

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Daniel 4:19-5:12 | Session 10 | B.C. 570-538

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS SESSIONS

- Chapter 1 was an introduction to Daniel's life which spanned from his captivity and royal service in Babylon at the age of fifteen to his final service under Cyrus, the king of Persia when he was around 80.
- Chapter 2 was the revealing of The Times of the Gentiles.
- In chapter 3, God miraculously rescued Daniel's three friends from the fiery furnace in which they were cast because they would not compromise their faith.
- In chapter 4, Daniel will interpret another of Nebuchadnezzar's God-induced dreams. The king dreams of a giant tree cut down, branches and leaves removed, and fruit scattered. The stump and its roots, however, remained. We found out in verse 16 that this tree represented a man whose heart (or mind) would be changed and who would be given a heart (or mind) of a beast for seven years. The dream was revealed by *watchers* or angels who told Nebuchadnezzar the ultimate purpose of the dream was *that the living may know that the most high ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will and setteth up over it the basest of men*. In other words, God is the Ultimate Ruler. But the king has no understanding of what this all means. But Daniel can interpret for him. The passage today has a lot to do with pride.

DANIEL INTERPRETS THE DREAM.

Verse 19—

We should recall that chapter four is narrated by king Nebuchadnezzar. **Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar**, the pagan name assigned to him by the king, is noted here (See 4:8). After hearing the dream, **Daniel was astonished for one hour**. We would use the word *astonished* today. The idea in both *astonied* and *astonished* is to be *turned to stone*. In chapter 3:24, we were told that Nebuchadnezzar was *astonied* when he saw the fiery furnace had not harmed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and that there were, in fact, four figures in the furnace. The Hebrew word in that verse meant he was *alarmed!* But here, in verse 19, the word *astonied* is different; it means he was *stunned* or appalled by what he saw.

The word **hour** can mean a brief time or moment within an hour. During that time, Daniel's **thoughts troubled him**. The Hebrew word **troubled** is used eleven times in Daniel and only in Daniel. It probably means he was *taken* aback as he considered the dream. The king could see that Daniel was **troubled** by what he saw.

Daniel answered the king, **The dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies.** And by the way, God typically provides an **interpretation**; I would say most of the time. He doesn't leave us to ourselves to devise any **interpretation** that might fit our agenda. In Revelation, for example, theologian John Walvoord lists 26 times when God interprets Himself. When we look for those interpretations, it keeps us from making up stuff. One of the rules of interpretation is to let the Bible interpret itself.

Daniel is saying; I wouldn't wish this dream on your worst enemies, but better them than you!

Verse 20, 21, 22—

The tree...it is thou, O king. Like the tree, you have grown and become strong in greatness and dominion over all the earth. The tree, Nebuchadnezzar, was meeting the needs of the whole world. In chapter two, we remember that Nebuchadnezzar was the Head of Gold. The point is that this kingdom had no rivals.

Verse 23, 24, 25—

Nebuchadnezzar will be cut down to size. He is going to go insane. Imagine that, an insane politician? Who would ever think that could happen? No longer will Nebuchadnezzar live with men; he will become as a beast of the field eating **grass as oxen**, for seven years, and **till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.**

I don't know if a study has ever been done, but if I were a betting man, I would put my money on the fact that most, if not all, world leaders might be a little narcissistic. Nebuchadnezzar might have been the leader in narcissistic governance. God will get his attention, and once Nebuchadnezzar figures out Who it is that rules in the **heavens**, the King's **kingdom shall be sure.**

Verse 26—

Daniel assured Nebuchadnezzar that during this time, he would not lose his kingdom; thy **kingdom shall be sure unto thee.** And Daniel confirmed to the king that after the seven years, **thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule**, not you, O king. Even when it comes to dictatorial leadership, God still is a God of grace.

Verse 27—

Daniel gives the solution to Nebuchadnezzar for him to avoid what is coming: live a life of **righteousness**, stop sinning and **show mercy to the poor.** If you do so, it may **be a lengthening of thy tranquility.**

This same formula was required of Israel in obedience to the Law. Psalm 41:1, *"Blessed is he that considereth the poor: The LORD will deliver him in time of trouble."* While it is a good thing for us to consider the poor, whether or not we do does not ensure our deliverance in times of trouble. This was a command for those in the dispensation of the Law. Since we live in the dispensation of Grace, our

life, good or bad, is not determined by our works. The king had a choice, he could change his prideful ways and live according to God's law, or he could face the inevitable of continuing his self-centered life.

We are not judged for our actions since Jesus paid it ALL on the cross, but Paul instructs us to "*reckon ourselves dead to sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" Paul says, "*Do not let sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lust thereof.*" (Romans 6:11,12). Yes, we are dead to sin and complete in Christ, but we cannot assume that we will not struggle with sin due to that spiritual reality. Because of our spiritual reality, we must conquer sin and temptation in our lives.

It is fully and completely a mistake to assume that someone involved in sin is not a Christian. This position assumes that our physical behavior will always align with our spiritual reality, which is exactly the opposite of what Paul is teaching. Rather, sinful individuals need to be strengthened in their resolve to live sinless lives, built on the spiritual reckoning of v. 11.

Why is it that God was even concerned with Nebuchadnezzar? After all, he was a Gentile, and Gentiles were without God and without hope (Ephesians 2:12). Could it be that since Nebuchadnezzar is a type of the Antichrist who is to come in the last days, God is making a point that it is futile to try and suppress the truth of God?

Verse 28—

All this came upon king Nebuchadnezzar. He did not heed Daniel's admonition.

Verses 29,30—

Twelve months pass between verses 28 and 29, and the king is still filled with pride. **Is not this great Babylon, that I have built....by the might of my power.... the honour of my majesty?**

Verse 31—

The kingdom is departed from thee.

Verse 32, 33—

The words Daniel spoke in verse 25 now return to haunt the king. And that **same hour**, it was **fulfilled**. He was **driven from men, ate grass**, had no protection from the elements, his **hair grew long like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws**.

Between verses 33 and 34, seven years pass.

Verses 34, 35, 36, 37—

What did it take for Nebuchadnezzar to become sane again and his kingdom restored to him?

I lifted my eyes unto heaven; he humbled himself.

We see so much insanity in our world today that, at times, we may throw our hands up in the air and say *it's hopeless*. And yet, it's not. As Christians, we can live as ambassadors for Christ and make a difference to someone around us. They, in turn, will impact someone else's life. It only takes a spark to get a fire going.

Why is our world in the state that it's in? It is because we have lost our Biblical moorings. We no longer have a Biblical worldview; in our government especially. Who in their right mind would allow small children unable to decide about their health and body to be given puberty blockers? What kind of monster would do that? I'll tell you, it is a person who has turned his back on God. Today, our government has been infiltrated with godless men and women who want nothing more than to lead your child or grandchild into a life of debauchery like their own. There is a concerted effort to destroy any vestige of the nuclear family with a mom and dad. The goal is to subdue and silence anyone with Christian values. The establishment is pulling out all the stops to try and bring down anyone who has a hint of Godliness or righteousness. We even have a month officially called PRIDE month. There is no lack of voices on social media, in Hollywood, or in universities and colleges espousing that there is no God. But, as Nebuchadnezzar found out, it is the fool who says there is no God.

Romans 1:18-23 states, *"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they know God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image make like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed creeping things."*

Nebuchadnezzar was that fool who denied the One True God. Sadly, much of the world acts just like him. Our world would be better if our politicians would do as the great hymn suggests, "Turn *your* eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace." This begins with us.

Nebuchadnezzar was lifted by pride, and God laid him low because of it. God is not impressed with pride; in fact, he often warns against it in Scripture: Proverbs 16:18; Isaiah 14:12-15; 1 Timothy 3:6; Acts 12:21-23; 2 Corinthians 12:7; 1 Peter 5:5.

This is the last we hear from Nebuchadnezzar himself in the book of Daniel¹.

CHAPTER 5—THERE'S A NEW KING IN TOWN.

¹ Except in reference to being the "father" of Belshazzar in chapter 5.

Verse 1—

Belshazzar the king, thirty years have passed, and it is around B.C. 539, and there is a new king in Babylon. Daniel is no longer a young man, he is now in his 80s, and Israel has been in captivity for about 67 years. According to historical documents, Belshazzar probably ruled with his father Nabonidus, which is not much known.

In verse two, Daniel refers to Belshazzar as the son of Nebuchadnezzar. Most likely, this refers to his father in the ancestral sense of meaning; for example, the phrase “Abraham our father” is used often in Scripture.²

Belshazzar’s name means “Bel has protected the king.” Bel was another name for the god Marduk. Since the forty-three-year rule of Nebuchadnezzar ended with his death in B.C. 562, the kingdom of Babylon began to weaken as his sons and grandsons fought for their position through murder and assassination to rule as kings.

As the fifth ruler since Nebuchadnezzar, and a co-regent with his *actual* father, Nabonidus, **Belshazzar** was responsible for defending his kingdom. Shirking his duties, he ignored the threat of invasion by the Persians even though they were literally outside the city’s walls and **made a great feast to (for) a thousand of his lords**³. Did he feel invincible? After all, Babylon was the largest city in the world at that time. He felt secure enough to hold a giant drinking party since the city’s walls were high, and historically, the Babylonians had a strong army that had easily defeated the enemy.

Where enemies lurk, we can never rest on our laurels. And, as long as we live in Satan’s domain, we as Christians, will have enemies around us who want to bring us down. That is why the apostle Paul warned us to *Put on the armor of God so that we can stand against the wiles of the devil!* (Ephesians 6:11).

But Belshazzar had a false sense of security and is about to get a rude awakening, all according to God’s prophetic plan.

Verse 2,3,4—

In the act of invincibility and brazen blasphemy against the One True God, **Belshazzar...drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, and iron, of wood, and of stone, from the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem** (See chapter 1:2).

Numbers 32:23 states, “*Be sure your sins will find you out.*” Belshazzar had been found out.

² Luke 3:8; John 8:39; John 8:53; Acts 7:2; Romans 4:1, 12; James 2:21, etc.

³ As I like to say, the Bible proves Archeology, not the other way around: A royal banquet hall that may have held this many people has been uncovered in the ruins of Babylon. Bible Knowledge Commentary.

Verses 5,6—

At that very moment **came forth fingers of a man's hand and wrote...upon the wall.** With the **candlestick** reflecting on the wall, the king **saw the part of the hand that wrote.** He went from feeling invincible and strong to losing his coloring and weakening his **knees.**

Verses 6,7,8,9—

Just like Nebuchadnezzar before him, this polytheist knew only one thing to do; call in the **king's wise men.** Instead of the *stick approach* of threatening to cut them in pieces and make their houses a dunghill as Nebuchadnezzar had threatened, **Belshazzar** tried the *carrot approach* for whoever could show him the interpretation **shall be clothed in scarlet, and have a gold chain about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.**

But they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof. Isn't this like government officials? They get to keep their jobs but never get much work done. But again, the reading and understanding of the writing were hidden from them because it was God-induced. God was about to use this moment to confirm the prophecy given to Nebuchadnezzar in his dream of the great statue in chapter 2. **Belshazzar** was **greatly troubled** that the wise men could not tell him what the handwriting meant.

Verses 10, 11, 12—

The **queen came into the banquet house.** She was not at the feast and was not Belshazzar's wife (she may have been his grandmother), for his wives were all with him at the feast (vss. 2,3), heard the commotion and recalled to the king that there was someone in the kingdom who could reveal to him the interpretation. The queen was old enough to remember sixty years before when Daniel interpreted the dream of Nebuchadnezzar. While at that time, Daniel had been made **master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers** under king Nebuchadnezzar, it appears he no longer held that position otherwise, the current group of wise men would have known about him. It goes to show how quickly we are forgotten.

We might stop here and think about our lives. Where are our priorities? Are we living only to make a name for ourselves or to amass wealth and worldly possessions? But getting rich and making a name for yourself is fleeting. You will die, and you will be forgotten. You may be thinking, well, my family will remember me! The truth is that even our families will forget us. How many of us know much about our relatives who lived 60 years ago? How about 100 years? Maybe a few people will remember us, but the fact is, we are here today and gone tomorrow. All that counts is what we do for the Lord today, for tomorrow may never come.

Daniel will come on the scene again as an older man in his 80s, forgotten but ready to do the Lord's work. And in our next session, we will see what God has planned for Daniel and Belshazzar.