



villagebible.church/daniel

DANIEL

KINGDOMS, CHAOS, AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

SMALL GROUP LESSONS
PART 1



TABLE OF CONTENTS

LESSON 1 Exiles	2
LESSON 2 God of gods	10
LESSON 3 Stand Firm: Part 1	16
LESSON 4 Everything We Have Is from God.....	22
LESSON 5 The Writing Is on the Wall	28
LESSON 6 Stand Firm: Part 2	34

DANIEL

KINGDOMS, CHAOS, AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Lesson 1

Exiles

INTRODUCTION

Daniel 1

The book of Daniel is about, among other things, God's control over the movements of kings and nations. Daniel begins with God sending Israel into exile and into the hands of King Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 1:1-2). But Israel's exile is a threat to God's promises. God promised he would never abandon Israel and would use Israel to bless the world. But even in exile God is in control. Among these exiles is Daniel (the son of a Judean politician) and three of his friends (Daniel 1:6). They are handpicked to enter into the king's court (Daniel 1:3).

Daniel is probably a teenager. He's separated from his parents, displaced in a new culture, and now lives in a massive city. Nebuchadnezzar takes advantage of Daniel's disorientation and appoints experts to indoctrinate him and his friends in the culture, language, and literature of Babylon (Daniel 1:4). Nebuchadnezzar scrubs the theme of all ties to their Hebrew past and gives them new Babylonian names (Daniel 1:7). And under threat of death and promise of promotion, he demands Daniel and his friends abandon their Jewish laws about food (Daniel 1:5, 10). Daniel is being tested. Will he trust the God who sent him into exile, or will he be wooed by the power and promise of Babylon? Daniel must decide if God is in charge or Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel chooses obedience and faithfulness to God over allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel refuses to eat the king's meat and wine—and proposes a test of his own (Daniel 1:8). Daniel will eat only vegetables and water for ten days while the king's other indoctrinates eat the food of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 1:12-13). And in response to Daniel's faith, God makes Daniel gain weight on a diet of vegetables and water. God then gives him a higher capacity than any of his peers to understand the culture and literature of Babylon (Daniel 1:15, 17). Daniel and his friends become blessings to the king's court as his most trusted and competent advisors (Daniel 1:19-20). Nebuchadnezzar is not in charge, God is. Even in exile God remains true to his promises and raises his people up to bless the world.

Where is the Gospel?

Like all empires and kings, Nebuchadnezzar's power came from his ability to wield death. Nebuchadnezzar used exile to kill Daniel's nation, and executions to keep his captives compliant. But the book of Daniel shows the power of empires and kings is not more powerful than God's promises. Despite what it looked like, God was always in control. And just as Daniel rose in power while powerless in Babylon, Jesus rose in power from his grave (Ephesians 1:19-21). And just as all the power of Babylon could not overturn God's plan to preserve an exiled people and put his man in a seat of power, neither could the combined power of Rome nor the exile of the grave overturn God's plan to raise Jesus from the dead and seat him in power (Acts 2:23-24). Daniel's ascent in exile and Jesus' ascension from the grave both prove that God is always in control. And unlike the empires of the world, God's power rests not in his ability to cause death, but to undo death.

As the apostle Paul says, if God is for us, then who can be against us (Romans 8:31)? There is no hardship, persecution, global catastrophe, or national collapse that can separate us from God and his loving commitment towards his own (Romans 8:35). This doesn't mean we won't die or that we won't suffer like Daniel in exile or Jesus on the cross. But it does mean there is no pain and no grave that can keep God's people from conquering all things (Romans 8:36-37).

There are a lot of reasons to be afraid in this world. Nations are collapsing. Viruses are killing. Babylon has gone digital with its language. But the message of Daniel and Jesus is the same. Despite what it looks like, God is in control.¹

OPEN IT

1. Describe a time when you were thrown into a new unknown situation. (new school, job, location) Were you more apprehensive or excited? Why?

READ IT

Read Daniel 1

EXPLORE IT

2. What specific instructions did King Nebuchadnezzar give to his chief eunuch concerning the young men from Israel? (Daniel 1:3-5)
3. How did Daniel and his friends react to being placed in the king's service and being provided with royal food and wine? (Daniel 1:8-16)
4. What was the result of Daniel and his friends choosing to eat only vegetables and water instead of the king's food and wine? (Daniel 1:17-20)
5. What special abilities or skills did God give Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah? (Daniel 1:17-21)

¹ <https://www.spokengospel.com/devotionals/daniel-1>

APPLY IT

Why study the book of Daniel?

Daniel's situation parallels our own. For most of his life, Daniel lived as part of a believing minority in a majority pagan culture. From the time he was a teenager until he died around the age of 90, he served under a series of pagan kings. He never had the luxury of living in a country surrounded by people who believed as he did. From his story we will draw many useful principles as we attempt to live for Christ in a world filled with people who do not share our faith.

Daniel's prophecies may soon be fulfilled. This book is filled with dreams, visions, and prophecies about the end times. In the weeks to come we will discover an amazing correspondence between the words of Daniel and life on the cusp of the 21st century.

Daniel's God is our God too—and he is still on the throne. This may be the most important lesson of the book. God is in charge! Simple and clear. He is in charge of nations, families, and individuals. He is in charge of the past, the present, and the future. He is in charge of good times and bad days, of happiness and sorrow, of joy and heartache, of great victories and shocking defeats. He is in charge when a child is born and he is in charge when death knocks at your door. Studying this book ought to increase our confidence in the sovereignty of a God who makes no mistakes.²

6. Read each of the reasons for studying this book. Which one is most needed in your life today and why?

² Sermon by Ray Pritchard found @ <https://www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/the-four-freshmen-how-the-world-tries-to-seduce-the-church/>

Daniel, like many young individuals in modern America, lived in a society that had turned away from the Lord, embracing false idols and a secular lifestyle. Despite Prophet Jeremiah's forty years of steadfastly warning the nation to repent and return to God's ways, his words fell on deaf ears amid widespread rejection of faith. Records indicate at least six individuals, like Baruch, Jeremiah's aide, Prophet Habakkuk, and Daniel with his three Hebrew companions, who seemed influenced by Jeremiah, preserving faith for future generations. It's likely Jeremiah didn't realize the impact on this small group, including four teenagers destined to become esteemed faith leaders.

Around two decades after Jeremiah began preaching, Prophet Habakkuk was called to warn the nation (Habakkuk 2:2, 3). Approximately 22 years into Jeremiah's ministry, King Nebuchadnezzar attacked Judah, taking several prominent individuals and youths captive to Babylon. Some youths underwent intense indoctrination erasing prior beliefs, pledging loyalty to false gods and the King. Daniel and his companions, likely 15 or 16 years old, were among these captives, born years after Jeremiah's ministry began. Daniel emerged as the most prominent figure (Daniel 6:2, 3), exemplifying how Christians navigate spiritual challenges in unfamiliar territory.

Considering our recent study of Jude in the church, exploring influences that draw us from God, Daniel's time echoes our struggles. Amid voices seeking to erode faith, unwavering individuals championed God's truth, serving as beacons to believers.

7. What voices or people in your world do you see contending for the faith as these prophets and young men did in their day? What enables them to do this in light of the opposition?

I find it instructive that this book begins with total humiliating defeat. The very first verse takes us back to 605 BC as the armies of Nebuchadnezzar surround the capital city of Israel. We know from history that eventually the king of Babylon had his way and overran the city's defenses. From that day onward the temple, the city, all the things that mattered most, fell into the hands of the pagans.

This led to the first deportation. A second one followed in 597 BC. And in 586 BC the Babylonians attacked again, this time utterly destroying Solomon's Temple, leaving the city in ruins and the walls torn down.

Daniel and his friends were taken to Babylon in the first wave of deportees. Now they are far from home and separated from all they have known. How will they worship God without a temple, without sacrifices, and while living among unbelievers?³

8. The book of Daniel narrates God's remarkable triumphs over worldly kingdoms, all while depicting the entirety of the story within a backdrop of God's people enduring exile and living under the rule of sinful individuals. How does this truth offer hope and instill confidence in our present circumstances?

³ Sermon by Ray Pritchard found @ <https://www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/the-four-freshmen-how-the-world-tries-to-seduce-the-church/>

9. The Babylonians sought to separate Israelites from the community of faith back in Israel with the hope that they would abandon the faith as a result. What contemporary things work to separate us from our own community of faith?

10. In what ways does your church community help to keep you living faithfully despite the many temptations to do otherwise?

He (King Nebuchadnezzar) was going to take them, he was going to train them, he was going to assimilate them. They would be Babylonian more than Jewish. And he would use their training for the glory of his own kingdom. Now, key to this was the determination to get them young. You've got to get them young, you see if they're older, they're already set in their ways. And so these were youths, teenagers, young men and he intended to brainwash them, I guess, it'd be the best way to put it, to attract them in the Babylonian ways and then to use their abilities.⁴

11. How do you react when faced with situations that challenge your beliefs or values? In what ways can we maintain our spiritual identity in a culture that promotes values contrary to our faith?

⁴ <https://twojourneys.org/sermon/the-courage-and-consequences-of-an-uncompromising-life-daniel-sermon-2-of-17/>

Step One: Change your names! (vv.6-7)

Daniel — My Judge is God...Belteshazzar — Bel protects his life

Hananiah — Yahweh has shown grace...Shadrach — the command of Aku

Mishael — Who is like God?...Meshach — who is like Aku?

Azariah — Yahweh helps...Abednego — servant of Nebo

We will see in this book that Daniel and others would not participate in certain things that the Babylonians demanded of them and yet when it came to being educated and trained in their worldview and being named after pagan gods there was no mention of any rebuttal or fight.

- 12. In this world, we often face numerous demands and pressures that contradict our beliefs as followers of Christ. How do we discern when to adapt and when to stand firm? How can we support each other in making these decisions?**

- 13. Describe a moment in your life when you had to decide between following God's will or yielding to outside influences. What insights did you gain from this particular experience?**

Step Two: Eat Our Food!!! (vv.8-16)

And exactly what did Daniel resolve to do? He resolved “that he would not defile himself with the king’s food or with the wine he drank.” The reason Daniel viewed the food and wine as defiling is not completely clear. It may have been dietary, if the food was unclean for a Hebrew (cf. Lev 11:1-23). It may have been religious or spiritual, if these items had been offered to idols (cf. Deut 6:13-15). It may have been symbolic: he would not pledge absolute loyalty to the king...Daniel and his friends were forced to be in Babylon, but they would not let Babylon get into them. They made a conscious and determined decision to say no. With courage and conviction Daniel approached the chief of the eunuchs and requested that he allow him to disregard the king’s order and not defile himself.⁵

14. Have you ever taken time to consider what lines you resolve not to cross as a believer? What are some uncrossable lines and why have you come to such a conclusion?

15. Read Daniel 1:9-14. What can we learn from Daniel’s approach to those in authority over him? How is this approach better than protesting or escalating the situation?

16. It said that Daniel had found favor with his supervisors. What things can you be doing with those in authority over you that might serve you well in the moment where you must “draw your line in the sand”?

⁵ Exalting Jesus in Daniel (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary) Dr. Daniel L. Akin, David Platt, and Tony Merida

Step Three: Let's see what happens!

He had friendships with these officials but there was an obstacle in verse 10, the official said, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you." You see, life is cheap there. And Nebuchadnezzar was an autocrat, he was a tyrant, a dictator, he could at any time give the command, we'll see it in chapter two and the heads will roll. And so he was afraid and he said we have a problem here. What about my obligation to the king?

And so then Daniel proposes a test. The test is accepted and the test is passed in verses 11-16, "Daniel said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah, please test your servants for 10 days, give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food and treat your servants in accordance with what you see."

Well, at the end of the 10 days. God blessed lavishly. They looked incredibly well. Perhaps, the others were a little sickly. God can orchestrate these things as they just line them up and say "Boy, it's clear, it's obvious the difference. Obvious." And so the first reward from God is just the success of the test. But then God lavishes on them besides verse 17, it says, "To these four young men, God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning and Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds." Now, all four of them were blessed with insights and wisdom and understanding.⁶

17. God blesses the obedience and courage displayed by Daniel and his friends. What blessings might we be missing out on because we choose to go with the flow instead of being faithful?

18. God's blessing in verse 17 is His giving of these men insight, wisdom, and understanding. In what area could you use these three blessings? Share them with your group and make them a point of prayer.

⁶ <https://twojourneys.org/sermon/the-courage-and-consequences-of-an-uncompromising-life-daniel-sermon-2-of-17/>

This study was compiled and questions were written by Tim Badal (Sugar Grove Campus)—www.villagebible.church/smallgroup

DANIEL

KINGDOMS, CHAOS, AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Lesson 2

God of gods

INTRODUCTION

Daniel 2

The dreams Nebuchadnezzar experienced in the night were God's response to his thoughts as he waited for sleep to come:

"As for you, O king, while on your bed your thoughts turned to what would take place in the future; and He who reveals mysteries has made known to you what will take place" (Daniel 2:29).

The king was pondering what the future held. Through his dreams, God revealed the future and its implications.

It is possible, as some have suggested, that the king actually forgot the dreams, and that is why he demanded that his wise men tell the dream and then its interpretation. I think the king remembered his dream, but wanted to be certain of a genuine interpretation, not a fabrication. Anyone can "interpret" a dream; few indeed can tell you what your dream was. The king required both.

King Nebuchadnezzar was in a bad mood when he called his wise men. His dream troubled him so greatly he could not sleep afterward (2:1). Two things caused the king such distress over his dream. First, he believed his dream was very important. In his culture and religion, dreams were a means of revelation from the gods. He wanted to know what the gods were trying to tell him. Secondly, like the Pharaoh of Joseph's day who did not understand his dream, there was an ominous sense that something was wrong. Because he lacked the interpretation of his dream, he did not know what was wrong, or what he should do about it.

A great sense of urgency arose when the king's senior wise men gathered before him. After briefing them of the situation, he demanded they tell him his dream and its meaning. The assembled wise men, representing the various heathen methods for obtaining "divine guidance," were unanimous about one thing: the king was being unreasonable in asking them to do the impossible. No king, they protested, had ever asked this of his counselors. They could promise an interpretation if he told them his dream, but he should not demand that they reveal his dream. This was beyond their ability and the ability of their gods.

Their response to the king not only reveals their impotence, but also that of their gods. It testifies to the futility of the heathen religions and introduces the God of Daniel, who can do what they and their gods cannot...

...To summarize the story up to this point, the situation looks dismal, if not disastrous, and by divine design. Only when things seem impossible is God's hand undeniably present. The king's demands were unreasonable because they were impossible, humanly speaking. Here at the point of impossibility, the powerlessness of the "gods" of the heathen became evident. The wise men who stood before Nebuchadnezzar confessed with their own lips that their gods could not accomplish what the king demanded. They even admitted that any "God" who could fulfill the king's request would be a "God" of a different (higher) order.⁷

⁷ Sermon by Bob Deffinbaugh found at: <https://bible.org/seriespage/dream-which-nearly-became-nightmare-daniel-21-49>

OPEN IT

1. What's a dream that you've always remembered?

READ IT

Read Daniel 2

EXPLORE IT

2. What did Nebuchadnezzar ask his magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and the Chaldeans to do?
3. How did those people respond to Nebuchadnezzar's request?
4. What did Daniel do when God revealed Nebuchadnezzar's dream to him?
5. What was Nebuchadnezzar's dream?
6. What did Daniel say the meaning of the dream was?
7. How did Nebuchadnezzar respond to the interpretation of this dream?

APPLY IT

A Story in THE Story

Our temptation when studying a story like this is to zero in on the characters and circumstances. We tend to look at an episode like Daniel 2 and treat it like a parable or one of Aesop's Fables, where we create a model out of someone like Daniel, drawing out principles and practices that we should model after his character and how he navigated his circumstances and therefore, our application turns into simply being more like Daniel.

While there may be valuable things that Daniel does model for us, if that's all we do with a passage like this, we've failed to see and understand the bigger picture. Because even Daniel didn't want to draw attention to himself. He was more concerned with deflecting credit and honor to the God of heaven who alone is worthy of praise and worship.

The "bigger picture" of this chapter is not that we would develop a deep and robust anthropology (belief about man, ie - Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar) but a deeper and more robust theology (belief about God). After all, it was Daniel's theology that guided his prayer, his praise, and his proclamation before Nebuchadnezzar. It was through this that God set Himself apart from the gods of the Babylonians. He is the "God of gods, Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries."

8. How have you seen your theology influence and guide the way you live your life? Give an example of one way you've seen this happen.

9. As you look at Daniel 2, in what ways do you see that this story is more about God than it is Daniel or even King Nebuchadnezzar?

10. What do the details of this story reveal about the nature and character of God? (Cite some specific examples.)

11. What dangers may creep into our understanding about ourselves and God if we only look at Daniel's behavior in this passage as something we should model in our lives?

Blessed be the name of God

“Here as elsewhere in the story we see the overriding sovereignty of God in this young man's affairs. In fact, the sovereignty of God is the connection between these chapters. In chapter 1 God gave Daniel wisdom, influence, and health of long life. Now, in spite of the threat to kill Daniel, God fulfills what he has promised. How? By being sovereign over the details of history, which is the book's theme. If God does not control our lives - from the actions of kings and others in positions of power to the most minute circumstances - then everything in life is uncertain. We are victims of circumstances, and whatever happens will happen. *Que sera, sera!* But if God is sovereign, as the Bible declares Him to be, and if He is our God - if the promises He makes and the actions He takes are certain of fulfillment - then we can be confident of the future and know that we will be able to live our lives in a way that will please God.”⁸

12. What circumstances in Daniel 2 may have made it difficult to see and trust in God's sovereign hand? What makes it so difficult for us today to trust that God holds every detail under His sovereign control?

13. People often struggle to trust in the sovereignty of God because of the presence of suffering and evil. How do you see God's sovereignty on display despite the presence of suffering and evil so far in Daniel? How have you seen it in your own life experience?

⁸ Boice, J. M. (2006). Daniel: An expositional commentary. Baker Books. p. 27

“The idea of God as infinitely wise is at the root of all truth. It is a datum of belief necessary to the soundness of all other beliefs about God. ... Wisdom, among other things, is the ability to devise perfect ends and to achieve those ends by the most perfect means. It sees the end from the beginning, so there can be no need to guess or conjecture. Wisdom sees everything in focus, each in proper relation to all, and is thus able to work toward predestined goals with flawless precision. All God’s acts are done in perfect wisdom, first for His own glory, and then for the highest good of the greatest number for the longest time. And all His acts are as pure as they are wise, and as good as they are wise and pure. Not only could His acts not be better done: a better way to do them could not be imagined. An infinitely wise God must work in a manner not to be improved upon by finite creatures.”⁹

14. “Not only could His acts be better done: a better way to do them could not be imagined. An infinitely wise God must work in a manner not to be improved upon by finite creatures.”

How do you reconcile the concept of God's ways, thoughts, and plans being higher than our own with the human desire for understanding, control, and certainty in our lives? How does this perspective impact your approach to faith, trust, and surrender in the face of life's uncertainties?

15. God’s perfect wisdom “sees the end from the beginning so there can be no need to guess or conjecture.” How does this bring peace to your life today? In what area of your life might you need to be reminded that God sees the end from the beginning?

⁹ A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 66–67

About that Dream...

It is important to notice, however, that the passage itself gives us virtually no data about the specifics of any of these kingdoms, because it intends to give a philosophy of history rather than a precise analysis of history ahead of time. As John Goldingay puts it, "In the drama of the story the description has to be allowed to remain allusive. People miss the point when they spend time arguing who the empires were." The focus of the dream itself and its interpretation are more concerned with what the future holds than when it will come to pass.¹⁰

That is Daniel's chief message for Nebuchadnezzar and for our own time. The kingdoms of this world are powerful and sometimes even glorious - from our point of view. But even their strength is given to them by God, and just as God sets up kingdoms, so does he bring them down and dispose of them. He was to do that with Nebuchadnezzar. He has done that with all the world's past kingdoms, and he will do it with those of our time.¹¹

16. This dream shows us that God is working out His divine plan according to His perfect wisdom by sovereign power and that all peoples and nations are subject to Him. How should this shape or influence our understanding of societal and global events today?

17. The fifth and final kingdom mentioned in the interpretation of this dream is a kingdom that shall stand forever – the Kingdom of God in Christ Jesus. What does this remind us as believers about our ultimate relationship and belonging in the world we live in today?

18. What is one way that you can trust God with your tomorrow and seek first His kingdom this week?

¹⁰ Duguid, Iain M.. Daniel (Reformed Expository Commentary) . P&R Publishing. Kindle Edition.

¹¹ Boice, J. M. (2006). Daniel: An expository commentary. Baker Books. p. 40

This study was compiled and questions were written by Jeremy Anderson (Indian Creek Campus)—www.villagebible.church/smallgroup

DANIEL

KINGDOMS, CHAOS, AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Lesson 3

Stand Firm Part 1

INTRODUCTION

Daniel 3

Daniel chapter 3 is a well known and well loved chapter in the Bible. It contains things we all like in a story... 90 foot idols, furious kings, fiery furnaces hot enough to kill people who are just passing by... That sort of thing. When we left our friends at the end of chapter two everything was going along very nicely thank you very much. Daniel and his three amigos Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were exalted to a position of privilege and power in Babylon. But unfortunately things have a habit of changing in this life. And so they did, for King Nebuchadnezzar decided to set up a golden image that was ninety foot high and nine foot wide! And what's worse, everyone is commanded to bow down and worship the image!¹²

OPEN IT

1. **Think back to your teenage years - what was the dumbest thing you did because of peer pressure? Can you name something good that you did because of peer pressure?**

READ IT

Read Daniel 3

EXPLORE IT

2. **What did Nebuchadnezzar make on the plain of Dura?**

¹² <https://jesusplusnothing.com/series/post/Daniel3>

3. What was this image made of?
4. Who did Nebuchadnezzar invite to the dedication service?
5. What did he command the people to do when they heard the music?
6. Who refused to obey the King's command?
7. What was their reasoning for not obeying?

APPLY IT



So king Nebuchadnezzar makes an image of gold and it is no small undertaking. This image is 30m high! So the first question is where do you think they got this idea from? While the Bible doesn't say exactly what the image was of, many commentators believe that the king would have been inspired by the vision that he had had in chapter 2 and created an image of a man. It could even have been in his own image. The Bible states it was all in gold. You may remember from chapter 2 that in the dream of the statue, he was the head of gold but he also learned that this head of gold would come to an end. It is therefore likely that king Nebuchadnezzar had this image set entirely in gold to indicate that his Babylonian empire would never perish or be conquered. While this is speculation, knowing the pride of Nebuchadnezzar it's probably on the money. So the king gathers all his leaders in preparation of some grand dedication. Seems like something big is on the way!¹³

8. How could King Nebuchadnezzar go from honoring God at the end of chapter 2, (read Daniel 2:46-47) to setting up this idol in chapter 3?

¹³ <https://jesusplusnothing.com/series/post/Daniel3>

9. What are some idols that our culture puts before us today? How big (visible) are these idols?

The general compliance of the assembly with this command, v. 7.

They heard the sound of the musical instruments, both wind-instruments and hand-instruments, *the cornet and flute, with the harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer*, the melody of which they thought was ravishing (and fit enough it was to excite such a devotion as they were then to pay), and immediately they all, as one man, as soldiers that are wont to be exercised by beat of drum, *all the people, nations, and languages, fell down and worshiped the golden image*. And no marvel when it was proclaimed, that whosoever would not *worship this golden image* should be immediately thrown *into the midst of a burning fiery furnace*, ready prepared for that purpose, v. 6. Here were the charms of music to allure them into a compliance and the terrors of the fiery furnace to frighten them into a compliance. Thus beset with temptation, they all yielded. Note, that way that sense directs the most will go; there is nothing so bad which the careless world will not be drawn to by a concert of music, or driven to by a fiery furnace. And by such methods as these false worship has been set up and maintained.¹⁴

10. Why is it true that most people will go along with the crowd? How has the Church been influenced by the crowd as it relates to cultural issues?

11. There were thousands of people who bowed to the idol. What do you think made the difference between the Jews who bowed and the three who didn't?

12. What are some idols in your life that you need to eradicate so you can worship the Lord?

¹⁴ Matthew Henry, Commentary on Daniel 3

“They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image” Apparently their failure to worship the image was not discovered until these certain Chaldeans made it known. With so many thousands of government officials in attendance, it would be easy to overlook these three. Additionally, we see from this that the three Jewish men did not lodge a formal protest; they simply refrained from sharing in the sin of idolatry themselves.

Their actions were not *public* but neither were they *hidden*. These three Hebrew men must have known they would be discovered, yet they obeyed God rather than man. “You will not be able to go through life without being discovered: a lighted candle cannot be hid. There is a feeling among some good people that it will be wise to be very reticent, and hide their light under a bushel. They intend to lie low all the wartime, and come out when the palms are being distributed. They hope to travel to heaven by the back lanes, and skulk into glory in disguise. Ah me, what a degenerate set!” (Spurgeon)¹⁵

13. What do you imagine was the impact of the three Jews not bowing to the image and how might it have affected those who were in attendance? How does their power to stand strong for God impact you to stand for God this week?

14. What was the difference in demeanor between King Nebuchadnezzar and the three Hebrew men? How can you respond kindly when people in your presence are furious? Has this ever happened to you?

15. Was there ever a time when you stood for God when no one else was willing to? It can be a recent experience or something that took place decades ago.

¹⁵ https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik_david/study-guide/daniel/daniel-3.cfm

16. There are times when people stand for God and lose their life. In Hebrews 11 we read about a list of people who loved God and lost their lives (read Hebrews 11:32-38). Reflect on the phrase "but even if he does not." What does it reveal about the trio's perspective on God's sovereignty and their trust in Him? How can we apply this attitude to our own lives?

Pray...

Heavenly Father, this story is, simultaneously, convicting and encouraging. Such God-centered, non-utilitarian, heart-engaged worship of you is rare, and beautiful. Take us farther up and further in. At times, we worship worship, more than we worship you.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego didn't worship you because of the gifts you gave them, but because of the God that you were to them. They were *firmly* convinced that you could rescue them from the fiery furnace; but even if you didn't rescue them, it would have no effect on their love for you, and trust in you.

Father, forgive us when the intensity and delight of our worship is tied to our experience of your goodness—to how well you provide for us, protect us, and fulfill our expectations of you.

We want to worship you in or out of the fire; when life is easy, and when it's not; when your presence is real and when your silence is loud; when our health is good and when it's fragile; when we feel like shouting, "Great is your faithfulness!" and when our cry is, "How long, O Lord?" You are Abba Father, not Sugar Daddy.

Lord Jesus, you endured the "fiery trial" of the cross that we might know the unsearchable riches of God's grace. By the Holy Spirit, stoke the fire in our hearts that we might know you are just as present with us as you were with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. You will *never* leave us or forsake us—at any time or in any trial. Because of you, we don't have to be afraid to die, or live. So very Amen we pray, in your beautiful and strong name.¹⁶

17. **Here's list of issues that have challenged the Church in recent days: covid restrictions and mandates, gay marriage, sexual identity, pronouns, persecution, post-modernism, political unrest and tribalism, war, poverty - the list goes on and on. How do we as Christians know when it is time to "obey God rather than man" and face the fiery furnace?**

¹⁶ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/scotty-smith/worshipping-god-when-its-easy-and-when-its-not/>

18. Jesus told us that life would bring trouble, (John 16:33,) but He also told us that He would always be with us (Matthew 28:20). How has the presence of Jesus helped you face the troubles of life? How do you practically experience the presence of God in your life and how can you experience more of Him in the days to come?



DANIEL

KINGDOMS, CHAOS, AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Lesson 4

Everything
We Have Is
from God

INTRODUCTION

Daniel 4

In the preceding chapters of Daniel, we find the pagan king of Babylon ambitious to build a great and mighty kingdom. Nebuchadnezzar commands his subjects, including the Hebrew exiles, to yield to the Babylonian culture and to pay homage to its pagan gods. His oppressive edicts collide with the Hebrews' worship of the one true God.

Nebuchadnezzar's admiration and respect for uncompromising, humble Hebrews such as Daniel and his friends give him pause. He has just witnessed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego being rescued by God from the fiery furnace. The king acknowledges that "there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way" (3:29). But as the powerful, willful king relishes the prosperity of his kingdom, the shadow of pride follows him. He is conflicted.

And yet as chapter 4 begins we see glimmers of a spiritual transformation in his life. This chapter is a testament to that change. The king is terrified by a second dream. Daniel is again summoned to interpret, and the news is not good. Nebuchadnezzar's authority and kingdom will be greatly reduced. Furthermore, he will be drastically humbled, until he knows "that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will" (4:25). But even with the impending doom, God provides a way of escape if he will simply reform his life (v. 27). The king refuses, once more boasting in his kingdom (v. 30).

Here we have a prideful king, claiming to have built his kingdom by his own hands, facing humiliation and ruin when the King of heaven extends mercy as a way of escape. The truth is that swift repentance quickens reconciliation with God. Yet King Nebuchadnezzar continues his "walk of pride" for the next 12 months. He forgets what he has witnessed in the lives of the Hebrews, and how God works on behalf of those who trust in him (Prov. 21:1). Sadly, he resists the life-giving, pride-destroying path of repentance, and his nightmarish dream comes true.

At the end of God's appointed time of judgment, however, Nebuchadnezzar comes to his senses, acknowledges his sin, looks heavenward, and worships the Most High (Dan. 4:34–37). He is restored, and he gains even greater renown. The story of Nebuchadnezzar is an Old Testament example of a crucial theme throughout the Bible, one that Jesus himself will emphasize: God humbles the proud and exalts the humble (Luke 18:14). This powerful king who had destroyed Jerusalem and persecuted God's people was humbled by God's grace and brought to confess God's mercy.¹⁷

¹⁷ Karen S. Loritts. *Pride and Humility*. ESV Women's Study Bible. Crossway.

OPEN IT

1. When was the last time you tripped or fell? How would you describe the experience?

READ IT

Read Daniel 4

EXPLORE IT

2. What does Nebuchadnezzar want to show through his account, according to verse 2?
3. How does Nebuchadnezzar describe his life at the time of this second dream, according to verse 4?
4. What does Nebuchadnezzar notice is special about Daniel in verse 18?
5. What supernatural experience happened to Nebuchadnezzar because of his pride according to verses 33-34?
6. What did Nebuchadnezzar learn at the end of this extraordinary experience, according to verse 37?

APPLY IT

Nebuchadnezzar Has a Story to Tell (4:1-18)

The opening words are a universal announcement. Nebuchadnezzar wants everyone everywhere to hear his story. His account will tell of “the signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me” (4:2). These wonders involve both judgment and restoration. The king extols God’s wonders as great and mighty. Although Nebuchadnezzar would not have welcomed the notion that his earthly reign would end, he opened his account declaring that God’s kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. Since unending dominion belonged to God, it did not belong to the king of Babylon. This admission is both true and shocking because of Nebuchadnezzar’s attitude and actions in chapters 1–3. The account in chapter 4 will justify the newfound perspective of Babylon’s king.¹⁸

7. At this point in Nebuchadnezzar’s story, things were good. What are three blessings from God unique to your current season of life?

8. Read verses 10–12. What words could be used to describe Nebuchadnezzar’s impact on the world as portrayed in his dream? From where did his success come?

9. What kind of success makes you feel accomplished? Why is taking the credit for ourselves so easy?

10. How have you seen someone else give God the glory for the great things He has done?

¹⁸ Mitch Chase. Daniel: A Commentary by Mitch Chase. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/commentary/daniel/#section-10>

Nebuchadnezzar Had Humility to Learn (4:19-33)

Daniel began to explain the vision. He explained that the tree was Nebuchadnezzar. God had exalted him to be a great figure, to fill all the world with his empire. Those of the earth were nourished by him - the birds in its branches, the beasts under the tree - all were fed. But because his heart was lifted up through pride, God was going to cause this great tree to be cut down. He was not going to die. But he was going to lose his sanity for seven years until he came to recognize that the Most High God rules in the affairs of men. This God sets up whom he will and brings down whom he will, and when he sets a man up, he can do it from the basis of men. He does not have to choose what we would regard as the best. The story goes on to show that this is precisely what happened.¹⁹

11. The Spirit of God set Daniel apart from the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and astrologers. Do other people at home, at work, or at school notice that the Spirit has set you apart? Why or why not?

12. Who is one powerful person you interact with regularly? Do you like how they handle their power? Why is it important to remember that God has entrusted that power to them?

13. James 4:6 says “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Where do you have to fight against pride in your own life?

¹⁹ James Montgomery Boice. Daniel: An Expository Commentary. 1989.

- 14. If we don't want God to oppose us, we need to approach Him with humility. When have you seen humility modeled well? What's one way you can embody this humility in your own life?**

Nebuchadnezzar Had a Testimony to Give (4:34-37)

Nebuchadnezzar describes the king of heaven with a series of relative clauses. He is the king whose every work is true and every way just, and he is the king who was able to humble those walking in pride - a particularly poignant clause given the events of the chapter. This chapter has been about two sovereignties - human and divine - and the lesson learned by the king is that his rule was "utterly derivative, utterly contingent, and totally dependent on the Divine will." (Towner, Daniel, 59-60)

This is the final word from Nebuchadnezzar in the book after four chapters in which he has occupied Center stage, chapters that have been carefully crafted and combined to provide a good look at the gentile King into chronicle his gradual transformation from "a king who considers himself to be the most powerful figure in his kingdom the one who recognizes that his extraordinary greatness is but a gift from the most high God." (Newsom, Daniel, 127)²⁰

- 15. Shockingly, when Nebuchadnezzar lifts his eyes to heaven, seeking God's aid, his reason returns to him. His appropriate response is to worship the Most High God. Why should moments of clarity in our lives turn into worshipful moments?**

²⁰ Wendy Widder. Daniel: Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament. 2023.

16. God entrusted Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom to him again, along with even more greatness, but this time, Nebuchadnezzar told others that everything he had was from God. Why is this always better than convincing others we're a self-made success story?

17. Write out a brief praise poem of 4-6 lines, praising God for His greatness and power. (Nebuchadnezzar's didn't rhyme, and yours doesn't have to either!)

DANIEL

KINGDOMS, CHAOS, AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Lesson 5

The Writing Is on the Wall

INTRODUCTION

Daniel 5

“The writing is on the wall.”

“Your days are numbered.”

The story of King Belshazzar’s party in Daniel 5 was once so well known that it spawned clichés everyone knows. Unfortunately, we have largely forgotten the story behind the cliché. They have become statements of fate or “comeuppance”. A sort of Westernized, sanitized version of Karma. But the story of Belshazzar is anything but a story of blind fate. It is a story of arrogance and jealousy, a story of blasphemy and pride. A story comparing kings. Above all, it is a story which reminds us all that God is on his throne and while he may be patient with us, there are limits and there will come a time when we must answer for our transgressions.

Daniel 5 begins abruptly with a new king, Belshazzar. A king that didn’t exist in any of the known king lists of the Babylonian Empire. After Nebuchadnezzar, three kings ruled Babylon for a period of about 6 years, the last of which lasted only a few months. Then a king named Nabonidus took the throne and ruled right up until Cyrus the Persian captured Babylon and the empire came to an end. No Belshazzar. For many this was proof that Daniel was at the least written long after the events it claims to record firsthand.

That is, until 1854, when a British explorer found barrel shaped cuneiform tablets in a temple to the Babylonian moon god Sin. These tablets mention Nabonidus’s son and heir—Belshazzar. Later discoveries confirmed not only that he existed, but that he was co-regent under his father. Nabonidus spent about a decade in northern Arabia while Belshazzar ruled in Babylon. While little is known about either the father or the son, political and religious intrigue surround them. It is quite possible that Nabonidus was surprised to be on the throne and that Belshazzar was part of the plot that put him there. Land records have been found indicating that he received the bulk of the deposed ruler’s rich estates.

Belshazzar’s father Nabonidus returned to defend Babylon against an incursion by his former ally Cyrus the Persian, but was soundly defeated in a battle about 50 miles away. He retreated and set up a defensive line along the Euphrates river, but it appears that Cyrus’s forces went around and took the capitol with almost no resistance. One account says that the Persian army diverted the river that went through the city so they could get in through the river and avoid the gates altogether. Babylon was taken on the night of October 12, 539 BC, the night that Belshazzar threw his party.

By this time, Daniel was an old man. If, as is likely, he was taken in 605 BC as a teen, he would have been in his 80s. Likely retired, or at least serving in a diminished capacity (chapter 8 does indicate that he had been working for the king around seven years prior), Daniel has seen it all and has been an influential man in a foreign and pagan land for far longer than he lived in his own homeland. He is a survivor and is still close enough to the centers of power that when summoned he comes to the king quickly and God’s favor still rests on him.

OPEN IT

1. Do you remember something that completely frightened you to the point where you could not function?

READ IT

Read Daniel 5

EXPLORE IT

2. What is the main occasion of the chapter?
3. Who are the main players in the event?
4. What happens to Belshazzar when he sees the handwriting on the wall?
5. How does the queen's description of Daniel (vv. 11-12) differ from the way Belshazzar spoke to him (vv. 13-16)?
6. Who understands the message?

APPLY IT

7. Compare the event to what has already happened in the book. How is it similar or different from the previous episodes?

- 8. Most scholars agree that chapters 4 and 5 function as direct comparisons to one another. How are Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar the same and how are they different in these two events?**

We don't know exactly what the occasion was for Belshazzar's party. Some think it was a harvest festival, others a morale boost of the city with the approaching Persians, or even a coronation ceremony, assuming the death of his father in his defeat.

Whatever the case, Belshazzar did something that no king before him had done. Nebuchadnezzar had sacked the Jewish temple and had brought many of the temple vessels back with him (Dan. 1:2). These were placed in the temple of his god (probably Marduk) because it seemed that his god had granted victory over the Hebrew God. Even so, these vessels were never used by people, because they belonged to the gods, and were therefore given a place of respect. Belshazzar's decision to use the Jewish temple vessels showed his arrogance as well as his feelings of inferiority—he was nowhere as great as Nebuchadnezzar but was showing off to his nobles. It was also clearly, even to the pagans of Babylon, a sacrilege. But to God and to the Jewish people it was blasphemy. With the temple destroyed, the vessels were the strongest remaining tangible link to Jewish identity, worship, and more importantly to God. While their importance may not seem great to us, both the Babylonians and the Jewish people understood them to be significant. Exodus has two sections on the construction of the tabernacle vessels (25-31, 35-40), there's a description in 1 Kings (7-8), their whereabouts are tracked in both 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles (23-24, 36 respectively) and Ezra records their return—all 5400 pieces (Ezra 1). They are a big deal. Because they connect the people tangibly to God. So when Belshazzar uses them in the context of a drunken, probably debauched, party, it is a direct affront to God.

- 9. Belshazzar was using the things of God to show off to the influential people of the empire, while unbeknownst to him that same empire was crashing down around them all. How can we avoid falling into this pattern?**

- 10. How can Belshazzar's flippant treatment of the things of God function as a warning to us?**

11. In verse 4, Daniel makes an ironic statement. Belshazzar had taken the golden vessels from the temple and used them profanely, all the while praising gods made of the same stuff: things created by God, perhaps even beautiful, but not God. How can we fall prey to worshipping the good gifts of God in his place?

In verses 5-9 we see the narrative turn. Belshazzar is confronted by the very God he has profaned. A disembodied hand writes on the wall, and no one can interpret it. Belshazzar falls apart in fear, screaming for his wise men to explain what is going on. It is unclear from the text whether everyone can see the writing or only he can: the mention of the lampstand (v. 5) seems to be a clue that everyone could see it but the bewilderment of the nobles (v.9) might mean that they couldn't. In any case, it seems clear that Belshazzar knows that this is a moment of divine judgment, that for all of his impiety he is aware that a price is to be paid for his arrogance, sacrilegious action and blasphemy even though he does not know what the writing means. So he looks for a divine answer and, initially at least, he cannot find one.

12. Belshazzar's fear is justified, how is this event a reminder to us to have a proper fear of God?

13. How do you see the culture around us looking for spiritual answers in all the wrong places?

In verses 10-12, Belshazzar is both confronted and given advice by “the queen” (v.10). We do not know who this queen was, but the fact that she was not at the party and verse 8 already indicates that his wives were there, leads most scholars to believe that she is actually the “queen mother”, a position of significance in the ancient world and one that would have afforded her a great deal of latitude and influence over Belshazzar. She is terse, almost condescending to him. One can almost imagine her saying “man up!” then she tells him to do what he should have done in the first place—go to the one who can (and has) interpreted dreams and visions before, the one who Nebuchadnezzar had put in charge of the wise men, namely Daniel. So Daniel is brought before the king. Belshazzar’s response seems more than a little condescending towards Daniel, perhaps even trying to bribe him to give a positive interpretation. (The position of third in the kingdom could either refer to an official of high rank or to the next highest position in the kingdom to himself as regent).

Daniel makes it clear that he will not be bribed (v.17), and then proceeds to compare Belshazzar to Nebuchadnezzar. The former king had been arrogant, too, and paid for it, but was given a chance to humble himself before God. Belshazzar, it seems, knew all of this (v.22) but persisted in his evil ways. V. 23 seems to indicate that taking the vessels from the temple was an intentional slight toward God. Before the interpretation is given, Daniel makes it clear that it is that arrogance that sent the hand.

14. Belshazzar thought God was defeated and impotent, so he saw no downside to taking the vessels from the Jewish temple or treating Daniel poorly. How can God’s seeming silence lead others to think there is no risk to treating him or his words with little or no respect? How can we fall into the same way of thinking?

15. Compare Daniel’s response in chapter 5 with his response to hearing Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in 4:19 and following. How is his demeanor different? What do you think the difference in responses says about the nature of these two kings—both pagans—and Daniel’s feelings toward them?

16. How can Nebuchadnezzar’s willingness to repent and recognize God’s sovereignty be a reminder to us?

Verses 25–28 finally tell us what was written on the wall as well as Daniel’s interpretation. As modern English readers, we may be tempted to look at what was written and wonder why no one but Daniel could understand it, after all it was their language (Aramaic) wasn’t it? But like many ancient languages, only consonants had specific letters. In English it may look something like this: Jn rd th bk. These four words could easily mean “John read the book” but they could also mean “.Jane rode the bike”. If there are no spaces between letters it becomes even more difficult. Something like this is probably going on, but it isn’t a sentence. And on top of this there is a wordplay happening. Daniel identifies the four words as nouns and then uses those same letters to identify verbs that interpret them. As nouns the words refer to standard weights and measures: Mene, mene—mina (worth 60 shekels), tekel—shekel, and upharsin or parsin—a half shekel, but in this case the word is plural. So the nouns mean: a mina, a shekel and 2 half shekels. The verbs also refer to weighing: mene—numbered, tekel—weighed, parsin—divided or assessed. Al Wolters argues that the image of the scales present throughout “gains further significance when we realize the annual rising of Libra took place on the eve of Babylon’s fall to the Persians.”²¹ Libra, the constellation also known as the scales, represented the Babylonian god of justice.

God is showing Belshazzar that he has not been defeated, he is in fact present where his vessels are and is showing his preeminence over the gods of Babylon, administering justice at the very moment they are being worshiped. (Some of those idols may well have been statues that Nabonidus had moved from outlying cities to protect them from the oncoming Persian army). In the end Daniel was rewarded, though the rewards actually meant nothing because the kingdom was taken from Belshazzar that night.

17. God may seem silent, even for long periods of time, but he is neither unaware of nor ambivalent to those who disrespect him. How is this fact an encouragement to you? How does it affect the way that you interact with those who do not honor God?

18. How does God’s sovereignty over the situations you face—even frightening or difficult ones—impact the way that you respond?

19. Daniel was faithful from the time he was young to the time he was old. What do you think fostered that?

²¹ Al Wolters “The Riddle of the Scales in Daniel 5”, cited in Tremper Longman, Daniel: The NIV Application Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 162.

DANIEL

KINGDOMS, CHAOS, AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Lesson 6

Stand Firm Part 2

INTRODUCTION

Daniel 6

We're apt to be intimidated by our culture, at least sometimes I feel that way. Our schools and media and professors and celebrities and government agencies and all the Hollywood mess, all the elements of our society are tolerant of most everything and anything, except if you happen to be a biblical Christian. So, if we're not careful we'll keep our heads down. We'll keep our mouths shut, and our convictions will be silent, and the world likes to practice censorship when it comes to biblical truth and that can put us on the defensive. Careful study of the life of Daniel shows us how to overcome the intimidation of a corrupt culture.²²

OPEN IT

1. What makes "you" you? What are a couple of characteristics about you that people know you for? (i.e. funny, caring, honest, etc...)

READ IT

Read Daniel 6

²² <https://sermons.love/david-jeremiah/4078-david-jeremiah-daniel-overcoming-the-lions-den.html>

EXPLORE IT

2. **Who is the king in this chapter?**
3. **What nation is in authority over Daniel?**
4. **Why was Daniel “distinguished above all”?**
5. **Who plotted against Daniel?**
6. **What law declared that a king’s order could not be revoked?**
7. **How did King Darius react when he was informed of Daniel’s disobedience?**

APPLY IT

Daniel lived out his life in a situation not unlike our own. He was a godly man trying to live in a pagan culture. To say he overcame is understated. He lived in that culture from the time he was 14 years old until he died in his 90s. When he faced the cultural issues of his day that were in opposition to his faith, he overcame them with courage and conviction. And men and women, I believe that this is God's challenge to all of us, to overcome. We don't have to shout and make fools of ourselves, but, like this man of God in the Old Testament, we do have to be overcomers. Daniel chapter 6, verses 1 through 3 reads like this, "It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom one hundred and twenty satraps; and over these, three governors, of whom Daniel was one, that the satraps might give account to them, so that the king would suffer no loss. Then this Daniel distinguished himself, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king gave thought to setting him over the whole realm".

According to the description in Daniel 6, Daniel was preferred above all the other governors and satraps because, quote, "there was an excellent spirit in him". That's what the Scripture says. This means that he had a good attitude, that he worked hard. He fulfilled his responsibility. He was honest. He didn't complain. He just did what he was supposed to do. Daniel had continued to honor God with his life and now God is going to honor Daniel again. Daniel would become the second in command over all the Medo-Persian empire, a fact that did not go unnoticed by his peers. This did not make him a popular person. And the second thing we learn about overcomers from Daniel is that

overcomers are often persecuted. If you're gonna overcome, if you're gonna be victorious, if you're gonna be more than a conqueror, if you're gonna stand above the heap, people are gonna shoot at you and criticize you and persecute you.²³

8. Daniel was well trusted by King Darius. From reading this passage and looking at the previous chapters, what do we know about Daniel's character?

9. Why is our character (the actions or the way that we live) so important to God? In other words, how does our behavior show who we believe in?

10. How does a person living righteously threaten those that are evil? How should a personal relationship with Jesus distinguish a Christian from a non-Christian, and how should this difference affect the workplace?

²³ <https://sermons.love/david-jeremiah/4078-david-jeremiah-daniel-overcoming-the-lions-den.html>

11. The people who deceived Darius in signing the law against worshiping any gods or humans but him was directed fully at Daniel. Sometimes it feels like our relationship with Jesus is being challenged, attacked, or used against us by others. Daniel 6:10 tells us of Daniel's response. How should we respond in those moments?

12. Notice Daniel's turning to God was something that he did daily. Daniel didn't just know a lot *about* God; Daniel *knows* God. What is the difference between knowing about God and knowing God, and how does that impact the way we handle difficult trials and circumstances in our lives?

Now, I've heard preachers preach on this and say when Daniel was told he couldn't pray, he went home, and he flung open his windows, and he prayed as loud as he could to put it in the face of everybody that he was a man of God. And that's not what it says. It says he went home, just like he always did, went and prayed, just like he always did. It says, "As was his custom since early days". Overcomers are consistent. They're persistent. They just get up every day and do the things that need to be done. They don't take a day off, and Daniel was that kind of a person. He was a persistent man, but now comes the good stuff. He was also protected. Verses 12 through 23 tell us that the Lord didn't prevent Daniel from being thrown into the lions' den. He could have, but through all the events that transpired we see God's hand of protection over Daniel's life. Let me tell you what I've learned, men and women. When you walk with God, God walks with you. He never turns his back on you. He never leaves you. Even when you think you're in the most difficult situation, if you just hold in for a moment, you'll see God. He'll show up!²⁴

13. Do you think that there will always be attacks coming against the person that is following Jesus? Why or why not? (Psalm 22:12,13; John 16:33; 1 Peter 5:8)

²⁴ <https://sermons.love/david-jeremiah/4078-david-jeremiah-daniel-overcoming-the-lions-den.html>

14. Do Christians ever make themselves targets for persecution? How can a person's actions and reactions affect the trials we face?

15. Read 1 Timothy 2:1-2. Following Daniel's example, how can we do this in the society in which we live while "obeying God, not man- Acts 5:29"?

So Daniel is thrown into the lion's den, which was a pit dug into the ground with an entrance from the side for the lions and with a huge boulder placed over the top so there could be no escape. It was a crude and very effective form of capital punishment. No one ever got out alive. And certainly not an old man over 80. Daniel was as good as dead the moment they threw him in. Or so they thought.

Notice Daniel's Three "Did Nots:"

He did not try to escape the consequences of his decision to obey God.

He did not know what would happen.

He did not make a deal with God to save himself.

Evidently Daniel was not afraid to die. He may have suspected that God would rescue him, but he could not be sure until the moment came. I do not doubt that he had some anxiety when they took him to the pit. And I'm sure he was praying as they flung him into the darkness. Then he hit bottom, slid along the dirt and came to rest on his backside. He could hear the sound of the lions breathing a few feet away. But there were no roars, no menacing movements, no teeth tearing into his flesh. As the seconds ticked away, he began to relax. Minutes passed and then hours and the lions did not touch him. Daniel later said that an angel came to rescue him. Did he have a conversation with the angel? We do not know for sure, but I think he probably did. Who knows? Maybe the lions became like cuddly kittens and Daniel played with them all night long.²⁵

16. It is unlikely we will be thrown into a lion's den and then saved from being eaten by those lions. What does it look like in our world to be rescued by God from danger? Why are there no promises that God will always physically rescue us? Why is physical deliverance secondary to faithful obedience?

²⁵ <https://www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/how-to-tame-lions/>

Lord, It Belongs Not to My Care - Richard Baxter

Lord, it belongs not to my care,
Whether I die or live;
To love and serve Thee is my share,
And this thy grace must give.

If death shall braize this springing seed,
Before it come to fruit;
The will with Thee goes for the deed,
Thy life was in the root.

Thou lead'st me through no darker rooms
Than Christ went through before;
He that into thy kingdom comes,
Must enter by this Door.

Come, Lord, when grace hath made me meet
Thy blessed face to see;
For if thy work on earth be sweet,
What will thy glory be?

Thy knowledge of that life is small;
The eye of faith is dim;
But, it's enough my God knows all,
And I shall be with Him.

- 17. Death, or the fear of death, can be a powerful motivator. How should a Christian think about death? How did Jesus conquer death and how can you enjoy his victory as well?**

The end of the story comes quickly. First, the enemies who plotted against Daniel are thrown to the lions, along with their wives and children (verse 24). Then Darius offers public praise to “the God of Daniel” (verses 26-27) who is the living God who endures forever. He rescues and he saves, and he is the One who delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. What amazing words coming from the lips of a pagan king. Or perhaps he is a pagan no more. Perhaps like Nebuchadnezzar he became a believer in the one true God. We won’t know for sure until we get to heaven, but I would not be surprised to see Darius there.

Before we leave this story, I would like to point out the gospel in Daniel 6. Daniel the man is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ who, though he was innocent, was envied and hated and condemned to die. He, too, was let down into a pit of death and a stone was rolled across the entrance and an official seal placed across the stone. Just as God sent an angel to Daniel, he also sent angels to the Lord Jesus Christ to testify “He is not here. He is risen just as he said.” From that pit of death came forth the Prince of life. He is the One who has conquered death

forever and ever. Because of him, we know that to be absent from the body is not to be dead, but to be present with the Lord.

He is Daniel’s God. His name is Jesus. He is our Savior and our Lord.

The same God who rescued Daniel will rescue you from your sin if you will trust in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who trust in him are counted righteous in God’s eyes and their sins are forgiven forever. If that’s what you need, and if that’s what you want, then run to the cross. Do not delay. Run to the cross and lay your sins on Jesus. In one shining moment your sins will be forgiven and you will receive a brand-new life. This is God’s promise to those who trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior.

And for all of us there is much to encourage us in this beloved story. In the days to come we will all face hostility in one form or another because of our Christian faith. Those who serve the Lord never have an easy road in this world. But be of good cheer. If we will be faithful, God can use us to touch many people, including some in high places who watch us from a distance and cheer us on, hoping that our God will deliver us. Here is a prayer that I pray for myself and also for everyone reading these words:

Lord, I do not ask for an easy road but for courage to walk the path you set before me. I thank you that my life is in your hands and that I have nothing to fear because all my days are appointed by you. Give me the faith of Daniel. May my colors be clear so that everyone will know that I belong to you. I do not pray for a den of lions but I ask for courage to go there if that be your will for me. Above all else, may you be glorified in my life so that others will see Jesus in me. I pray this in the name of him who is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Amen.²⁶

18. What practices are in your life now that connect you to Jesus, and which would give you the strength to obey God instead of human rulers, as in Daniel’s situation?

²⁶ <https://www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/how-to-tame-lions/>

This study was compiled and questions were written by Steve Lombardo (Plano Campus)—www.villagebible.church/smallgroup