

DANIEL: Lesson 1
“Introduction & A Few Good Young Men”
Daniel 1.1-21

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

Daniel’s place in Biblical history takes place during one of the lowest moments for the people of Israel. After the golden age of Kings David and Solomon, the united kingdom of Israel was divided into two separate nations after Solomon’s death. The northern ten tribes pulled away using the name Israel. The two remaining tribes in the south continued under the name of Judah. During the next 209 years the northern kingdom of Israel continued its worship of Idolatry until 722 B.C. when God used the Assyrians as His hammer of judgment. The southern kingdom of Judah continued on for another 134 years after Israel’s fall only to be judged for its spiritual adultery by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar (2 Chron. 36.17-20). Both nations had forsaken the law of the Lord and ignored God’s covenant (Is. 24.1-6). The capture of both nations, and more specifically, the deportation of Jews from Jerusalem to Babylon were the fulfillment of many warnings from the prophets of Israel’s coming disaster because of the nation’s sins against God.

BABYLONIAN BACKGROUND:

Babylon and the Chaldeans: The Chaldeans were Semitic nomads who lived near the Persian Gulf in what is now Kuwait and southeastern Iraq. These nomadic tribes wandered in and out of Babylon at will until 875 B.C. and settled permanently there. During the 700’s B.C. some Chaldean leaders ruled as kings of Babylon. One of their leaders named Nabopolassar, united all the Chaldean tribes and was crowned king of Babylon in 626 B.C.. He defeated the Assyrians who had destroyed the Northern kingdom of Israel. He developed commerce and massive a building program and extended the empire as far as the Mediterranean sea. He was succeeded by his son Nebuchadnezzar around 605 B.C.. Today, both “Chaldean” and “Babylonian” mean essentially the same thing.

It was Nabopolassar’s son, Nebuchadnezzar who as Daniel records besieged Jerusalem and not only brought back to Babylon the vessels of the house of God (Dan. 1.1), but captives from who were brought to the Chebar river and treated as colonists. They were given freedom to lead normal lives as long as they remained politically loyal to the Babylonian government. The first group of captives to be led away to Babylon included the prophet Daniel in 605 B.C.. A few years later in 597 B.C. ten thousand captives, including the prophet Ezekiel followed. Finally, when the city of Jerusalem fell in 586 B.C. the final captives were led away to the banks of the Chebar river in Babylon (cf. 2 Ki. 24.1-18; 2 Chron 36.11-21; Jer. 52.1-11; Ezek. 1.1-2; Dan. 1.1-7).

DANIEL’S BACKGROUND:

Daniel belonged to the royal family of Judah who was probably born in Jerusalem around 620 B.C.. He was about 13-14 years old when King Nebuchadnezzar captured him at Jerusalem along with the other noble Israelites and carried them off to Babylon around 605 B.C.. Daniel was already educated and was selected along with his friends Hannaniah, Mishael, Azariah. They were of “royal descent, with no defects, good-looking and showing intelligence in every branch of wisdom, endowed with understanding” (1.4).

Daniel quickly distinguished himself because of his determination to be faithful to God. He gained the blessings of God and reaped the confidence and favor of those around him. Daniel earned the promotion by Nebuchadnezzar to a position of authority over all the wise men of Babylon when was the only one able to interpret Nebuchadnezzar’s troubling dream. Daniel would spend the rest of his life as one of the most powerful men in the world who faithfully served the Lord as well as several world leaders (1.21).

Daniel’s role as a prophet is uniquely different than the others. His role as a prophet is not in the speaking to the nation to repent of their spiritual and ethical sins, but wrote down prophetic visions and messages to the nation to enable them to walk through their history with the confidence that God is working among

them even though they are being dominated by pagan Gentiles. This book would enable Israel to walk more faithfully with God when they saw His inclusive plan for them.

ABOUT THE BOOK:

The book of Daniel is one of four major prophetic books in the Old Testament. The other three are Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel. Daniel, was a contemporary of Ezekiel. The Book of Daniel is considered to be an “apocalyptic” book. This is a term in the Greek that means both “revelation” and “eschatological” (end). The book contains stories told by and about Daniel. The stories were either written by Daniel (7.1) and/or dictated by him. These stories could have been recorded in part during Daniel’s lifetime and then collected and arranged in their present form after his death. It was likely written sometime between 540-530 B.C..

The structure and written language of Daniel is unique in that it has two parts. Chapters 1-6 are stories about Daniel and his friends in Babylon. Chapters 7-12 tell of Daniel’s visions. Part of the book is written in Hebrew (Daniel 1.1-2.4a; 8.1-12.13), the language of Israel. The rest of the book is written in Aramaic (Daniel 2.4b-7.28), which was the international language of Daniel’s day.

The stories and visions in the Aramaic chapters demonstrate that God is Lord of all peoples and that God’s power is greater than the power of any earthly ruler. The Hebrew chapters place Daniel and his friends in Babylon and tell how world events will affect Jerusalem and God’s chosen people. The visions in Daniel are dramatic symbols revealing some part of God’s plan for “the end” of the age. This is what gives the book its “apocalyptic” nature.

There are four visions in Daniel that the Lord uses to communicate the sovereign will and plan of God for His people, the nations and the end.

VISIONS IN DANIEL			
CHAPTER 2	CHAPTER 7	CHAPTER 8	CHAPTERS 10-12
The Great Image	The Four Beasts	Ram and He-Goat	A Word for Latter Days
Gold (Babylon) Daniel 2.38	Lion (Daniel 7.4)		
Silver (Media-Persia) Daniel 2.39	Bear (Daniel 7.5)	Ram (Media-Persia) Daniel 8.20	Persia (Daniel 11.2)
Bronze (Greece) Daniel 2.39)	Leopard (Daniel 7.6)	Goat (Greece) Daniel 8.21	Greece (Daniel 11.3-45)
Iron/Clay (Rome) Daniel 2.40	Indescribable Beast (Daniel 7.7-8)		Rome (Daniel 11.29-30)
Stone (God’s Kingdom)	Kingdom of the Son of Man and of the Saints		End of Days (Daniel 12.1-13)

THEME AND THEOLOGY OF DANIEL: The theological theme of Daniel concerns God’s sovereignty. “The Most High God is ruler over the realm of mankind” (5.21). The visions Daniel witnessed showed God as triumphant.

THE PURPOSE OF DANIEL: To establish hope in future restoration by reflecting in vision God’s dealing with Israel’s national sin through the times of the Gentiles. To instruct and admonish the people of God in the crisis of faith and to challenge the faithful to be awake and ready for the unexpected intervention of God in the last days to come.

KEY PEOPLE:

NAMES OF THE FOUR HEBREW BOYS			
HEBREW NAME	HEBREW MEANING	BABYLONIAN NAME	BABYLONIAN MEANING
Daniel	God is my judge	Belteshazzar	whom Bel favors; keeper of the treasures of the prince of Bel.
Hannaniah	God is gracious; God's gift	Shadrach	Illumined by Shad (a sun god)
Mishael	Who is like God?; God is great	Meshach	Who is like Shach (a love goddess)
Azariah	God is my helper	Abed-nego	the servant of Nego (a fire god)

KINGS DURING THE TIME OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL			
NAME	NATION	REFERENCE	DANIEL'S SERVICE
Jehoiakim	King of Judah (608-598 B.C.)	2 Kings 23.36-24.6; 2 Chronicle 36.4-8	No reference of Daniel's service.
Nebuchadnezzar	King of Babylon (605-562 B.C.)	57 References: 2 Kings 24-25; 1 Chronicles 6; 2 Chronicles 36; Ezra 1, 2, 5-6; Nehemiah 7.6; Esther 2.6; Jeremiah 27-29; 34.1; 39.5; Daniel 1-4	Daniel served him.
Belshazzar	Babylonian regent	Daniel 5, 7-8	Daniel served him.
Nabonidus	Belshazzar was the regent under Nabonidus	Not mentioned	If Daniel served him, it was indirect at best.
Darius (3 possibilities) 1. Darius I (Ezra 4-6) 2. Darius (Nehemiah 12)	King of Babylon (538-536 B.C.) or King of the Medes or King of Persia	Daniel 6.1-28 or Ezra 4-6 Nehemiah 12	Possibly
Cyrus the Great	King of Persia	Daniel 6.28	More likely.

KEY VERSES: 2.20-22, 44; 4.34-37

CHRISTOLOGICAL THEMES: Jesus is the coming Messiah who is the stone that will crush earth's kingdoms, Christ is the Son of Man and Christ is the coming Messiah who will be crucified.

OUTLINE AND LESSONS FROM DANIEL:

- I. Stories about Daniel (Chapters 1-6)**
 - A. Daniel's Character (1.1-21)**
 - B. The Times of the Gentiles: God's sovereign plan for the world (2.1-6.28)**
 - 1. Nebuchadnezzar's first dream: The Big Picture (2.1-49)**
 - 2. Nebuchadnezzar's Golden Image (3.1-30)**
 - 3. Nebuchadnezzar's Pride and Humility (4.1-37)**
 - 4. Belshazzar's Feast (5.1-31)**
 - 5. Darius's Pride and Preservation (6.1-28)**

- II. Prophetic Visions of Daniel (Chapters 7-12)**
 - A. Daniel's Vision of the World's Future History (7.1-28)**
 - B. Daniel's Vision of the Ram and the Goat (8.1-27)**
 - C. Daniel's Vision of the 70 sevens (9.1-27)**
 - D. Daniel's Vision of the Future (10-12)**

LESSONS:

- 1. Introduction & A Few Good Young Men (1.1-21)**
- 2. The King's Dream (2.1-49)**
- 3. The King's Golden Image (3.1-30)**
- 4. Pride and Humility (4.1-37)**
- 5. The Writing on the Wall (5.1-31)**
- 6. In the Den of Lions (6.1-28)**
- 7. I Can See Clearly Now (7.1-28)**
- 8. An Exhausting Dream (8.1-27)**
- 9. 70 Sevens (9.1-27)**
- 10. He's God the Whole World in His Hands (10-12)**

DANIEL: Lesson 1
“Introduction & A Few Good Young Men”
Daniel 1.1-21

LOOK IT UP:

■ **PREVIEW:** How have you seen the Lord work during the darkest times of your life?

■ **REFLECT:**

1. Who allowed the Babylonians besiege Jerusalem? Was it Nebuchadnezzar? Jehoiakim? Or Someone else? (Daniel 1.1-2)

2. What policy did king Nebuchadnezzar command his officials to carry out? What was the criteria? (Daniel 1.3-5)

3. List the names (Hebrew and Babylonian) of the few young men selected? (Daniel 1.6-7)

4. What was Daniel’s resolved and how was he granted permission to carry it out? (Daniel 1.8-11)

5. What was Daniel seeking to prove by his recommended test? What was the result? (Daniel 1.12-16)

■ **REVEAL:** What does the first chapter of Daniel show us in relation to God’s sovereign hand and the faithfulness of these young men? (Daniel 1.17-21) How have you seen God’s hand in your life? How did you express faithfulness to Him?

THE LESSON

LEARN IT:

INTRODUCTION: Chapter 1 of Daniel provides an introduction to the whole book. It relates the early events in the lives of Daniel and his three Hebrew friends, but the emphasis is on Daniel's decisions. These decisions by Daniel form the basis for his character and abilities which account for the unusually long and successful career he enjoyed in the service of several kings.

PURPOSE: Daniel's godly character provides a key concerning God's choice of him to receive and transmit the remarkable revelations of the future that this book contains. God's choice of Daniel was sovereign, but Daniel's choices qualified him to serve as God intended (cf. 1 Tim. 1.12).

THE CAPTIVITY (1.1-2):

The Siege of God's Holy City (v.1): Daniel begins with a synopsis of the first Jewish deportation in 605 B.C. - (See above for background on this). The date of this deportation by Nebuchadnezzar takes place during King Jehoiakim's reign (v.1; cf. 2 Kings 24.1; 2 Chron. 36.6). We know nothing about Daniel's family background other than he lived apart from his family in Babylon (cf. vv. 11-13). It is speculated that perhaps his parents were killed when king Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

The Sovereign Hand of God (v.2) - It might go unnoticed, but verse 2 states that the end of the kingdom of Judah and the deportations of the Israelites were done by the Lord's hand. It was the Lord who gave Jehoiakim into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. Not only the king, but the "vessels of the house of God." Even though Babylon was an impressive and mighty empire, they would not have been able to conquer Jerusalem unless it was by the Lord's permission. Daniel points out here for us God's sovereign hand in controlling the past affairs of His chosen people (cf. Eph. 1.4). What is interesting is that God allows His people, His vessels to be brought into the land of "Shinar" which is a biblical name for Babylon that often connotes a place hostile to God and faith in God (cf. Gen. 10.10; 11.2; 14.1; Isa. 11.1; Zech. 5.11).

The destruction of Jerusalem, the Temple of God and the deportation was a dark day in Judah's history. God had been patient with His people for 490 years. Finally God showed his great displeasure with the Jews for constantly breaking His covenant. He refused to be patient or protect them any longer. Instead of delivering them from the hands of the Babylonians, the Lord delivers His chosen people into the hands of a pagan king to defeat His own nation and people.

THE CHOOSING (1.3-7):

Specific Selection for Service (vv. 1-4): From the first deportation that took place around 605 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar had ordered the chief of his officials to choose from among the exiles choice prospects who might serve the king in his court. It was the king's policy to employ the best minds in his kingdom in government service, regardless of their national or ethnic origin.

The king had specific requirements (vv. 3-4):

1. They had to be upstanding young men (some of which were of royal blood and nobles)
2. They had to be young (youths) who had no defects.
3. They were to be good looking.
4. They had to show intelligence, wisdom, discerning knowledge.
5. They had to be able to serve in the king's court.

Study Program for the Youth of Tomorrow (vv. 5-7): The duration for the program was to take three years of study that involved academic in literature and the language of the Chaldeans (v.4). Thus, they studied the history and literature of this ancient part of the world (cf. Acts 7.44). This might have included the old Akkadian and the ancient Sumerian cultures from which the Babylonians had developed. Learning these academics was the best way to absorb the worldview of its people. Thus, Nebuchadnezzar was seeking to acculturate these youths and make them thoroughly Babylonian. Now, it is thought that Daniel and his Hebrew friends must have been in their middle teens, since Daniel lived at least until 536 B.C..

They were also given a daily ration from the king's choice food. This proved to be a challenge for Daniel and his friends because of the Jewish dietary laws (Exod. 34.15; Lev. 11; Deut. 14; cf. Deut. 8.3; Prov. 20.1).

The purpose of selecting these youths to be educated to serve in the king's court was possibly accomplishing several objectives. These were glorified hostages to help keep the royal family of the kingdom of Judah in line. It also served as a trophy reminder to the king of his conquest in battle. Finally, training young servants might serve the king well in later dealings of Jewish affairs (Walvoord).

Sovereign Control by the Changing of Names (vv. 6-7): The practice of changing names was a way to express sovereign control over others. These new names would have also encouraged these youths to think of themselves as part of the culture in which they were now living, rather than the culture they came from (cf. Gen. 41.45).

- Daniel's name means "My Judge is God." He was given the name "Beltshazzar" which means "Bel's Prince" or "Lady Protect the King." This refers to the goddess of Sarpanitu, the wife of Marduk.
- Hananiah's name means "Yahweh Has Shown Grace." He was given the name "Shadrach" which means "Command of Aku." Or "I AM of Little Account."
- Mishael's name means "Who is What God is?" His was changed to "Meshach" which means who is like "Shach" or "a love goddess."
- Azariah's name means "God is my Helper." He was given the name "Abed-nego" which means "servant of the god Nebo."

THE CHARACTER (1.8-16):

Daniel's Resolve to Please Yahweh (vv. 8-13): Daniel's character as a leader is shown by his resolve not to defile himself with the king's food. His heart was set upon to be faithful to the Lord and His ways. Daniel led and his friends followed his lead. His decision was not to remain morally pure, but to remain ceremonially pure. To remain ceremonially pure was something that concerned only the most faithful of Jews. Daniel wanted to please the Lord in every respect, not just in the most important moral aspects of his life, but all aspects. This resolve is what most faithful children of God face when they are in situations in choosing to go along with the crowd and submit to cultural pressure or do what they can do to please their God though it might involve persecution and cost them their lives or opportunities. Notice God's hand on Daniel as he records that "God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials" (v.9). Daniel must have established a good relationship with the officials who were in direct stewardship over him (v.11). Daniel proposed to him a vegetarian diet which omitted meat and wine from one's diet and to test and see the results after "ten days" (vv. 12-13). The purpose of this test possibly served two things for Daniel and his friends. To remain ceremonially clean and to earn credibility and trust and to glorify God.

The Success of the Test (vv. 14-16): God gave the young men better (fatter, i.e. healthier) appearances by natural or by supernatural means. This result encouraged their supervisor to continue to feed them a diet of things grown in the ground. God blessed these young men for their bold faithfulness in Him, because they did not follow the will of man, but God's will.

THE COMPARISON (1.17-20):

God's Blessing (v. 17): Not only did the Lord grant these young men with favor and compassion with their officials, the Lord also "gave them knowledge and intelligence in every branch of literature and wisdom" (v.17a). To Daniel he gave the understanding of "all kinds of visions and dreams" (v. 17b). This is very similar to what God did for Joseph (Gen. 39.21). Visions and dreams were the primary means God used to communicate His revelations to prophets in the Old Testament (Num. 12.6).

Graduation: The Head of Their Class (vv. 18-19a): At the end of their three-year curriculum, the four faithful friends received a final examination that included an oral testing by the king himself (cf. Prov. 22.29). They passed at the head of their class (cf. 1.Sam. 2.30). They were now probably close to 20 years old now.

First Job (v. 19b): After final examination by the king the young men now were given their first jobs to enter "the king's personal service" (19b).

King's comparison (v.20): What the king observed by examining these young men was that they were "Ten times better than all the magicians and conjurers who were in all his realm" (v.20). The "magicians" were "astrological diviners" and the "conjurers" were "enchanters." This proposes a problem for a faithful Hebrew if they were concerned in being ceremonially pure. The Old Testament Law expressly forbade the practice of "occult arts" (Deut. 18.10-12). So, what

Daniel is expressing in the Babylonian terms. What he means is that they excelled in the matter of offering greater wisdom and advice to their king. Again, very much like Joseph did for the king of Egypt.

THE CONCLUSION (1.21):

In conclusion of this chapter, verse 21 serves as a summary of Daniel's service to several kings throughout the years of his life. He excelled quantitatively as well as qualitatively. The kings which he served recognized and continued to employ his divinely bestowed talents for many years. Cyrus's first year as king was around 538 B.C. Thus Daniel's ministry as a government official spanned approximately 65 years. Daniel records that he continued to receive revelations from the Lord even after his career as a government official ended (10.1).

LIVE IT:

Two dates serve as bookends for Daniel in this first chapter. The year Daniel went to Babylon as a captive (605 B.C.) and the year his government career ended (538 B.C.). This chapter focuses on the key to Daniel's remarkable career. Here are some things to learn from Daniel:

1. Be purposeful to remain faithful to God's will even in a relatively minor matter.
2. No matter your age, you are called to be obedient and full of integrity unto the Lord.
3. Do not squander God's blessing upon your life.
4. Be bold to trust God in all circumstances and share the wisdom of God with others.
5. Whatever you do in word or in deed, do it all for the glory of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Daniel's story is a great reminder that we are God's workmanship, created in Christ for good works so that we may walk in them (cf. Eph. 2.10). God's sovereign hand is upon His own. Walk boldly and faithfully by trusting in Him in all things.

DANIEL: Lesson 2
“A King’s Nightmare”
Daniel 2.1-49

LOOK IT UP:

■ **PREVIEW:** What did you learn about dependency on God through Daniel’s example in Chapter 1?

■ **REFLECT:**

1. What was king Nebuchadnezzar stressed out over? (Daniel 2.1-3)

2. What was the king’s impossible request? What decree did the king make if his wise men could not tell him his dream? (Daniel 2.2-5)

3. What limitation of man did the Chaldean wise men say to Nebuchadnezzar? (Daniel 2.10) Who is that power reserved for?

4. What role did Daniel play in keeping the king from destroying his wise men? (Daniel 2.14-16) What did Daniel and his friends first commit too? (Daniel 2.17)

5. What did God reveal to Daniel, what was Daniel’s response, and the king’s reaction (Daniel 2.19-49)

■ **REVEAL:** How fervent is your prayer life? What does the lack or activity of your prayer life reveal about your relationship with God? Do you pray?

THE LESSON

LEARN IT:

INTRODUCTION: The book of Daniel reminds us that God is active not only in past history, but also in the present and the history to come. Daniel reminds us that God is sovereign over all, including the most powerful kings of the earth. Without the Lord, none of which would have found their place of authority over nations and peoples of the earth. Daniel reminds us that God is both just, merciful, and patient, yet swift to act according to His will and Word. The book of Daniel on a personal note ought to encourage the believing reader to be courageous during a time when the people of God live in a world hostile towards them. The book calls for perseverance and faithfulness. To stand firm and proclaim the God of all creation. The true King of kings and Lord of lords.

BACKGROUND: The book of Daniel was set during the Babylonian exile of Judah (605 B.C.). Jerusalem had been carried into Babylon as a punishment for sin (Dan. 1.1-2; Deut. 28.36), for rebellion against God (Deut. 28.15-47). The people of God had turned their back on Him and His covenant with them. They did not as the Lord foretold, *“did not serve the Lord your God with joy and a glad heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the Lord will send against you”* (Deut. 28.48).

The book gives about a 70 years in the life of Daniel, his visions, stories, and God’s activity with gentile kings and people. It is a God centered view of history. The book is a message of hope as Daniel records God’s judgment on the kingdoms of this world and the hope of restoration (Deut. 30.1-5).

LITERARY LANGUAGE AND STRUCTURE: It should be noted that Daniel 1.1-2.3 is written in Hebrew, but the language changes to Aramaic from Daniel 2.4-7.28. The reason for this is because this section concerns the future history of the Gentiles during “the times of Gentiles” (Luke 21.24). Aramaic was the common language of the world in which Daniel lived when he wrote. It would have been natural for him, since most of his education was sourced from the Chaldean system, that Daniel would have recorded what concerns the world as a whole in the language of the Gentiles.

Now as to the structure of Daniel chapters 2-7), this is F.Y.I. (for your information) than anything pragmatic. The outline below is to help you see how the writer constructed this section of the book. We have seen this form before, it is called a “chiastic form” of literature.

- A. A prophecy of an image concerning four Gentile nations and their end (ch. 2).
 - B. The supernatural persecution and deliverance of Daniel’s friends (ch. 3)
 - C. God’s revelation to the Gentile king Nebuchadnezzar (ch. 4)
 - C’ God’s revelation to the Gentile king Belshazzar (ch. 5)
 - B’ The supernatural persecution and deliverance of Daniel (ch. 6)
- A. A prophecy of animals concerning four Gentile nations and their end (ch. 7)

PROPHETIC NOTE (Dreams and Visions): The writer of the book of Hebrews states “*God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son...*” (Heb. 1.1). One of those “*portions and many ways*” was through “*dreams and visions.*” If you recall the story of Joseph, the Lord chose for the first time not to speak directly to a patriarch in the form of a “*theophony*” (personal manifestation of Christ in the Old Testament), but to communicate His will for His chosen people by giving Joseph the ability to dream visions and to interpret dreams of others (Gen. 37, 39-41). The dreams mentioned in Joseph’s story and in Daniel’s were revelations from God. The visions belonged to God and only the Lord, no man can interpret them unless God gives them the ability to do so, as both Joseph and Daniel have confessed to their kings.

What is the difference between a “*dream*” versus a “*vision*”? The difference between a vision and a dream is that a vision is given when a person is awake while a dream is given when a person is asleep.

Is the Lord still communicating through dreams and visions today? In short, yes, but we should not expect visions and dreams to be an ordinary occurrence. The Bible, as stated above in Hebrews 1, tells us that God spoke to people many times by means of visions. Other than Joseph the son of Jacob, the Lord spoke to another Joseph and his wife Mary. God spoke to Isaiah, Solomon, Peter, and Paul. The prophet Joel predicted an outpouring of visions as confirmed by Peter in Acts 2. Even today in many parts of the world, God uses visions and dreams at various times in areas where there is little or no gospel message available, and where people do not have Bibles. God is taking His message to people directly through dreams and visions. Furthermore, if God desires to communicate His message to a people, He can use whatever means he finds necessary. There is no limit to what God can do, for nothing is impossible for Him.

WARNING: We should be careful. First, we must remember the Bible and the testimony of Christ, and the gospel is finished. The Bible tells us everything we need to know. Therefore, if God were to give a vision, it would agree completely with what He has already revealed in His Word. Second, visions should never outweigh the authority of the Word of God. Thirdly, if one has been given a vision, they must prayerfully consider what God said and examine it to see if it agrees with Scripture, then prayerfully ask God what He would have you do in response to the vision (Jms 1.5). Then finally, vision and dreams are different than revelations. As stated, the Lord has already revealed to us His Son and all we need to know concerning Him and the gospel. The purpose of visions and dreams today is to warn believers, bring an unbeliever to Christ, or to instruct believers where to go to spread the gospel and to build up His church for the sake of Christ and His glory.

PURPOSE: Daniel’s godly character provides a key concerning God’s choice of him to receive and transmit the remarkable revelations of the future that this book contains. God’s choice of Daniel was sovereign, but Daniel’s choices qualified him to serve as God intended (cf. 1 Tim. 1.12).

SUPERNATURAL DREAMS (2.1-13):

The king's troubling dreams (vv. 1-3) - The opening verses of this chapter reveals that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, the most powerful man in the world at the time, had disturbing dreams that caused him to be restless, mainly because he had no peace concerning the meaning of them. The fact that Daniel writes here in Hebrew, "had dreams" or "dreamed dreams" leaves us to believe that the king had recurring or similar dreams that he later describes as one dream (v.3). His solution was to order his wise advisors to tell the king his dreams and what they mean. Daniel identifies them as:

- "magicians" - scholars who could divine the future by using various means.
- "conjurers/enchanters" - could evidently communicate with the dead.
- "sorcerers" - practiced sorcery and casts spells.
- "Chaldeans/astrologers" - were of a priest caste that studied the heavens to determine the future. The Chaldean astronomers were remarkably accurate.

The king's impossible request (vv. 4-11): Daniel prepares his readers for the failure of all the kings wisemen when the Chaldeans spoke up by taking the lead by requesting the king to tell them the dream first so that they may "declare the interpretation" (v.4). Note here is when the literary language goes from Hebrew to Aramaic as Daniel records this account.

The king's request for his advisors to tell him the dream was "firm." Some suspect that Nebuchadnezzar made this requests perhaps because he had forgotten the dream and wanted to remember it. But, it seems clear by most translations that the king wanted them to tell him the dream first. Now, as to why would the king make such an impossible request? It could be that he, being a younger ruler who is being advised by his father's older wisemen, that Nebuchadnezzar did not trust the advice given by them in the past. So, in a sense, he is using this opportunity as a means to do away with them by putting them to death if they do not have the ability to reveal to him not only the interpretation of the dreams, but to reveal the dream to him without telling them what they were (vv. 5-9)

The Chaldean's spoke honestly to the king by stating that what the king requested was humanly impossible. No one could tell what the king had dreamed. Furthermore, no king had ever asked his counselors to do such a thing before. Only the immortal gods could provide this information, and the implication was that even these men could not get information from the gods. This confession sets the stage for Daniel's ability through power of the only One true God what these wise men said no person could do (vv.10-11).

The king's furious decree (vv.12-13) - Unfortunately, their honest confession of inability did not set well with the king. Neither did their complaint that the king was being unfair made Nebuchadnezzar very angry (cf. Gen. 40.2; 41.10; Dan. 3.13,19). Therefore, he gave the orders to execute all the wise men in Babylon, specifically, those who were his counselors. If you recall, Daniel and his three friends fell under the same edit because they were advisors tot he king (1.20), not because they practiced divination, which, it is safe to say, they did not.

Ligon Duncan commented on this scene that for restless hearts and souls this is what you decide to do, just kill all the wisemen. “It’s a solution, I guess. You can’t get an answer from them, just kill them all.” This seems to be the extreme reaction by those who lack the peace of God in their hearts. When I do not get what I want from you, I will punish you with my anger.

Nebuchadnezzar, though the most powerful man at that time is no different than another man when it comes to having a lost heart that is in darkness. We will see as Daniel records how one acts when the peace of God rules their hearts. For them, no situation is too big or dire because no matter the situation, nothing is impossible with the Lord, because He is sovereign over all, including powerful monarchs.

SUPERNATURAL REVELATION (2.14-23):

Daniel’s requests (vv.14-18) - Next, we see a stark contrast between Daniel, the other wisemen and Nebuchadnezzar. If Nebuchadnezzar is a man who is restless and has no peace, Daniel is a man who is confident because he has the peace of God ruling his heart.

First, Daniel seeks an audience with the king (vv. 14-16) - When Daniel learned of his sentence, he responds with “discretion and discernment” (cf. 1.8; 12, 14), not with objection (cf. vv. 10-11) or anger (cf. v.12). Daniel, having favor with the king and his court was granted permission to be heard and was granted stay from the king’s decree “*in order that he might declare the interpretation to the king*” (v.16). It should be noted that there is no record of God having given anyone knowledge of a dream that another person had - without the dreamer telling him about it. For instance, in Joseph’s case, he interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh and his servants after they told him what they were. In this case, Daniel believed that God could do anything, even reveal the dream itself to him, as well as its interpretation.

Second, to seek compassion from God (vv. 17-18) - Daniel then goes and informs his three friends, “Hananiah, Michael, and Azariah” about the situation so they could pray together about it (cf. Phil. 4.7). This decree affected them all. So, they took the situation to “the God of heavens” (v.18), a title for God that appears five times in his chapter (vv. 18, 19, 28, 37, 44), and other places in the books that have pagan Babylon as their setting. Why is this? The Babylonians worshipped the heavens, but Yahweh is the God over all “the heavens,” not just the God of heaven. He is sovereign over all. Thus, they pray to God that he might have compassion concerning this mystery so they would not be destroyed with the rest of the other king’s wisemen.

The apostle Paul reminds us that instead of being full of anxiety, take everything to the Lord in prayer with thanksgiving in your heart as you make your request known to God. This is the heart and disposition of a prayer warrior. One who prays much frets less. Why is this? Because the “*peace of God...guards your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus*” (Phil. 4.6-7). Jesus preached that instead of being anxious about things in this life, we ought to seek out the Kingdom of God first through prayer (Matt. 6.25-34). The application here is that God’s people find peace, not in the things of this world, but in the kingdom they belong to in Him. Therefore, God’s people will find rest in being more kingdom minded rather than earthly minded. This is

the distinctive difference between Daniel and his friends versus Nebuchadnezzar and his wisemen.

Daniel's Response (vv.19-23) - During the night, the Lord reveal the “mystery to Daniel in a night vision.” Daniel’s response was one of gratitude, praise, and glory “to the God of heaven” (v.19). Daniel wished that people would bless (praise) God’s name forever because of two of His traits: The first being His “name,” which in Scripture stand for the nature or revealed character of God. The second centers on God’s “wisdom and power.”

It’s in God’s wisdom that He controls appointed periods (times and epochs) [v.20]. God also has the “power” or “might” to reveal things that would be unknown to humans otherwise. He can do this because He knows what is unknown to people and the light of knowledge dwells within Him (v.22). Daniel then concludes his prayer of thanksgiving by referring to Yahweh as the “God of his (my) fathers” because he was experiencing God’s compassion in a similar way that his spiritual forefathers had experienced it. Daniel gives tribute to the Lord because He knows that the proper source of his knowledge came from God, not of himself. Thus, he viewed the vision as an answer to prayers of himself and his three friends (v.23).

Are you grateful or ungrateful? Do you give the Lord credit when credit to Him is due? One of the Grimm’s Brother’s tales tell about “The Ungrateful Son.” The story begins with a man who was sitting with his wife before their front door. They had roasted chicken which they were about to eat together. Then the man saw that his aged father was approaching, and he hastily took the chicken and hid it, for he did not want to share it with him. The old man came, had a drink, and went away. Now the son wanted to put the roasted chicken back onto the table, but when he reached for it, it had turned into a large toad, which jumped into his face and sat there and never went away again. If anyone tried to remove it, it looked venomously at him as though it would jump into his face, so that no one dared to touch it. And the ungrateful son was forced to feed the toad everyday, or else it would eat from his face. And thus he went to and fro in the world without rest.

A strange story, but a tale that illustrates what happens to ungrateful people in the world. Like, Nebuchadnezzar who had no peace or those who are not grateful. The stress, anxiety, and anger eats away at you. Daniel shows us a heart that is not only depended on the grace of the God of heaven, but the spirit of gratitude for what our God can and does do for His own.

SUPERNATURAL INTERPRETATION (2.24-45):

Daniel reveals the king's dream (vv. 24-35) - Daniel is now ready to speak to the king and approaches Arioch, the one whom the king appointed to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. He tells him that he is ready to speak to the king and reveal to him his dream and it’s interpretation (v. 24). After being introduced as “ a man among the exiles from Judah” (v.25), Daniel (whose name is Belteshazzar) informs the king first that the Chaldeans were correct. There is not a man who is able to declare what the king would like to know, only the “God of heaven who reveals

mysteries.” (v.28). Daniel makes it very clear, that what the king is requesting is impossible for man, but not for the One true God of heaven.

Daniel then proceeds to tell the king what he saw in his dream (vv. 31-35). He first begins by stating that what God has revealed to Nebuchadnezzar were events that would take place in the future. What the king saw was a large statue that stood before him. The statue was splendid and “awesome.” Its head was made of fine gold. Its breast and arms of silver. Its belly and thighs, bronze. Its legs were made of iron and its feet partly iron and partly clay. Then, Daniel continued by telling him that he saw *“a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them”* (v.34). Because of this, the whole statue came crumbling down and *“became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth”* (v. 35).

Daniel interprets the king’s dream (vv. 36-45) - Daniel now carefully distinguished the dream (vv. 31-35) from its interpretation (vv. 36-45) for the sake of clarity.

- ***Kingdom of Gold (vv.36-38)*** Daniel tells the king that *“you are the head of gold”* (v.36). He informs Nebuchadnezzar that even though at this time he is the “king of kings” on the earth, but he has that position only because the “God of heaven” gave him that power and authority over the lands he rules. Nebuchadnezzar ruled 445 years from (605 B.C. - 560 B.C.) His father, Nabopolassar founded the Neo-Babylon Empire in (627 B.C.) and it would fall into the hands of the Persians in 539 B.C.. Thus, the Babylonian empire would only exist for 88 years.
- ***Kingdoms of Silver & Bronze (v. 39)***:After Nebuchadnezzar would follow the Medo-Persian Empire (Silver) led by Cyrus the Great. It would be by comparison inferior in comparison to Nebuchadnezzar’s viewpoint. Cyrus would not have absolute power and control because of the king according to their law cannot annul any law that went into effect (cf. Daniel being sent to lion’s den-6.8,12). Yet, this kingdom would be larger and cover more geographical area and lasted long (539-331 B.C.) for a total of 208 years.
- The third kingdom that succeeded the Medo-Persia empire was Greece (Bronze) under Alexander the Great (cf. 8.20-21). Its territory was even larger than that of the Medo-Persia. Greece dominated the ancient civilization from 331-31 B.C., so it lasted longer than the first two empires.
- ***Kingdom(s) of Iron and Clay (v.40-43)***: Rome would become the fourth kingdom in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream. They defeated the last vestige of the Greek Empire in 31 B.C. and ruled four hundred years until A.D. 476 in the Western Roman Empire, and until A.D. 1453 in the Eastern Roman Empire. The representation of iron legs that is strong and can shatter everything as it walks about on legs conquering the world, Daniel reveals that iron also breaks into pieces. This represents in history how much more inferior was the Roman Empire because the people and the senate played major roles in setting its policies and they controlled the emperors more than had been true in the preceding empires. Thus, this empire is fragile

and will break into pieces even though it was made of the strength of iron, it will collapse on itself. It will eventually be mixed with clay, *“partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron”* (v.41). Now, the final description of this empire is up for interpretation (v.43). Some scholars seem to indicate that the mixture of iron with *“common clay”* and the combination *“in the seed of men”* not adhering *“to one another”* seems to indicate a futuristic revived Roman Empire to come in the last days (v. 43). It will be a kingdom that will not be totally unified as it strives for global unity. This will set the stage for a final kingdom in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream.

- ***The Divine Kingdom (vv. 44-45):*** This kingdom will be uniquely different in that as Daniel describes, *“The God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed”* (v.44). This is the fifth kingdom that God Himself will establish following the final phase of the fourth. The “Rock” is a frequent symbol of God and Jesus Christ in Scripture. It represents Him as the King as well as His kingdom. This figure of a “rock” pictures God both as a righteous Judge (Deut. 32.4) and as a Savior (Deut. 32.15). The “mountain” by which this kingdom comes from is evidently God (cf. Deut. 32.18; Ps. 18.2; 31.2-3). As to all the kingdom then and before, the “God of heaven” will bring to an end with total destruction all other and will never suffer its own destruction nor be succeeded by another kingdom. It will begin with the Millennium kingdom and continue forever in the Eternal State.

Daniel concludes his interpretation by informing the king this is what will take place in the future, therefore, *“the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy”* (v. 45b).

What comforts Daniel and what should comfort God’s people is knowing the trust worthiness of God’s revelation and His Word. God is not passive when it comes to the epochs of time and His plans for the universe and His people. God is still and has always been in control. He is sovereign over all things. Therefore, there is nothing that will take Him by surprise and there is nothing that is too difficult for Him to accomplish. He is still working His purpose out and holding all things together both now and even to the end of the age. One day, Jesus will return and will destroy all those who are hostile towards God and His people. It will be on that day He will establish His glorious and eternal Kingdom. A Kingdom that will never ever be destroyed.

SUPERNATURAL PROMOTION (2.46-49):

The king’s humble confession (vv. 46-47) - The chapter closes with Nebuchadnezzar’s humble confession. Daniel had done what everyone, including himself, said was humanly impossible. He revealed the dream that only the king alone knew. Like, Pharaoh’s response with Joseph, Nebuchadnezzar could only conclude that Daniel was some sort of god and proceeded to treat him as one by bowing before him, presenting an offering to him, and burning incense to him (cf. Acts 10.25; 14.13).

Yet, the king did confess, *“Surely your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries”* (v.47). Here we see the king’s humility of acknowledging the sovereign power of Daniel’s God.

Daniel's humble promotion and request (vv. 48-49) - In response to this, Daniel is promoted to be head man over the province of Babylon, and chief of the wise men. He, in a sense, became the ruler in charge of this most important province (cf. 3.2). Normally, this was a position that would have gone to an indigenous Chaldean, a member of the “master race” of Babylonian society. Yet, the fact that Nebuchadnezzar gave this position to a young captive Jewish exile showed his tremendous respect that Daniel had earned with God’s help. This promotion not only benefited Daniel, it also placed his three friends (Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego) over the administration of the province of Babylon, while Daniel served at the king’s court.

LIVE IT:

This story teaches us the great lesson of faith. Never estimate what God can do when all things seem impossible. There is always room for God to work His purpose out when by our perception things look bad. Remember we are “*God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them*” (Eph. 2.10).

Daniel should inspire us that keeping a devoted prayer life, keeps you from fearing the impossible. How important is prayer to you? Ronnie Floyd reminds us that “should not prayer be the first choice we make?” He then lists three things about “when we pray.”

1. When we pray, we are depending on God. When we do not pray, we are depending on ourselves.
2. When we pray, you are declaring faith because you are absolute depended on the Lord.
3. When we pray, you are taking action while at the same time seeking God’s guidance and strength.

We are reminded numerous times in Scripture the need for and the purpose of prayer. Why do we pray? We pray because God commands us to pray (Phil. 4.6-7). We pray because Jesus exemplified prayer for us (Mk. 1.35). If Jesus thought it was worthwhile to pray, how much more so should we? There are multitudes of reasons why we should pray, but possibly the greatest of all is that when we do not pray we demonstrate a lack of faith and trust in the God’s Word.

Be like Daniel. Do not fret. Keep calm and pray. Trust God and be thankful!

DANIEL: Lesson 3
“The King’s Golden Image”
Daniel 3.1-30

LOOK IT UP:

■ **REVIEW:** How did your prayer life go this week? What did you pray for? How did you see the Lord work?

■ **REFLECT:**

1. What did Nebuchadnezzar build and what did he want his officials to do? (Daniel 3.1-7)

2. What would be the punishment for not obeying the king’s decree?

3. Who was charged for not obeying the king’s decree and for what reason did they choose to disobey the king? (Daniel 3.8-18)

4. Who perished by the heat of the furnace and who was saved? How were they saved? (Daniel 3.19-27)

5. What was the king’s reaction and response to the three men’s deliverance? How did he honor the Lord and these men? (Daniel 3.28-30)

■ **REVEAL:** What does this story reveal about man and God? How does this story encourage you in your walk with the Lord in a world that is hostile towards Him or is ignorant of Him?

THE LESSON

LEARN IT:

OVERVIEW: Nebuchadnezzar erects a golden image and commands all peoples and nations to bow down to it once they heard the sound of music. The consequence for disobeying this order is certain death in a furnace of blazing fire (3.1-7). Everyone one obeys the king's command except Daniel's three friends. Certain Chaldeans bring a charge against them. They are brought before the king and given an opportunity to bow and worship the image. They refuse out of obedience to the Lord and confidence in His power and will to save them if He chose to do so (3.8-18). Nebuchadnezzar in violent anger ordered the three young men thrown into the furnace. The king noticed that the young men are joined by a fourth individual who resembled the Son of God and that they were not perishing by the fire, thus the king commands them to come out (3.19-27). The king gives glory to the Lord and makes a decree not to speak against this God or they will be destroyed. The young men are rewarded for their faithfulness to the Lord (3.28-30).

PURPOSE: Believers who demonstrate a steadfast faith in the Lord regardless of the outcome brings glory to the Lord.

I. THE KING'S ARROGANCE (3.1-7):

The object of pride (v.1): The image that the king built was gold. It was more likely based on the golden head from his recent dream (2.38). The statue was probably crafted to represent Nebuchadnezzar as the personification of the Babylonian Empire. Similarly, huge statues of Lenin were erected in various countries within the former Soviet Union. The image stood about 99 feet high and nine feet wide. This is the height of a ten-story building and the width of a 9 by 12 foot room. The famous Colossus of Rhodes stood 70 cubits (105 feet) high at the entrance to that ancient port. Whether this is important or not, the dimensions of Nebuchadnezzar's statue was 60 by 6 cubits. The mark of the Beast is 666, a latter day equivalent (Ironsides). John Phillips comments that numbers in Scriptures have significance. For instance he writes, "Four symbolizes the world, five is associated with grace, and six has to do with man. Man was created on the sixth day; he works six days; the hours of his day are a multiple of six (6x4); and the Antichrist is stamped with six, as is his fearful mark. 'The number of his name, 666' (Rev. 13.13), shows man in all his glory. But it is six that is glorified which contrast with the number seven, the perfect number." Thus, we are reminded here by the size of this image that Nebuchadnezzar is only a man no matter how powerful a man he may be. He is a man, not God.

Some scholars suggest that the image may not have represented his image, but could have been something similar to those found in Egypt (a monolith or monument) since there is no evidence that Mesopotamians ever worshipped statues of their rulers as divine during the ruler's lifetime. The image might have represented Nebuchadnezzar's patron god, Nebo. Regardless, the image was erected as an object of man's pride that signified his greatness. In this case, for Nebuchadnezzar, it was created out of the king's ego, representing his enormous power in the world.

The object of intimidation (vv. 2-6): Nebuchadnezzar summons his officials to the image for what he probably intended to be a demonstration of loyalty to him. Whether the image represented the king or his patron god Nebo, the image became an object of Nebuchadnezzar's intimidation. James Vernon McGee makes several observations regarding this intimidating command by the king.

- (1) The making of this image shows the rebellion of Nebuchadnezzar against the God of heaven who had given him world dominion. Instead of gratitude, this is a definite act of rebellion.
- (2) This also shows his vaunted pride in making an image which evidently was self-deification. The Roman emperors also attempted this later on.
- (3) Obviously, Nebuchadnezzar was seeking a unifying principle to weld together the tribes and tongues and peoples of his kingdom into one great totalitarian government.

In other words, he was attempting to institute a world religion. This was nothing in the world but a repetition of the tower of Babel - a forming of one religion for the world. Notice, also, Jeroboam practiced the same when he initiated his own religion in the Northern Kingdom of Israel to unite the ten tribes so they would not defect and return to Jerusalem to worship the One true God (1 Kings 12.26-33).

This passage obviously is about worship. It is also about music in worship. The command by the king is specific: *"that at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar has set up"* (v.5). The musical instruments referred here have both Persian and Greek names. Both of which had an influence on early Babylon before Daniel's time. These were various wind and string instruments which were connected with the Babylonian culture (Ironsides).

Music, both in singing and the playing of instruments has a significant place in Scripture, especially when practiced by God's people as they glorified Him in Word and song. The first reference of God's people singing to the Lord took place after they escaped from the Egyptians by crossing the Red Sea. The people once they were safe, sang a song to the Lord (Exod. 15). This practice took on a more significant role as part of the Temple worship (1 Chron. 6.31-32; 16.42) and continued even in the New Testament (Matt. 26.30; Col. 3.16-17). An article published by the Reformed Church in America points out that music is a gift of God and part of the created order (Job 38.7; Rev. 5.13). They also pointed out that of all the musical instruments that may be employed in the praise of God, the human voice has priority (Ps. 150.6; 1 Pet. 2.9-10). Singing is a ministry that belongs to all the people of God and is especially corporate so that all may glorify the Lord (Ps. 96.1). Music in the church not only glorifies the Lord, but in return, edifies the body of Christ (1 Cor. 14.15-15) and is a moving aid to the worship of the Lord. Thus, we witness in these verses decreed by Nebuchadnezzar's arrogance and pride, to not only take worship and honor away from God, but to steal His glory through music. This was carried out by the people in full face rebellion against the Lord.

The command by the king was also intimidating in that it threatened the life of any one who did not obey the king's decree by stating: "*But whoever does not fall down and worship shall IMMEDIATELY be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire*" (v.6). This furnace was probably already in use for the baking of bricks required for the vast building projects of Nebuchadnezzar. Some were great ovens that were found in excavations. The practice of throwing slaves into an oven was nothing new in Babylon. A Solomonic judicial directive by the ruler Rim Sin (1750 B.C.) appeared in a published document of the Yale Babylonian Collection where four men of Larsa were thrown into an oven (Wiersbe).

The object of worship (v. 7): The practice of worshipping the image was consecrated by the act of all those who were present by the bowing of their knees before the image when they heard the sound of music. It was an universal worship service before the image by dignitaries from "peoples, nations, and men of every language" (v.4b). They "fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up" (v.7). Thus, all the peoples represented by these attendees submitted themselves to personification of man out of rebellion to the One true God of heaven and earth. Paying homage not only to the image but to the king for the success and power given to them in building such an empire, not knowing that it was from the sovereign hand of God that the Lord had given this role to Nebuchadnezzar as testified by Daniel's interpretation of the king's dream (2.31-45).

II. THE KING'S ANGER (3.8-18):

The accusation against Daniel's friends (vv. 8-12): In Exodus 20.3-5, the Lord commanded His people that they "shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol... you shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God." The main reason for Israel's captivity is because they broke with God's covenantal relationship and disobeyed this basic command. Like, Daniel, his three friends (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) must have been raised by God fearing families before taken into captivity by the Babylonians. We know that Daniel wanted to remain ceremonially clean by not eating the king's choice menu (1.8). Here, we see his three friends remaining steadfast by not giving into the threatening decree made by the king to bow down before the image he had erected. Because they did not, "certain Chaldeans" brought to the king "charges against the Jews" (v.8). It is assumed that these "certain Chaldeans" were probably the ones who lost their positions in the king's court as lead wisemen. They now saw an opportunity to regain their role and grace with the king by bringing forth these charges against the Jews, more specifically, these three. Even more, they specifically stated to the king, "These men...have disregarded you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up" (v.12). Their charge was not as much against the king's law, but the king's person and god.

The anger towards Daniel's friends (vv. 13-15): We have already witnessed once the king's reaction in the flesh, especially in regards to his anger (2.5). His solution to problems is simply to execute people when they do not do what he wants. Once again, we see how controlled by the flesh Nebuchadnezzar really is when the charges are brought to him. The king reacted with "rage and anger" (v.13). Meaning, Nebuchadnezzar's anger was provoked. The Chaldeans achieved

their goal to incite the king to erupt with uncontrollable rage. The three young Hebrew men are brought before the king and asked if these charges were true and were given an opportunity to repent by bowing down and worship the golden image or be thrown into the fiery furnace (v.15).

This is what self-centeredness and pride looks like in the flesh. When one makes absolute demands. When they do not get the results they want they fly off the handle and punish those who do not follow their ways. This is life without the peace of God. Many people, great or small, live in this state. Many relationships both at home and abroad have been severed, sometimes abusively destroyed when the flesh and pride has control over the individual.

The answer given by Daniel's friends (vv. 16-18): How does one respond to such a situation as this? You react the same way these three men did. First, let's observe their steadfast resolve. They did not need anytime to think over the king's offer. They were quick to respond by saying, "we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter" (v.16). Why? Because their faith in the Lord was strong and courageous that regardless the outcome they knew that the Lord could deliver them from the fire and deliver them out of Nebuchadnezzar's hand (v.17). Even, if the Lord doesn't deliver them, they still would not rebel against the Lord because of threats to worship an image created by man. They knew by faith who the Creator is. The same one who created Nebuchadnezzar and themselves. They had seen what God had done to His people. They knew better than to give in to the pressure to bow down before a created image (v.18).

III. THE KING'S ASTONISHMENT (3.19-30):

The king's command (vv. 19-23): Nebuchadnezzar's response to these young men reply sent him over the edge. Now, the king is filled with "wrath" (v.19). Meaning, a poison fury that is feverishly driven by the displeasurable response from these men. These young men are then persecuted for their faith in the Lord and by the order of the king, are tied and casts into the fiery furnace (vv. 20-23). Observe this about these verses. Those to whom the king ordered to carry out this sentence were themselves slain by the heat of the fire, yet "these three men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, fell into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire still tied up" (v.23). The executors were killed, yet the three men were still alive.

The king's consternation (vv. 24-27): When Nebuchadnezzar saw this he was "astounded" and notice not only did these men still alive, but he saw "four men loosed and walking about in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods!" (v.25). Here we see the Lord delivering His servants.

What did the king mean by this fourth person with them, that he had the appearance like a son of the gods? He probably meant that from his viewpoint as a pagan he saw what appeared to be a super-human or divine person in the furnace with these young men. This fourth person was either an angel or the Angel of the Lord (the incarnate Christ (cf. Gen. 16.13). The Lord was with the three men in their affliction and protected them from harm in it (cf. Exod. 3.12; Ps. 23.4-5; Isa. 7.14; 43.1-3; 63.9). He not only deliver them from the fire, but was in it with them (cf. Rom. 8.37). Then, Nebuchadnezzar drew as close to the large door of the furnace as he could and

called the three men to come out and they responded obediently this time. The fourth person disappeared as quickly as He had appeared. What is striking is what the king said in his call out to the young men. "...you servants of the Most High God...come here" (v.27). What the king and his high officials observed was that the bodies, the clothes, their hair were not singed by the heat or flames of the fire. Not even the smell of fire was on them (v.27b). This was truly as miracle in their midst.

The king's confession (vv. 28-30): What the Lord taught Nebuchadnezzar here is Who is the real God. Who, once again, has supreme power not only with the ability to reveal great mysteries, but also able to deliver His own from danger. This deliverance made Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego's God far more superior to all others in Nebuchadnezzar's eyes. Thus, he was humbled and had to acknowledge Yahweh's sovereignty over his own god, Nebo, in this respect. Therefore, after blessing the Lord, the king issued a decree ordering everyone to respect Yahweh and to say nothing against Him (v.29). By giving this decree made Judaism a recognized religion with rights to toleration and respect. This edit and the importance of this passage may have been responsible in part for the fairly comfortable conditions under which the Israelites lived in Babylonian exile.

In this end of the chapter, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego received from the king, his blessing. He approved their faith in Yahweh and made them "to prosper in the province of Babylon" (v.30).

LIVE IT:

Previously, the Lord revealed Himself as the only God who can reveal mysteries: things previously unknown but now made clear by Him. The image that Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream, and that Daniel had interpreted, was a revelation of future world kingdoms and their characteristics. This chapter shows that Yahweh is powerful enough to control history miraculously. He does so to remain true to His promises to His people, and to deliver those who put their trust in Him. This he does by showing the most powerful man of his day how superior the Lord is. There should be no question about the Lord's greatness and faithfulness.

I am reminded of the great hymn: "Great is Thy Faithfulness"

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father
 There is no shadow of turning with Thee
 Thou changes not, Thy compassions, they fail not
 As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be

Great is Thy faithfulness
 Great is Thy faithfulness
 Morning by morning new mercies I see
 All I have needed Thy hand hath provided
 Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord unto me

DANIEL: Lesson 4
“The King’s Testimony: Pride and Humility”
Daniel 4.1-37

LOOK IT UP:

■ **REVIEW:** How were you encouraged by the Lord this past week? How did you see the Lord work in your life? How was He able to use you for His glory?

■ **REFLECT:**

6. Read Daniel 4 several times. What do you suppose is the key idea of this chapter? What was God’s purpose for Nebuchadnezzar?

7. What kind of dream did Nebuchadnezzar have? (v.5)

8. List what the king saw in his dream (vv. 10-18)

9. Describe or list Daniel’s interpretation (vv. 20-26)

10. What was Daniel’s advice to the king? (v.27)

11. What change took place in Nebuchadnezzar after the fulfillment of the dream came true? (vv. 34-36)

■ **REVEAL:** What does this chapter then say what God can do in your life personally? What is it really that gets in the way of your relationship with the Lord? How must you deal with this sin? (v.37)

THE LESSON

LEARN IT:

OVERVIEW: King Nebuchadnezzar is given a second, yet dreadful dream by the Lord that will personally effect the king both physically and spiritually. Nebuchadnezzar begins this chapter by personally and publicly giving praise to Yahweh (vv.1-3). Nebuchadnezzar is given a second dream that only Daniel (Belteshazzar) is able to interpret with God's help (vv. 4-27). The King's dream comes to fulfillment as the Lord punishes Nebuchadnezzar for his pride (vv. 28-33). The King finally comes to his senses after a period of seven years and begins to exalt the Lord out of humility (vv. 34-35). The King is humbly restored by the Lord as He closes his testimony with exalted praise to the Lord (vv. 36-37).

PURPOSE: God is able to humble those who walk in pride and bring them to Himself for His sovereign purposes.

INTRODUCTION: In the first three chapters of Daniel we have already seen how the Lord, who is sovereign over all, is able to do the impossible. We have witnessed how the Lord not only works in and through the lives of His chosen servants, but also in and through the lives of those who are lost like Nebuchadnezzar. We have witnessed how the Lord can use young, captive Hebrew slaves like Daniel and his friends to have a major impact on the most powerful human being on the earth at his time. All this to fulfill His divine purpose and protection for His people and plans. The first three chapters have been written from Daniel's perspective, chapter four is written from king Nebuchadnezzar's perspective as we witness how the Lord divinely takes a prideful king who exalted himself and breaks him into a humble king who exalts the Lord.

UNDERSTANDING NEBUCHADNEZZAR: King Nebuchadnezzar II (634-562 BC) was the greatest king of ancient Babylon. He succeeded his father, Nabopolassar who had defeated the Assyrians with the help of the Medes. He established himself as king of Babylon in 605 BC and ruled until his death around 562 BC. Nebuchadnezzar was a highly spiritual king. Upon ascending to the throne, he spoke to the gods, in his inaugural address, saying, "O merciful Marduk, may the house that I have built endure forever, may I be satiated with its splendor, attain old age therein, with abundant offspring, and receive therein tribute of the kings of all regions, from all mankind." From the king's perspective it would seem that the gods heard his prayer for his empire became the most powerful in the region both as a ruler and warrior, yet we will learn from Daniel, that this was the Lord's own doing.

Nebuchadnezzar's conquering resume includes the defeat of the Assyrians, Egyptians, Phoenicia, Philistia, Judah, Ammon, Moab and most notable the conquest and destruction of Jerusalem. He consolidated his power by controlling the trade routes across the Mesopotamia to the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea. Adding to his accomplishments was the gate at Ishtar which was one of the Seven Wonders of the world, along with the Hanging Gardens. Probably one of the greatest testament of Nebuchadnezzar's pride was the rebuilding of Babylon on a scale and with a magnificence never before envisaged. The city covered some 500 acres and was protected by

massive double fortifications. The Euphrates river dissected the city and was spanned by a bridge. Surrounding the city were the bright blue walls of brick that stretched fifty-six miles in length and encircling an area of two hundred square miles with the inscription on them that read, “I am Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon.”

It is from this backdrop that we hear from the king himself how the Lord took Nebuchadnezzar’s pride and broke him into submission to be a humble king who in the end exalted not himself, but the King of heaven Whose works and ways are true and just (v.37).

I. THE KING’S PRIDE (4.1-27)

The Doxology by the King (4.1-3) - Unlike his historical inaugural address when he became king, Nebuchadnezzar begins his story with an doxology unto the one true God of heaven and earth, Yahweh. But, like his inaugural address, he communicates to everyone living on the earth (peoples, nations, men of every language [v.1]). He testifies by stating what the “Most High God” (which is clearly Yahweh [cf. 3.26]) had done for him and what the Lord had made known to him through “signs and wonders.” “Signs” refer to “natural phenomena that because of their magnitude or timing decisively give evidence of God’s intervention. “Wonders” are supernatural manifestations of divine intervention in the course of nature. You will notice that the king’s praise of Yahweh bookends this chapter. This introduction by the king himself is to create an interest for the reader to make us eager to discover what happened to Nebuchadnezzar, to help us pay close attention to his testimony that follows how this prideful ruler became a humbled ruler.

The Dreadful Dream (4.4-18) - The king starts out by telling about a second dream, more dreadful than the previous ones in chapter 2. Here we see that this dream (just one) made Nebuchadnezzar “fearful.” It was a vision from God that terrified him. At the time, he still believed in his wise men even though they had previously let him down (2.10-12). This time he told them his dream and simply asked them to interpret it. Once again, they failed him, so he called in Daniel (vv.5-7)

Nebuchadnezzar identifies Daniel both by his Hebrew and Babylonians names. This would have had the double effect of causing those who read this decree to recognize Daniel by his common Babylonian name, and to honor Daniel’s God (cf. v.37). The king recognizes that Daniel possessed the ability to interpret mysteries of visions and dreams because he had the “spirit of the holy gods” in him (v.9). Spoken by a true pagan, Nebuchadnezzar, still at this time does not fully comprehend the God behind Daniel’s abilities. Though, it could be, that with the king’s limited knowledge of Daniel’s God, that he could have meant “the Spirit of the holy God.”

The king then proceeds to tell Daniel what he had seen in poetic language. In the dream the king sees a tree. This tree becomes an object of great fear for the king because he assumes the tree represented himself. Ancients frequently used trees to describe rulers of nations (cf. Isa. 2.12-13; 10.34; Ezek. 31.3-17). So what happens to the tree in his dream could account for his fear (v.5). The beasts and birds probably represent the many types of people who benefited from Nebuchadnezzar’s reign [cf. Ezek. 31.6; Matt. 13.32] (vv. 10-12).

The “watcher” who descended from heaven (v.13) was probably a divine agent, an angel, though the king described it using terminology from his background (cf. v.17). The “binding of the stump” (v.15) hints at a restoration of the tree’s life and its growth after its cutting down. The significance of the “iron and bronze band” that bound the stump is questionable. It kept the tree stump from disintegrating, and perhaps it symbolized the madness that would bind Nebuchadnezzar or the fact that he would be protected while demented. As the description proceeds, it becomes more clear that the tree represent a man. “It” now becomes “him” (v.15).

The man portrayed as a tree cut down would be out of his mind for “seven periods of time” (v. 16, cf. vv. 23, 25, 32; 7.25). The word “periods of time” is indefinite. It does not indicate how long these periods of time are. Though, in (7.25) it means years. That may be the meaning here too since seven hours, days, or weeks would have been too short a time for his hair to grow the length of feathers (v.33), yet it could have been seven months.

God reveals the purpose of the judgement of this “tree.” It was to teach all people that the Most High God (cf. 3.26) is sovereign over all the affairs of humankind (v.17; cf. vv. 25, 32; 3.21; 1 Sam. 2.7-8; Job 5.11). Meaning this, God can, has and will set up whom He will, even people of humble origin, to rule nations (e.g. Joseph, Israel’s judges, Saul, David, etc...). God does not need the mighty to do His work. Therefore, it is foolish to become proud over one’s accomplishments and importance, as Nebuchadnezzar was. Thus, it was God’s purpose to impress His universal sovereignty on the king (chs. 2-3), but the king had not learned his lesson. So the Lord sent him a stronger lesson (v.17).

The king concluded his description of what his dream contained by appealing to Daniel to interpret it for him. It is amazing that his own Babylonian soothsayers could not offer an interpretation of this dream, but it could be because the Lord hid the meaning from them, or maybe they knew it predicted the king humiliation and would not have wanted to tell him of that.

The Disturbing Interpretation (4.19-27) - Daniel’s initial hesitation to tell the king the interpretation must have been due to the bad news itself, or to the potentially harmful consequences to Daniel for telling it to the king. The king assures Daniel that he can give the interpretation without fear of punishment. This verse reflects the respect that each man held for each other. Here, we see how Daniel is able to humbly serve not only His God, but also his king at the same time. We also see Daniel’s concern for the king and grieved over what he had to tell him as stated by Daniel when he spoke, “if only the dream applied to those who hate you...” (v. 19b).

Daniel reassured the king that he understood the dream exactly as the king had told him by repeating the facts back to Nebuchadnezzar. The king (the tree) will have to leave his present place in society and would live in the open air with “beast” (animals) of the field. He will also behave as an animal himself, even eating grass (vv.20-23). The king would remain in this condition for seven periods of time (cf. v.16) until the king had learned that the Most High is

sovereign. Then, at that time Nebuchadnezzar would receive back both his senses and his throne recognizing that “it is Heaven that rules” not Nebuchadnezzar (vv. 24-26).

The Direction to Repent (v.27) - Daniel concluded with a bold exhortation for the king. What God had revealed would happen unless Nebuchadnezzar turned from his sins, practiced righteousness, and showed mercy to the poor. Clearly, Nebuchadnezzar ruled with a heavy hand as well as a proud heart.

Pending judgment by the Lord ought to lead towards forgiveness if only the sinner would repent from their sinful ways, turn to the Lord and choose to acknowledge, trust and obey the Lord. The Lord gives us warnings through His Word concerning our sin and His desire to see us come to repentance. When one does not act upon God’s grace and announcement of his just disciplinary action by not confessing and turning from their sin, they prove their disobedience by making the Lord to be a liar and they themselves to be right (1 Jn. 1.5-9). The prophet Isaiah wrote: “*Come now, let us reason together,*” says the Lord, “*though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool*” (Isaiah 1.18).

Do not tarry by rationalizing your sin, choose today (reason) to be cleanse from your sin God’s way by repenting, confessing, and trusting in Christ your Savior. The only way to have peace in one’s life is not by acknowledging how great they are, but how great and awesome the Lord is.

II. THE KING’S PUNISHMENT (4.28-33)

The Pride of the King (4.28-30) - This next section introduces the fulfillment of what God had warned Nebuchadnezzar he could expect if he failed to repent. “Twelve months later” the Lord was patient and waited for the king to repent, but after those twelve months, Nebuchadnezzar was as proud as ever (v.28-30). While surveying the city from his palace, Nebuchadnezzar reflected on his own greatness concerning all that he took credit by his own might, power, and glory of his own majesty. You have to admit, the city for its’ time was a marvel to behold. The king’s pride would become a snare caught in the judgment of the Lord.

The Punishment by God (4.31-33) - No sooner had the king articulated his pride, than he heard a voice from heaven pronouncing the punishment that Daniel had warned might come upon him (vv.31-32). Immediately something snapped in his mind and he became like an animal. His hair were as “eagle feathers” which represent unkept matted hair. His fingernails and toenails were like “bird claws”. Because of his condition, the king was “driven away from mankind” and he lived among the wild animals of the field as “his body was drenched with the dew of heaven” (v. 33).

God’s judgment is a sobering reminder that we are all but a breath or a heartbeat from insanity, or death, but for His grace. We all must recognize that it is the Lord who sustain us moment by moment (Jn. 15.5; Col. 1.17). The humbling of proud rulers is a common theme in Scripture (cf. Deut. 17.14-20; Ps. 92; Prov. 16.5-7; etc...)

In reference to the “iron and bronze band around the stump” reminds us that it would not have been abnormal for Nebuchadnezzar’s enemies in Babylon (or other kingdoms) to kill him and take his place. The fact that this did not happen during the time of the king’s breakdown is another tribute to God’s sovereignty kept Nebuchadnezzar’s affairs under control, so that when he recovered, he could continue to rule. It may be suspected that Daniel may have played a part in protecting the king, and encouraging the other royal officials to expect and plan for the king’s restoration. Again, another aspect of God’s sovereignty in appointing one of His own people to influence a pagan nation held in captivity, keeping safe a remnant of His own chosen ones.

The Personal Confession by the King (4.34-35) - The narrative resumes in the first person which adds personal force of personal testimony to the story that the king had been telling. At the end of the seven periods of time, Nebuchadnezzar comes to his senses and raises his “eyes toward heaven”. It is at this time he “blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever” (v.34). In the king’s inaugural address he ask his god that his kingdom would live on forever, here Nebuchadnezzar in his humbled state blesses the Lord who reigns forever (vv. 34b-35).

Nebuchadnezzar goes from the polytheistic beliefs which is an inclusive religious system that is tolerant of all the people’s gods, including Marduk (2.47; 3.28-29) to an exclusive acknowledgement and worship of Yahweh and His sovereignty over him (vv. 34-35).

III. THE KING’S RESTORATION (4.36-37)

The humble restoration of the King (4.36) - The closing two verses in this chapter and testimony reveal the marvelous restoring grace of our God. Even though Nebuchadnezzar blesses the Lord, it is the Lord who does far greater to bless this now humbled king (cf. Job). The Lord restores the king’s throne, kingdom, his mind and wisdom even to the fact that his own counselors sought him out for counsel. In the end, Nebuchadnezzar’s story becomes one of spiritual success, in that, he did nothing to earn or deserve God’s blessing. Only by God’s sovereign hand to will and act to bring the king to humility and restore him is purely of grace so that Nebuchadnezzar could not boast (Eph. 2.8-9).

The humble exaltation by the King (4.37) - Speaking of boasting, the king concludes his testimony just as how he began in devoted praise to the Lord for His goodness and greatness. Not only giving honor to the Lord, but also pointing out that what God did “was true and just”... “to humble those who walk in pride” (v.37b).

Besides the work of spiritual renewal that took place in Nebuchadnezzar’s life, one would have to assume that God’s captive people were encouraged by what they heard and witnessed. They themselves had been followers of not just one god, but many throughout the centuries. They too, like the king were not kind and were socially brutal to those who needed justice. They, like Nebuchadnezzar walked boastfully in their own accomplishments without giving credit to God alone for what He had abundantly blessed them with. They too for a period of time will be cut off, held captive until a period of seven decades before the Lord releases them from their

captivity and restores them in their homeland, yet, awaiting the day when He will restore them not only spiritually, but also as a nation united under one king, Christ Jesus our Lord!

LIVING IT:

I am reminded of what the apostle Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus to help them to remember who they once were and encouraged them to walk with the Lord in a worthy manner:

“And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world” (Eph. 2.1a). Doesn't that describe Nebuchadnezzar? Doesn't that truly picture who you were before Christ? Paul continues later:

“Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh...were at that time separated from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and with God in the world” (Eph. 2.11-12).

“But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barriers of the dividing wall...” (Eph. 2.13-14)

How did the Lord do this?

“By abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace” (Eph. 2.15)

If the Lord can bring together a boastful, powerful, pagan king and a humble captive Hebrew young adult, what could He do in you and others. Realizing that both parties (all) must be one in Christ and submit to Him as Lord of lords, King of kings, the Master and Savior to those He came to save.

DANIEL: Lesson 5
“The Handwriting on the Wall”
Daniel 5.1-31

LOOK IT UP:

■ **REVIEW:** When did you first recognize Christ as Lord and Savior? What was the occasion? What or who did the Lord use to reveal Himself to you?

■ **REFLECT:**

12. What is the scene in Daniel 5? Summarize in your own words the narrative.

13. What was Belshazzar’s view of the Lord most high?

14. How did the Lord reveal Himself to Belshazzar? (v. 5)

15. What did the king offer to his wisemen? (vv. 6-7)

16. Summarize Daniel’s rebuke of the king? (vv. 17-24)

17. What was the message from the Lord to the king? (vv. 25-28)

■ **REVEAL:** Have you ever examined yourself to see if you have a pride or arrogant heart towards the Lord? How have you confronted this sin? Do you walk in the peace of Christ or do you live in fear and anxiety? What must you do to have peace?

THE LESSON

LEARN IT:

OVERVIEW: Belshazzar the king held a great feast using the vessels from the house of God to praise their gods in orgiastic celebration (5.1-4). During the feast, a man's finger appeared and inscribed a message which no wise men could explain and made the king greatly alarmed (vv. 5-9). The queen informed the king that Daniel who served as Nebuchadnezzar's advisor could declare the message on the wall for him because the spirit of the gods was in him (vv. 10-12). Daniel was brought in and he was able to interpret the message which was a message of judgment on the king because he had not humbled his heart like Nebuchadnezzar and for using the vessels from God's house to give praise to their gods (vv. 13-28). Belshazzar then rewards Daniel and placed him as the third ruler in the kingdom, then the king was slain that night and Darius the Mede received the kingdom (vv. 29-31).

PURPOSE: God will not be mocked nor share his glory with man or false gods. The Lord demonstrates that He is sovereign over all and will judge those who mock His name and His existence.

BACKGROUND: There is a considerable lapse of time and history that takes place between the chapters 4 and 5. Daniel 4 ends with Nebuchadnezzar's confession that the Lord alone is God, but we are not told by Daniel anything concerning the rest of his rule and his death. Daniel abruptly moves on to the next story which begins with Belshazzar as king (5.1). This creates historical problems by liberal critics who argue that Daniel is not historically true, because up until the time of modern archaeological finds, there was no mention of a Belshazzar as king in Babylon. J.A. Brinkman cites that "probably the first recorded mention of Belshazzar (Bel-shar-usur) as Prince of Babylonia under Nabonnedus is found in cuneiform text 135 from a collection at the Archaeological Museum in Florence. The text dated in the 6th century B.C. indicates that a person known as Bel-sarra-usur was an officer of the king, under Neriglissar who came to the throne in 560 B.C.. This prepared the way for the co-regency under Nabonidus which more likely began around 553 B.C. which supports Daniel 5."

John Walvoord cites a fragment from Berosus which was preserved by Josephus who summarizes the history between Nebuchadnezzar's death in 562 B.C. and the fall of Babylon 539 B.C.. Berosus indicates that Nebuchadnezzar died after a reign of 43 years and was followed by Evil-Merodach who reigned for two years and then was assassinated by Neriglissar who reigned for four years. When he died, his son, Labrosoarchod, an only child, reigned only nine months until he was beaten to death as a result of a conspiracy. Those who conspired against Labrosoarchod appointed one of their own, Nabonidus, who then reigned for seventeen years before being defeated by Cyrus the Persian. There is external evidence from a document entitled, "Prayer of Nabonidus" while he was away in Teima in Arabia, that he had appointed Belshazzar as co-regent over Babylon. This regency would have been around 553 B.C.. Berosus seems to indicate that with Nabonidus away, the Persians took advantage of the opportunity to surround and defeated Babylon. Nabonidus possibly died on his way to make battle against the Persians

while Belshazzar sat on the throne, who himself would die shortly after in 539 B.C.. Therefore, the events of chapter 5 occur about 66 years after those in chapter 1 and 36 years after those in chapter 4. This would place Daniel's age during Belshazzar's feast around 80 years old. What all this means is that the Word of God is both accurate and true. Living and active. Sufficient and inerrant.

I. A FEAST TO THE GODS (5.1-4)

The scene (v.1): Belshazzar (Bel has protected the king), as mentioned above, acted as king during his father's (Nabonidus) frequent and prolonged absences from Babylon. On this occasion, Daniel records of a great feast that Belshazzar held for "a thousand of his nobles" (v.1). Even though that banquet this size drew the attacks of critics, ancient historians mention that Persian kings frequently dined daily with 15,000 people (cf. Esther 1). What marks this one as being significant is that this banquet possibly took place on the night that the city of Babylon fell (vv. 30-31). The invading Medes and Persians would have already taken the surrounding countryside, and everyone in the city would have known of their intentions. However, Babylon the city had not fallen to an invading army for 1,000 years because of its strong fortifications. According to the Greek historian, Herodotus, the defense of the city boasted a 14 square mile double system wall enclosed with a moat between the two walls. The outer wall was 87 feet thick, wide enough for four chariots to drive on side-by-side. It was 350 feet high with 100 gates, plus hundreds more towers that reached another 100 feet above the walls. Thus, Belshazzar's confidence in the security of his capital is evident in his banqueting and getting drunk while his enemy was at his door. Confirming Daniel's account, Herodotus mentioned that the city fell while a festival was underway.

The vessels (vv.2-4): Belshazzar orders that the gold and silver vessels his "father," Nebuchadnezzar had taken out from the temple in Jerusalem, to be used by his party guests which included "his nobles, wives and his concubines" (v.2). Note: Nebuchadnezzar was Belshazzar's grandfather rather than his father. The original language commonly used "father" in the sense of ancestor because neither in the Hebrew or Chaldee are there words for "grandfather or grandson." Forefathers were called "fathers" or "fathers' fathers." The "vessels" taken from the Jerusalem temple had been stored as trophies of war and not used previously (cf. 1.2). Their presence in the warehouses of Babylon was sufficient humiliation of Yahweh Who, in the minds of the Babylonians, was weaker and could not prevent their theft. However, using these vessels in praise of Babylon's gods was even more sacrilegiously humiliating than just possessing them. The toast offered by Belshazzar and his guests were to the pagan gods of Babylon which were represented by idols made of "gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone." Archer comments the deities described as "gods of gold" because to the Hebrew writer, "these materials were all the substance the pagan gods had," meaning, for the Israelite, the gods that Belshazzar honored were no gods at all (v.4).

The presumptuous mindset of the regent king and his guests was that even though a great foe stood at their doorstep, they were safe and secure within their city walls, thus the feast represents the arrogance of a people who depended on personal security and personal idols. What makes

this even a more dire situation for these people is that they made a mockery out of the Lord. To purposely humiliate Him and His people by adulterating holy vessels unto the Lord with the praise of false idols. The Lord will only allow depravity to reign for so long before His justice and wrathful hand destroys those who arrogantly offend His name and person. The Lord will avenge Himself, as He will do with the Belshazzar and the Babylonians. The lesson learned here is that pride comes before the fall.

II. THE FINGER OF GOD (5.5-12)

God's revelation to Belshazzar (vv. 5-9): Like Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar received a frightening omen from God (vv.5-6). Instead of dreams (chs. 1-4) it comes in the form of handwriting on a wall. That night of revelry became a night of revelation (Campbell). Like his grandfather, Belshazzar first calls for his wisemen (conjurers, Chaldeans, and diviners), which, like before could not give the king an answer, even with the offer to become third ruler in Babylon (vv. 7-8). The characteristic of the writing appeared to have been in the Aramaic language. Therefore it seems that the wise men's difficulty in understanding the message must have been due to its interpretation, rather than just the meaning of the words (cf. vv. 14-16, 25). This made the king even more "perplexed" (v.9).

The queen's counsel (vv. 10-12): The queen that Daniel mentions here might have been Belshazzar's grandmother rather than his wife or mother. The text seems to indicate that Belshazzar's wives were already in the room (v.3), this queen had just entered the room because of what she had heard (v.10). The queen also spoke to the king more as a mother than as a wife and it seems she had personal acquaintance with Daniel's earlier interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams (cf. 4.8,9,18). Her counsel to Belshazzar was not to fear (v. 10b) and summon Daniel who not only was appointed chief over the wisemen by his grandfather (v.11), but also possesses an "extraordinary spirit" to interpret "dreams, explanation of enigmas, and solving of difficult problems" (v. 12)

Like the king, many in this world live in fear and anxiety. They do so because the peace of God does not reside in them (Phil. 4.7) and they are numb to God's hope in Christ. John Piper says of the numb and listless sinner who feel they are beyond all hope that if they would "trust Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness" (Romans 4.5). It is God who justifies the "ungodly." "This truth is meant to break the back of hopelessness" (John Piper).

III. THE FALL OF THE KING (5.13-31)

The King's request (vv. 13-16): After hearing about Daniel's reputation, the king was desperately willing to give this Jewish exile (whose God he had just made a mockery of) all the honors that he had formerly promised his wise men (to become third ruler in the kingdom [v.7]) if he could decipher the mystery. Now Daniel stands before the king to prove superior to the Chaldeans in interpreting the message on the wall.

Daniel's rebuke (vv. 17-24): Daniel's rebuke begins by declining the gifts offered by the king to help the king realize that these gifts did not influence his interpretation of the writing. Secondly,

Daniel reminds the king and those in the room of the lesson in humility that God had taught the king's forefather, Nebuchadnezzar (ch. 4). That at one time his grandfather was just as prideful as he is at this time and that he was under His (the Lord's) greater sovereignty. Even though that Belshazzar knew about his grandfather's pride and humiliation, he had not humbled his heart before the Lord of heaven and glorified Him. Therefore, this same God, who held Belshazzar's life and his ways in His hand, had sent the hand to write the inscription on the wall (vv. 18-24).

Daniel's reading (vv. 25-28): Scholars, like the Chaldeans struggled in figuring out how Daniel got his interpretation from the Aramaic words. But, we must trust God's word here in how He supplied the interpretation to Daniel. One thing that seems clear in regards to the interpretation, the words all referred to measures of weight and numbers. Note: Like Hebrew, Aramaic has no vowels. Therefore, the transliteration would look like this: (mn, tk, uprsn, prs). Daniel must have added the vowels to get the translation and interpretation below (Josephus).

- *Mene (Menah)* - "numbered" - this stands for the number of years that God had prescribed for the Neo-Babylonian Empire had expired.
- *Tekel (cognate with the Hebrew "shekel")* - means "weighed." God had weighed Belshazzar and had found him deficient; he was not the ruler that he should have been because of his flagrant refusal to acknowledge the Most High God's sovereignty (v.22).
- *Uparsin* - means "half-shekel" and "*peras*" means "broken in two" or "divided" - This relates to the division of Belshazzar's kingdom into two parts, one part for the Medes and the other for the Persians. However, "*paras*" means "Persia." Persia was the dominant kingdom in the Medo-Persian alliance. Thus "*peres*" had a triple meaning.

The meaning of the words describing various weights would have been unintelligible to the Chaldean wise men. Even if they had supplied the vowels that Daniel did, and came up with the words, "numbered," "weighed," and "divided" - they would have been meaningless without a context (Josephus). The ironic thing is that as Daniel is interpreting God's verdict against Babylon, the Medes and Persians were already pouring into the city.

Daniel's rise and the king's fall (vv. 29-31): In the short time they had, Belshazzar kept his promise (v.16) instead of executing him for such a negative interpretation. Daniel's honors would last only a few hours, yet he is given authority as third ruler in the kingdom (v.29).

During the same night, which scholars believed to be on October 12, 539 B.C. (Herodotus, Xenophon, Berossus, the Babylonian Chronicles, and Cyrus) all describe the fall of Babylon in writings that have remained to the present day (Goldingay). These text describe how the Persians diverted the water from the Euphrates River that flowed south through Babylon into an ancient lake located to the north. This allowed them to walk into the city on the riverbed and scale the undefended walls that flanked the river. In the end, "Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain" (v. 30), possibly by execution that very night. It would be at that time that "Darius the Mede received the kingdom at about the age of sixty-two" (v.31). Some scholars indicate that "Darius

the Mede” was not the same person as “Darius the Great (Darius I)” who was much younger and ruled Persia later, from 521-486 B.C.

LIVING IT:

This chapter illustrates the involvement of king and kingdom in one destiny. Belshazzar’s blatant disrespect for the Most High God was all of a piece with the national character, indeed with our human condition, as it is depicted in Psalm 90. “Though human days are numbered” (v.10), few number them for themselves and “get a heart of wisdom” (v. 12). Belshazzar presents a vivid picture of the fool, the practicing atheist, who at the end can only defiantly ignore the stark reliability who God is.

These opening chapters in Daniel should serve as reminders to anyone who is in any form of leadership (whether king, president, pastor, CEO, etc..) that they have been given a great responsibility to shepherd people under the sovereign hand of God who placed them in those roles. They ought to heed God’s call and warning to not only acknowledge His sovereign rule, but also to seek the same things the Lord requires....Deuteronomy 10.12-13

- To fear Him
- To walk in all His ways
- To love Him
- To serve Him with all your heart and soul
- To keep His commandments

These are great reminders for every citizen both on earth and in the kingdom of God.

DANIEL: Lesson 6
“In the Den of Lions”
Daniel 6.1-28

LOOK IT UP:

■ **REVIEW:** Do you have a pride problem? How has the Lord revealed this to you? How have you confronted this sin in your life? What grace and freedom have you experienced in the Lord once you have dealt with pride?

■ **REFLECT:**

18. How did Daniel distinguish himself from among others in the kingdom and to what position was he promoted to? (vv. 1-3)

19. Who conspired against Daniel and why could they not find anything to accuse him of? (vv. 4-5)

20. What means would they entrap Daniel with and how did they get Darius to sign on to the plan? (vv. 6-9)

21. What was Daniel’s reaction towards the statue and what was the kings response to the accusers charge? (vv. 10-15)

22. What was the kings reaction both towards Daniel being cast into the lion’s den and his deliverance? (vv. 16-27)

■ **REVEAL:** Because of your faithfulness to the Lord, what fruit has come as a result in being obedient to God’s will in your life?

THE LESSON

LEARN IT:

OVERVIEW: Even though this chapter is one of the most popular one in all the Bible, it has also been the target of strong critical attacks because of the identity of Darius. The chapter begins with Daniel's integrity and success (6.1-3) followed by the conspiracy of his colleagues plan by getting Darius to sign into law an injunction, which includes the death penalty to anyone who does not make petition to him for thirty days (vv. 4-9). Daniel chooses to obey the Lord in prayer and disregards the injunction and is charged for breaking the law (vv. 10-13). Darius realizes what has happened and now can only hope for Daniel's deliverance (vv. 14-18) and witnesses Daniel's deliverance (vv. 19-23) and has his conspirators and their family executed in the lion's den (v.24). Darius then signs a decree for all to fear the Lord (vv. 25-27) as Daniel successfully lives out his life in faithful service during the reign of Darius, and that of Cyrus the Persian (v. 28).

PURPOSE: God will vindicate His own who choose death rather than apostasy.

BACKGROUND: Who is Darius? Much has been debated about the identity of "Darius the Mede" (5.31; 6.1, 28; 9.1; 11.1). We first encounter Darius the Mede at the close of Daniel 5 where Daniel records the end of the Neo-Babylonian empire which historians believed happened on October, 539 B.C. during a great festival, which was more likely Belshazzar's feast (Dan. 5.31). Daniel records that after Belshazzar was slain that evening, "Darius the Mede received the kingdom at about the age of sixty-two" (Daniel 5.31).

We learn in Daniel 11.1 that this ruler was the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes (9.1). Historians believe this Darius to be a viceroy of Cyrus the Persian, who became king of Persia in 559 B.C.. Though, there are some scholars who identify this ruler to be Cyrus the Persian himself because the name "Darius" could also serve as a title meaning "lord." What confuses the matter of identity is that the father of Darius the Mede might be the same father of Cyrus the Persian. Historians tell us that Ahasuerus (9.1) was sometimes known as Cyaxares, a Persian name or title for the king of Media who conquered Nineveh. What makes things even more complex is that both "Darius" and "Cyrus" could be use a titles rather than proper names, "Darius" a Median term and "Cyrus" a Persian term. Deepening the complexity of this identity is the fact that Cyrus the Persian was both half Mede and Persian. His father's Persian name was Cambyses, the prince of Persia and his mother, Mandane of Media, was the daughter of Astyages (son of Cyaxares), the last king of the Media Empire. The vassal marriage between his parents paved the way for Cyrus to inherit the throne in 559 B.C..

In summarizing the identity of Dairus the Mede, it could be separate kings and/or could be Cyrus the Great. This does not negate that both a Darius and Cyrus existed as documented both in the Bible and ancient historical documents. What matters is that Daniel enjoyed success as a prime minister to both because of God's favor and Daniel's integrity in the Lord (Dan. 6.28).

I. DANIEL'S INTEGRITY (6.1-5)

Daniel's promotion by Darius (vv. 1-3): When the Medo-Persian alliance overthrew the New-Babylonian Empire in October 539 B.C., it acquired much geographic territory that it preceded to incorporate into its kingdom. The Persian Empire became the largest the world had yet seen, eventually spreading from modern Turkey to Egypt, and parts of India to North Africa as well as Babylonia. Darius divided his realm into 120 satrapies or provinces, and set a satrap (a protector of the realm) in charge of each one (cf. Esther 1.1; 8.9). The 120 satraps reported to three commissioners, one of whom was Daniel. Evidently, Darius had heard about Daniel's unique gifts and accomplishments as a Babylonian administrator, and wanted to use him in his cabinet. As time passed, Daniel distinguished himself above the other commissioners, even though he was in his 80's. It was Darius's purpose to put Daniel in charge of them all and elevated Daniel to prime minister.

Daniel's problem with his colleagues (vv. 4-5): The problem Daniel faced was a conspiring plot against his life by officials who wanted to get rid of him. The text doesn't say why, but perhaps his integrity made it difficult for them to get away with political corruption or because of Anti-semitic prejudices (cf. v.13; 3.12). For whatever the reason, the text does indicate the outstanding personal integrity and professional competence of Daniel. Since his conspirators could not bring him down professionally, they would attempt to do so spiritually. It would be a similar plan as those who attempted to entrap Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego (Daniel 3). They knew that Daniel was a God-fearing man who did not worship pagan idols. So they set a trap for him believing that he would remain faithful to his God. When Daniel had to choose between obeying his God or his government, his God came first (cf. v.10; Acts 5.29).

How will the world test you? Do those who are not believers see you as one who is obediently loyal to the Lord, enough so, that not only are they convicted by your personal integrity, but they also know of your steadfast faith in the Lord. How will they conspire against you. What will they use against you to get you to fall and sin against the Lord? This is a great opportunity to examine one's self. Are you religious or are you lovingly obedient to Christ?

II. DARIUS'S INJUNCTION (6.6-15)

The initiation of the injunction (vv. 6-9): The conspirators plan was simple. To get Darius to sign into law a statue that would be enforced by injunction that "anyone who makes a petition to any god or man besides" Darius for thirty days "shall be cast into the lion's den" (v.7b). They promoted this idea as something that "all the commissioners of the kingdom" had agreed on (v. 7a). Obviously, Daniel was not in agreement noted by his resolve to continue in his routine of praying and giving thanks to the Lord on his knees three times a day (v.10). What is interesting is that Darius did not object to the plan presented by these commissioners by his signature of approval (v. 9).

The heart of the proposed statue catered to the king's vanity. Though it was religious in nature, it promoted humanism, which places the philosophy of man over God. Moses Stuart points out that

“Parsism (the official religion of Persia) did not indeed require men to regard the king as a god in his own proper nature, but to pay him supreme homage as the representative of Ormusd.” Ormusd (Ahura Mazda, also known as Ohrmazd, Auramazda and Hurmuz) was the name for the creator and sole god of Zoroastrianism, the old Iranian religion that spread across the Middle East before being relegated to small minorities after the Muslim conquest of Iran. It first appeared in the Achaemenid period (c. 550-330 BC) Under Darius. This is ironic given the timing of the statue promoted by the commissioners of the Persian empire under Cyrus. The statue would be enforced by casting those who disobeyed the law into the lion’s den (v.7b). Olmstead notes that it was the Babylonian who burned criminals alive (ch. 4), but the Persians, who worshipped fire, threw criminals to the lions. The injunction revealed the limited power of the king under Persian law. The king was bound by the authority of a royal edict (vv. 8, 12, 15; cf. Esth. 1.19; 8.8). This made his power less than it was under an absolute dictator such as Nebuchadnezzar (cf. 2.39).

The indictment of the injunction (vv. 10-14): This new decree did not deter Daniel from continuing to pray for the welfare of the city where God had sent them into exile, and for the Jews’ return from exile. Daniel’s prayer routine included among other things, thanksgiving (v. 10). Daniel, perhaps was initiating Jeremiah’s teaching on prayer (9.2; cf. Jer. 29.1,7,10) when he speaks that God had promised to hear such prayers, if they were sincere and wholehearted, to restore the fortunes of the Jews, and to re-gather them to the Promised Land (Jer. 29.12-14). This had been Daniel’s concern and resolve. Praying three times a day was the practice of godly Jews dating back to David, if not before then (cf. Ps. 55.16-17). The fact that his window was open evidently symbolized for Daniel that his prayers were unhindered. Windows in ancient near eastern cities were normally small, high, and had a lattice covering, so Daniel was probably not praying with his window open to be seen by others (v.10).

Daniel’s colleagues knew about his prayer habits (cf. Phil. 4.6). They contrived to observe him praying in his own house, somehow, to enable them to give eyewitness testimony that they had seen him violate the king’s order. They expected that the edict would not deter him from his regular devotional habit - even though it might cost him his life. What a testimony Daniel had among his fellow workers.

This an opportunity to pause once again to examine our walk with the Lord. How is your prayer life? How much time do you spend in prayer each day? What do you pray for? Is it mostly for your own personal welfare, or for the welfare of others, including God’s people and His kingdom. One consistent example in the Bible are the godly who had a consistent prayer habit. Perhaps, as Daniel encouraged his own peers, we should be encouraged and strengthened by following Daniel’s example, even if it costs us our lives.

Because of Daniel’s faithfulness to the Lord, and being found by his colleagues “making petition and supplication before his God” (v.11), the commissioners reminded Darius of his decree and that his prime minister elect had violated it, and was therefore worthy of death. More specifically, they state, “Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to YOU,

O king, or to the injunction which you signed, but keeps making his petition three times a day” (v.13). They not only point out that Daniel as one of the exiles, but also they made this a personal offense to the king by stating that Daniel has no regards for the statue nor the king.

Darius’s reaction is a peculiar one, in that, unlike Nebuchadnezzar who reacted with vicious anger when Daniel’s three friends chose not to bow before the golden image (cf. Ch. 3), Darius was deeply distressed and put his mind to find a way on delivering Daniel. We find here that Darius “kept exerting himself to rescue him, even until sunset” when the injunction would be enforced (v. 14). The commissioners once again reminded the king that there could be nothing done by law, because the injunction that the king signed into law cannot be changed (v.15).

Daniel’s relationships with his kings were personal and one of respect. Daniel was so valued by Darius that he was angry that he had allowed himself to sign the decree. What sort of respect do you have among the pagans? Those who do not have a relationship with the Lord. Obviously, there are those who because of their hostility towards the Lord (like Daniel’s colleagues) they promote their persecuting behavior towards believers because of our way of living and beliefs do not fit their way of life and culture. But, there are those whom we work or live close by, who are not believers, who respect what we believe to the point of becoming respected friends who care deeply for each other. It’s these relationships that the Lord can use to reveal himself in unique ways, so that they may be drawn to the Lord and begin following Him. Do as Jesus says, “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5.16).

III. DANIEL’S INNOCENCE (6.16-24)

Daniel’s innocence is revealed (vv. 16-23): Darius’s parting words to Daniel here are significant. One could render them, “Your God whom you serve continually, He will deliver you” (v.16). Darius tried to save Daniel and had failed. Now Yahweh must save him. The Lord never promises to keep his own from difficulty, but He does bring some safely through it, if it serves His purpose and brings glory to Himself. Again, I use Psalm 23 as an illustration in how the Lord does walk with His own from green pastures through the valley of the shadow of death. There are many believers who walk through the difficulty of death’s dark shadows. It may look different for many whether physical or spiritual trials. The Lord told us we would have trials, but He also promised to never leave us, nor to forsake us (Heb. 13.5-6).

Daniel is cast into the lion’s den. This den appears to be a large pit in the ground with an opening above that a large stone sealed, probably to keep people from stumbling into it. Pits like these were common in the region and were used as cisterns for collecting water or as prisons. After Daniel was cast down into the pit with the lions, a large stone is said to have covered the pit sealed with the king’s signet, and those of the nobles, so that nothing could be changed in regards to Daniel. Unlike Nebuchadnezzar’s reaction towards Daniel’s three friends who showed no compassion for them, Darius spent a fitful night without food, entertainment, or sleep (v.18).

The minimum sentence for this injunction was apparently one night in the lion's den, because early the next morning Darius set out to free Daniel and so see if he had survived. Uncertain about the Daniel's fate, the king calls out to him, hoping he was still alive. Daniel responded with untroubled voice and greeted the king in the common courteous manner (v. 21). Daniel reported to the king that the Lord's angel was sent to shut the lions' mouth (v.22). This angel was probably the same Who protected and saved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego in the fiery furnace (3.28). That angel being, Christ the Lord. Daniel testifies to Darius that the Lord saved him because he was found "innocent before Him (the Lord) and also toward" Darius himself (v. 22). True he violated the king's edict, but he had not done anything that really harmed the king. God had rewarded Daniel's trust (v.23), which Daniel demonstrated by obeying God's will. Darius had Daniel extracted from the den, and marveled that he had sustained no injuries whatsoever (cf. 3.27).

Darius's imposing judgment (v. 24): Because of Daniel's testimony and the Lord's protection on him, Darius applied what is called (lex talionis [law of retaliation]) and cast the conspirators and their families into the very den they had cast Daniel in and they perished before reaching the bottom of the den by the lions.

There are a couple of life lessons to be learned here to note. First, the reward for being faithful to God's Word and will. There is also the witness of being a faithful follower of the Lord to those who are close to us. To help them to see how great and power our God is. Then there is the effect of sin on ourselves and others. The execution of the evildoers' family members seems unfair and cruel, but it reflects the principle of corporate solidarity that was common in the biblical world (cf. sin of Achan - Joshua 7).

IV. DARIUS'S ISSUED DECREE (6.25-28)

Darius's decree (vv.25-27): Finally, we come to Darius's decree and praise of Yahweh (vv. 25-28). This narrative ends as the previous ones did with the king praising and promoting Yahweh. This expression of praise, however, surpasses the others (cf. 3.28-29; 4.3, 34-35, 37). Not only did Darius personally praise God, but he ordered his subjects to do the same thing (cf. 3.29, 4.1). It is as though God was giving two witnesses to His people Israel: Nebuchadnezzar and Darius. Both monarchs testified to the living and eternal God's unshakable sovereignty, grace, and power in heaven and on earth (cf. 4.3; 34-35). These testimonies certainly would have encouraged the Israelites to trust Him in spite of the circumstances of the exile.

Daniel's success (v. 28): The final verse notes that Daniel continued to enjoy success during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus, which could also be interpreted as saying, "Daniel continued to enjoy success during the reign of Darius, even the reign of Cyrus" since Darius was apparently a title for Cyrus. Cyrus's first full year as king of Babylon was 539 B.C. and this is when Daniel's career in government service ended (1.21). This was the same year that Cyrus issued his decree permitting the Jews to return to their homeland. Daniel received the revelations of chapters 10-12 in the third year of Cyrus's reign (10.1), but he was no longer in government service then.

LIVE IT:

Looking back at this incredible narrative that has captivated many who have read and been taught the Bible stories, prayerfully what one learns are these lessons below:

1. God is sovereignly working out His plan of redemptive history.
2. Faithfulness and obedience is not only what God desires from His own, but is more genuine when during times of trials, one has already resolved by faith to remain obedient to God's will and Word.
3. It is during times of trouble that the Lord reveals Himself through His servants. Paul reminds us that it is when we are weak that He is strong (cf. 2. Cor. 12.9-11).
4. The occasion for prayer ought to be done out of habit, not by our need for God for help, for we are always in need for God's provision and protection daily. Daniel reminds us that prayer should be the ongoing faithful habit of ever believer, it should also reflect the needs of others welfare rather than praying selfishly for our own.
5. God will be our avenger towards those who seek to oppose his ways and who are evil and wicked.
6. Finally, this chapter teaches us that though the world may want to conspire to kill us, we can face persecution with confidence, especially if we know we have a clear conscience before the Lord and man. This chapter also teaches that it is up to God to save us from a martyr's death or not. All we need is to have the resolve to live and walk in a manner that pleases God and to be a witness to others of our devoted faith in Him alone through Christ.

DANIEL: Lessons 7
“Visions of Things to Come”
Daniel 7.1-9.27

LESSON 7: “THE THRONES OF MAN AND GOD” - Daniel 7.1-28

LOOK IT UP:

■ **REVIEW:** How have you seen the Lord’s protection on your life because of your obedience and loyalty to Him over man?

■ **REFLECT:**

1. What and when was the occasion for Daniel’s dream? (v.1)

2. List and describe what Daniel saw in his dream. (vv. 2-14)

3. List what Daniel wanted to know concerning this dream? (vv. 16, 19)

4. What did Daniel learn about the “great beasts” (vv. 17-18) and the meaning of the fourth beast (vv. 23-27).

5. What was Daniel’s reaction to this revelation? (v.28)

■ **REVEAL:** What is your reaction to God’s revelation to Daniel? How does this impact your view of the Lord, His plans, and His Word?

LESSON 7: Daniel 7.1-28

LEARN IT:

OVERVIEW: Daniel receives a vision from the Lord during the first year of the reign of Belshazzar and writes down a summary of it (7.1). Daniel's vision from the Lord reveals both present and future thrones and kingdoms to come (vv. 2-8). His vision also reveals the glory of Christ and His eternal kingdom (vv. 9-14). Daniel is then given the interpretation of his vision which greatly frightened Daniel and he kept it to himself (vv. 15-28).

PURPOSE: God reveals that by His sovereign will, His eternal kingdom will forever replace man's earthly kingdom. Though many of His saints will face death and persecution, they will rule with Him in His kingdom to come.

BACKGROUND: We now come to a new section of the Book of Daniel that provides the most comprehensive and detailed prophecy of future events to be found anywhere in the Old Testament (Walvoord). Chapter 1 summarizes Daniel's life and career. Chapters 2-6 are stories about Daniel and his friends in Babylon. Chapters 7-12 tell of Daniel's visions. The first six chapters are a chronological survey of Daniel's life, while chapters 7-12 reveal certain revelations that came to Daniel during the narratives of chapters 2-6. Even though chapter 7 begins this new section, it's language (Aramaic) belongs with chapters 2-6 (Goldingay). In review of our introduction to Daniel, we learned that part of the book is written in Hebrew (Daniel 1.1-2.4a; 8.1-12.13), the language of Israel. The rest of the book is written in Aramaic (Daniel 2.4b-7.28), which was the international language of Daniel's day.

We have already read of two dreams that Nebuchadnezzar had (2.1; 4.5). Now God gave one to Daniel. It too was a vision from God that came to Daniel while he slept and laid on his bed. This revelation came to Daniel in the first year of Belshazzar's reign as co-regent with his father, Nabonidus, namely, in 553 B.C.. His reign abruptly ended in 539 B.C. when the Persians invaded Babylon and killed Belshazzar, then Darius received the kingdom (5.31). It is fitting then, that this vision of the downfall of world empires should come to the prophet during the reign of the last king of Babylon. God gave it to him 50 years after the similar revelation of the great image in chapter 2 (cf. Gen. 41.25;32). Daniel would have been about 68 years old when he had this dream. Chronologically, this vision would have been placed between chapters 4 and 5.

I. THE VISIONS (7.1-14)

The Four Beasts (vv. 1-8)

Summary of the vision (vv. 1-3): Daniel records that during the first year of Belshazzar's reign, he "saw a dream and visions" and wrote a summary of what he saw while laying on his bed (v.1). Note, that Daniel referred to himself in the third person in the first six chapters, but in these last six he will reveal himself in first person. This change by Daniel is probably for the effect to reveal the personal nature of these visions and to make his visions more impressive and persuasive to the readers.

The first thing that Daniel sees in this vision is the “four winds of heaven stirring up the great sea” (v. 2). This “great sea” that Daniel saw was probably the Mediterranean (cf. Num. 34.6-7; Josh 1.4; 9.1; Ezek. 47.10). The “stirring four winds” was more likely the “spirits of heaven” (v. 2; cf. Jer. 23.19; 49.36; Zech. 6.1-6; Rev. 7.1-3). The “sea” in Scripture and in ancient Near Eastern thinking represented the unorganized mass of humanity, the populace place of the earth (v. 17; cf. Isa. 8.6-8; 17.12-13; 57.20; 60.5; Jer. 6.23; Matt. 13.47; Luke 21.25; Rev. 13.1; 17.1, 15; 21.1). The Mediterranean would seem to be particularly in view.

The “wind” represents God’s power expressed in judgment, using heavenly and earthly forces from all directions, to influence the nations as He wills (cf. Rev. 7.1; 9.14-15). John Walvoord comments that “God often used the wind as a means to attain His ends (Gen. 8.1; Ex. 10.13-19; 14.21; 15.10; Num 11.31...). Of more than 120 references in the Bible of wind (more than 90 in the O.T. and about 30 in the N.T.), well over half are related to events and ideas which reflect the sovereignty and power of God. In Daniel, wind is uniformly used to represent the sovereign power of God, which is the view of the the book.”

The “four beast” arising out of the sea represent four kings (v17). They personify the nations over which they rule, as becomes clear in the following revelation. They are anomalies, as are the other characters presented, and their abnormalities have significance.

The Beast: (vv. 4-8)

- *A Lion (v.4)* - The first beast looked like “a lion,” but it also had “wings like (of) an eagle.” It was common in ancient Near Eastern art to combine notable features of various animals into one composite animal figure to stress outstanding features in a symbol. Often animals represented nations. Even today, animals still represent nations (cf. the eagle for America, the bear for Russia, the dragon for China, etc...). Other biblical writers had compared Nebuchadnezzar to a lion and an eagle (cf. Jer. 4.7; 49.19; 50.17, 44; 49.22; Lam 4.19; Ezek. 17.3, 12; Hab. 1.8). As Daniel watched, something plucked this beast’s wings off, made it stand on two feet like a man, and gave it a human mind or nature. This may allude to the humiliation of Nebuchadnezzar (cf. 4), or perhaps to the deterioration of his kingdom after his death.
- *A Bear (v.5)* - The second beast resembled that of a bear. The Old Testament writers spoke of the bear as the most formidable beast of prey in Palestine after the lion (cf. 1 Sam. 17.34; Amos 5.19; cf. 2 Kings 2.24; Hos. 13.8). The bear that Daniel saw appeared stronger on one side than the other. This probably reflects the superior strength of the Persian part of the Medo-Persian Empire (cf. 8.3,20). The three ribs in the bear’s teeth probably stood for three nations or three parts of one nation that Medo-Persia had devoured or would devour. When Daniel saw this vision, Medo-Persia had not yet overthrown Babylonia, so perhaps these were nations of less prominence that it had conquered. It is unclear what voice that Daniel heard, some believe the voices to have been angelic voices encouraging the bear to devour much meat. This probably indicates that it would subdue many nations. The Medo-Persian empire ruled for 208 years before Alexander the Great swept in and toppled it in 331 B.C.,

and its geographic extent was far-reaching. Leadership and world dominance passed from Assyria to Babylon in 612 B.C., from Babylon to Medo-Persia in 539 B.C., and from Medo-Persia to Greece in 331 B.C..

- *A Leopard (v.6)* - Most conservative biblical scholars have identified the third kingdom with Greece, because Greece overthrew Medo-Persia as dominance was given to it. It bore the characteristics of the animal described here. Leopards (or panthers) are less majestic and ponderous than lions and bears. Their outstanding characteristics are their speed, strength, and cunning (cf. Jer. 5.6; Hos. 13.7; Hab. 1.8). The four wings on this leopard's back made it even faster. Woolvard comments that "with the swiftness of a Leopard, Alexander the Great conquered most of the civilized world all the way from Macedonia to Africa and eastward to India (334-331 B.C.)." The imagery of the four wings and heads suggest intelligent direction. Greece had four governmental divisions with one person heading each division. Following Greece's defeat at Ipsus, in Phrygia, in 301 B.C., the Grecian Empire irretrievably divided into four parts under Alexander's four generals. Many scholars speculate on who these leaders were, but what is factual is that the Grecian empire did split into four major empires after Alexander died (cf. 8.8, 22) and the successors ruled one of the geographical segments: Greece, Western Asia, Egypt, and Persia.
- *The fourth beast (v.7-8)* - This fourth beast is considered the most crucial issue in the interpretation of the entire book of Daniel (Woolvard). Most believe this fourth beast to represent the Roman Empire. In contrast to Greece, the rise and fall of the Roman Empire was slow. It gradually expanded throughout the whole Mediterranean world: western Europe including Britain, Gaul, and Spain; and western Asia as far east as the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf. It began in 241 B.C. with the occupation of Sicily and formally ended in the Western Roman Empire in A.D. 41 when the Visigoths sacked Rome. Its governmental influence persisted as late as A.D. 1453 when the last Roman ruler died in the battle of Constantinople (C.E. Van Sickle, *A Political and Cultural History of the Ancient World*, vol. 2).
 - The "ten horns" of this beast is more difficult to understand. There is possibly some connection between these 10 horns and the 10 toes of the image in chapter 2. These apparently represent 10 contemporaneous rulers (v.17). Horns pictured strength and rulers in ancient Near Eastern iconography, yet scholars have not been able to agree on the identification of 10 outstanding rulers of the Roman Empire who ruled simultaneously. The most common belief is that the 10 horns describe 10 rulers who will arise in the future and reign simultaneously from a revive Roman Empire in the future. It may not be called the Roman Empire, but will have connections to the old Roman Empire. James Darby referred to it as "Europe."
 - A "little horn" (v.8) - Daniel saw a different "little horn" in another, later vision that he reported witnessing (8.9-11). However, the differences between the two little horns argue for there being different rulers, which I disagree. They, may not be the same person, but the second one personifies what the first one will be in the future person of the Antichrist.

The Ancient of Days (vv. 9-14): In some English versions, verse 9 and some that follow (vv. 10, 13-14) are in poetic form. This indicates a difference in the original language (Aramaic), which sets these verses off as distinct and more elevated in literary style, in the opinion of the translators.

God the Father (vv. 9-12): - The “Ancient of Days” seems to refer to God the Father (cf. vv.13, 22; Isa. 43.13; 57.15), whereas in 7.13, God the Son is in view. In this vision, Daniel saw God take His seat on His heavenly throne.

- The title, “Ancient of Days” stresses God’s eternity. His pure white clothing pictures His purity and holiness, and His pure wooly hair suggests His mature judgment.
- Daniel saw His throne blazing with fire (lit. A burning flame), symbolic of knowledge, purity, and judgment in Scripture (cf. Exod. 3.2; Deut. 4.24; 1 Tim. 6.16; Heb. 12.29; Rev. 1.14-15).
- The wheels probably imply that the throne and God can go in any direction, that he can do anything He pleases (cf. Ezek. 1.13-21).
- Coming from the throne was a “river of fire” (v. 10). This symbolized God’s judgment. Those attending Him were angels (cf. Deut. 33.2).
- The “court” (cf. v.26) seems to be a heavenly venue in which God renders judgment on rulers and their nations based on their deeds (Job 1-2; Isa. 65.6; Mal. 3.16; Rev. 20.12; Matt. 25.31-46).

In verses 11-12, Daniel observes the “boastful words which the horn was speaking.” God passed judgment on the fourth beast and destroyed it along with all its horns (cf. Luke 21.24-27; Rev 19.20). Similarly, the stone cut out without hands crushed the toes of the image in chapter 2 - suddenly and violently. The end of the prior three empires contrasts with the end of this fourth one God took away the dominion of each of the earlier three kingdoms one by one, but they continued to exist, as realms of the kingdom that overcame them, for some time. However, God will cut off the fourth empire completely, and it will continue no longer (v.11). Thus the end of the fourth kingdom will result in a totally new condition on the earth: Messiah’s thousand -year reign (cf. Rev. 19.19-20.6).

God the Son (vv. 13-14) - Daniel saw again something happening in heaven (cf. 5.1-10). One “like a Son of Man” was brought before the Ancient of Days. The angelic attendants in heaven’s court probably ushered Him forward. This description glorifies the Ancient of Days, who then proceeded to give this Person authority to rule on earth (cf. Ps. 2.6; 110.1-2). The “One like a Son of Man” has similarities with human beings, as the title “son of man” implies. However, He comes with clouds of heaven, which elsewhere in Scripture describes how God has come to earth (cf. Exod. 13.21-22; 19.9, 16; 1 Kings 8.10-11; Ps. 18.10; Isa. 19.1; Jer. 4.13 ...). Thus, this “One like a Son of Man” appears to be a “God-man” (cf. Phil. 2.6-7). Now this Son of Man became the prominent Person in the vision. He received dominion and glory and a kingdom from the Ancient of Days. It is God’s intention in giving the Son of Man this authority (cf. Matt. 28.18) so that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. He was to have global rule over everyone. Furthermore, His kingdom would last forever in contrast to the preceding four

kingdoms. His kingdom will never be destroyed (cf. Ps. 2.6-9; 72.11; Isa. 11; Rev. 19.15-16; 20.1-6).

II. THE INTERPRETATION (7.15-28)

The Inquiry about the Visions (vv. 15-18) - Even though Daniel understood all kinds of visions and dreams (1.17), much of what he had just seen baffled and alarmed him (cf. 7.28). He now saw himself participating in the events of his vision. He evidently addressed his question to an angel (cf. 8.16; 9.21). The fourth beast, and particularly the little horn, were the parts of the vision that he could not understand and most interested him (vv. 15-16).

The “one who approached” Daniel gave him a general answer to his question (v.17). He stressed that each of the four beasts represented a king (or kingdom, cf. v.23). They arose from the earth’s population, which is what the sea symbolized (v.2; cf. Isa. 17.12-13; 57.20-21; Jer. 46.7-8). Yet, he tells Daniel that the “saints of the Highest One” (citizens of Heaven, cf. v.27), are the believers of all ages. They will have a share in the Son of Man’s everlasting kingdom after He establishes it. This will involve reigning with Christ (cf. Matt. 25.13-30; Luke 19.11-27; 2 Tim. 2.12; Rev. 5.10, 20:4, 6; 22.5). This kingdom will begin with the return of Christ to the earth and will continue for one thousand years on the earth, and then continue in the new heavens and new earth forever (v.18).

The Inquiry about the Fourth Beast (vv. 19-22) - In this section, Daniel repeats the description of the fourth beast and the little horn, and in doing so mentioned for previously unrevealed details about them. The beast he saw had claws of bronze, stressing its fierce nature (v.19). The little horn was more prominent than the other horns, accounting for its ability to rise in the place of three other horns (v.20). The little horn waged war with the saints and overcame them, which explains one reason for God’s final judgment of him (v. 21; cf. Rev 11.7; 12.13-17; 13.7; 17.17). Daniel seems to have had a particular concern about the fate of the saints whom the little horn overpowered. Finally, God passed judgment in favor of His saints, further indicating the importance of God the Father, stressing His eternity and sovereignty, respectively.

The Interpretation about the Fourth Beast (vv. 23-25) - The interpretation is now granted by the angel, giving Daniel more insight concerning the beast and the little horn. Here the dual identification of the beasts with kings and kingdoms becomes transparent. The fourth beast does not only represent a king (v.17), but also a kingdom. The angel repeated the facts already revealed (v.7), but clarified that the previous description referred to a kingdom.

One difference between the description of the little horn here and earlier (v.8), is that the little horn is a king, not a kingdom. Another is that he will be different from the previous 10 kings (cf. Rev. 13.1; 17.12). This eleventh king’s boastful words will be against the Most High and His saints (v.25). He will wear down the saints, evidently by persecution (cf. 2 Thess. 2.8-9; Rev. 12.13-17; 13.1-10, 16-17). He will also desire to make changes in times (the calendar?) and in law. Archer recorded an interesting account of an unsuccessful attempt during the French Revolution to replace the Christian (Gregorian) calendar with a Revolutionary calendar. God will

allow this ruler to have his way for “a time, times, and half a time” (v.25). This period relates to the last 3 1/2 years of the seven years of tribulation which corresponds to the “Great Tribulation,” the phrase Jesus described (Matt. 24.21).

The Interpretation of the Beginning of the Everlasting Kingdom (vv. 26-28): - The angel continues to explain that the heavenly court (v.10) would pass judgment on the little horn, and God will remove his dominion and destroy it forever (v. 11; 2 These. 2.8; Rev. 19.20) [v.26]. The fifth kingdom, under the Son of Man’s leadership (v.14), will then commence. The Son of Man’s kingdom will be endless and worldwide. Notice that the titles “Highest One” (God the Father) and “His” (the Son of Man’s) are interchangeable, pointing to the deity of the Son of Man. This verse also clarifies that the saints are not the same as the Son of Man, “saints” being plural and “His” and “Him” singular. The kingdom is not just the rule of the saints; it is the rule of the Son of Man in which the saints participate. Daniel then indicates the end of the vision, and added that what he had seen and heard alarmed and terrified him. His pale face evidently resulted from his fear, as he contemplated the severe trials and persecutions awaiting his people. He then keeps this revelation to himself, perhaps because he realized that it might prove explosive if he announced it immediately.

LIVE IT:

Daniel’s personal reaction to this revelation (v.28) ought to cause us to pause and reflect and ask what is our emotional response to what we just learned, just as Daniel. Sometimes, in studying the Bible, we can become so academic in our studies that it does not stir our emotions concerning the plans of God for this world and His people. We read and study about amazing epochs of time, beasts, kingdoms, kings, and people. We read and study about sin and judgment, death and destruction, victory and restoration. Daniel was moved by what he saw and heard. Even though the outcome for God’s people is positive, still many will face great persecution. Daniel response was one of deep concern because, when all is said and done, Daniel saw that many lives will be lost and destroyed because of sin.

How do you know you are being moved by God’s Word and Spirit rather than receiving it academically? Does your heart break like God’s toward personal and corporate sins. Are you alarmed by what God is about to do to those who do not know Him yet? Are you moved in your gut to see how this approaching great tribulation will greatly effect the whole global society? Does this knowledge reveal by the Lord cause you to burn in your groin to warn others about the truth concerning the gospel of Christ and His plan of salvation? The church in general is peculiar in that we are so academic about the Bible on one end that we are not greatly concerned about the truths we learn and teach. At the same time, we are emotional over the things that God is not greatly concerned about. So much of that emotion is humanistically selfish. Motivated by self interest. What we can get out of God and church, rather than what we can offer and do for the glory of the Lord.

Though Daniel did keep the matter to himself (possibly because how this knowledge would impact his people living in Babylon), still Daniel was moved and greatly alarmed by what he had seen and heard. So much so that it caused the blood to flush away from his face. May the Lord lay such a deep burden on our hearts that we are greatly alarmed by His plans which ought to motivate us to have a greater and deeper conviction for those His plans will impact.

Another reaction to what we see in this lesson is the revealing glorification of Christ to come (vv. 13-14, 27). Even though we should be moved by God's wrath on this world to come, we also should be moved with joy when our glorious and mighty Savior and Lord will come and set up His kingdom that will never end, nor be destroyed. No more will sin rule. No more will death be our enemy. No more will people be hostile towards God. God will set up His perfect kingdom will we will serve and worship Him for the ages to come. Hallelujah!

A final reaction is to pray for God's mercy on those not saved. Pray that God will create divine opportunities to share His gospel. That He will draw people to Himself. That they will be saved and escaped the wrath of His hand both now and eternity to come. Pray and make yourself available to Him to be His servant in His great plan. May your heart be moved by the King of Creation and Lord of Salvation, Christ Jesus our Lord. May God's mercy be extended a little longer so that those in this world will still have time to receive Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord. Amen!

DANIEL LESSON 8
“SEEING THE END OF TIME”
Daniel 8.1-27

LOOK IT UP:

■ **REVIEW:** Did you pray for and engage with someone who does not know the Lord? If so, share with your class about it to encourage them without being boastful.

■ **REFLECT:**

1. When did this vision take place? (v.1) Where was the location in the vision? (v.2)

2. List and describe the creatures that Daniel witnessed in this vision. (vv. 3-14)

3. Who interpreted the vision for Daniel? (v.16)

4. In your own words, describe the interpretation Daniel received. (vv. 20-26)

5. How can we trust this vision from God? (v.26b)

■ **REVEAL:** How do you feel about knowing in these lessons that the Lord has designated a specific end time for the world? What is the Lord teaching you in regards to man’s kingdoms and His glorious kingdom to come?

LESSON 8: Daniel 8.1-27

LEARN IT:

OVERVIEW: Daniel records that during the third year of the reign of Belshazzar he received another vision from the Lord which was like one previously (8.1). This vision concerned the images of a ram which had two horns, a male goat and a little horn (vv. 2-14). Daniel then receives an interpretation from Gabriel who revealed the identity of the ram, the goat and the horns (vv. 15-25). Daniel, after being commanded to keep the vision secret, becomes exhausted and sick for days (vv. 26-27).

PURPOSE: God reveals His plans for the fate of the dominion of man on earth.

BACKGROUND: Two things signal the beginning of a new section in the book here. These two things are: a return to the Hebrew language in the original text (cf. 1.1-2.3) and an emphasis on the nation of Israel. Evidently, Daniel wrote the remainder of this book in Hebrew because the revelation in it concerned his people particularly. The Book of Revelation, though written mainly in one language originally, reveals a similar structure. After an introduction (Rev. 1-3; cf. Dan. 1), a section dealing with worldwide judgments follows (Rev. 4-11; cf. Dan. 2-7). Then the prophecies deal more specifically with Israel (Rev. 12-20; cf. Dan. 8-12).

Daniel records that this vision takes place during the third year of the reign of Belshazzar. This would place the date to be around 551 B.C., two years after the vision in chapter 7 and about 12 years before the events of chapter 5. Daniel was then living within the kingdom of Neo-Babylon, the first beast of chapter 7. Apparently this was not a dream combined with a vision (7.1), but just a vision. This vision probably came to Daniel during the daytime. The vision that appeared to Daniel previously refers to the one in chapter 7.

I. THE VISION (8.1-14)

The Ram and Goat (vv. 1-8): Evidently Daniel was in Babylon when he had this vision, but what he saw, including himself, was in “Susa” (Shushan; cf. Ezek. 8.3; 40.1). Some commentators however, believe Daniel was physically present in Susa. Though, Daniel possibly traveled there because of his high ranking position, therefore, he would have had some knowledge of the location where this vision placed him. Susa stood about 200 miles east of Babylon and approximately 150 miles due north of the top of the Persian Gulf. Archaeologists discovered the Code of Hammurabi there in 1901. The site of Susa is in modern Iran, whereas the site of Babylon is in modern Iraq. “Elam” was the name of the province where Susa stood when Daniel wrote this book when he had this vision. When Medo-Persia overthrew Neo-Babylonia, Susa became the capital of the Persian Empire. Eighty years after Daniel had this vision, Susa became Esther’s home. One hundred seven years later, it was the city from which Nehemiah departed to return to Palestine (Esth. 1.2; Neh. 1.1). The “citadel” was the palace that housed the royal residence, and it had strong fortifications. The “Ulai” canal can best be

identified with an artificial canal which connected the rivers Chastes (modern Kerkha) and Coprates (modern Abdizful) and ran close by Susa.

The Ram (vv. 3-4): - The “ram” (male sheep) that Daniel saw standing before the canal represented the Medo-Persia empire (v.20). It corresponds to the lopsided bear in the chapter 7 vision (7.5). The two horns, representing power, symbolized Media and Persia, the two kingdoms that formed an alliance to create Medo-Persia. The longer horn stood for Persia, which had become more powerful in the alliance and had risen to displace Media in leadership after the two nations merged (Walvoord). Historically, the Medo-Persian Empire pushed its borders primarily in three directions. It went westward (into Lydia, Ionia, Thrace, and Macedonia), northward (toward the Caspian Mountains, the Oxus Valley, and Scythia) and southward (toward Babylonia, Palestine, and Egypt). Compare the three ribs in the mouth of the bear (7.5). These advances happened mainly under the leadership of Cyrus and Cambyses. Indeed, Medo-Persia had its own way for many years, and glorified itself.

The Goat (vv. 5-8): - Next, the vision identifies the male goat. Goats are relatives of sheep. In this vision, this represents Greece (v. 21). History has confirmed the identification of this being Alexander the Great as the goat with the conspicuous horn between its’ eyes. Normally, goats have two horns, so this goat was unusual. Under Alexander, the Greek armies advance quickly from the west against Persia (v.5). Due to previous attacks by the Persians, the Greeks retaliated against these enemies with unusual vengeance. Alexander won two significant battles in Asia Minor in 334 B.C. and in 333, first at the Granicus River and then at Issus in Phrygia. Alexander finally subdued Persia with a victory at Gaugamela near Nineveh in 331 B.C.[vv. 6-7] (Walvoord). This description clearly corresponds to that of the third beast in 7.6. Alexander magnified himself exceedingly in two ways. He extended the borders of his empire after he conquered Medo-Persia even farther east into modern Afghanistan and to the Indus Valley. Alexander’s empire covered one and a half million square miles (Whitcomb). He also became extremely arrogant. He regarded himself as divine and made his soldiers bow down before him. This resulted in his troops revolting (Archer). In his arrogance, historians tell us that Alexander drank himself to death when he was thirty-three years old. His death left a great conquest without an effective single leader, and it took about twenty years for the empire to be successfully divided [v.8](Walvoord). It is worth noting that alcohol played a significant role in the fall of Babylonia, Medo-Persia, and Greco-Macedonia empires.

The Little Horn (vv. 9-14) - Daniel sees next a rather small horn (king v.23) grow out of one of the four horns (kingdoms, v.22) that had replaced the single horn (the first king, Alexander, v.21) on the goat (Greece v.21). This horn is quite clearly different from the little horn that came up among the 10 horns on the fourth beast in the previous vision (cf. 7.8, 11, 24-26). This horn grew very great to the south, the east, and “the Beautiful Land” (v.9). This means that from one of the divisions of the Greek Empire would emerge a king of unusual significance.

NOTE: John Phillips comments that we have one of those remarkable evidences of Scripture that each word in the sacred original text was “God-breathed” because the words for “little horn” in

chapter 7 and 8 are not equivalents. The explanation for this is knowing which language the two chapters were written in. Chapter 7 is written in Aramaic, while chapter 8 is written in Hebrew. The Aramaic word (7.8) can be translated “a horn, a little one. The “little horn” in chapter 8.9 in Hebrew means “a horn less than little” or “a horn from littleness” (arising from a small beginning), pointing to his development from insignificant beginnings. It is understood that the “little horn” in chapter 7 is the Antichrist who will arise from the revived Roman Empire. The “little horn” in chapter 8 is understood by scholars to be Antiochus IV Euphianes (175-163 B.C.) who was the ruler of the Seleucid Greek Empire.

UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCE: Phillips tells us that we need to see the two “little horns” in view of Roman and Greek cultures to understand the difference. The Romans, he describes, was a world of martial might and rigidly imposed universal law. Rome bent everyone and everything to its will. It borrowed from others and crushed anyone who stood in its way. The Greeks on the other hand, was a world of intellectual splendor, yet with all its intellectual prowess, was grossly deceitful by its gross immorality, and to abject superstition as witnessed of the gods of Mount Olympus, who delighted in lust, lawlessness, and every kind of decadence and depravity. Therefore, even though the “little horn” in chapter 7 rightfully depicts the Antichrist to come, the “horn from insignificance” of chapter 8, points to Antiochus Epiphanes who illustrates the character and career of the Antichrist.

WHAT DANIEL WITNESSED: What Daniel witnessed in his vision was future history when Antiochus Epiphanes rose up from Syria (one of the broken horns of the Grecian empire). He gained success by defeating regions in the south (Egypt), to the east (Persia, Parthia, Armenia) and the “Beautiful Land” (Palestine). It was in Palestine where he took out vengeful campaign against the Jews and brutally persecuted them. Historians tell us that in one assault on Jerusalem, 40,000 Jews were killed in three days and 10,000 more were carried away into captivity. These were more likely the “stars” (8.10) that fell to the earth. A reference referring to Yahweh telling Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the heavens (Gen, 12).

This suppression came to head in December 168 B.C. when Antiochus was pushed from Alexandria by the Roman commander Popilius Laenas, and out of frustration, vented his anger on the Jews. Thus, he sent his general Apollonius, with twenty thousand troops under orders to seize Jerusalem on a Sabbath. After which, he erected an idol of Zeus and desecrated the altar by offering swine on it. This idol became known to the Jews as the abomination of desolation which served as a type of a future abomination that will be set up in the Jerusalem sanctuary to be built in the last days (cf. Christ prediction in Matt. 24.15). Thus, in one swift and vengeful sweep this once insignificant ruler brutally conquered God’s “beautiful land” and “caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the earth, and trampled them down” (v.10). He then, “magnified himself” to be equal with the Lord, desecrated the temple by sacrificing a pig on the altar and ceased all sacrifices and destroyed the Torah scrolls (1 Macc. 1.56) (vv. 11-12).

Daniel then records that two “holy ones” spoke to one another saying, “How long will the vision about the regular sacrifice apply” which is a “transgression” that causes horror because of how

the holy place was “trampled” on by Antiochus (v.13). The other holy one replied by saying that the description would last for “2300 evenings and mornings” (v.14), which could mean either, 2300 days (i.e. six years, four months, and 20 days) on a 24 hour day since the Jews described a day as morning and evening. Some believe this to be 1150 days and 1150 evening, meaning 1150 24 hour days (i.e. three years, two months, and 10 days). Which ever it is, it still meant that the morning and evening sacrifices would be halted by Antiochus during his reign before they would be restored once again on December 14, 164 B.C., when Judas Maccabaeus rededicated the temple and when the first Hanukkah was celebrated.

II. THE INTERPRETATION (8.15-25)

The Summary (vv. 15-19): As in the previous vision (7.16), Daniel needed help to understand what he had seen. He saw someone who looked like a man standing before him. Evidently this was an angel. Daniel also heard a voice that he could understand, possibly God’s, instructing the angel by name to give Daniel understanding of the vision. This angel is identified as Gabriel, whose name means, “strong man of God” or “man of God.” Gabriel is one of two angels, and the first, that the Bible identifies by name, the other being Michael (cf. 9.21; 10.13, 21; 12.1; Luke 1.19, 26). NOTE: Daniel is the only Old Testament book that identifies angels by name.

Gabriel’s approach made Daniel so fearful that he prostrated himself on the ground. The title “son of man” indicates humanity, and here, in contrast to Gabriel, it stressed Daniel’s human weakness (cf. 7.13; Ezek. 2.1). Daniel’s response to Gabriel was that he apparently fainted (Montgomery). The Hebrew here denotes that Daniel fell into a “coma-like state of deep sleep brought about by supernatural agency, especially in connection with the visionary experiences” (Goldingay). Gabriel proceeded to revive Daniel to prepare him to receive the remainder of the interpretation which would concern information about the end of time (vv. 18-19).

The Ram, Goat, and Horn (v. 20-25): Gabriel identifies the ram with the two horns as Media and Persia (cf. vv. 3-4). The goat, is further described as shaggy, represents Greece (cf. vv. 5-7). The large horn on the goat is the first king of Greece, namely, Alexander the Great. The four kingdoms that arose to replace Alexander when he died were Macedonia and Greece, Thrace and Asia Minor, Egypt and Palestine, and Syria and Persia (cf. v.8). As stated above, most scholars recognize that Antiochus Epiphanes fulfilled what Gabriel predicted in these verses who will on a smaller scale do what the AntiChrist will do on a larger scale in the much later period of the rule of these kings, namely the end times. A time when transgressors will have run their course even more completely. The Antichrist will oppose the Prince of princes, God the Son, who will break him without human agency (Ps. 2; Rev. 19.19-20 [vv. 23-25]).

III. THE SICKENING SECRET (8.26-28)

Daniel is then commanded by Gabriel to seal up the vision in the sense of recording, finishing, and preserving it, not in the sense of making it secret. It pertained to many days in the future, namely, four centuries later as well as beyond (v.26). Daniel was simply worn out by what he had seen and heard in his vision. This experience so drained him that he was sick for several days and could not work. Probably the knowledge that severe persecution was in store for “the holy people” (v.24) distressed him greatly. In spite of Gabriel’s interpretation, there were things that Daniel still did not understand about this vision (cf. 1 Pet. 1.10-12). He had to live with unanswered questions since God did not provide further help for him.

LIVE IT:

The emphasis in this chapter is on the little horn, as the emphasis in chapter 7 was on the little horn, though two different individuals are in view. The little horn in chapter 7 is the Antichrist, and the little horn in chapter 8 is Antiochus in the short range and Antichrist in the long range. Chapter 8 focuses on the Jews as the target of Antiochus’ antagonism in the short range. Chapter 7 focuses on believers as the target of the Antichrist’s opposition. However, there is some hint in both chapters that in the long range the Jews will be the objects of persecution as even witnessed in our modern times today.

How are God’s people to face persecution for being identified as one of His own? To address this we need to understand why we face persecution.

- We face persecution because this world is hostile towards the Lord without cause (Jn. 15.18; Ps. 69.4; Matt. 10.22)
- We face persecution because we became friends with God at salvation. When we surrendered our will to Christ and subjected ourselves to His Lordship, we instantly became an enemy to the world. This is because they hate the God we love (Jn. 15.19; 1 Pet. 2.9; Ps. 4.3; James 4.4)
- We face persecution because darkness always hates the light (Jn. 3.19-21). Because of Christ is the Light of the world, His light convicts darkness. People love darkness more than light because their deeds are evil. God’s Law exposes sin, Christ is the Light that not only reveals our sin, but also leads us to His grace. Therefore, a true follower of Christ will influence those around them because the light of Christ will shine from our lives, thus become a convicting reminder of God’s truth and righteousness that they so despise and reject (Matt. 5.14-15).
- We face persecution because people hate the truth (Rom. 1.18; Amos 5.10; Gal. 4.16; Jn. 17.17).
- We face persecution because of the mission we are sent on by Christ. Prophets were hated in the Bible because they had to go and tell unbelievers who think they are good, have been doing things wrong and that their deeds are as filthy rags. Their reaction is “how dare you say I am not good enough, God knows my heart.” Unfortunately, the last statement is true. God does know your heart (Rom 10.3; Matt. 7.22-23; Eph. 2.8-9).

The list of reasons is enormous. Suffice to say, that Satan has blinded this world to the truth and has cause many to believe a lie (2 Cor. 4.4). When a society hates and rationalizes God's Word and make adjustments to it to fit their sinful lifestyle they reveal their blindness. Thus, they do not want to be held accountable to their sins. Unfortunately, the Lord will in end hold all accountable. Both great and small, rich and poor.

Unfortunately for Daniel he had no one to explain what he had seen, but fortunately for you, you do. The comfort we have is that not only can we go out and share under Christ authority what the Lord has done to save others, but we also have the empowerment of His Spirit in us (Rom. 8.9). So, even though we may be persecuted for being identified as followers of Christ, we can ashamedly (Rom. 1.16) take the gospel to the world and share the forgiving love of Christ to all with the hopes that they are part of God's elect in His kingdom (Eph. 2.8-10).

The greatest comfort in being persecuted for being known as God's child is that in the end, you will be forever loved in eternity by the Lord Himself, surrounded by a great cloud of loving witnesses, who many themselves have been persecuted, even to death as followers and witnesses of Christ Jesus our Lord.

DANIEL LESSON 9
“INTERCESSORY PRAYER”
Daniel 9.1-27

LOOK IT UP:

■ **REVIEW:** How has the Lord been challenging you concerning His plans for the end of time? What concerns you? What brings peace to you? How will this change how you live for the Lord?

■ **REFLECT:**

1. What is time reference of chapter 9? Who is the king at this time? (v.1)

2. What was the source of Daniel’s inspiration to pray? What did he call this source? (vv. 2-3) What was the subject that became the foundation of Daniel’s prayer?

3. What was the mood of Daniel’s prayer? (v. 3)

4. Summarize or outline Daniel’s prayer to the Lord (vv. 4-19)

5. When did the Lord answer Daniel’s prayer? (vv. 20-23)

6. What was the Lord’s response to Daniel’s prayer (vv. 24-27) What did the Lord reveal?

■ **REVEAL:** What motivates you to pray? Who do you pray for? What do you pray? How do you pray? Are your prayers more about your needs or others? What does Daniel teach you about praying?

LESSON 9: Daniel 9.1-27

LEARN IT:

OVERVIEW: During the first year of the reign of Darius, Daniel observed in the writings of Jeremiah, the completion of the desolation of Jerusalem, namely the 70 years and begins interceding on behalf of His people, praying by confessing their sin and asking the Lord to release them and send the captives back to Palestine (9.1-19). The Lord sends Gabriel once again as his messenger to give His answer to Daniel (vv. 20-23). The Lord reveals to Daniel God's plan for Israel, the Messiah and the Antichrist (vv. 24-27).

PURPOSE: Prayerfully be prepared for what the Lord will do.

BACKGROUND: This chapter records a third vision that Daniel received (cf. chs. 7-8). The vision itself occupies only a small part of this chapter (vv. 24-27), but the verses that precede it prepare for it and connect with it. Daniel indicates that this vision took place during the first year of Darius the Mede (Cyrus's) rule as king over the former Neo-Babylonian Empire (5.31; cf. Ezra 1.1). This would place this vision around 538 B.C.. This means that Belshazzar's feast (ch. 5) occurred between chapters 8 and 9.

I. Daniel's Prayer (vv. 1-19)

The Inspiration (vv. 1-3): The inspiration to pray and what to pray for should come from God's Word. Some how, Daniel was able to obtain a copy of Jeremiah's prediction during the first year of Darius's reign. Jeremiah's writing predicted the length of Jerusalem's desolation (cf. Jer. 36.23,28). Jeremiah had revealed that the city would lie in ruins for 70 years and then God would destroy Babylonia (Jer 25.11-12; 29.10-14; cf. 2 Chron. 36.21). Daniel received this vision about 67 years after Nebuchadnezzar had deported the first group of exiles, including himself, in 605 B.C.. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the temple and Jerusalem in 586 B.C., thus the specific period of desolation in verse 2 probably refers to 586-515 B.C., since "the desolation of Jerusalem" are in view. Daniel also interprets Jeremiah's prediction to be a literal "70 years." Daniel's understanding of a literal fulfillment of numbers in prophecy helps us know how we should understand at least some of them. Daniel also regarded Jeremiah's prophecy as "the word of the Lord." (v.2). Daniel then, understood this prediction that God would restore His people to their land when they prayed to Him wholeheartedly (Jer. 29.12-14). Thus, this revelation prompted Daniel to pray the prayer that follows (vv 3-19 [v.3]).

The Prayer (vv. 4-19):

Confession of Sin (vv. 4-6): Daniel starts by saying that, "I prayed to the Lord my God..." (v.4a). This is only the second time in the book that Daniel used the name Yahweh for God (cf. vv. 2,8, 10, 13, 14, 20). He also addressed God as "Adonai (master)" in verses 4 and 7. In verses 5-6, Daniel stressed God's transcendence and His loyal love (Heb. hesed) to Israel in his salutation (v. 4). He then proceeded to point out that, in contrast to Yahweh's faithfulness to Israel, Israel had been unfaithful to Him. Daniel included himself by identifying with his people. Personally he had been faithful to God. Yet since he was an Israelite, he partook of the blessing and curses that

God sent Israel for her obedience and disobedience (cf. Deut 28.48-57, 64-68). Here, he listed several of Israel's sins. First, their sins of commission and omission (vv.5-6). Daniel wanted to confess all the nation's sins of every kind to their full extent. Especially sinful was the fact that all classes within Israel had disregarded God's words to them through His prophets (cf. 2 Chron. 30.10). To disregard God's Word is foolishness (Prov. 1.7).

Admission of Guilt (vv. 7-14): Daniel then proceeded to contrast the righteousness that belongs to God, with the guilt and shame that belonged to His people because they had sinned against Him (vv. 7-8). He also compared God's forgiveness and compassion with Israel's rebellion (v.9). Daniel focused again of Israel's great sin of disregarding God's words to her (v.10).

In the next verses (vv. 11-14), Daniel admits that all of this sin resulted in Israel's humiliation among the Gentile nations. God had poured out curses on His people because of these sins (v. 11b). He had done what He had promised He would do if Israel departed from Him (v. 12; cf. Deut. 28.15-68). Moses had warned the Israelites about departing from God, yet His people had not sought His favor by repenting (v.13). Therefore, calamity had descended on them, since Yahweh is righteous in all His deeds, while they had not obeyed His voice (v.14).

Some who pray would hardly take time to glorify the Lord during a time of admitting guilt and confessing sin. Yet, Daniel glorified God for dealing justly with His people who, Daniel acknowledged, deserved all the punishment they had received.

Supplication for Forgiveness and Restoration (vv. 15-19): Having laid a foundation for appeal in his confession (vv. 4-14), Daniel now proceeded to petition God to restore His people to the Promise Land. First, he refers to the Exodus, as a former demonstration of God's power and faithfulness for His people when they found themselves in a situation similar to that of the Babylonian exiles. Against Daniel stressed Gods reputation and Israel's unworthiness, clarifying the basis for his appeal (cf. vv. 4-5 [v.15]).

Next, Daniel appealed to God as Adonai, stressing His sovereignty over His people, and as Elohim, the strong One. As God had righteously brought discipline on Israel for her past sins, Daniel asked Him to bring restoration righteously, since He had promised to do so. The answer would primarily glorify God, and secondarily, bless His people (vv. 16-17).

Daniel again, appeals to God to hear and answer his prayer, not because the Israelites deserved it, but because God is compassionate (cf. Exod. 32.12-14). It is interesting that Daniel did not tell God what to do, instead he asked God to hear, to see, and to act. This is a humble approach that does not dictate to God but leaves the answering up to Him. This magnificent prayer builds an emotional positive, logical climax in verse 19 (vv. 18-19).

II. God's Answer (vv. 20-27)

When does God answer prayers? Have you ever asked that question? Here we see that God began responding to Daniel's prayer as soon as he began praying (cf. v.19; Luke 11.10-13). What

this means is that the prayer recorded in the preceding verses is only a summary of what the prophet prayed, since he prayed long and hard (v. 21).

God's Response to Daniel (vv. 20-23): The Lord sends Gabriel to Daniel once again. Evidently, Daniel had become weary because of his praying and fasting. The time of the evening offering was 3:00 p.m.. The Jews were not able to offer the regular morning and evening sacrifices after the Babylonians destroyed their temple. However, pious Jews such as Daniel still prayed at these customary times (cf. 6.10). This may be similar to those who pray at the wailing wall in Jerusalem today (vv.20-21).

Daniel's concern for God's reputation (vv. 4-14) doubtless made him special to God (v.23). The vision that God had sent Gabriel to convey constituted an answer to Daniel's prayer. It revealed what would happen to the Jews (vv. 22-23).

God's Revelation of Israel's Future (vv. 24-27): In the concluding four verse of Daniel 9, one of the most important prophecies of the Old Testament is contained. The prophecy as a whole is presented in verse 24. The first sixty-nine sevens is described in verse 25. The events between the sixty-ninth seventh and the seventieth seventh are detailed in verse 26. The final period of the seventieth seventh is described in verse 27 (Walvoord).

- **70 Weeks:** The Hebrew word translated "weeks" (shabu'im) literally means, "sevens." It can refer to seven days (Gen. 29.27-28) or seven years, as verses 26-27 show. Daniel had been thinking of God's program for Israel in terms of years. He had read Jeremiah's prophecy that the exile would last 70 years (vv. 1-2). It would have been normal then for him to interpret these sevens as years (Otto Zockler, *The Book of the Prophet Daniel*" in Lange's Commentary on the Holy Scripture; and the New Scofield).
- **The Math:** Seventy seven-year periods totals 490 years. Therefore, as Jerusalem was suffering under the hand of Gentiles for 70 years (v.2), so the Jews and Jerusalem would suffer under the hand of Gentiles for 490 years. However, these will not be uninterrupted years. Israel's rule by Davidic monarchs had suffered interruption: the last king being Zedekiah and the next, Messiah.

God had decreed these years. He had ordained them, and they were as certain to come as anything else that God had foreordained. This verse states that the purpose for God decreeing this period is six-fold:

1. To end rebellion against Him.
2. To end human failure to obey God.
3. To provide time for atonement that will cover human wickedness.
4. To inaugurate a new society in which righteousness prevails.
5. To bring in the fulfillment of the vision that God has for the earth.
6. The announcing of the most holy, probably a reference to a new and more glorious temple (Ezek. 40-48).

Already, the Lord has achieved some of these goals: specifically the third one and to some extent the first two. However, other goals have not yet seen fulfillment. Those await for an imminent time which could be fulfilled in our own perspective of history.

When does God's clock begin ticking? Up to this time before Gabriel's announcement (cf. v. 24), the Lord had not been keeping time. With this decree of 490 years (70 weeks), the Lord would start keeping time when a certain decree was issued to restore and rebuild Jerusalem. Below is God's timeline for the end of the world:

- 1st week: In 445 B.C. Artaxerxes issued a second decree to rebuild and restore Jerusalem. This decree was issued in the month of Nisan (March) in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes (v.25; cf. Neh. 2.1-8, 17,18).
- Weeks 1-7: 49 years later (seven weeks) Jerusalem was rebuilt with a plaza and moat during times of distress (v. 25b). The distress that Gabriel spoke of concerned the Ammonites, Moabites, and Samaritans, all of whom opposed the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Therefore, they mocked the Jews, ridiculed them, plotted to kill Nehemiah, and threatened war. The Jews stationed guards with weapons and trumpets at 500 foot intervals around the wall; the Jews wore swords while they worked and kept shields within a few feet of every man (cf. Nehemiah 4). After the completion of rebuilding Jerusalem, Gabriel states that in 62 weeks (434 years) the Messiah would appear (v.25b). Some figure this out to be Palm Sunday, April 6, 32 A.D., the day when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey and revealed himself as Israel's Messiah (Matthew 21.1-11).
- 69th week: Gabriel told Daniel that after the second time period of sixty-two sevens (434 years), Jesus, the Messiah would be cut off (crucified). Some believe this to have happened on the cross in 32 A.D. After the Messiah's crucifixion (cut off), Gabriel states there will come a "prince" who will bring a flood of terror and "destroy the city and the sanctuary" (v.26). Some believe this to have been the Roman General Titus in 70 A.D. who sacked and burned Jerusalem, killed 5 million Jews, and tore the Temple apart stone by stone.
- 70th week: The final week of sevens marks the end. Gabriel states then, during the 70th week a prince will "make a firm covenant with the many for one week (7 years), but in the middle of the week (3 1/2 years) he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering" (cf. the little horn ch. 7 and 8) and will bring about a desolation and abomination in the temple and then at the end of the 70th week, the Messiah will come and defeat this prince (Antichrist) and destroy him (v.27b).

Meaning this, we are in the times between the 69th and 70th weeks, known either as an age of grace or times of the gentiles. God's clock ceased ticking when Jesus the Christ (Messiah) was crucified by His own. The 70th week will not commence until the Antichrist makes a covenant (v.27a) for one week (70th week, 7 years), only to break his covenant to bring about a Great Tribulation on all God's people and the world. Then, at the end of the 70th week comes our Lord Jesus Christ, in all His power and glory, and He will slay that dragon, and then will come the Millennial reign of Christ, followed by the eternal ages to come.

LIVE IT:

Daniel had already exemplified a devoted and habitual prayer life (Dan. 2.18; 6.10). Here we witness that the source of inspiration for his prayer in chapter 9 comes from the very word of the Lord (9.2). The word of God should lead one to be focus on God's will. In knowing and understand God's will and ways through His Word becomes the source of our inspiration and guide for praying. For without going to God's Word first, how will we know or discover what the Lord desires. Our prayers should be born out of the desire of what God wants, rather than man.

The posture and attitude of prayer should be one of humility. Most times our prayers are one-sided conversations with the Lord, by which our posture reflects the single-mindedness of our heart and mind. We witness through Daniel an example how to approach the Lord through prayer: Daniel...

- gave his full attention to the Lord (v3).
- humbly sought the Lord in prayer through humble posture (v. 3).
- addressed the Lord personally (v. 4)
- acknowledge the Lord's greatness (v.4)
- reminded the Lord of His covenant (v.4)
- praise the Lord for His kindness towards those who obey Him and His Word (v4)
- Confessed personal and corporate sins (vv.5-13)
- Agreed that the Lord was right in corporately discipling Israel for their disobedience towards Him, even if it included the same for the righteous few (vv. 12-14)
- Reminded the Lord how He worked restoration in the past (vv. 15-16)
- Asked the Lord to hear his prayer for forgiveness and restoration (vv 17-19)

All these are elements that should be part of every believers prayer life. We even see elements of this in the prayer life of Christ, Peter, Paul and other biblical saints. Perhaps there is something to be gained by these examples as we approach the holy throne of God with confidence in our time of need. James reminds us to "humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up (Jms. 4.10).

DANIEL LESSON 10
“Future Vision”
Daniel 10.1-12.12

LOOK IT UP:

■ **REVIEW:** Did you spend time this past week to pray for God’s people and for His will to be done? Did you pray for those who are lost who are not ready for Christ return or for death? Are you praying for Christ to return quickly?

■ **REFLECT:**

1. When did this revelation take place for Daniel? (10.1)

2. How was Daniel prepared for the revelation? What had he been doing for several weeks? (10.2-3).

3. Who do you presume spoke to Daniel in these verses? (10.5-21)

4. Describe the revelation Daniel received - who was it about and who did it effect? (11.2-45)

5. What is the victory and hope of chapter 12.1-3?

6. What is Daniel instructed to do with the book? (12.4, 9). Why do you suppose he is asked to do this?

■ **REVEAL:** Are you ready for Christ’s return? What are you placing your hope on? Read Genesis 22.4-8. What hope did Abraham have? What is your hope? How is this similar to Daniel’s hope and message and the gospel today?

LESSON 10: Daniel 10.1-12.12

LEARN IT:

OVERVIEW: Daniel receives one more terrifying vision from the Lord during a season of fasting (10.1-9). He is comforted and strengthened by the Lord to receive the understanding of the vision (10.10-11.1). The vision revealed to Daniel came in two parts: the immediate future from Darius through Antiichus (11.2-35); and the distant future, namely: the seventieth seven (9.27), of the Tribulation Period (11.36-12.4). The rest of chapter 12 provides a conclusion to this revelation.

PURPOSE: Believer's are not to fear the future. There is peace and encouragement in knowing that the Lord is sovereign over all history, both today and tomorrow.

BACKGROUND: The third year of Cyrus' rule as king over Babylon was 536 B.C.. Cyrus had begun ruling over Persia in 558 B.C., but Daniel's and the other biblical writers' interest in Cyrus was as ruler over Babylon, which he conquered in 539 B.C. (5.31). Cyrus had issued his decree allowing the Jews to return to their land and to rebuild their temple in 538 B.C. Some of them had departed that same year under Zerubbabel's leadership.

The returned exiles had reinstitute the sacrifices by 537 B.C. (Ezra 3.6), and by 536 B.C. they had begun to rebuild the temple (Ezra 3.8). Daniel would have been in his 80's in 536 B.C., and his age may account for his not returning to the Promised Land. Daniel remained in Babylon for several additional years, perhaps in retirement.

I. Comfort and Courage from the Lord (10.1-11.1)

(vv. 1-3) - During the third year of Cyrus's reign in Babylon (536 B.C.), Daniel received a "message" from the Lord. This message perhaps again came from an angel of the Lord. Daniel indicates that this message was true and that it involved a revelation of great conflict to come. Daniel was prepared to receive this "message" as he had been "mourning, praying and fasting" for three weeks. This was nothing new to Daniel as we had seen this spiritual practice in his life before (9.3; 1.11-13). The days of fasting for Daniel possibly took place during the days in which the Jewish Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread were celebrated, though it was possibly as a result of the news Daniel received concerning those who returned to the promise land and were encountering opposition (cf. Ezra 4.1-5, 24; Phil. 4.6-7). Even though many Israelites were returning to Palestine, God had already revealed that they would experience trouble there.

(vv. 4-6) - Daniel notes that he was by the bank of the "great river... Tigris" where he had encountered the Son of God (vv. 4-5). Daniel's description of the man he saw is very similar to that of the apostle John in Revelation and Ezekiel (cf. Ezek. 1.26-28; Rev. 1.13-16; 2.18). The description of the man's dress resembles that of the expensive linen dress that the priests in Israel wore, and it distinguished them as God's special servants. Likewise, the sash around the man's waist, evidently embroidered with or made completely of the best gold, would have identified him as a special person. The meaning of "Uphaz" is uncertain. It may be the same as "Ophir." The personal descriptions of this man resemble what John saw on the island of Patmos, namely:

the Son of God (Rev. 1.13-16; cf. Ezek. 1.13-14). All these features picture a person of great glory and splendor.

(vv. 7-9) - Daniel's companions, sensing something awesome was happening (cf. Acts 9.7; 22.9), hid themselves while Daniel viewed what God showed him (v. 7). His personal reaction to this vision was also similar to the Apostle John's (v. 8; cf. 8.27; Rev. 1.17). The words of the person Daniel saw, along with his glorious appearance, caused the prophet to faint (v.9).

(vv. 10-14) - Now, the "man" who touched Daniel and proceeded to speak to him may not have been the same one the prophet saw in the vision (vv. 5-6). The person in verses 10-21 was more likely the angel Gabriel, since God sent Gabriel to Daniel on other occasions (8.16; 9.21). The angel described Daniel as a "man of high esteem" (cf. 9.23; 10.19). We know that Daniel enjoyed a good reputation among his peers, but this title probably reflects God's estimate of him. The word for "esteem" in Hebrew (*hemodut*) literally means, "man of preciousness." Daniel was precious to God, not only because he was one of God's chosen people, but also because God had been precious to him (vv. 10-11). The angel then comforts and encourages Daniel not to be afraid. Even though this angel had been delayed 21 days by some "prince of Persia", whether an Satanic angel or political entity in Persia, this good angel (possibly Gabriel) had come to give understanding to Daniel concerning what will happen to God's people in the latter days (vv. 12-14). Daniel had already received some revelation about what lay ahead for the Jews (cf. 8.23-26; 9.24-27). It was evidently this revelation that puzzled Daniel and led to his requesting clarification in prayer (vv. 1-2). Now, what follows in 11.2-12.4 is more information about Israel's fate relative to Antiochus Epiphanies, in the near future, and information about Israel's fate relative to the Antichrist, in the distant future.

(vv. 15-19) - Apparently the angel's explanation about the angelic conflict was something about which Daniel had known nothing about. Daniel's response was simply to bow his head and silently accept this revelation (v. 15). Then, the good angel touched his lips to enable Daniel to speak (cf. 7.16; 8.15-19; 9.21-22; Isa. 6.7; Jer. 1.9). Daniel proceeded to explain that the vision had caused him anxiety and robbed him of his strength (cf. Isa. 6.5). Daniel felt so inferior to the angel that he considered himself unworthy to talk to him (vv. 16-17). In his weakness, Daniel is strengthened once again by the angel a third time (vv. 10, 16; cf. Her. 1.14). The angel once again encourages Daniel that he is precious in God's sight and not to fear, to feel at peace, to take courage, and to be courageous (v. 19; cf. Josh. 1.9). These words strengthened the aged prophet and he asked the angel to give him the rest of the revelation. The intensity of Daniel's weakness and desire for greater knowledge of the vision is probably recorded to make the reader anticipate the importance of the following revelation to come.

(vv. 20-21) - Before the angel reveals the message to come, he asked Daniel if he knew why he had come to him. The angel informed Daniel that he had to return to resume his fighting against the demon who was influencing Persia (v. 13), and then battle the one that would be influencing Greece. The prince of Greece maybe a reference to Alexander the Great. Persia and Greece, of course, are two of the kingdoms that have been the focus of prophecy in this book. The angel

proceeds to inform Daniel that what he is revealing is the “writing of Truth” (v. 21). This “truth” seems to refer to all that God has recorded as truth. This includes Scripture, but it also includes all that is true that God has not revealed. The angel would make part of what God had established as “truth” known to Daniel. The angel intended this revelation to encourage Daniel, in view of his having to leave the prophet to return to spiritual warfare. Revealing to Daniel what takes place in the spiritual realm, with God’s angels (Michael and Gabriel) coming along side him and his people, ought to have given courage to Daniel. Knowing that the Lord’s angels are fighting the good fight, ought to be encouraging to us today, knowing that we are not alone in the good work of the Lord.

(11.1) - This verse actually fits better as a conclusion to chapter 10. Darius, as we have mentioned before was probably another name for Cyrus. This king had actually been a champion in many ways for the people of God while in captivity. He was also responsible in making as one of his first decrees to allow the Jews to return from exile. The connection of this verse to chapter 10 becomes a bookend to the angelic activity assisting Darius decision making and blessing for the Jews. This king had also issued a decree commanding everyone in his kingdom to honor Yahweh (6.26-27). Thus, the point of this verse is that the good fortune that the Israelites now experienced, under Darius, had been the result of successful angelic warfare in the heavenly realms.

LIVE IT:

There are many things that we do not know concerning the activities of God and the spiritual realm. All the things we know, we have written as truth in the Word of God, the Bible. These are the testimonies of God and His direct revelation to us, giving us all we need to know about who He is (Holy), who we are (sinful), how we can be saved (salvation) and how to live (set apart) for him until He brings all things to an end for His glory (eschatology).

God’s people, and the rest of humanity, live in a complex and terrifying world. The forces we know very little about in the spiritual realm, along with those in the earthly realm, battle either against the will of God or for the will of God. It is not surprising that even a godly man such as Daniel would feel weak concerning the future of his people and what was and would take place in history concerning the fate of mankind and God’s people. Like, Daniel, we need the encouragement of God’s truth to strengthen our resolve to serve a living and eternal God.

Those who observe God’s activity and plan in this world tend to have a greater sensitivity in what the last days mean for all of man kind. It is a troublesome burden to feel and carry. Daniel certainly felt it and carried this burden. This is good for us to see and also to experience, because this burden should drive us with purpose to make known God’s truth about what is to come. To warn and prepare everyone concerning the fate of mankind and God’s people. This burden is a message that is mixed with the heavy outcome of the ungodly and the joyful anticipation for the righteous in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This chapter should help those of us who read and study it to prepare our hearts for the proceeding message to come in the remaining two chapters. The revelation Daniel would receive would not only prepare him for what is to come, but to encourage him to know that God's people are not forsaken, even though, for a time, we might experience a great tribulation to come. As the apostle Paul wrote, "If God is for us, who can be against us!" This is of great encouragement for us all to know that the Lord and His armies are fighting for us as we serve Him in this world, in this life until He calls us home to be with Him. Just as the Lord spoke to Joshua, the battle belongs to the Lord - therefore, be strong and courageous!

II. Conflict and Challenges to Come (11.2-45)

The interpreting angel now explained the long anticipated revelation about the future that involved Daniel's people, the Jews (v.10). The first part of that future concerns events preceding the Messiah's first advent (vv. 2-35). The second part concerns events preceding the Messiah's second event (11.36-12.4)

Events before the Messiah's first advent (11.2-35)

- (v.2) - The events that precede the Messiah's first advent concerns the prophecy effecting Daniel's near future. The interpreting angel reveals what will take place concerning four future kings of the Persian empire (v.2). These four kings from our history were known to be Cambyses, Pseudo-Smerdis, and Darius I. The fourth Persian king to appear became the stronger of the four, and attacked Greece just as predicted. This fourth king was known as Xerxes I (Ahasuerus).

- (vv. 3-4) - The angel then revealed that the king who would overcome Xerxes I would be a great and mighty king from Greece. History tells us this to be Alexander the Great, whose invasion of the Persian empire was large in part in retaliation for Xerxes' attacks against his people. Alexander quickly overthrew the Persian yoke in 331 B.C. near Nineveh. His conquest only took five years (334-330 B.C.). But, Alexander's conquest ended prematurely in Babylon, which was his imperial capital. His two sons were both murdered when they were young, as was his uncle, Philip Arrhidæus. This left the kingdom with no heir and thus, the kingdom was eventually divided up between Alexander's four leading generals (cf. 7.6; 8.8,22). Cassander ruled Macedonia-Greece, Lysimachus governed Thrace-Asia Minor, Seleucus took the rest of Asia except lower Syria and Palestine, and Ptolemy reigned over Egypt and Palestine.

- (vv. 5-35) - This next section forecasts the conflicts that would take place between the Ptolemies (southern kingdom - Egypt/Palestine) and the Seleucids (northern kingdom - Syria). These conflicts would eventual lead to the rising of Antiochus IV (Epiphanes or madman) who is describe by the angel as the "contemptible person" of verse 21. In his attempt to gain absolute control over Egypt, he led ruthless campaigns against the south and failed to overcome the Ptolemies who had control over that region. Out of rage and anger for not being able to gain control of the south, he turned his wrath towards Jerusalem, more specifically, the Jewish people (vv. 30-35). In doing so, Antiochus desecrated the altar in the temple, set up an image to Zeus (168 BC), and required the Jews to worship the gods of the Greeks. The "little help" that the

Lord raised up (v.34) would historically be Judas Maccabeus. The godly Mattathias led the Jews to resist the order to sacrifice to the gods. His son Judas Maccabeus led the insurrection and by God's grace restored and cleansed the temple. The dedication of the altar took place in December 165 B.C.. This event forms the background of the Hanukkah (dedication) celebration (cf. Jn. 10.22).

The angel's purpose in revealing Antiochus is to present the power and spirit that typified all kings who exalt themselves, doing whatever they please. This description not only applies to Antiochus, but is also the symbol of all evil. More specifically, the Antichrist to come who would pour out all kinds of evil against God's people in the distant future. The struggles that God's people would encounter would then become a time of purging and purification to prepared them for the end to come, "the appointed time" (v.35). Anthony Tomasino comments in his book, "Judiasm Before Jesus" - "The amazingly detailed prophecies of the first thirty-five verses of this chapter, containing as they do approximately one hundred and thirty-five prophetic statements, all now fulfilled, constitute an impressive introduction to the events that are yet future, beginning in verse 36...". John Walvoord compliments this by stating, "The fact is that there is no supported evidence which can contradict any statement made in these thirty-five verses...from the divine viewpoint, the accuracy of this prophetic word is supporting evidence that prophecy yet unfulfilled will have the same precise fulfillment in the future."

Events before the Messiah's second advent (11.36-12.4)

In the revelation given to Daniel about the 70 sevens (9.24-27), we observed that what Gabriel told the prophet in verses 24-26 has already happened. Those verses described what would happen in the first 69 sevens. Verse 27 predicts things that have not happened yet. It reveals what will happen in the seventieth seven. There is a similar break between verses 35-36 of chapter 11. What was predicted in verses 2-35 has happened. What follows in this chapter has not happened. This section predicts what will take place in the distant future (11.36-12.4).

- (vv. 36-39) - The angel speaks of a coming ruler. Like Antiochus, this coming ruler will have the power to do as he pleases, but will not be subjected to a higher human authority (cf. 7.23; Rev. 13.1-10; 17.12). He will exalt himself higher than any other god; which implies that he will demand worship. He will also repudiate the true God (cf. 7.25; Rev. 17.14). He will succeed for a time, until God's indignation against His people the Jews has run its course. All of this will happen under the sovereign authority of God. It is possible, as some believe, that this ruler might possibly be a Jew as reference as one who will "have no regard for the gods of his fathers" or "desire for women" and "show reward for any other god" (v.37a). This ruler will be an atheistic Jew who will have no desire for women who desire to be the mother of the Messiah. Because of this, he will magnify himself above them all (v.37b). This antichrist will not worship gods, but honor the gods of fortresses, for he will be the personification of war and might (v.38). His god will be war and military power. He will go to war against the strongest nations with the help of his own "foreign god" (v.39). This antichrist will destroy anyone who would challenge him. He will become like a "beast" (Rev. 13.4). He will reward those who bow to him and make

them ruler over many people and allot them territories to rule by yielding their allegiance to him (v. 39b).

- (vv. 40-45) - Up to this time everything would have been going in the way of the antichrist, but things would change as his rivals Egypt and Syria will form a coalition against the antichrist and his empire will begin to disintegrate. The vials of God's wrath will be directed at the power structure of the beast. The result will be a lesser grip on his universal empire. The eastern half of which will break away and mobilize against him (cf. Rev. 16.12-16). The eastern armies will attempt to take advantage of the antichrist's local troubles in the Middle East and will march against him. They will cross the Euphrates river and deploy on the plain of Armageddon, or the mountain of Megiddo. The antichrist will then gather his armies from the west to meet them there setting up the final battle on earth, the war to end all wars, the battle of Armageddon. A battle that will be over in a moment when Christ comes to put an end to all his enemies, including the antichrist (Rev. 19).

- (12.1-3) - The verses above focused on the activities of the antichrist, the following verses focuses on Israel. These predict the deliverance of Israel. This speaks of the end time which will be a time of intense persecution of Jews and climaxes with God's faithfulness to His promised people and His covenant with them. Throughout the course of Israel's history they have encountered many level's of distress. John Philipps comments: "The sufferings of the Jews began with the Egyptians who attempted to exterminate them. The Assyrians kings, Babylonian emperors, and Persian potentates have turned their hands against them. Xerxes ordered their total extermination from all of his realms. Greek tyrants and Roman Caesars, neighboring princelings and church officials, Spanish inquisitors and Roman popes, medieval kings and swashbuckling czars and commissars - one and all have persecuted this people...but the great tribulation will be worse of them all."

Not only do we see the great tribulation of God's people, but we also get a glimpse of the doctrine of resurrection. It is hinted in the Old Testament, but not stated clearly (v.2). Abraham hinted to it when he went to Mt. Moriah to offer up Isaac, he believed that God could raise his son from the dead (Gen. 22; Heb. 11.19). Job expected to see God in his resurrection body (Job 19.25-27), and this anticipation was shared by the writers of the psalms (17.15; 49.15; 71.20). Even the prophets believed in future resurrection. Jesus, though brought "life and immortality to light" (2 Tim. 1.10) and clearly taught the fact of His own resurrection and what that would mean to His followers (Jn. 5.19-30; 11.17-44). Here, the angel predicts when Jesus returns during His second advent, the dead in Christ will be raised first, and then the living believers will be caught up with them to be with the Lord (1 Thess. 4.13-18). When Jesus returns at the end of the tribulation, He will bring with Him people who will share in His victory and glory. But, the angel warns, some will awake to enjoy glory, some everlasting contempt and everlasting judgment (v. 2; cf. Rev. 20.14).

Finally, the angel predicts the rewards the Lord will give at the judgment seat of Christ (Rom. 14.9-12; 2 Cor. 5.6-10). The angel states that they will "shine brightly like the brightness of the

expanse of heaven” (v. 3). This possibly speaks of the transformed bodies of the redeemed. They will be like “the stars forever and ever”, meaning the eternity of the redeemed in Christ.

- (12.4) - Finally, Daniel is instructed to “conceal” and “seal up” the book until the “end of time” (v.4). Meaning that Daniel is to preserve this message (the Book of Daniel) until the end of time or tribulation, because much of what God had revealed to him concerned the far distant future, much of which he confessed, he did not understand.

LIVE IT:

The commonality that we have with Daniel and his people is that like them, we still do not fully comprehend this book’s prophecies. Even though we have seen many of the predictions come true, they would embrace this by faith, we on the other hand embrace it by faith because we have seen the faithful activity of God at work. Since the Lord has fulfilled already many of these predictions, by faith, we trust that the Lord will continue to fulfill His purpose and will towards His covenant people, Israel and His church for the things to come. Just as the future would be difficult for Daniel’s people, the same for those in the future as well in the present. Jesus promised that we would have persecution, Peter and Paul encouraged the churches in how to handle persecution, knowing that the persecution we face today will be in no comparison to the great tribulation to come under the hand of the antichrist.

The application for Daniel and his readers is still the same for us. God will work out His will. We are to trust in what God is doing. We are to remain faithful and obedient to Him. We are to be alert and look forward to the blessed hope and resurrection we have in Christ for the eternal ages to come. This is our victory to come. This is our hope. This is our distant future to come. To reign and rule with Christ who will bring final victory over all God’s enemies, by which He will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed. An eternal kingdom ruled by Christ Jesus our Lord.

III. Conclusion of Conflicts for Israel (12.5-13)

- (vv. 5-7) - On both sides of the Tigris river (cf. 10.4), Daniel saw two “others” (or angels). One angel asked a question, while the other answered him. The first asked, “when will all this take place?” (v.6). The second angel replied by saying, during “a time, times and half a time” meaning, three and a half years (v.7). The times of which the predicting angel spoke of, the time a great tribulation, which will take place during the final half of the tribulation period of seven years. It will be at time that the antichrist would have utterly destroy the will and exterminated and defeated the Jews to the point of extinction; then God Himself will intervene in mighty judgment on the invaders and will utterly destroy them (cf. Zec. 14.3). This will end the reign of the antichrist and the beast at the battle of Armageddon.

- (vv. 8-13) - Daniel, obviously confused by all these predictions, heard them, but could not understand them and is instructed to go his way and seal up and conceal these predictions (vv. 8-9). These times are to “purge and purify” God’s people and for the wicked to act more “wickedly” (v.10). It will also happen during a time when after having restored the practice of sacrificing in the new temple in Jerusalem during the first half of the tribulation will come to an

end when the antichrist will break his covenant with God's people and desecrate the temple. The number of those days would be 1290 days (3.5 years) when the antichrist will set up the abomination of desolation (v.11). But, in the end, there is a blessing for those who remain faithful to end (1335 days - v.12) for it will at that time that finally, God's people will enter into His rest and rise again when the Son of Man will Himself assume supreme control over the entire earth. This, being the millennial reign of Christ (v.13; cf. Rev. 19.11ff).

LIVE IT:

What practical understanding should we take away from this book? One, Christians should look forward to the beginning of this Messianic age and pray for its coming (Matt. 6.10; Luke 11.2). Just as this book would have encouraged the Jews of Daniel's day, it has become increasingly encouraging to God's people as history unfolds. Today, we can see, as never before, how God has fulfilled His predictions exactly in the past. This gives us great confidence as we anticipate His faithfulness to those promises that still remain unfulfilled.

Other applications is that we can understand how God will create history; we can know about the "times and seasons" that are still future. This knowledge should make us feel the urgency of our commission (Matt. 28.19-20) and the alertness of God's activity in the world. It should spur us on to evangelism and mission and discipleship. It should also give us a sense of peace as we go through trouble and hope that God will will the battle over evil. It should encourage us to inform God's people of what He has revealed so they can be informed and ready for what is coming. And it should cause us to live holy lives in view of the Lord's return.

Amen! Come quickly Lord Jesus!