

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Daniel 5:13-6:28 | Session 11 | B.C. 538

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS SESSIONS

- Chapter 1 was an introduction to Daniel's life which spanned from his captivity and royal service in Babylon at the age of fifteen to his final service under Cyrus, the king of Persia when he was around 80.
- Chapter 2 was the revealing of The Times of the Gentiles.
- In chapter 3, God miraculously rescued Daniel's three friends from the fiery furnace in which they were cast because they would not compromise their faith.
- In chapter 4, Daniel will interpret another of Nebuchadnezzar's God-induced dreams. The king dreams of a giant tree cut down, branches and leaves removed, and fruit scattered. The stump and its roots, however, remained. We found out in verse 16 that this tree represented a man whose heart (or mind) would be changed and would be given a heart (or mind) of a beast for seven years. The dream was revealed by *watchers* or angels who told Nebuchadnezzar the ultimate purpose of the dream was *that the living may know that the most high ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will and setteth up over it the basest of men*. In other words, God is the Ultimate Ruler. But the king has no understanding of what this all means. Daniel can interpret for him.
- In chapter 5, Daniel is an older man in his 80's, long forgotten by most in Babylon. The Jews had been in captivity for about 67 years, Nebuchadnezzar died 23 years earlier, and a new king was in power: King Belshazzar, a co-regent with his father, Nabonidus. This time it was not a dream Daniel was summoned to interpret, but the handwriting of God upon a wall. In a grand banquet hall, Belshazzar mocked the One True God by serving wine in the holy vessels taken from the Temple in Jerusalem 67 years earlier. And in so doing, he praised the gods of gold, silver, brass, iron, wood, and stone. In that same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand and wrote upon the wall.

DANIEL IS BROUGHT BEFORE THE KING (5:13-16).

Verses 13-16—

While forgotten, the king recalls, **I have even heard of thee**. In step with the polytheism that permeated the Babylonian empire, the king has heard that **the spirit of the gods is in thee**. The king and those before him had every opportunity to acknowledge the One True God, but they refused.

Romans 1:21, the apostle Paul wrote, “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.” He said in Romans 1: 26,28; 2:1, “For this cause God gave them up...and gave them over...that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.” Belshazzar is about to face God’s judgment.

Since none of the wise men were able to interpret the hand-writing, the king promises Daniel, if he can make **known to the king the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom.**

DANIEL’S IMPOSING SPEECH (5:17-23).

Verses 17-23—

Daniel became more than an interpreter. After seeing what was written on the wall, he refused the king's honors. He knew the days of this blaspheming king were about to end. He acts more like a prophet, and his speech before this king in this passage is imposing.

DANIEL INTERPRETS THE HANDWRITING ON THE WALL (5:24-31).

Verses 24-29—

MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. These words were written in Chaldean on the wall, a solemn announcement of God’s impending judgment on Belshazzar and Babylon.

MENE, MENE = NUMBERED, NUMBERED.

TEKEL = WEIGHED.

Upharsin = DIVIDED (or BROKEN). The “U” is a conjunction that means “and.” Pharsin: the plural is **PERES**.

God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it. Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. Thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians. The king had been weighed in the balance of God’s justice and was found *wanting*. And this very night, his kingdom is going to be divided.

One might think Daniel would show some fear in making this pronouncement to the king, but this is the same pattern he has exhibited since chapter 1, where He “purposed in his heart not to defile himself.” He doesn’t do it for reward—who cares about that, but the king lavishes riches and the promise of power anyway. Daniel knows worldly riches are a big deal and those being offered by the king will be worthless by morning.

The king, on the other hand, still felt invincible. Even after hearing the pronouncement of judgment, the furthest thing from his mind was that he was about to die.

Yet, **in that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.** Paul writes for us in 1 Corinthians 10:12, “*Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*” Paul is talking about falling into the temptation of lust, idolatry, fornication, and so forth, but here Belshazzar’s kingdom and life fell. This may be an excellent time to consider how we live our lives. After all, we do not know the future. We are only a breath away from eternity; tomorrow on earth may not come. When that day comes, I would desire to be found serving the Lord Jesus rather than living for myself.

A NEW EMPIRE AND A NEW KING (5:31).

Verse 31—

Darius, the Median’s (or the Mede) identity is unknown in history except for the book of Daniel. He was either a co-regent (like Belshazzar) under Cyrus the Great, or **Darius** could be another name for Cyrus, the king who took Babylon in B.C. 539. Nonetheless, he was 62 years old when he took the kingdom.

The Median/Persian empire is the second phase of the Times of the Gentiles prophesied in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in chapter 2.

DANIEL IS PLACED IN AN ADMINISTRATIVE ROLE (6:1-3).

Verses 1-3—

After taking Babylon, Darius sets up a new government. The word **princes** are also *satraps* who are governors of provinces. Over the **one hundred and twenty** governors were three **presidents** or overseers. Those three overseers would report back to the King. We are not told how Daniel got noticed by the king (maybe he was one of the three presidents), but **Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes.** As the saying goes, the *cream rises to the top*. How was he the cream? **Because an excellent spirit was in him.** The word **spirit** probably means *his spirit*. Daniel is in his 80’s. Often when men get into the latter years of life, their spirit becomes cynical and jaded by the world. Men who focus on the Lord Jesus Christ can continue to serve God until the Lord calls them home—and people will recognize those men. Therefore, **the king sought to set him over the whole realm.**

THE PLOT TO BRING DANIEL DOWN (6:4-9).

Verses (4-9)—

When one person gets a promotion, it follows, others do not. We all know what can happen if those who didn’t get the promotion become envious. They will try to find a way to bring you down. They

will look for any little chink in your armor and direct their attack there. With Daniel, we have seen that he was above reproach. **Daniel was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him** (vs. 4). Morally and ethically, his attackers could not find a single flaw. Since that was the case, the envious ones will find a way to cheat to accomplish their mission.

Daniel's adherence to the Law of God was evident to these men; it was there, on Daniel's own obedience to the Law of Moses, that they would make their attack.

Unbeknownst to Darius, these men concocted a scheme to convince the king to sign a binding proclamation that would back Daniel into a corner. The *wiles of the devil* (Ephesians 6:11) are always at work around us. Appealing to the king's ego, these envious men propose to the king that he establish a month when only *he* could be worshipped. Anyone who ignored the decree would be cast into the **den of lions**.

It reminds us of what the homosexuals' *PRIDE month* which is celebrated worldwide in the month of June. We saw passages in Scripture in our last session of what God thinks of pride. While believers are not thrown to the lions for going up against *Pride month*, pressure is put on people each year to acknowledge it. Athletic teams force players to wear LGBT jerseys, and corporations plaster LGBT slogans on their products, forcing those who disagree to purchase the product with no other alternative. We are always only a step away from being forced to bow down. I wouldn't say I like the month of June. Although, isn't it poetic justice that in the month of June 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled the *right to abortion* as unconstitutional? It was like a counterpunch by God—now we can call June the month of LIFE.

With the king's ego stoked and not considering all the ramifications of the ruling, he **signed the writing and the decree**, which, according to Persian law, was irrevocable.

UNDETERRED BY THE DECREE (6:10-15).

Verses 10-15—

Daniel already witnessed the boldness of his three friends so many years ago. They never compromised their faith, were thrown into the fire and came out unscathed. Why would Daniel be afraid of an edict? He **knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; not in secret, but with his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God as he did aforetime**. He changed nothing about his life, and he was being watched.

The envious ones made a beeline to the king to tattle on Daniel. When the king **heard** that it was Daniel, he realized these men had duped him, and he **was sore displeased with himself** for making such a rash decree without considering all the ramifications. He tried all day to figure out a way to get

around the law, but **No decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed; the envious ones reminded him.**

DANIEL IN THE LIONS' DEN (6:16-23)

Verses 16-23—

Darius was aware he, too, was a victim of this coup to bring Daniel down. Darius knew he had been played for the fool and knew it was too late to help Daniel. The decree had to be enacted and followed. Daniel was **cast into the den of lions**. Only Daniel's God could save him now, and the king recognized that; **Thy God Whom thou servest continually, He will deliver thee**. Whether or not Darius believed in Daniel's God, after watching Daniel's life and faith, he believed Daniel worshipped a God who would deliver him. Yet the king lost sleep over the ordeal.

Rising early in the morning, the king ran **to the den of lions**.

O Daniel, servant of the living God. The king recognized Daniel's God was living! Do you know that our God is still living? We serve a living God. He knows us, He cares for us, and He provides everlasting life, yet we often treat Him as if He is dead. We neglect him, give into sin, never read His living word, and rarely talk to him unless we're in trouble. It's no wonder we are weak and sickly in our faith. Even the pagan king recognized and had faith in the Living God.

Is thy God, Whom thou servest continually (what a wonderful reputation Daniel had) **able to deliver thee from the lions?** And Daniel's response from deep inside the cave was, YES! He assured the King that he had done nothing against the king himself and that he was innocent. **God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me.**

The king was filled with joy and **commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den**, and he was unharmed **because he believed in his God**.

We are not promised salvation from the Lions' den, but we are promised salvation from everlasting death. We receive the gift of life by faith when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. And like Daniel, death cannot harm us.

DANIELS IS VINDICATED, AND THE LORD IS GLORIFIED (6:24-28)

Verses 24-28—

The king pronounces immediate judgment on the envious men and their families. **And the lions had mastery over them** before they landed on the bottom of the den.

The king made a wonderful acknowledgment of the **living God** whose **dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and He worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth...**

Acknowledging God is not a profession of salvation by grace through faith. We shouldn't confuse the two. Darius believed God but did not embrace Him. He doesn't say "My God" but calls Him "Daniel's God." For Darius, Daniel's God was just another god in his pantheon of gods.

Nevertheless, what he said is true; God's **dominion shall be even unto the end**. We have already seen the prophecy regarding the kingdom of God in chapter two, and we will see more as we make our way through the last six chapters of Daniel. **So Daniel prospered...**