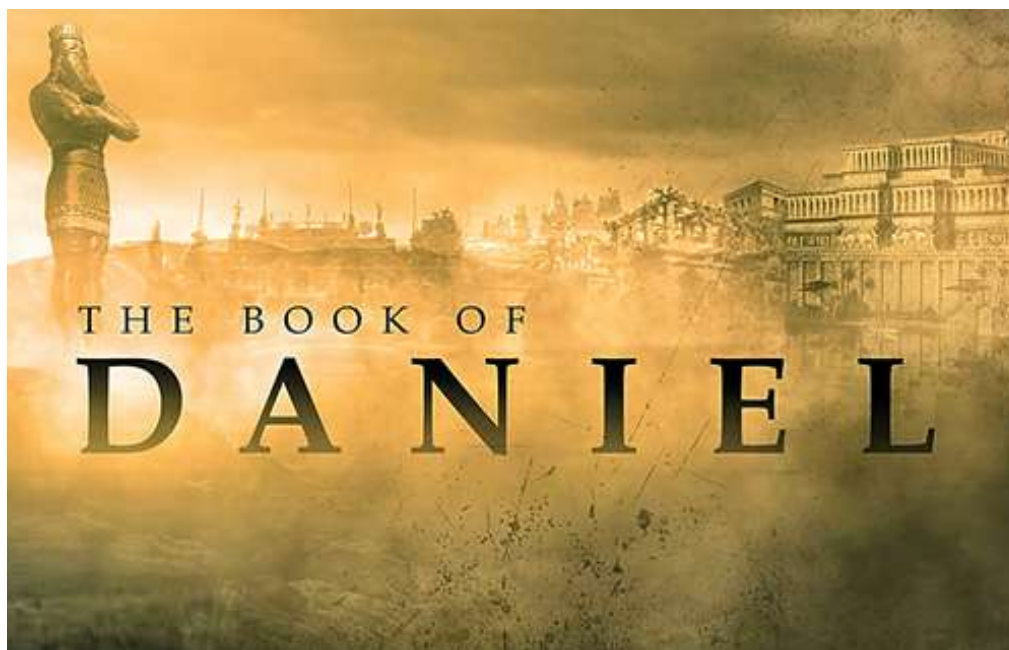


Let's Worship God

15th-20th November 2021

Daniel



THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Monday - Daniel 5:1,29 - Did This Chapter Get It Wrong?

Quite a number of years have passed since the end of chapter 4 and there is a new king in town. They this raises a problem - for years critics of Christianity used this chapter as ammunition against us. They told us that there was an obvious mistake - no Belshazzar ever ruled over Babylon and the last king of the kingdom was a man called Nabonidus. So, can we trust this passage?

The answer is a definitive yes! In fact, archeology and historical research has only served to confirm this chapter's account and disarm the sceptics. It is true that at this point, Nabonidus was king of Babylon, but many sources reveal that he spent most of his time overseeing his pet projects in Arabia rather than actually administering the kingdom from his capital city. While he was gone, he left the actual work of ruling the Empire to... you guessed it, a man called Belshazzar!

In fact, notice how this passage hints at this historical reality that had otherwise been lost in the mists of time: in v7 Belshazzar offers the position of third place in the kingdom to whoever interprets the mysterious writing. Why third place? Because there were already two kings in place!

I realise that historical details like that don't exactly get the heart racing, yet demonstrate how Christians have nothing to fear from tough historical questions - the real facts will always match with God's infallible Word. This has been proven over and over again and many arguments that have been used by sceptics over the years have now been answered definitively in favour of the scriptural account.

Of course, we shouldn't expect it to be any other way. All Scripture is breathed out by God. It would be unfathomable for it to contain any mistakes, either big or small. We can trust it when it describes the inner workings of the Babylonian administration; we can trust it just as much when it reveals to us the way of eternal salvation in Jesus Christ.

Questions

1. We've jumped forward many years between chapter 4 and chapter 5. What has been the most striking lesson of chapters 1-4 for you?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks for how God has given us his Word and for how it is completely free of any errors.
2. Give thanks for how many of the so called "mistakes" in the Bible have been proven correct over the years.
3. Use prayer points from your congregation.
4. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy," Daniel 9:17a

Praise: Psalm 34 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Tuesday - Daniel 5:1-4 - Belshazzar's Brass Neck

The wine was flowing and the tables were crammed with food. What was the occasion? We're not told exactly, yet the events at the end of this chapter and other historical accounts give us a bit of a clue. We know that the Medo-Persian Empire was the rising power on the world stage and we know that they were in the process of invading the Babylonian Empire. In a few days time we'll see their final triumph, something that God has already told us will happen back in chapter 2.

Putting all these pieces together, this is my best guess: the Persians were on the rampage in Babylonian lands and were now within striking distance of the capital city itself. However, Babylon was an incredibly well fortified city and had a vast stockpile of resources. Belshazzar and his followers could expect to withstand a Persian siege for a very long time indeed.

In a strange way, that explains the festivities. Could it have been all for show? By dining so extravagantly and celebrating so wildly, the Babylonian leaders were effectively boasting about just how secure they were behind their colossal city walls.

I also wonder if Belshazzar was all too aware of the prophecy in chapter 2 that the head of gold would give way to the chest of silver. Does that explain his horrifically blasphemous decision to defile these holy vessels from the temple in Jerusalem? Was this one final act of defiance against the one who removes and sets up kings (2:21)? Was Belshazzar sticking his head in the sand?

This isn't an isolated incident. Even professing Christians can be guilty of doing this. Deep down we know that not all is well yet we try desperately to maintain the illusion of having everything in control. It takes a brass neck to defy the King of Kings and yet that is exactly what many of us have.

Belshazzar's grisly end show us just how deadly that can be. Let's learn the lesson before it's too late.

Questions

1. Are there areas of your life where you have been trying to defy God's will?
2. Have you been sticking your head in the sand; acting like you have everything in control when deep down you know you don't?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that God would give you a soft heart so you heed, rather than ignore his warnings.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy," Daniel 9:17a

Praise: Psalm 35 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Wednesday - Daniel 5:5-16 - Belshazzar's Weak Knees

Imagine the scene. You're sitting at a party and there's a din of noise. Someone a few tables away has told a filthy joke and their buddies are in stitches. Two men have had way too much to drink and are bawling in each other's faces. The party is so riotous that you can barely hear yourself think, and then... silence. The jokes stop, the singing dies. All you can hear is your own heartbeat - and the shrill sound of scraping plaster.

Then imagine looking around and seeing this disturbing sight - disembodied fingers hovering in the air and scraping a message into the wall. You presume that you've had too much to drink, except everyone else is standing with their mouths wide open too. What's going on?

You turn to look at Belshazzar and he's turned as white as a sheet. In fact, his knees are knocking and his legs have given way! (v6) By the way, it's possible that this is a rather diplomatic way of saying that the arrogant king lost control of his bladder. One minute he's having a ball, the next he's changing his trousers.

This chapter hammers home a lesson we have already seen in this book - we ignore God at our peril because he has ways of getting our attention.

Of course, there is another lesson too. Belshazzar was a wicked and blasphemous man who sinned arrogantly and despicably in this chapter. Yet, God will not allow himself to be mocked forever. Our world today is full of powerful figures who sneer at God and his ways and who disdain God's people. Quite frankly, they seem to be untouchable and unbeatable.

Yet, this great book shows us that there is a king who judges. He will bring the scoffers down in shame and he will vindicate the righteous. Wisdom means acting upon this fact. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him." (Psalm 2:12)

Questions

1. How would you have felt if you were at this party and witnessed this first hand?
2. How do you think it will feel on the day of judgement for those who have not turned to Christ?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks for how Christ will return to judge those who rebel and to vindicate those who follow him.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy," Daniel 9:17a

Praise: Psalm 36 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Thursday - Daniel 5:17-30 - Belshazzar Goes Belly Up

“You’ve got an hour to pack your bags and get out of the house. Once you’re gone we’re changing the locks.”

Those were the words of the enforcement officers as they spoke to the tenant who had trashed the house and stopped paying rent.

“I know my rights! You have to give me 30 days notice!”

Like most of the others featured in the documentary, the non-paying tenant tried to argue his way out. But it was too little too late. The enforcement officers pulled out a piece of paper giving them full authority to take possession of the house. At the bottom of the document was something that rendered all bargaining and threatening utterly futile - the signature of a High Court judge.

That’s not unlike the situation Belshazzar found himself in. Inscribed on the wall were both his eviction notice and his death warrant, written by God himself. His time was up and no amount of bargaining, fighting or burying his head in the sand would add even a solitary day to his reign.

Historical sources tell us that the Persian army led an ingenious sneak attack on the city. They diverted the River Euphrates and bypassed the mighty city walls by following the rapidly draining path of the river. They faced minimal opposition in doing this because, as the sources tell us, there was a massive celebration going on!

Belshazzar was killed that very night (v30) and this arrogant blasphemer went tumbling into a lost eternity. As he and his kingdom passed into the history books, something else happened: the head of gold from chapter 2 became the chest of silver, just as God had promised so many years before. The true king, the King of Kings, had spoken. Belshazzar’s time was up.

Daniel received great honour, but by the very next morning those honours were completely and utterly worthless. Yet, I hardly think he minded - he, like the greater servant who would follow, looked for his recompense in God (Isaiah 49:4). Will you do the same?

Questions

1. Daniel didn’t want the king’s gift (v17). What did motivate him to explain the writing?

Prayer Points

1. Give thanks for how the Lord Jesus is the true ruler of history.
2. Pray that God would make you into a courageous ambassador of the king, just like Daniel.
3. Use prayer points from your congregation.
4. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

“Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy,”
Daniel 9:17a

Praise: Psalm 37 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Friday - Daniel 6:1-10 - The Power of Godly Habits

One writer observes wryly that chapter 6 BEGINS with a miracle - a squeaky clean politician! Daniel was kidnapped as a teenager and was now an elderly man, yet he managed to remain a man of absolute integrity throughout decades of intense pressure. What is the secret to following in his footsteps?

The most obvious secret to Daniel's success was prayer - he was absolutely committed to praying no matter what. Without prayer he would never have been half the man he was. Of course, we all know that this is the case, yet for many of us, a close examination of our lives would suggest that we do not. Would there be any danger of you or me being caught out by the king's spies or secret cameras? If we are serious about living godly, Christ-exalting lives, most of us ought to commit ourselves to prayer far more than we do right now.

Another secret was Daniel's habits. I realise that saying this makes some Christians recoil; after all, our devotion to God should be far more than a matter of daily ritual. Yet, habits can be incredibly helpful things. A mother hears her toddler screaming in pain and runs to his aid. A world class cricketer moves his feet into exactly the right spot a split second after the ball leaves the bowler's hand. An experienced driver engages the clutch without even realising it. Why? All three are acting out of habit. They don't have to stop and deliberate before making their decision - they do what they are hardwired to do. Daniel has made a habit of obeying God in the small things (see chapter 1) and of praying three times a day (v10). When the challenge comes, he doesn't need to stop and think - he does what he's hardwired to do. We fool ourselves if we think we can turn faithfulness on or off like a lightswitch.

Will you learn from Daniel's example? Will you seek to form habits that drive you to godliness and which exalt Jesus Christ?

Questions

1. Is there a Christ exalting habit that you could begin to form today?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that you would be able to form godly habits.
2. Pray that you would not form them in your own strength, but in the power of the Holy Spirit.
3. Use prayer points from your congregation.
4. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy," Daniel 9:17a

Praise: Psalm 38 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Saturday - Daniel 6:1-10 - You Can Take the Boy Out of Jerusalem...

For a time in the 1970s, Henry Kissinger may have been one of the most recognisable US citizens on the planet. Yet Kissinger was not a natural born American. His birth name was in fact Heinz, not Henry, and he lived in Germany until he was 15 years old.

I remember seeing a video clip of Kissinger being interviewed by a German journalist for German TV. As the interview was about to commence, the former Secretary of State made a simple request - "is it OK if we do the interview in English?"

German was his native tongue, yet he felt awkward and unnatural whenever he had to speak it. It appears that decades of speaking English and breathing in US culture meant the he felt far more American than German.

Not that there's anything wrong with that of course! But it's interesting, because Daniel and "Heinz" were probably around the same age when they were suddenly uprooted from their native lands. By chapter 6, Daniel has been breathing in Babylonian culture for almost an entire lifetime. It would be entirely understandable if he had become a dyed-in-the-wool pagan.

Yet notice in v10 where Daniel looks towards when he prays - Jerusalem. Now, this is not a superstitious practice (like Muslims praying towards Mecca), rather it is an outworking of the fact that his heart lies with God's people in God's city. Daniel never forgot who he was. You can take the boy out of Jerusalem but you can't take Jerusalem out of the man.

It should be the same with us. It's easy to get sucked in by our favourite TV shows, sporting teams, jobs, or even patriotic fervour for our countries. Yet, first and foremost we are to be citizens of heaven. We are fundamentally different from the people around us. One of the secrets to living faithfully for Jesus Christ is this: remember that you are a stranger and an exile here on Earth. We look to the city "whose designer and builder is God." (Hebrews 11:10)

Questions

1. Which pleasures/worries of life make you forget that you are a stranger and exile here on Earth?
2. What can we do to help us remember where our true citizenship lies?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that God would keep you from feeling too "at home" in this sinful world.
2. Pray for the preaching and hearing of God's Word tomorrow.
3. Use prayer points from your congregation.
4. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

"Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy," Daniel 9:17a

Praise: Psalm 39 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

The goal of Let's Worship God is to encourage and help you in your worship of God each day.

**God tells us that
Ezra read from
the book of the Law
day after day
and that
the people of God
were filled with joy!**

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