

Daniel – An Old Testament Major Prophet, 4:1 – 6:28

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Notes:

- These are the kings listed in Daniel and their reigns:
 - Nebuchadnezzar – King of Babylon (605–562 BC).
 - Belshazzar – Grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, Co-Regent of Babylon with his father Nabonidus (553-539 BC).
 - Darius – Governor of Babylon under Cyrus (~559 – 530 BC)
 - Cyrus – King of Persia (559 – 530 BC)
- Chapter 3 took place in 587; the account in chapter 4 begins 16 years later (571-562), thus covering the last nine years of Nebuchadnezzar's reign.

Nebuchadnezzar Praises God (4:1-3): The ending theme of chapter 3, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego...,” and the beginning of chapter 4 below are similar.

1. ¹ King Nebuchadnezzar to all peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you! ² It has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me. ³ How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endures from generation to generation.
 - a. King Nebuchadnezzar *seemed* to say all the right things, we may do the same; however, the king must have had hidden sins of pride and self-sufficiency due to what happened as recorded below.
 - b. What is true of us?
 - i. We are putting on a good show!
 - ii. Our outward expressions agree with our inward realities!

Nebuchadnezzar's Second Dream (4:4-18): A summary: “In Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the great tree overshadowing the whole world represents a ruler who would be humbled. He has to learn that God rules all earthly kingdoms. We need constantly to be reminded that, although earthly kingdoms have great power and authority, the Most High rules” (1404).

2. ⁴ I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and prospering in my palace. ⁵ I saw a dream that made me afraid.... [He said to Daniel:] ⁹ “O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you and that no mystery is too difficult for you, tell me the visions of my dream that I saw and their interpretation. ¹⁰ ...I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and its height was great. ¹¹ The tree grew and became strong, and its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth. ¹² Its leaves were beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, and the birds of the heavens lived in its branches, and all flesh was fed from it.”
¹³ “...and behold, a watcher, a holy one [*an angelic messenger*], came down from heaven. ¹⁴ He proclaimed aloud and said thus: ‘Chop down the tree and lop off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts flee from under it and the birds from its

branches.¹⁵ But leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, amid the tender grass of the field [*because it will sprout again*]. Let him be wet with the dew of heaven. Let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth.¹⁶ Let his mind be changed from a man's, and let a beast's mind be given to him; and let seven periods of time [*probably 7 years*] pass over him.¹⁷ The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men...."

- a. Do rulers then and now sometimes conclude that they are in control? Y N
- b. God declared this reality through the apostle John: "Jesus Christ [is] the ruler of kings on earth" (Rev. 1:5 ESV), so the kings of the earth are not in control.
- c. Are we in control of our lives? Y N (So let us trust in the Lord who is in control!)

Daniel Interprets the Second Dream (4:19-27): A summary: "Daniel interprets the dream for the king and urges him to repent. Today, God does not normally use dreams to make clear His will that we repent, for He has given us the Scriptures, which are filled with such admonitions" (1405).

3. ¹⁹ Then Daniel...was dismayed for a while, and his thoughts alarmed him. The king answered and said, "Belteshazzar, let not the dream or the interpretation alarm you." ... ²⁰ The tree you saw... ²² it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong.... ²³ And because the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven... ²⁴ ...It is a decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king, ²⁵ that you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. You shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and you shall be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will. ²⁶ And as it was commanded to leave the stump of the roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be confirmed for you from the time that you know that Heaven rules. ²⁷ Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you: break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed...."
- a. Even though the alarming message from the Most High was difficult for Daniel to share, he did speak God's truth. Let us also speak God's truth in love.
- b. Daniel said to the king: "break off your sins by practicing righteousness..." It is easy for us to become comfortable with our sins, *to even forget we are sinning*. Therefore, let us ♦stay in God's Word, ♦repent whenever necessary, ♦be certain of God's forgiveness through Jesus, and ♦practice righteousness.

Nebuchadnezzar's Humiliation (4:28-33): A summary: "Since Nebuchadnezzar goes on living as before, the decree of the Most High (v 24) comes to pass. For a period of time, he lives like a beast. This is to be a learning experience for him. God may also allow trouble and illness in our lives to discipline us for our good (Hebrews 12:3-11)" (1405).

4. ²⁸ All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. ²⁹ At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, ³⁰ and the king answered and said, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?" ³¹ While the words were still in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, "O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you..."
³³ Immediately the word was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from among

men and ate grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair grew as long as eagles' feathers [approximately 15 inches], and his nails were like birds' claws.

- a. Think about the LORD's prophecy: The man leading the world would eat grass like an ox, grow long hair all over his body, and grow nails like the claws of a bird. It was so extreme, and yet it happened because the LORD is God! *Let us never doubt His Word!*
- b. How do we respond to the LORD's discipline?
 - i. By complaining about our troubles.
 - ii. By remembering that "God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God..." (Rom. 8:28) and He disciplines us because He loves us and wants us to repent (Rev. 3:19).

Nebuchadnezzar Restored (4:34-37): Now, after receiving the LORD's discipline, take note of the king's proper perspective of the Most High in comparison to people.

5. ³⁴ At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; ³⁵ all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay [stop] his hand or say to him, "What have you done?"

³⁶ At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and splendor returned to me. My counselors and my lords sought me, and I was established in my kingdom, and still more greatness was added to me. ³⁷ Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble.

- a. What is your choice?
 - i. Learn the hard way like King Nebuchadnezzar.
 - ii. Learn from his hard lesson; then know the LORD's ways are right, be humble, and trust in the LORD.
- b. Can you identify a time in your life when the LORD disciplined you? _____
 - i. What was He trying to teach you? _____
 - ii. Did you learn it? Y N

The Handwriting on the Wall (5:1-12): A summary: **Belshazzar** [Grandson of Nebuchadnezzar] hosts a great feast at which he and his guests drink toasts to their idols from the sacred vessels of the Jerusalem temple. God, whom Belshazzar mocks, suddenly shows His presence. This is a warning for us all. "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked" (Gal. 6:7). God calls for repentance and faith (1406).

6. ¹ King Belshazzar made a great feast for a thousand of his lords and drank wine in front of the thousand [539 BC]. ² Belshazzar, when he tasted the wine, commanded that the vessels of gold and of silver that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem be brought, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. ³ Then they brought in the golden vessels... [and they] drank from them. ⁴ They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

⁵ Immediately the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, opposite the lampstand. And the king saw the hand as it wrote.

⁶ Then the king's color changed, and his thoughts alarmed him; his limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together. ⁷ The king called loudly to bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers. [But none of them could interpret the writing on the wall. Then, after the queen explained to the king about Daniel, she said:] ¹² "...Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation."

- a. Then and today the LORD does permit evil to exist in this sinful world; people can reject the LORD, misuse His name, despise His Word, dishonor their parents, etc., etc., etc. However, King Belshazzar went too far by drinking wine from the golden vessels from the Jerusalem temple while praising created things rather than the CREATOR.
- b. The LORD's judgment – *either immediate or when Jesus returns*: ^{NAS} **Galatians 6:7-8**
"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life."

Daniel Interprets the Handwriting (5:13-31): A summary: Daniel, after being introduced to Belshazzar, reminds him of how God has chastened Nebuchadnezzar for his pride. Belshazzar does not learn from this lesson, and so, as the writing reveals, he will be humbled and his kingdom given to another. The fall of Babylon made a deep impression on the biblical writers (Is. 21:9; Rev. 18:2) and came to symbolize the end of the world. All human history will end. Only the kingdom of God is forever, and He rules for the sake of our justification (1407).

7. ¹³ Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king answered and said to Daniel, "You are that Daniel, one of the exiles of Judah, whom the king my father brought from Judah. ¹⁴ I have heard of you that the spirit of the gods is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you.... ¹⁷ Then Daniel answered and said before the king... ¹⁸ "O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father kingship and greatness and glory and majesty. ¹⁹ And because of the greatness that he gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him.... ²⁰ But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was brought down from his kingly throne, and his glory was taken from him.... ²² And you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this, ²³ but you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven. ...the God in whose hand is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not honored. ²⁴ Then from his presence the hand was sent, and this writing was inscribed. ²⁵ And this is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN. ²⁶ This is the interpretation of the matter: MENE, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end; ²⁷ TEKEL, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting; ²⁸ PERES, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians." ... ³⁰ That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed. ³¹ And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.
- a. Daniel had an excellent reputation. How are we known to others? What can we do now so that our lives honor the One who lived and died for us (2 Cor. 5:15)?
 - b. King Belshazzar failed to learn the valuable lesson his father / descendant endured. Let us learn the many valuable lessons contained in God's Holy Word!
 - c. Notice the LORD's swift action: "That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed." So let us believe the Bible, repent, and seek His will in every circumstance!

Daniel and the Lions' Den (6:1-28): A literal account that probably happened in 538 BC.

8. The other leaders are jealous of Daniel: ¹ It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps [provincial officials], to be throughout the whole kingdom; ² and over them three presidents, of whom Daniel was one, to whom these satraps should give account, so that the king might suffer no loss. ³ Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other presidents and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. ⁴ Then the presidents and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him. ⁵ Then these men said, "We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God."
- a. It was wise to divide the kingdom into 120 parts, with one leader over each part. Moses did something similar *about 800 years earlier*: ^{ESV} **Exodus 18:24** So Moses listened to the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said. ²⁵ Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens." So imagine this structure:
 - i. Moses worked with each man who was over a group of 10,000.
 - ii. Each of them worked with the ten under them who were each over 1,000.
 - iii. Each of them worked with the ten under them who were each over 100.
 - iv. Each of them worked with the ten under them who were each over 10.
 - b. Why was Daniel distinguished above the others? _____
 - c. God calls us, *as His holy children through Jesus*, to live so that others have no ground for complaint against us. However, *both in Daniel's time and today*, people will find reasons to condemn us because we place God's Word over the wicked ways of the world!
9. The king is tricked into making a new law: ⁶ Then these presidents and satraps came by agreement to the king [they conspired together] and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever [which was said to win his favor and cover their evil motive]! ⁷ All the presidents of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction [a law that stipulates how it will be enforced], that whoever makes petition [prayer] to any god or man for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. [Since only God hears prayers, they were elevating the king to the place of God. Even today, do people pray to other people, thus elevating them to the place of God? Y N] ⁸ Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked." [So they identified the king as God, yet they reminded him that once the law was signed it could not be changed.] ⁹ Therefore King Darius signed the document and injunction.
10. Faithfulness and Tattletales: ¹⁰ When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously. ¹¹ Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and plea before his God. ¹² Then they came near and said before the king... "O king! Did you not sign an injunction, that anyone who makes petition to any god or man within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?" The king answered and said, "The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked." ¹³ Then they answered and said before the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or the injunction you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day."
- a. When Daniel knew the law was in place, did he *hesitate* to pray to God? Y N

- b. The Bible instructs us to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29). Would you proceed like Daniel, even if you knew it meant being thrown to the lions? Y N
 - c. Did Daniel's enemies believe they had won, that Daniel's life would soon end? Y N
11. The king wants to save Daniel: ¹⁴ Then the king, when he heard these words, was much distressed and set his mind to deliver Daniel. And he labored till the sun went down to rescue him. ¹⁵ Then these men came by agreement to the king [*again, conspiring together*] and said to the king, "Know, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or ordinance that the king establishes can be changed." *Thus, no matter how hard you try, O king, you cannot change what is written; Daniel must be thrown to the lions!*
12. The king was powerless to help; Daniel was in God's hands: ¹⁶ Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The king declared to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!" ¹⁷ And a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel. ¹⁸ Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him.
- a. As the stone was sealed so no one could free Daniel, so the stone of Jesus' tomb was sealed. Both were in God's hands. ^{ESV} **Matthew 27:65** Pilate said to [the chief priests and the Pharisees], "You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make [Jesus' tomb] as secure as you can." ⁶⁶ So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.
 - b. The king showed genuine concern for Daniel by fasting, *thus not eating*, and not having anything brought to him that might take his mind off of Daniel.
13. Trading places, the faithful one for the unfaithful ones: ¹⁹ Then, at break of day, the king arose and went in haste to the den of lions. ²⁰ As he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish [*suffering, fearing that Daniel had been torn apart and eaten by the lions*]. The king declared to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?" ²¹ Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! ²² My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm." ²³ Then the king was exceedingly glad, and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. ²⁴ And the king commanded, and those men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and cast into the den of lions--they, their children, and their wives. And before they reached the bottom of the den, the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces.
- a. Who received all the credit for Daniel's rescue? _____
 - b. We deserve eternal punishment, but God did *everything* to save us; *He gets all the glory!*
 - c. The lions were definitely hungry; see verse 24.
14. God can use our faithful living to eternally bless others: ²⁵ Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: "Peace be multiplied to you. ²⁶ I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end. ²⁷ He delivers and rescues; he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, he who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions." ²⁸ So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.
- a. Since we have identified ourselves as Christians, others are *watching* and *listening*.
 - b. May God help us to boldly honor Him who made us, saved us, and provides for us!