

Daniel:

God's Divine Ambassador

New Hope
Baptist Church
Winter Bible Study
2010



The Story Thus Far:

- ❖ 605 B.C.: Nebuchadnezzar took over Judah
 - ❖ Took Daniel and other aristocratic youths to Babylon to serve his kingdom
 - ❖ Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah became Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego
- ❖ 586 B.C.: Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem, carried last of the Jewish leadership into exile

The Story Thus Far:

- ❖ Chapter 1: Daniel & Friends remained faithful to God and the Covenant
- ❖ Chapter 2: Daniel received a vision from God both revealing and interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream
 - ❖ Foretold world history, including the 4 major empires (including Babylon)
- ❖ Chapter 3: The golden image; Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego delivered from the fiery furnace by "the Son of God"
- ❖ Chapter 4: Nebuchadnezzar's boanthropy

Major Themes

- ❖ God's protection of His people
- ❖ God's use of Hebrews to testify to Gentiles
 - ❖ God spoke to Gentiles through dreams, but they had to rely on Hebrews to interpret them
- ❖ God's elevation of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah to places of authority
- ❖ God controls the affairs of nations
- ❖ This vision accurately predicted the empires of the West for at least the next 1,100 years

Major Themes

- ❖ Nebuchadnezzar's confession of God's sovereignty
 - ❖ Ch. 1: "Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery"
 - ❖ Recognized Daniel as messenger of his God
 - ❖ Ch. 3: Nebuchadnezzar's recognition of God's power: "There is no other god who is able to rescue in this way"
 - ❖ Ch. 4: "I blessed the Most High.... Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble"

From Ch. 4 to Ch. 5

- ❖ 562 B.C.: Nebuchadnezzar died
- ❖ Succeeded by internal unrest
 - ❖ 562-560 B.C.: Evil-merodach, his son
 - ❖ Freed Jehoiachin from prison (2 Kings 25:27)
 - ❖ Murdered by his brother-in-law Nergal-shar-usur, who ruled until 556 B.C.
 - ❖ Labashi-Marduk, his son, succeeded him: murdered nine months later (556 B.C.)

From Ch. 4 to Ch. 5

- ❖ Last emperor: Nabonidus, 556-539 B.C.:
 - ❖ No desire to rule an empire, preferring to stay at an oasis worshiping the moon god instead (his mother was a high priestess of the moon god)
- ❖ 539 B.C.: Cyrus defeated Babylonian army on the Tigris River
 - ❖ Nabonidus fled, leaving Babylon in the charge of his son, Belshazzar
 - ❖ Belshazzar's last night: Chapter 5.

Belshazzar's Feast

- ❖ Persians outside Babylon, so what did Belshazzar do?
Throw a feast “for a thousand of his lords”
 - ❖ Used the sacred utensils from the Temple in Jerusalem to serve his guests
- ❖ Belshazzar and the party “drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone”

The Hand

- ❖ “Immediately the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace, opposite the lampstand. And the king saw the hand as it wrote”
- ❖ Belshazzar’s reaction: “Then the king’s color changed, and his thoughts alarmed him; his limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together”

Someone Interpret This!

- ❖ The king called loudly to bring in the enchanter, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers
 - ❖ Same group (different generation) on whom Nebuchadnezzar first relied
- ❖ Belshazzar: “Whoever reads this writing, and shows me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom”
 - ❖ Nabonidus was first, Belshazzar was second
- ❖ v. 8: “Then all the king’s wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or make known to the king the interpretation”
- ❖ v. 9: Belshazzar’s “color changed”

Daniel to the Aid

- ❖ “Queen:” probably the queen mother (Nabonidus had married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar)
- ❖ “There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods”
 - ❖ “King Nebuchadnezzar, your father—your father the king—made him chief of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and astrologers, because an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar”
- ❖ Daniel was over 80 years old by now

Daniel's Lesson to Belshazzar

- ❖ Daniel's reaction to Belshazzar: "Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another"
 - ❖ Daniel knew Belshazzar had nothing to give
- ❖ vv. 18-21: Daniel gave Belshazzar a history lesson
 - ❖ Recounted Nebuchadnezzar's encounters with God
 - ❖ "You his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this"
 - ❖ "A generation which ignores history has no past and no future" — Robert A. Heinlein
- ❖ Belshazzar rebelled "against the Lord of heaven"
 - ❖ Last straw of Babylonian pride and arrogance: The desecration of the sacred vessels

The Letters

- ❖ The writing: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN
 - ❖ Written in a form of Aramaic that Belshazzar did not understand (or, perhaps, was too frightened to understand)
- ❖ MENE (“counted out”): “God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end”
- ❖ TEKEL (a coin, but also “weighed”): “you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting”
- ❖ PARSIN (“divided”): God “split” the kingdom from the Babylonians and gave it to the Persians (“Parsin” uses same letters as “Persia:” Aramaic doesn’t write vowels)

The Result

- ❖ 539 B.C.: Persians took Babylon
 - ❖ This conquest came in spite of Babylon's immense walls: they were 11 miles long, 65 feet wide, and 85 feet high
 - ❖ Persians diverted the Euphrates River down an old canal and lowered the water level below the gates guarding the river entrance
 - ❖ "That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed"
- ❖ "Darius the Mede:" a royal title, like "Caesar" in Rome