, it is very clear that he is talking here about the antichrist who will rule for 1290 days or three and a half years. we are obviously dealing with the last half of Daniel's seventieth week (the Great Tribulation); and we know very little about the first half.
- He defined the period by days not by years, that is 1290 days, which is three and a half years, where the church will suffer from the great tribulation. This was an amazingly specific prophecy. Daniel said

that from the time of the abomination of desolation, you can simply start marking off your calendar to the final consummation of all things, 1,290 days later.

- The angels blessed those who would wait till 1335 days, [1335-1290= 45] Forty-five days are added to make the number 1335 days. Probably this is the period between the killing of the antichrist and the coming of the Lord Jesus.
- It is a period of rest so that those who deviated after the antichrist may repent. At the same time, it is a period for purifying the believers where they joyfully await the coming the Lord after the antichrist is gone. That is why Daniel praises those who wait for the 1335 days.



Life application:

I want to emphasize here that since the Lord’s ascension, the church is joyfully awaiting the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus. He is definitely coming and coming quickly. Therefore, we do not have to be negligent nor slothful. The Lord Jesus has revealed to us the signs of His Second Coming, so we may be ready with patience and with facing difficulties, especially the great tribulation and the abomination of the desolation. We should also be ready with joy and hope that we have a share in the fatherly bosom.

Lesson delivery idea: [Is your name in the Book of Life?]



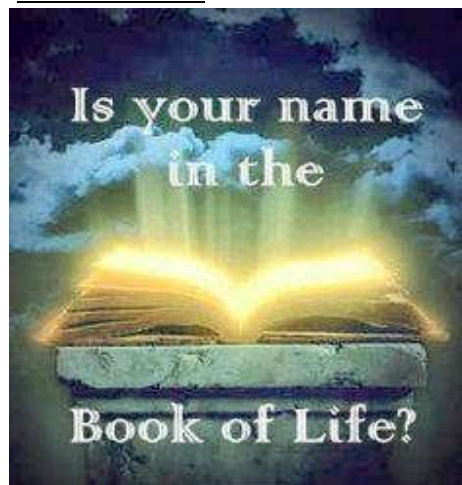
- If you watch the Olympic games, what do the top three winners receive? (Medals-gold, silver, and bronze)
- Did you know that one day there will be an ‘award ceremony’ for every human being that has lived on this earth? Unlike the Olympics even the ‘losers will receive something [bad] on that day as well. Let’s turn in Daniel 12 to see what I mean by that statement.
- Daniel 12 is the continuation of the angel telling Daniel about end time events in ch 11. The end times that the angel spoke to Daniel about are still future to us. We don’t know when these terrible times will begin but we can trust that they will happen exactly as God said they will.
- In our study of Daniel’s visions, we have discovered how things in history happened exactly the way God said they would.

- Because the end time is still future to us, we have responsibilities to respond by obedience to what the Bible teaches us. A follower in Christ still living on this earth is in a competition or race. (Acts 20:24; 1 Corinthians 9:24; Philippians 3:12-14; 2 Timothy 4:7)
- Believers are on God's winning team. Each day they walk in obedience to Jesus, they are fulfilling their purpose on God's team. At the end of the race (death) they enter heaven to live with Jesus forever.
- Unbelievers are on a path to destruction. As believers run along the path God sets before them, they invite those on that path to destruction to join the winning team by sharing the Good News. (Rescue the perishing by extending the baton of grace through the Gospel of Jesus Christ-He died on the cross for their sins, was buried and rose again the third day. All who believe in Him will be saved.)

Read Daniel 12:1-2.

"Everyone whose name is found written in the book-will be delivered." What book is the angel talking about? (Allow responses) In order to understand this reference, we are going to compare this Scripture with others to understand.

- (Exodus 32:32) Moses refers to this Book when God's people sinned by worshipping the golden calf. He was pleading for the forgiveness of the people. Moses was willing to have his name taken out of the Book so they could be forgiven.
- (Exodus 32:33) God's response to Moses' request: "Whoever has sinned against Me I will blot out of My Book."
- (Revelation 20:12-15) The eternal destination of each human being is determined by whether they are found written in the Book of Life.



- Simply put, the Book of Life is a Book that has recorded the names of each person who has been saved by faith in Jesus. You may be wondering how people were saved before Christ came to the earth and died on the cross.
- People in the Old Testament believed God's promise to send a Savior and it was their faith in God's promise that saved them. They looked forward by faith that God would send His Promised Messiah. After Jesus came and died on the cross, fulfilling God's promise to send a Savior, people look back by faith in His completed Work on the cross (Romans 4:18-25, Acts 4:12).
- Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: The angel is referring to a future day when there will be a day when all people will stand before God. (Revelation 20:12-15)

- Some to everlasting life, and others to shame and everlasting contempt: The Bible refers to this time where people stand before God as judgment day (Romans 14:9-10; Revelation 20:11-12)

Let's read Daniel 12:3,10,13.

Award Ceremony:

- On judgment day people will be awarded for the things they did on this earth.
- Believers will stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ. This event takes place for each believer to have his/her work for Jesus awarded.
- How each person used the life that God had given them on this earth to serve Him will be tested. (1 Corinthians 3:12-15)
- Believers will be given awards and will live with Jesus for all eternity.
- Unbelievers (those who have rejected God's gift of salvation through Jesus Christ) will stand before God's White Throne of Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15). Unbelievers will be awarded according to the deeds they have done and will be cast into the lake of fire to be eternally separated from God.
- The difference between any saint and an ordinary person, is that a saint is serious in his/her spiritual lives. Not by frowning, but by making an effort to keep close to God like David who used to wake up before dawn to praise God. Instead of praying zero psalms every day, make them 1 or 2, instead of 1 or 2, make them 3 or 4 and so forth. Let us take it seriously.
- There are only 2 sides at judgement day, heaven, or hell. There is no place for someone who is not too bad. There is no middle grounds. There are ranks in heaven, but all are on the one side [heaven].
- *12:3: "Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever".* To be wise is to understand what the will of God is and to bring others to Him.

Awards at the Great White Throne:

- Let's read Revelation 20:11-15. This is a terrible place to be standing in line. The awards the people receive who stand here is eternal punishment and separation from God. Every evil deed they have committed will be brought up at that time because they refused Christ.

God's Word always demands a response.

- We all have been challenged from Daniel 12 and the teaching about resurrection and rewards.
 1. If you are a believer, are you faithfully obeying what He asks you to do?
 2. If you are not a believer, you can get in the right line and receive eternal life and begin serving Jesus to have rewards one day.

Application:

In reality, it won't matter whether you believe in the second resurrection and whether or when it comes in relation to these events because they're all going to happen according to God's will and timing regardless. The more important factor is whether or not your name is "written in the book", whether or not you choose Christ in spite of everything else.

Memory Verse:

Daniel 12:3 "Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever"3.

Chapter 13 [The story of Susanna]

Servants' preparation:

English sermons by Fr. Matthias Shedad

<https://soundcloud.com/stpaulhouston/daniel-13-story-of-susanna>

Read the chapter from Coptic reader or use this link → https://st-takla.org/pub_Deuterocanon/Deuterocanon-Apocrypha_El-Asfar_El-Kanoneya_El-Tanya_7-Daniel.html#Chapter%2013

Remember last chapter:

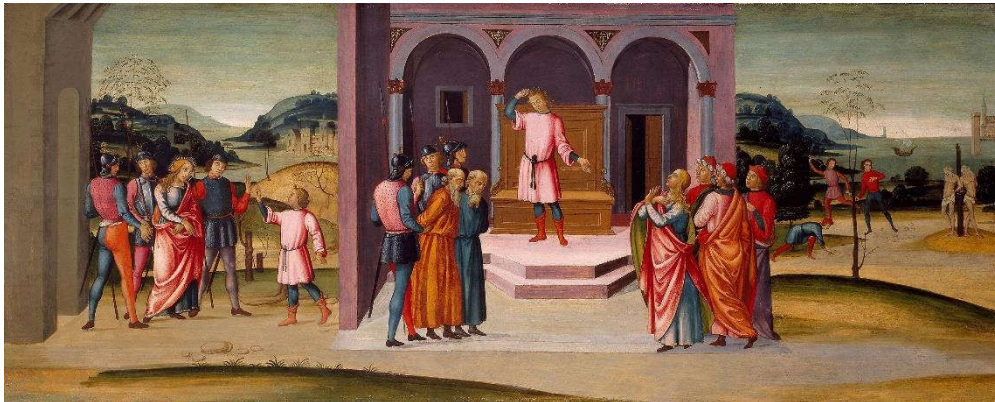
Last chapter, we ended the last vision of Daniel which extended over 3 chapters, he described the Resurrection of the dead and judgment day where everyone would go to his/her eternal life either in heaven if their names were written in the book of life or in hell.

Chapter summary:

Susanna was a wealthy woman who although was well connected and known to be an upstanding woman, she was manipulated by two elders and judges of the court when she refused to agree to do wrong things with them.

As retaliation, they falsely accused her of adultery with another man and she was put on trial for death. Just when she was sentenced and all looked bleak, the faithful young Daniel, (before the story of the lion's den), spoke up when prompted by the Holy Spirit. His method of discerning the truth of the matter saved Susanna's life.

Chapter details:



- The Holy Bible provides us with several examples of women who can be taken as role models. Through their holy lives, they teach us how to persevere in our own daily lives. Susanna, the wife of Joachim was one such example, who although is only mentioned in short chapter in the Book of Daniel, provides for the modern married woman a large number of lessons. Susanna, being an ideal model of purity, faithfulness, long-suffering, decency, and reliance on God, is the subject of this article.

- Susanna was a beautiful and deeply religious woman married to a very wealthy man, Joakim and daughter to Hilkiah.
- They had lovely gardens that Susanna chose to walk in each day.
- There were two judges who held court at the residence of Joakim who lusted after the beautiful Susanna.
- One day they followed her to the garden where she decided to take a bath. She requested her servants lock the gate so that she could be alone, unaware that the two judges were hiding and watching her. When the servants left the judges forced themselves upon to do evil with her. They told her that if she didn't comply, they would take her to court for adultery saying that they saw her alone with a young man.
- She chose not to comply and began screaming; when her servants heard her, they came running. The men told their side of the story and Susanna was taken to court the next day.
- The judges are caught in a lie because young Daniel yelled out in opposition to the charges against Susanna. He would not be a party to her death without proof of her guilt.
- He directed the court to separate the two judges and question them individually. So, they did and because of a discrepancy in their individual testimonies regarding the type of "tree" the lovers were standing under as they committed their crime, the judges were caught in their lie.
- The story indicates that Daniel was directed by divine guidance and was not willing to be pleased with her execution. He was brave enough to speak up and change the course of the narrative.

Susanna's Upbringing

- Susanna was the daughter of Hilkiah who was described as a God-fearing man (Daniel 13:2, NAB).
- Her parents were both just and were careful to teach their daughter the Law of Moses. They preserved her chastity given they were living in the land of captivity and were surrounded with ungodly practices.
- Susanna was careful throughout her life not to show herself in public (Daniel 13:7, NAB), she was decent and careful in her dress and behavior.

Susanna's Family and Husband

- Susanna was married to Joakim for several years and was fruitful in his house. In the manner of her parents, she was a living example to her children and those around her.
- This must be considered in the circumstances surrounding Susanna and her family: her faith was strong in the land of captivity, surrounded with evil and immorality, yet she sheltered herself and her children in her home and did not expose herself to any unrighteousness.
- It was remarkable that given the weight of the punishment and the severity of the accusation against Susanna, the children were allowed to accompany their loved mother to her judgement, it shows the absolute trust Joakim had towards Susanna as he allowed his children to support her.
- Joakim, being full of wisdom must have heard of the accusation the day of the incident and did not rush to conclusions nor arising hazardous suspicions.

Her Purity and the Sin

Susanna was an example of Joseph the righteous, who in the like manner resisted Potiphar wife's temptation and saw it better to please God rather than men.

It was best to honor God rather than men. Her sole reason to refute their demands was she did not want to sin in the sight of God, and by raising her voice for pleading for help, took an active approach to protecting her purity, just as Joseph did by fleeing.

The truth revealed:

It was God who through Daniel defended for her and exposed the evil of the two judges.

Daniel was still a youth, probably few years after arriving to Babylon and finishing all the 3 years of training at the palace. He was not known for being wise yet and the elders could have easily ignored his comment during this trial but it was all planned by God that they sarcastically ask him to show why the verdict was wrong.

God used Susanna as a tool to rectify the evil of the two judges who oppressed many innocent people through unjust judgements.

Susanna's innocence was a stamp on her conduct and lifestyle before all people, who through witnessing her trial and outcome may have repented from their ways.

In like manner, we too must live a life which is conducive of purity and righteousness to thereby set an example to those around us.

May we learn the life of purity and take Susanna as a righteous example and model to which we should match in our lives such as to bring ourselves and those around us to the glory of God.

Life application: [Let your eyes look towards heaven]

Read how the two elders started their sinful act:

“They perverted their thinking; they would not allow their eyes to look to heaven and did not keep in mind just judgments” (Dn 13:9).

- This is how sin works in us. This is how we allow sin to corrupt our thoughts, our actions, and our lives. It begins with temptation, but temptation alone is not enough. Those elders did not stop at wanting to sin with her, they started looking at her then planning how to find a time she was alone.
- There is a difference between being tempted and committing sins.
- This line from Daniel shows us what must happen within us before the temptation can become actual sin. The elders perverted [twisted] their thinking.
- Note: this is not something that passively happened — they intentionally twisted their own thoughts, in order to convince themselves that what they knew to be wrong was in fact right. How did they do this? By not allowing their eyes to look to heaven.
- This is the most critical line of the passage. By not looking to heaven, they avoid the light of goodness and truth. Had they looked to heaven, the darkness of their evil desires would have been revealed. Their guilt would have been undeniable.
- There are two ways to end the pain of a guilty conscience: turn away from sin or turn away from the light. They turned away from the light.

- By contrast we have Susanna, who never takes her eyes off God. She understands the urgent nature of her situation. Either she commits adultery with these men and escape punishment; or refuse and be punished for the very crime she refused to commit.
- Looked at from a purely worldly perspective, it would seem better for Susanna to commit the sinful act and save her own life than to be killed for not doing it.

- But Susanna does not have a worldly perspective. Her perspective is that of heaven.
- “If I yield, it will be my death; if I refuse, I cannot escape your power. Yet it is better for me not to do it and to fall into your power than to sin before the Lord” (Dn 13:23).
- There is no fate worse in Susanna’s mind than to sin against God. Such an act would be a betrayal of His love.
- What I want to highlight here is that through all of her trials, Susanna never took her eyes off of God.
- She actually did not argue with her accusers nor ask God to prove her innocence, she just laid the problem in front of Him in prayer and left Him to take care of the matter. She told God that she did not do anything wrong and that she will die. If a kid runs to his father telling him, he will be punished but he is innocent, there is no need to ask for help, his father will sure jump into the problem and save him.
- Just like Saint Mary at the wedding of Cana, she told Jesus, they have no wine. Let us learn this nice prayer, when we pass through problems, we just tell God how we feel and let Him find the best way to deal with it.
- In Suzanna’s story, it says, God heeded her prayers. We know that He called Daniel at that moment to help her.
- When faced with temptation, all the knowledge in the world won’t help us if we turn away our eyes from heaven. We hide God from our sight (thinking wrongly that that will hide us from His) and find a way in our minds to justify our sin.
- May we take these lessons from today’s story and apply them to our lives. May we keep our eyes ever on God, so that our hearts may be filled with the courage needed to resist evil, and an infallible trust in His goodness.

Memory Verse:

Daniel 13:9 “They suppressed their consciences and turned away their eyes from looking to Heaven”



Chapter 14 [Bel and the dragon]

Servants' preparation:

English sermons by Fr. Matthias Shedad

<https://soundcloud.com/stpaulhouston/daniel-14-bel-the-dragon-bible>

Read the chapter from Coptic reader or use this link → [https://st-takla.org/pub Deuterocanon/Deuterocanon-Apocrypha El-Asfar El-Kanoneya El-Tanya 7-Daniel.html#Chapter%2013](https://st-takla.org/pub_Deuterocanon/Deuterocanon-Apocrypha_El-Asfar_El-Kanoneya_El-Tanya_7-Daniel.html#Chapter%2013)

Remember last chapter:

Last chapter, we learned the beautiful story of Susanna and how she was falsely accused of adultery but as soon as she raised her eyes to heaven, putting her problem in front of God, He sent Daniel to stir the course of the events and prove that the judges were liars.

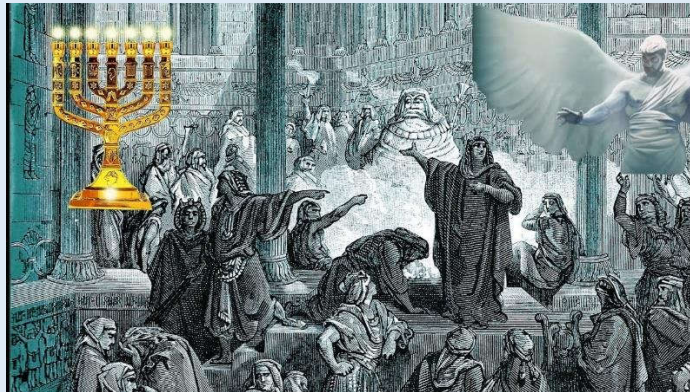
Chapter Outline:

There are three parts to the story of Bel and the Dragon. They all take place under the rule of the Persian king Cyrus.

- The Story of Bel: V1-22
- The Story of the Dragon: V23-27
- The Story of the Lion's Den: V 28-43

Chapter details:

The Story of Bel: V1-22



- At the heart of these stories is the issue of idolatry. What makes a god worthy of being worshipped? Cyrus, the Persian King, thought a god should be worshipped if it was a "living god."
- According to the story of Bel and the Dragon, Daniel is honored above all others by the new Persian king, Cyrus. The king asks Daniel why he does not worship the statue of Bel, to which the people have been offering great quantities of food every day.
- Daniel pointed out that Bel was made up of clay covered by bronze. It definitely was not a living god. The King completely disagreed and argued that of course Bel was alive because every day they gave him enormous amounts of food and every morning the food was always gone. Daniel chuckled.

- Maybe it was the way Daniel chuckled upon hearing that, or maybe the king simply didn't like being challenged. In any case, the king became very angry and called all the priests together. He proposed a test. Either they would show that Bel was eating all the food, or they would die. If Bel was eating the food, then Daniel would die! Suddenly, a random conversation with the king turned into life and death stakes for the participants.
- Daniel, however, was not discouraged because he trusted His God. He and the king met inside Bel's temple. All the priests stepped outside. The king laid out all the food and wine, and then came out and sealed the door shut with his signet ring. The priests understood that if the food wasn't gone by morning, their lives were on the line. What they didn't know is that before the king and Daniel left the temple, Daniel had his servants sprinkle ashes all over the floor.
- The next morning, the king breaks the seal and sees that the food has been eaten. He begins to praise Bel when Daniel points out the evidence in the ashes. There are footprints of men, women, and children leading to a secret door in the wall. The seventy priests and their families have been sneaking in nightly to eat the idol's offerings.
- The king flew into a rage, and the priests confessed that they had built a trap door under the altar and had gained access to the food on a nightly basis. The king immediately ordered them all put to death. He gave Bel over to Daniel, who destroyed the idol and the temple.

The Story of the Dragon: V23-27



- The second part of Bel and the Dragon involves an actual living dragon, which Cyrus again tells Daniel to worship. Since the dragon is flesh and blood, Cyrus claims, it is superior to Bel and should be honored.
- Even though, it was the same king seeing the power of Daniel's God when he destroyed Bel, it was not hard for him to add a god to his list, so God of Daniel is real, and this dragon is a real god too.
- Daniel told the king the snake was not a living god because he could kill it without using a sword or even a stick. Once again, the king took the challenge.
- Daniel prepared a mixture of pitch, fat, and hair. He fed it to the snake and shortly thereafter the snake burst open. Daniel again mocked the false idol that the king had been worshipping.

The Story of the Lion's Den: V 28-43



- Daniel is being thrown into the lion's den, this time by Cyrus, not Darius, as in Daniel 6.
- This time, the king had to deal with a rebellious population. They had just seen two idols discredited and destroyed. So, they rallied themselves against the king, wanting him to hand Daniel over to them or else they would go after the king's family.
- Finally, the king relented and handed Daniel over. Without further ado, the people threw him into the lions' den where there were seven hungry lions. Each day these lions were fed two humans and two sheep. But now, the lions were fed nothing but Daniel – for seven days!
- Of course, Daniel didn't have any nourishment either, which is why God got the prophet, Habakkuk involved. He was living at the same time of Daniel but all the way in Judea with the rest of people who were not exiled, so far from Babylon and the exiled people.
- Habakkuk had made a stew for the workers there, when an angel told him that that stew would be given to Daniel. Habakkuk answered saying "I have no idea where Daniel is, nor do I have a way to get to Babylon with this food"
- Immediately, the angel grabbed Habakkuk by the hair and whisked him over to the pit in Babylon where Daniel sat with the lions.
- Needless to say, Daniel was filled with gratitude because he knew that he had not been forgotten by the God he loved. He partook of the stew, and Habakkuk found himself back in his country.
- After seven days, the king approached the pit expecting to mourn the loss of Daniel. To his great surprise, there sat Daniel among the lions.
- The king rejoiced, praised Daniel's God, and threw his accusers into the pit. The lions wasted no time in devouring them.

Why did God send Habakkuk from far away instead of sending an angel to feed Daniel?

1. Habakkuk in his prophecy book had questioned God why He allowed His people to be taken into the exile, showing their enemies that their God did not help them. So, God wanted to show Habakkuk that He did not leave His people in the exile, the wicked people did not win and that He is glorifying His name through Daniel, Habakkuk was relieved.
2. Habakkuk would also be a witness for Daniel in Judea, telling the rest of the Jews how Daniel is keeping his faith.
3. God likes to have church members help each other to be the one body.

Live Application:

The value of these stories to the Jews and to us:

- These stories had value for the Jewish people in the OT who were struggling with idolatry. The first story illustrates how silly it is to worship something that man has created with his own hands. And the second story concurs that it is just as foolish to worship one of the creatures God had created.
- Jews should simply stay with the source, the one God, who created all and was all. So, these stories had some edifying aspects for idolatrous Jews.
- In the extreme, the stories show that there is no point in worshiping anyone or anything other than "the living God." For the Jews who were living among other nations, there was a great temptation to worship along with their gentile neighbors. When they didn't, they oftentimes suffered both religiously and economically. It would have been highly edifying to hear this story where Daniel stood up against the idolatrous king and was protected by God for his stance.
- Similarly, we encounter many people mocking religions and specifically Christianity, we should remember that our God is always watching over us and will glorify His name through us just as He had done with Daniel.
- God does not always work through heavenly miracles, but He uses things and people on earth in a miraculous way to serve His plan. For e.g.: If God is planning to heal someone from a disease, it does not have to be a miracle while he is sleeping but He could use the advancement in medicine and work with the doctors for this person to be healed. God is behind everything we see around us. He uses all threads and make them work together for our benefit.

How did Daniel preach?

- Throughout the book of Daniel, we never saw him disrespect idol worshippers or refuse to work with them because they worship fake statues. He would only witness to his God when they ask him why you don't join us or force him to forsake his God. He was willing to risk his life for witnessing for God.
- We should learn to do the same in our lives, we are asked by God to preach others but not necessarily by mocking other people's views but with all respect, we witness for what we believe in and explain why we believe that way. Remember our goal is to win people not to win arguments.
- It also depends on our relationship with those around us, Daniel might not have elaborated his reasons if he had not been close to the king. He could have said, I have another God to worship.
- These stories suggest there was a very close relationship between Daniel and the king. Daniel laughed, restrained the king from entering the temple and the king was not offended ! This would indicate their relationship was both intimate and long-standing.
- May God grant us wisdom to witness for Him everywhere we go, knowing that He is the only living God that protects His people from every evil.

Memory Verse:

Daniel 14:25 And Daniel said" I adore the Lord my God: for He is the living God".

Additional meditation: What can we learn from the character of Daniel?

Here are the 11 characteristics of Daniel everyone should learn from.

- 1 The first characteristic we can learn from Daniel was that he was decisive and stuck to his belief in God.
- 2 The second characteristic we can learn Daniel was that he trusted God
- 3 The third characteristic we can learn from Daniel was that he respected authority
- 4 The fourth characteristic we can learn from Daniel was that he used discretion and discernment
- 5 The fifth characteristic we can learn from Daniel was that he enlisted prayer warriors
- 6 The sixth characteristic we can learn from Daniel was that praised God when He answered
- 7 The seventh characteristic we can learn from Daniel was that he humbly gave God the Glory publicly
- 8 The eighth characteristic we can learn from Daniel was that he shared the accolades
- 9 The ninth characteristic we can learn from Daniel was that he delivered bad news with compassion and respect
- 10 The tenth characteristic we can learn from Daniel was that he spoke boldly with respect
- 11 The eleventh characteristic we can learn from Daniel was that he prayed for the sins of the people and included himself

1- The first characteristic we can learn from Daniel was that he was decisive and stuck to his belief in God

Do you have days like I do where it seems life is so overwhelming that I can't make a simple decision? Not Daniel. He made up his mind to not defile himself with the King's food. (Daniel 1:8) Daniel knew, deep within his heart and soul, that this was not something he should do. Being wise, even at the age of 15, Daniel knew the Jewish law.

Daniel stuck to his belief in God. He was faithful and prayed to God three times a day, every day (Dan 6:10). The satraps, governors of provinces, and commissioners in the kingdom wanted to find a way to trap Daniel. Scripture says that "No error or fault was found in him" (Dan 6:4), so they decided they could trap Daniel in how he regarded the law of God (vs 5).

Even when Daniel knew the document had been signed, he still went up to the roof to pray, with his windows open, toward Jerusalem, just as he had done every day.

How would you fair under those circumstances? Would you stand up for what is right? It is hard to think about being thrown into a den with bloodthirsty lions. But how could I bow to some other god besides the LORD our God??

Yet, there are times I have done that in many other ways. I have made 'things' in my life an idol. Food, binge-watching a tv show, reading books for hours on end or my desire to get ahead in my career are all types of an idol.

2- The second characteristic we can learn Daniel was that he trusted God

When Darius threw Daniel into the lion's den, scripture doesn't record Daniel's reaction. He was just put in the lion's den.

When he is removed the next day, Daniel is gracious and says, “O king, live forever!” (Dan 6:21). Then he tells how God sent an angel to shut the lion’s mouth as he was found innocent before God and also towards the king (vs 22).

I love what scripture records next! “So, Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted God” (Dan 6:23 ESV).

Daniel did trust God. He knew that God is all-powerful and sovereign! God had a plan for Israel and this nation, and that Daniel was a part of it. He also knew that if God wanted him to perish, God would still get the glory!

3- The third characteristic we can learn from Daniel was that he respected authority

When Daniel didn’t want to defile himself with the King’s food during his three-year training, he asked permission from the commander.

When you have someone in authority over you, do you ask questions? Do you ask permission, so to speak, to do it in a different way? Then offer an option of how it could be done with a test period to see if that solution is a better one.

4- The fourth characteristic we can learn from Daniel was that he used discretion and discernment

The captain of the guard, Arioch, went out to begin slaying all the wise men, which would include Daniel and his three friends. Daniel replied to him with discretion and discernment wondering why the King’s decree was so urgent. Then Daniel proceeded to go into the king and to request time to declare the interpretation of the king’s dream to him (vs 14).

How often are we the brunt of someone’s anger and we respond inappropriately? Daniel’s response was such a conviction to me! If someone is mad and yelling at me, it is hard to respond with discretion and discernment. The next time it happens to me, I pray that I will reply with discernment and respond in a calm and respectful manner. How about you?

5- The fifth characteristic we can learn from Daniel was that he enlisted prayer warriors

After Daniel obtained some time from the king to give him the interpretation of the dream, he went home, explained the situation to his friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah and asked for their help. Daniel asked them to pray that God would have mercy on them and reveal the mystery of this dream. Understanding the mystery would prevent Daniel, his friends and all the other wise men from being killed (Dan 2:17-18).

Do you ask your friends for prayer help? God’s power is so miraculous. With that same power within us, we can do more than we could ever ask or imagine. I have some friends that I can text, and they will begin praying right away.

6-The sixth characteristic we can learn from Daniel was that praised God when He answered

That night, the mystery of the dream was revealed to Daniel. He blessed the God of heaven and said a prayer full of praise and thankfulness for how God is sovereign overall all the kings and reveals these hidden secrets (Dan. 2:19-23).

It is so great to hear when God has answered a believer’s prayers! We learn from this that the moment we have an answer, we need to stop and thank God for His answer and provision. We have such a loving and caring Father. When He takes a moment to hear our prayer, the least we can do is thank Him.

7-The seventh characteristic we can learn from Daniel was that he humbly gave God the Glory publicly

When Daniel appears before the king who asks him if he is ready to tell him about the dream and what it means. Daniel begins by telling the king that no wise man can answer this but there is a God in heaven who can. This God is not one of the man-made idols that Nebuchadnezzar served. He reveals mysteries and it wasn't wisdom that Daniel had from within him that made it possible to know it. God allowed Daniel to know the mystery so that he could tell the king the dream and its purpose (Dan. 2:27-30).

Daniel was humble and told the King that it wasn't his doing or any knowledge that he had on his own. Giving God the glory in small ways or in front of people at church is easy. But to say that publicly in front of a lot of people would be hard to do. I have heard athletes who have received a trophy or won a championship give God the glory. Honestly, I marvel at that because I don't know if I can do that in front of a crowded stadium, let alone millions of people watching on TV.

8- The eighth characteristic we can learn from Daniel was that he shared the privilege.

After Daniel had interpreted King Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the king fell on his face to worship him and ordered incense and offerings to be made to him. Then he gave Daniel gifts and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon. He also made him in charge over all the wise men of Babylon.

At this point, Daniel made a request of the king. While Daniel was in the king's court, he wanted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to be appointed administrators over the province of Babylon.

When someone gives me thanks for something that was a shared responsibility or totally the idea of another person, I will speak up and say, "I can't take credit for this. This person over here helped me." Without this person's help, I could not have done the best job I could do. They deserve to have the credit given to them too. Do you share privileges when it is due to others?

9- The ninth characteristic we can learn from Daniel was that he delivered bad news with compassion and respect

In chapter 4, Daniel was asked interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Daniel was so alarmed that he wished that the dream would apply to anyone else but the king he was standing in front of. What compassion he had for this man in knowing the outcome of the dream was not a good one!

He gives King the interpretation that he is to be removed from his office and would dwell among the beasts of the field until he recognizes that God is the Most High is ruler over earth and He is the one who gives it to whom he wills (vs 20-25)

Daniel then asks that his advice be pleasing to him and that the king would repent from his sins and be merciful to the poor. Perhaps in doing so, the king will still have a time of prosperity (vs 27). In addition to having compassion, Daniel respectfully gives him advice on how he could respond to this dream.

10- The tenth characteristic we can learn from Daniel was that he spoke boldly with respect

In chapter 5, Daniel speaks respectfully and tells King Belshazzar about how God bestowed honor on his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar. Then he shares how the king's pride had resulted in his throne being

taken away. Daniel tells Belshazzar, point-blank, how his heart was not humble and that bringing God's sacred vessels, originally from the temple, out to drink from exalted himself against the God of heaven. He then interprets the handwriting on the wall for King Belshazzar (Dan. 5:18-29 ESV). As a result, the King immediately gave him the gifts he mentioned. Later that night, the king was killed.

Daniel could have told Belshazzar to take a flying leap after he read the inscription on the wall. However, he was a man of integrity, and respectfully told the king what he requested. I like his approach of giving the king a history lesson about his grandfather King Nebuchadnezzar who learned his lesson about pride and humility. Then he respectfully let him have it by telling him how his lack of humility was his downfall.

11- The eleventh characteristic we can learn from Daniel was that he prayed for the sins of the people and included himself

In Chapter 9:2, Daniel was reading the Scriptures and realized that the number of years that they were being held captive in Babylon all these years was because of their sin. The Jews had not given the land a Sabbath rest for 490 years. Every seven years, the land had a Sabbath and was not plowed, and crops were not grown. So, 70 sabbath rest years were missed and that accounted for the 70 years that they were being held in captivity! See these scriptures about this for more study (Jeremiah 29:1-14, 2 Chronicles 36:20-23 and Leviticus 25:1-7 ESV).*

After studying this, Daniel fasted, prayed and asked for forgiveness. For the people AND for himself. With every phrase of his prayer, he said we and not they. He took responsibility for his part in the sins of the people.

I have always appreciated the humility of the prophets when they pray for the people and include them in the prayers of repentance.