

Daniel

Chapter 1

1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

- It is important to realize here that there were multiple attacks against Judah by Nebuchadnezzar and also that different calendar and year counting systems, Jewish and Babylonian, are at work here.
- There has been a lot of argument that the book of Daniel was written after the things it prophecies but these arguments are built on shaky observations about the text and misunderstandings of the calendars used
- We believe Daniel was written *by* Daniel and is part of God's inspired scripture

2 And the Lord handed Jehoiakim king of Judah over to him, along with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god.

- To defile the things of Jehoiakim's God
- BUT - 1 Samuel 5:3
- God is king - men can try to refute and denigrate Him but they are as nothing before Him
- Isaiah 40:17-23
- The rulers of this age would do well to study what happened to those who mocked God in the past

3 Then the king told Ashpenaz, the chief of his officials, to bring in some of the sons of Israel, including some of the royal family and of the nobles,

4 youths in whom there was no impairment, who were good-looking, suitable for instruction in every kind of expertise, endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge, and who had ability to serve in the king's court; and he ordered Ashpenaz to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.

- He desired to start with the youth, and train them to be Babylonians, forgetting their identity

5 The king also allotted for them a daily ration from the king's choice food and from the wine which he drank, and ordered that they be educated for three years, at the end of which they were to enter the king's personal service.

- Why would he give them choice food?
- People who are being indoctrinated are often lured in with gifts and good treatment

6 Now among them from the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

7 Then the commander of the officials assigned new names to them; and to Daniel he assigned the name Belteshazzar, to Hananiah Shadrach, to Mishael Meshach, and to Azariah Abed-nego.

- Nebuchadnezzar was really trying to erase Hebrew culture - indoctrinating youth, defiling religious symbols, giving these boys new Babylonian names that had references to false gods

8 But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank;

- Daniel was under the Old Testament Mosaic covenant, which, preceding Christ, had strict laws about what foods were clean and unclean
- Obviously there was no way to enforce these laws when being fed random food from the king
- This food might also have been offered to idols - Acts 15:29 - even the New Testament Jews saw a problem with this

- Although Paul recognized in Romans 14:14 and 1 Timothy 4:4-5 that for those who have Christ as their Savior, since idols do not really have any power, as long as we recognize the food is from God and give thanks, we are OK
- But Daniel had no such option

so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself.

- This was a bold move - you could be put to death simply for frowning in the presence of the king
- And this was not Daniel's king by birth or citizenship but rather the one who kidnapped him
- Where did Daniel get such strong faith?
- Daniel was a child around the time that king Josiah enacted his reform of Israel
- 2 Kings 23 - Josiah's reforms
- 26-27 God did not draw back His anger
- But perhaps part of the reason for God allowing Josiah the heart and room to carry out these reforms was so that men like Daniel, who would need strong faith in exile to maintain their connection to God would have a good example of how a holy man lives

9 Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials.

- Even when it seems we are firmly in the yoke of another, under oppression, God is always in charge of us
- Psalm 23:5

10 The commander of the officials said to Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has allotted your food and your drink; for why should he see your faces looking gaunt in comparison to the youths who are your own age? Then you would make me forfeit my head to the king."

- Notice that God softens this man's heart toward Daniel and puts him in almost a subservient position to Daniel
- Exodus 3:22
- Again, God is sovereign over all hearts, minds and situations

11 But Daniel said to the overseer whom the commander of the officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,

12 "Please put your servants to the test for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink.

13 Then let our appearance be examined in your presence and the appearance of the youths who are eating the king's choice food; and deal with your servants according to what you see."

- Daniel did not
 - Panic
 - Yell
 - Go on a hunger strike
- Instead he patiently, I'm sure after praying for guidance, reasoned with the guard
- Proverbs 15:1
- Romans 12:12
- Panic and wrath are seldom useful and do not glorify God
- Philippians 4:4-7
- This kind of peace and calm can only come into one's heart and mind when we consider the sovereignty, love and power of God
- Matthew 6:13

14 So he listened to them in this matter, and put them to the test for ten days.

15 And at the end of ten days their appearance seemed better, and they were fatter than all the youths who had been eating the king's choice food.

16 So the overseer continued to withhold their choice food and the wine they were to drink, and kept giving them vegetables.

- The Lord was with Daniel because of his faith and refusal to bend, even when his life was in peril and he was in someone else's control
- 2 Chronicles 16:9a

17 And as for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every kind of literature and expertise; Daniel even understood all kinds of visions and dreams.

- It is obvious, as it should be, that although Daniel and his three companions surely would have wanted to be somewhere else, they were exactly where God had placed them and needed them
- He used the teaching forced on these boys that the king intended to indoctrinate them and take their identity, God used it for His glory, to prepare these men to be great witnesses and prophets
- Romans 8:28
- Genesis 50:15-21
- God will keep His hand on us in what seems to be the worst situation that could happen, and if we are faithful and don't deny Him, He will use every evil brought against us to strengthen us and serve Him for His glory and our protection

18 Then at the end of the days which the king had specified for presenting them, the commander of the officials presented them before Nebuchadnezzar.

19 And the king talked with them, and out of them all not one was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; so they entered the king's personal service.

- Proverbs 21:1
- Genesis 4:1-15
- The Lord chastens those He loves but He always gives his protection as well

20 As for every matter of expertise and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the soothsayer priests and conjurers who were in all his realm.

21 And Daniel continued until the first year of Cyrus the king.

- The power of God is so overwhelmingly greater than that of false gods of wood and stone, of human kings, of anyone and anything, because when we have God within us, the One who created all that we see and know, well, as Paul put it if God is for us who can be against us
- 1 John 4:4-6

Daniel 2

1 Now in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was troubled and his sleep left him.

- Dreams seem a common mode of communication between God and men
- Genesis 28:10-17
- Genesis 37:5-9
- Matthew 2:12
- If you have a dream that moves you, that you remember well after you wake up, this can be the Lord speaking with you. Write it down and pray over it and if it is from Him, He will reveal it to you

2 Then the king gave orders to call in the soothsayer priests, the conjurers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king.

3 The king said to them, "I had a dream, and my spirit is anxious to understand the dream."

- Note that the king does not make any attempt to understand the dream by himself

4 Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic: "O king, live forever! Tell the dream to your servants, and we will declare the interpretation."

5 The king replied to the Chaldeans, "The command from me is firm: if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you will be torn limb from limb and your houses will be turned into a rubbish heap.

- Nebuchadnezzar definitely was disturbed by the dream and knew it was unusual - that was clear from the first verse
- But it is curious that he so adamantly opposes telling them the actual dream so they can interpret it
- It would seem the only reasonable explanation is that he is trying to make sure that they are actually telling him something useful and not just making up nice explanations to get in his good graces
- His own version of 1 John 4:1-3 - test the spirits
 - We would be well served to follow this model more often
 - Deuteronomy 18:20-22

6 But if you declare the dream and its interpretation, you will receive from me gifts and a reward and great honor; therefore declare to me the dream and its interpretation."

- This promise will become important a bit later
- Consider also that whoever knows the king's heart without having to ask him about it will receive a great reward - sound familiar?

7 They answered a second time and said, "Let the king tell the dream to his servants, and we will declare the interpretation."

- They must have known this appeal would fail but they had no choice at this point - they were under threat of death

8 The king replied, "I know for certain that you are trying to buy time, because you have perceived that the command from me is firm,

- Ironically he seems to know more about their hearts and minds than they do about his

9 that if you do not make the dream known to me, there is only one decree for you. For you have agreed together to speak lying and corrupt words before me until the situation is changed; therefore tell me the dream, so that I may know that you can declare to me its interpretation."

- Here he seems to confirm that in fact he wants them to tell him the dream without him revealing it because he needs a way to know that what they are saying has value
- Because he knows, apparently, that they are deceitful and fallible
- Isaiah 40:18-20
- People never want to admit that their idols are useless and never give any real answers
- I think about the big bang explanation that so many put stock in - whether it is true or not, if you ask them what came before the big bang they will either say a previous big bang, or it's impossible to know, or it doesn't matter
- Their idols have no real answers
- Much like these men

10 The Chaldeans answered the king and said, "There is no person on earth who could declare the matter to the king, because no great king or ruler has ever asked anything like this of any soothsayer priest, sorcerer, or Chaldean.

- I very much doubt their claim that no king ever asked such a thing
- They are very quick to admit that their powers are very limited
- These men were *magicians* - for real - and yet so quickly admit defeat

11 Moreover, the thing which the king demands is difficult, and there is no one else who could declare it to the king except gods, whose dwelling place is not with mortal flesh."

- John 1:14

12 Because of this, the king became angry and extremely furious, and he gave orders to kill all the wise men of Babylon.

13 So the decree was issued that the wise men be killed; and they looked for Daniel and his friends, to kill them.

- So here Daniel winds up in mortal peril because of the king's insane demand and the foolish answers of these royal sooth sayers
- The implication here is that Daniel and friends were already considered wise men
- And they had to know the king would carry out his threat
 - Jeremiah 29:22
 - Jeremiah 52:10-11

14 Then Daniel replied with discretion and discernment to Arioch, the captain of the king's bodyguard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon;

15 he said to Arioch, the king's officer, "For what reason is the decree from the king so harsh?" Then Arioch informed Daniel of the matter.

- Most young men Daniel's age, having a king's guard come at him to kill him, would have either launched themselves into a futile fight to preserve their life or else panicked and tried to run away
- Daniel responds with discretion and discernment, obviously calmly
- Daniel shows this same calm again and again
- Psalm 56:3-4
- Psalm 23:4
- Can we do this? Can we be calm in the face of earthly death? We should be able to.
- Psalm 103:19

16 So Daniel went in and requested of the king that he would give him a grace period, so that he might declare the interpretation to the king.

- This would be no small matter, considering how angry the king was
- It shows, as illustrated at the end of chapter 1, how much knowledge and wisdom God had granted Daniel and his friends
- Proverbs 2:6-8

17 Then Daniel went to his house and informed his friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, about the matter, 18 so that they might request compassion from the God of heaven concerning this secret, so that Daniel and his friends would not be killed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

- They didn't devise a way to escape. They didn't decide to spend their last night on earth drinking and partying
- Instead they just turned straight to God.. together
- Philippians 4:6-7

- Matthew 18:19-20

19 Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven;

20 Daniel said, "May the name of God be blessed forever and ever, For wisdom and power belong to Him.

21 It is He who changes the times and the periods; He removes kings and appoints kings;

He gives wisdom to wise men, And knowledge to people of understanding.

22 It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, And the light dwells with Him.

23 To You, God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, For You have given me wisdom and power; Even now You have made known to me what we requested of You, For You have made known to us the king's matter."

- Upon God giving Daniel this unknowable answer, Daniel immediately returns to the Lord with praise
- Luke 17:11-19
- We must always return quickly to the Lord with praise and thanksgiving
- We should desire to do this because He has blessed us

24 Thereupon, Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to kill the wise men of Babylon; he went and said this to him: "Do not kill the wise men of Babylon! Take me into the king's presence, and I will declare the interpretation to the king."

- Notice Daniel doesn't just say don't kill me and my friends
- He is concerned that none of the king's wise men should be harmed
- Acts 16:25-28
- Romans 12:17-21
- Notice it says *overcome* evil with good

25 Then Arioch hurriedly brought Daniel into the king's presence and spoke to him as follows: "I have found a man among the exiles from Judah who can make the interpretation known to the king!"

- Thus bringing the glory and attention to the God of Israel
- Now we begin to see God's purpose in all this

26 The king said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen and its interpretation?"

27 Daniel answered before the king and said, "As for the secret about which the king has inquired, neither wise men, sorcerers, soothsayer priests, nor diviners are able to declare it to the king.

28 However, there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets,

- Daniel makes sure to declare to the king where the answer comes from
- Colossians 3:17
- We should be sure to do this too - how often do we pray for something and the Lord provides it but we don't give Him enough credit for it in the eyes of others

and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days.

- Why to a pagan king?
- Maybe to give him a sense of his true place in the grand scheme of things, to humble him
- Didn't work

This was your dream and the visions in your mind while on your bed.

29 As for you, O king, while on your bed your thoughts turned to what would take place in the future; and He who reveals secrets has made known to you what will take place.

- Made it known through His messenger Daniel so that it will be clear where the message is from

30 But as for me, this secret has not been revealed to me for any wisdom residing in me more than in any other living person, but for the purpose of making the interpretation known to the king, and that you may understand the thoughts of your mind.

- In other words I, Daniel, have no special talent that caused me to be able to know this answer
- Notice it talks about helping the king understand the thoughts of his own mind
- We must seek God's wisdom about everything, even that which we are most sure of, our own thoughts
- Proverbs 14:12

31 "You, O king, were watching and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary radiance, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome.

- It would seem that one of the things Nebuchadnezzar took from this dream clearly sent by God is to make a giant gold statue for the people to worship.
- It's funny how sometimes people can actually get a message from God and still ignore it and misinterpret it
- Number 22:21-34
- We must try to realize when God gives us a message - when something unusual happens, really when anything unexpected happens, we must pray about it and ask the Lord what it means
- This is why it is a dangerous thing when some pastors preach that not everything comes from God or satan

32 The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its chest and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze,

33 its legs of iron, and its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.

34 You continued watching until a stone was broken off without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay, and crushed them.

35 Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed to pieces all at the same time, and they were 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 entire earth.

36 "This was the dream; and now we will tell its interpretation before the king.

37 You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength, and the honor;

38 and wherever the sons of mankind live, or the animals of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has handed them over to you and has made you ruler over them all. You are the head of gold.

39 And after you another kingdom will arise inferior to you,

- Persia

then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth.

- Greece

40 Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; just as iron smashes and crushes everything, so, like iron that crushes, it will smash and crush all these things.

- Rome

41 And in that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have within it some of the toughness of iron, since you saw the iron mixed with common clay.

42 And just as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of pottery, so some of the kingdom will be strong, and part of it will be fragile.

43 In that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in their descendants; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not combine with pottery.

- This seems to be a future kingdom, of mixed countries and peoples, still to come

44 And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.

45 Just as you saw that a stone was broken off from the mountain without hands, and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is certain and its interpretation is trustworthy.”

- Luke 1:26-35 - broken off without hands
- Matthew 21:33-46 - Same thing spoken of here
- 2 Samuel 7:8-16
- So many ways God expressed this, and through so many people and events, across so many centuries
- We watch for more of its fulfillment today

46 Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and paid humble respect to Daniel, and gave orders to present to him an offering and incense.

- Ironically enough this great king who has had this great vision from God and then an actual explanation of it as well straight from a prophet of God, still in the end turns to worshipping a fellow man
- We always look for things in front of us in the flesh to explain what we are hearing, seeing and feeling
- Genesis 28:16

47 The king responded to Daniel and said, “Your God truly is a God of gods and a Lord of kings and a revealer of secrets, since you have been able to reveal this secret.”

- At least he does acknowledge Yahweh

48 Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts, and he made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon, and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon.

- Remember the promise made by the king in verse 6
- This was the hand of God blessing Daniel and his friends
- Proverbs 21:1

49 And Daniel made a request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego over the administration of the province of Babylon, while Daniel was at the king’s court.

- Much like his predecessor Joseph in Pharaoh’s court!

Chapter 3

1 Nebuchadnezzar the king made a statue of gold, the height of which was sixty cubits, and its width six cubits; he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.

- We know that Nebuchadnezzar was not a believer in the God of Israel
- Yet we also know that God seemed to be speaking to him in dreams and reaching out to his heart
- And yet the only thing that Nebuchadnezzar seems to have taken away from his dream is the idea to build a large statue

2 Nebuchadnezzar the king also sent word to assemble the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the chief treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the administrators of the provinces to come to the dedication of the statue that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

3 Then the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the chief treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the administrators of the provinces were assembled for the dedication of the statue that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the statue that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

- Note that this group assembled here would definitely include Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, being as they had been put in positions of authority

4 Then the herald loudly proclaimed: "To you the command is given, you peoples, nations, and populations of all languages,

5 that at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe, and all kinds of musical instruments, you are to fall down and worship the golden statue that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up.

- This put these men square in the middle of a conflict between obeying the authority that God had placed them under and obeying His law
- Exodus 20:1-6
- Often when we are given important positions in earthly administrations, whether it be a company, a government or an organization, it will lead to conflict like this
- This is the time that decision is critical - and that decision is whether to obey God or to sin
- Acts 5:29
- There is no choice really - to willingly deny God in service of another is to willingly turn aside from salvation and deny Romans 10:9 - that Jesus is our MASTER and we are His servants
- Matthew 10:32-33

6 But whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be thrown into the middle of a furnace of blazing fire."

- This puts the full ante in place for these servants of God
- They have been blessed by God with protection from their captors and from uncleanness and saved from death by a miracle from God
- They have been placed in earthly positions of power with their captors
- They now face a choice between their lives and their adherence to God's law
- This is a choice every one of us will face at some point - the world or God, life or death
 - Deuteronomy 30:15-20
 - Revelation 12:11
 - 1 John 2:15
 - Matthew 10:28
 - These men got to live this out
- The time to make the choice is actually beforehand
- Police officers train to respond by instinct so that when they are in a life and death situation they will not have to think but rather just respond
- These men were also trained to obey God no matter what
- I don't think it was an accident that the earthly means set up to torture and kill them was to be cast into the fire
- Matthew 25:41
- satan wants to BE God - no wonder he would threaten the same thing that God Himself declares

7 Therefore as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe, and all kinds of musical instruments, all the peoples, nations, and populations of all languages fell down and worshiped the golden statue that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

- Notice how the text specifically points out that all peoples and nations and populations fell down and worshipped the false idol
- Revelation 13:1-8
- Luke 14:26
- We will see literally the entire world turning to the beast, to beliefs and thoughts and goals and aims that are not compatible with the Word of God and we will have to choose
- It will not be a choice like obeying Hitler or Stalin, it will be a choice where going with the crowd and agreeing to unholy things will be accompanied by positions of power
- It will be a choice where we are asked to bow down to certain satanic things, but our lives will be allowed to go on
- Matthew 24:37-39
- It is critically important for Christians who are in droves lining up in front of golden statues - be they political parties or non biblically based ideologies or anything else that requires them to salute an idol that they realize we are to worship God alone, obey God's law completely in our hearts, even if we can't perfectly in our flesh, and have allegiance to Him only, forsaking all others
- It is not coincidental that the marriage vows we use speak of "forsaking all others" and that Hebrews says marriage should be held in regard above all, and that we are Christ's bridegroom

8 For this reason at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and brought charges against the Jews.

- Luke 21:16
- John 15:18-25
- This is a real life foreshadowing of what we will face

9 They began to speak and said to Nebuchadnezzar the king: "O king, live forever!

10 You, O king, have made a decree that every person who hears the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, and bagpipe, and all kinds of musical instruments, is to fall down and worship the golden statue.

11 But whoever does not fall down and worship shall be thrown into the middle of a furnace of blazing fire.

12 There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon, namely Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. These men, O king, have disregarded you; they do not serve your gods, nor do they worship the golden statue which you have set up."

- This is what we are facing right now - bow down to the gods of sexual deviancy, unnatural relations, child sacrifice, not only don't object to these practices but we are increasingly required to actually praise them

13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in rage and anger gave orders to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; then these men were brought before the king.

14 Nebuchadnezzar began speaking and said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, that you do not serve my gods, nor worship the golden statue that I have set up?

- Is it true that you have denied the crowd sourced truths that we have created
- Is it true that you have refused to praise those who deny the law, who create chaos and destroy property, those who worship illicit substances and sexual deviancy?
- In rage and anger - just turn on the news...

15 Now if you are ready, at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery and bagpipe, and all kinds of musical instruments, to fall down and worship the statue that I have made, very well.

But if you do not worship, you will immediately be thrown into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire; and what god is there who can rescue you from my hands?"

- These satanically inspired earthly authorities do not acknowledge God - because satan also does not acknowledge Him and His authority
- That is satan's entire existence - denying jealously the authority of God and at every turn destroying what He has made

16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego replied to the king, "Nebuchadnezzar, we are not in need of an answer to give you concerning this matter.

- Luke 21:12-15
- Matthew 10:28
- There is a deeper point here - they simply don't find it necessary to answer this earthly human authority - what he is asking them to do is a deadly sin so there is no choice for them, hence no need to really even answer
 - Mathew 27:11-14
 - John 18:33-36
 - Sometimes there is no need to answer a defeated enemy - if it will not make a difference to the outcome then we just as well might follow Romans 12:18

17 If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to rescue us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will rescue us from your hand, O king.

- This is the confidence that a true believer displays
 - 1 Samuel 17:41-47
 - Acts 5:27-32

18 But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods nor worship the golden statue that you have set up."

- This is one of the most important statements in the Bible.
- Our faith does not depend on us testing God or God doing what we think He should do
- Deuteronomy 6:16
- Even if God should allow us to fall into danger, to be tempted, to be harmed, we must have absolute faith in Him and love for Him and His law
- Hebrews 11:17-19
- Hebrews 6:18-19
- Faith means we believe God's promises over our own understanding in every circumstance no matter what

19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with wrath, and his facial expression was changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. He answered by giving orders to heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated.

20 And he ordered certain valiant warriors who were in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego in order to throw them into the furnace of blazing fire.

- Just think about this - you stand up and refuse to deny God, and INSTANTLY you are met with intense rage and threat of a painful fiery death
- Still they did not relent. Why?
 - Revelation 14:11
 - They know that to deny God will result in far worse punishment

21 Then these men were tied up in their trousers, their coats, their caps, and their other clothes, and were thrown into the middle of the furnace of blazing fire.

22 For this reason, because the king's command was harsh and the furnace had been made extremely hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.

- Very often those who participate in the schemes of the devil wind up themselves ensnared in evil
- The devil wants to destroy all and loves to use man's own evil against himself

23 But these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, fell into the middle of the furnace of blazing fire still tied up.

24 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded and stood up quickly; he said to his counselors, "Was it not three men that we threw bound into the middle of the fire?" They replied to the king, "Absolutely, O king."

25 He responded, "Look! I see four men untied and walking about in the middle of the fire unharmed, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods!"

- Deuteronomy 10:14
- Isaiah 43:1-3
- Psalm 91:7-9
- Psalm 37:12-17
- The Lord gives this promise over and over; over and over in scripture we see the righteous prevail through God's divine intervention - Peter and Paul released from prison, Moses and the Israelites brought through the sea on dry land, Noah and his family preserved in a boat
- But we must have a deep trust in the Lord, even when He allows us to be raged at and thrown in the fire, that He will never let the righteous be moved
- Real faith is denial of everything you know and see with your own eyes, no matter what else happens

26 Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the furnace of blazing fire; he said, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, come out, you servants of the Most High God, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego came out of the middle of the fire.

- Notice that Nebuchadnezzar now addresses them as servants OF THE MOST HIGH GOD
- This had to be through divine intervention - he did not believe in God, and would have had no reason to refer to God in this way
- Isaiah 45:23
- Those who rail against God's elect, torturing and punishing them and unjustly making them suffer, only guarantee their own demise in the end. They may have their day on the earth, but the Lord is in Heaven.

27 The satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men, nor was the hair of their heads singed, nor were their trousers damaged, nor had even the smell of fire touched them.

- The Lord perfectly preserved them, since they perfectly refused to deny Him
- Matthew 10:32-34
 - Acknowledging God is not just speaking the Gospel or believing Christ; it is behaving in a way that shows your faith and trust in God overwhelms every other issue in your life
- Matthew 16:24

28 Nebuchadnezzar responded and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who has sent His angel and rescued His servants who put their trust in Him, violating the king's command, and surrendered their bodies rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.

- Luke 21:12-13

29 Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or population of any language that speaks anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego shall be torn limb from limb and their houses made a rubbish heap, because there is no other god who is able to save in this way.”

- Isaiah 45:20-25

30 Then the king made Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego prosperous in the province of Babylon.

- Deuteronomy 28:7
- John 18:36
- Psalm 37:9

Chapter 4

1 Nebuchadnezzar the king to all the peoples, nations, and populations of all languages who live in all the earth: “May your peace be great!

- This is a large attitude shift from the way that this king was previously
- Luke 19:1-10
- Ezekiel 36:24-28 - here He is talking about the Israelites but He does this for all who surrender to Him
- Psalm 51:10
- Romans 4:17
- He remakes us in His image - we don't go into true salvation with our old nature but a new heart that desires to do His will - we just battle our old flesh

2 I am pleased to declare the signs and miracles that the Most High God has done for me.

3 How great are His signs And how mighty are His miracles! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And His dominion is from generation to generation.

- Isaiah 45:23
- Compare to what Nebuchadnezzar said in Daniel 3:15
- We need to understand this - we cannot convert by battling impurity, we battle impurity by converting

4 “I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and happy in my palace.

5 I saw a dream and it startled me; and these appearances as I lay on my bed and the visions in my mind kept alarming me.

- We will see the same reaction to visions by Daniel in chapter 7
- This book has been greatly criticized and it's been claimed that it must have been written after historical events that it prophesied. But this narrative of being alarmed has the ring of truth to it
- Notice that last time, the king was thinking about the future. This time he says he was at ease and happy, just relaxing
- Obviously the Lord had a lot to say to this king, as well as to Daniel
- Makes one wonder what He has spoken to other kings who did not ever mention it

6 So I gave orders to bring into my presence all the wise men of Babylon, so that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream.

7 Then the soothsayer priests, the sorcerers, the Chaldeans, and the diviners came in and I related the dream to them, but they could not make its interpretation known to me.

- Here we find that Nebuchadnezzar went right back to his old ways, even though he seems to have acknowledged God in his life
- We do the same - we seek answers about God and the world in the old things *of* the world that we are used to - books, other people, the internet
- The bible has the answer to this - Ecclesiastes 12:11-14

8 But finally Daniel came in before me, whose name is Belteshazzar according to the name of my god, and in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and I related the dream to him, saying,

- He is also still trying to cling to his old god along with the One True God
- Idolatry - human nature
- Again we do this when we rely on yoga, luck, non-Christian meditation, all these worldly “new age” things
- Exodus 20:1-6
- James 1:5-8

9 ‘Belteshazzar, chief of the soothsayer priests, since I know that a spirit of the holy gods is in you and no secret baffles you, tell me the visions of my dream which I have seen, along with its interpretation.

- “a spirit of the holy **gods**”
- He definitely still doesn’t quite get it
- But note that he now does trust Daniel’s God enough to not demand Daniel also tell him what his dream was

10 ‘Now these were the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed: I was looking, and behold, there was a tree in the middle of the earth and its height was great.

11 The tree grew large and became strong And its height reached to the sky, And it was visible to the end of the whole earth.

12 Its foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant, And in it was food for all. The animals of the field found shade under it, And the birds of the sky lived in its branches, And all living creatures fed from it.

- Very similar dream to the first one the Lord gave him
- The Lord often dovetails one thing into another like this - it is one of His many signs to us that He is there and in control

13 ‘I was looking in the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed, and behold, an angelic watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven.

- How would a pagan king know about angelic watches and holy ones in Heaven
- Nebuchadnezzar is clearly being influenced by God, spoken through by Him
- God can and does use anyone, even those who are not yielding to Him

14 He shouted out and spoke as follows: “Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, Shake off its foliage and scatter its fruit; Let the animals flee from under it And the birds from its branches.

15 Yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground, But with a band of iron and bronze around it In the new grass of the field; And let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, And let him share with the animals in the grass of the earth.

16 Let his mind change from that of a human And let an animal’s mind be given to him, And let seven periods of time pass over him.

- God often uses the imagery of a tree for those whom He watches over
- Luke 13:6-9
- Mark 11:12-14
- A tree stands by its roots, grows larger and stronger with each passing year, lets go of its old leaves each year, and provides resources and nesting for all the creatures around it
- Jeremiah 17:5-10 relates both sides of this equation

17 This sentence is by the decree of the angelic watchers, And the decision is a command of the holy ones,

In order that the living may know That the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, And He grants it to whomever He wishes And sets over it the lowliest of people.”

- Each person who sets themselves up against the Lord will learn this lesson personally - He does not ignore anyone who is arrogant toward Him
- He can't - He must carry out perfect justice
- Isaiah 42:8
- Elijah killing the prophets of Baal, Moses punishing those who worshipped the golden calf, down to Ananias and Saphirah being killed for worshipping money
- Jeremiah 10:3-10
- God has a lot to say about idolatry in the many books, verses and chapters in which He speaks through the prophets to Jerusalem about their sin
- We would do well to pay heed to how God feels about idols since we still rely on so many in our modern lives to get us through - anything we give time to or use to influence our lives or help us that is not God is an idol

18 This is the dream that I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belshazzar, tell me its interpretation, since none of the wise men of my kingdom is able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able, because a spirit of the holy gods is in you.’

19 “Then Daniel, whose name is Belshazzar, was appalled for a while as his thoughts alarmed him.

- This should be a familiar feeling to the believer when either
 - The Lord is speaking to him or her about some event or judgment
 - Or there is a recognition that the person in front of us has offended a Holy God unrepentantly and is suffering consequences
- Galatians 6:6-7

The king responded and said, ‘Belshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation alarm you.’

- This seems to be either an attempt by Nebuchadnezzar to move things along by reassuring Daniel,
- or else just pure arrogance in thinking that it is just a harmless dream, despite how the judgment was framed to him

Belshazzar replied, ‘My lord, if only the dream applied to those who hate you, and its interpretation to your adversaries!

- Daniel’s horror and alarm here and this statement are evidence of his surrender to the will of the Lord and respect for what the Lord has put in place
- We see the same thing in King David when King Saul is out to kill him
 - 1 Samuel 24:1-13
- Even if we don’t agree with whatever evil king God has allowed to rule, it is clear from scripture that we still must obey that authority (Romans 13:1-7) as long as it does not tell us to disobey God (Acts 5:27-29) and protect and respect that authority until and unless God makes it clear that we are to do otherwise

20 The tree that you saw, which became large and grew strong, whose height reached to the sky and was visible to all the earth,

21 and whose foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in which was food for all, under which the animals of the field lived and in whose branches the birds of the sky settled—

22 it is you, O king; for you have become great and grown strong, and your majesty has become great and reached to the sky, and your dominion to the end of the earth.

- Note here that the vision given by the Lord includes a *beautiful* tree that represents Nebuchadnezzar - one that the Lord blesses all the earth through

- Perhaps the Lord was trying to bless the king the same way He blessed Solomon
- 1 Kings 10:1-9
- We all want to be blessed - Solomon was, Nebuchadnezzar was not
- The difference is clear - Solomon gave the glory to God as evidenced by the statements of the queen of Sheba, and Nebuchadnezzar took glory for himself, as is evidenced by him hanging onto his other gods and ways and also by what he says on the roof of the palace in the verses below

23 And in that the king saw an angelic watcher, a holy one, descending from heaven and saying, "Chop down the tree and destroy it; yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground, but with a band of iron and bronze around it in the new grass of the field, let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him share with the animals of the field until seven periods of time pass over him,"

24 this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king:

25 that you be driven away from mankind and your dwelling place be with the animals of the field, and you be given grass to eat like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven; and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.

- Notice
 - The Lord is consistent - Genesis 4:8-12
 - The length of the punishment, like the length of Jerusalem's punishment, does not depend upon him repenting or changing - it is a fixed trial given by the Lord as justice for unrepentant sin
 - Lead us not into temptation - when we stray and don't give glory to the Lord and disobey His commandments we put ourselves in danger
 - The Lord will then put us into a trial to ensure that we are corrected and repent and return to Him
 - This is done in love but with order and usually in a very serious way

26 And in that it was commanded to leave the stump with the roots of the tree, your kingdom will remain as yours after you recognize that it is Heaven that rules.

- Just as God did not take David out as king for defiling Bathsheba and did not take Solomon out as king for having idols, He has mercy on Nebuchadnezzar in that he will retain his kingdom
- But this is not necessarily pure mercy in the face of unadulterated sin, but rather this is God's plan - He is declaring you will still reign for me after I've punished you
- In this way we see that continued support by the Lord does not equate always to a lack of sin
- It is arrogance to assume it does

27 Therefore, O king, may my advice be pleasing to you: wipe away your sin by doing righteousness, and your wrongdoings by showing mercy to the poor, in case there may be a prolonging of your prosperity.'

- Again God is very consistent - He gives the law, warns when it is being broken and what the punishment will be, and gives a chance for repentance
- Isaiah 1:18-24
- Matthew 3:1-12

28 "All of this happened to Nebuchadnezzar the king.

29 Twelve months later he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon.

30 The king began speaking and was saying, 'Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the honor of my majesty?'

- We look at this and see the blatant arrogance of this earthly king and wonder at it
- His question of "what god can save you from my hand" was already answered in chapter 3

- He has had divine intervention, seen signs and visions
- And he has acknowledged God exists but has not surrendered to His sovereignty, His Lordship
- This is the same thing we do when we sin
 - When we assume He is good with us disobeying His law because of His grace
 - When we mistake the works of His Holy Spirit through us for our own efforts
 - When we fail to realize that everything belongs to Him (Job 41:11)
- This is why one sin damns us - we think the kingdom is ours and fail to recognize His absolute authority and justice
- James 2:10
- If you steal one quarter you may as well have taken the entire cash register because it showed your disregard for the law

31 While the word was still in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven, saying, 'King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you,

32 and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the animals of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.'

- Exodus 33:18-19
- Note He requires not only His chosen people but even this pagan king to recognize the truth

33 Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws.

- Job 1:13-20
- From a beautiful tree, a head of gold, to this
- Because he refused to give the glory to God and pursue righteousness, all he had was taken from him and he was humiliated

34 "But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom endures from generation to generation.

- How many times must we learn this lesson - same thing Job learned through the fish

35 All the inhabitants of the earth are of no account, But He does according to His will among the army of heaven And among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can fend off His hand Or say to Him, 'What have You done?'

36 At that time my reason returned to me. And my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the honor of my kingdom, and my state counselors and my nobles began seeking me out; so I was reestablished in my sovereignty, and surpassing greatness was added to me.

- Literally Proverbs 9:10
- Once we look to God, realize He is in charge, He owns all, He deserves the glory, He provides
- Then we can start to make sense of our world by the truth
- Otherwise we are like those who thought the sun revolved around the earth
- 2 Timothy 3:6-7

37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt, and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just; and He is able to humble those who walk in pride."

- Rough lesson for the king
- Acts 26:9-14

Chapter 5

5 Belshazzar the king held a great feast for a thousand of his nobles, and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand. 2 While he tasted the wine, Belshazzar gave orders to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives, and his concubines could drink out of them. 3 Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God which was in Jerusalem; and the king and his nobles, his wives, and his concubines drank out of them. 4 They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

5 Suddenly the fingers of a human hand emerged and began writing opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, and the king saw the back of the hand that did the writing. 6 Then the king's face became pale and his thoughts alarmed him, and his hip joints loosened and his knees began knocking together. 7 The king called aloud to bring in the sorcerers, the Chaldeans, and the diviners. The king began speaking and said to the wise men of Babylon, "Anyone who can read this inscription and explain its interpretation to me shall be clothed with purple and have a necklace of gold around his neck, and have authority as third ruler in the kingdom." 8 Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the inscription or make known its interpretation to the king. 9 Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, his face grew even more pale, and his nobles were perplexed.

10 The queen entered the banquet hall because of the words of the king and his nobles; the queen began to speak and said, "O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts alarm you or your face be pale. 11 There is a man in your kingdom in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of your father, illumination, insight, and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him. And King Nebuchadnezzar, your father—your father the king—appointed him chief of the soothsayer priests, sorcerers, Chaldeans, and diviners. 12 This was because an extraordinary spirit, knowledge and insight, interpretation of dreams, explanation of riddles, and solving of difficult problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belshazzar. Let Daniel now be summoned and he will declare the interpretation."

Daniel Interprets the Handwriting on the Wall

13 Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king began speaking and said to Daniel, "Are you that Daniel who is one of the exiles from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah? 14 Now I have heard about you that a spirit of the gods is in you, and that illumination, insight, and extraordinary wisdom have been found in you. 15 Just now the wise men and the sorcerers were brought in before me to read this inscription and make its interpretation known to me, but they could not declare the interpretation of the message. 16 But I personally have heard about you, that you are able to give interpretations and solve difficult problems. Now if you are able to read the inscription and make its interpretation known to me, you will be clothed with purple and wear a necklace of gold around your neck, and you will have authority as the third ruler in the kingdom."

17 Then Daniel replied and said before the king, "Keep your gifts for yourself or give your rewards to someone else; however, I will read the inscription to the king and make the interpretation known to him. 18 O king, the Most High God granted sovereignty, greatness, honor, and majesty to Nebuchadnezzar your father. 19 Now because of the greatness which He granted him, all the peoples, nations, and populations of all languages trembled and feared in his presence; whomever he wished, he killed, and whomever he wished, he spared alive; and whomever he wished he elevated, and whomever he wished he humbled. 20 But when his heart was arrogant and his spirit became so overbearing that he behaved presumptuously, he was deposed from his royal throne, and his dignity was taken away from him. 21 He was also driven away from mankind, and his heart was made like that of animals, and his dwelling place was with the wild donkeys. He was given grass to eat like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he recognized that the Most High God

is ruler over the realm of mankind, and that He sets over it whomever He wishes. 22 Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this, 23 but you have risen up against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your nobles, your wives, and your concubines have been drinking wine out of them; and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see, nor hear, nor understand. But the God in whose hand are your life-breath and all your ways, you have not glorified. 24 Then the hand was sent from Him and this inscription was written out.

25 “Now this is the inscription that was written:

‘Menē, Menē, Tekēl, Upharsin.’

26 This is the interpretation of the message: ‘Menē’—God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it. 27 ‘Tekēl’—you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient. 28 ‘Perēs’—your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians.”

29 Then Belshazzar gave orders, and they clothed Daniel with purple and put a necklace of gold around his neck, and issued a proclamation concerning him that he now had authority as the third ruler in the kingdom.

30 That same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed. 31 So Darius the Mede received the kingdom at about the age of sixty-two.