

The STORY CHURCH

Summer Bible Study: The Book of Daniel

Session 1 Content

Daniel within the larger story of scripture:

Author | Historical Context

God's judgment and sovereignty

Foreshadowing of Christ

Daniel and his friends taken into exile (1:1-7)

Daniel and his friends remain undefiled (1:8-16)

Daniel and his friends are promoted and preserved (1:17-21)

Author

Author Theory #1: Not Daniel	Author Theory #2: Daniel
<p>-Author belonged to the Hasidim, he was a member of a strictly orthodox Jewish sect which opposed Hellenizing influences on their faith and supported the Maccabean revolt.</p> <p>Proponents of this view also argue that the book was composed and/or edited (at least in part) by an unknown author (or authors) posing as the sixth century statesmen and prophet Daniel. They also argue that most of the prophetic chapters are merely "historical narratives," however the historical events do not match Daniel's prophetic visions.</p> <p>-Many of the themes of strict adherence to God's law in Chapters 1-6 are seen through the author's lense.</p>	<p>-The book records the life of Daniel and the visions he received from God during the time of exile in 605 (Daniel 1:5) until the third year of King Cyrus in 536 (Daniel 10:1).</p> <p>-The book deals with the rise and fall of empires and God's sovereignty over the ever-changing rulers and kingdoms of this world.</p> <p>-The book offered encouragement to Jewish people in exile who were under the oppressive rule of pagan kingdoms and under tremendous pressure to give up their Jewish identity.</p> <p>-The book offers a prophetic foreshadowing of Christ in chapter 7.</p>

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Historical Context

Contextual Approach #1 Hasidic Judaism, Maccabean Revolt, Antiochus Epiphanes	Contextual Approach #2 Babylonian Empire, Persian Empire, Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus
<p>Theologians that argue Daniel is not the author also place the context of this text in late first/early second century BCE during the persecution of the Jews caused by Antiochus Epiphanes. The persecution of Jews during this time period exacerbated feelings of dissent and caused the “unknown” author to portray extreme loyalty to God even while facing persecution or certain death through the book of Daniel. The author is assumed to belong to the Hasidim branch of Judaism, which is known for being an ultra-orthodox sect that demands complete loyalty to the Torah.</p>	<p>While the first contextual approach places the writing of Daniel in the second century BCE, other theologians argue that the book was written much earlier in the sixth century BCE by the prophet Daniel.</p>
<p>Antiochus brought collective trauma to the minds and lives of the Jews of his day by disrupting their religious observances, their ideals, and their cultic system. He recruited traitors to the Jewish cause, and he mercilessly persecuted those who were unwilling to assimilate to his cultural and religious norms.</p>	<p>The beginning of the book denotes the rise of the Babylonian empire after its conquest of the Assyrians, and later in the book it covers the conquest of the Babylonian empire by the Persians under the leadership of King Cyrus.</p>
<p>Antiochus marched and conquered Jewish territory, defiled the temple by erecting a pagan image on its altar, but he never destroyed the temple.</p>	<p>Babylonians recruited the best and brightest from conquered kingdoms to further strengthen Babylon. The recruitment of Shadrach, Meschach and Abednego is an example of this conquest tactic.</p>
<p>Problems with contextual approach #1: -This thesis does not account for the prophetic texts in Daniel 7-12. Daniel 11:40-45 does not conform to what is known about the end of Antiochus’ reign. This view argues that the author wrote prophetic texts as “wishful” thinking instead of divinely inspired revelation. Also, the visions that were allegedly written within living memory of the</p>	<p>Problem with contextual approach #2: -Opponents of this view critique the historical inaccuracies in the book of Daniel. For example, Nebuchadnezzar did not take Jerusalem in the third year of King Jehoiakim (6060 BCE). Instead, it was Jehoiakim’s son, Jehoiachin, who was borned away in captivity (based on 2 Kings 24). There are other errors in the history of the Persian empire, as it relates to the sequence of kings in Daniel 5:31 and 9:1.</p>

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events, and the various time periods listed in Daniel for the persecution of God's people and the restoration of the sanctuary services do not coincide with the three-year period mentioned in Maccabees for the desecration of the temple.

-What do we do about the foreshadowing of Christ in Daniel 7:13-14?

"I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of a man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed."

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

- Belonged to the royal family and/or nobility
- Young men without physical defect and handsome
- Showing aptitude and qualified to serve in the king's palace
- The king assigned them to learn Babylonian literature and language
- The king assigned them to receive a daily portion of food and wine from the king's table
- They were to be trained for three years and to enter the king's service after their training

Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon's Journey to Power

- Pre 612 - Assyria reigned as the most powerful kingdom of the Mesopotamian region
- 612 BC - Combined forces of Babylonians, Medes, and Scythians destroyed Nineveh, which was the oldest and most populated Assyrian city. Babylon was ruled by Nebuchadnezzar's dad, Nabopolassar, at this point in time.
- 609 BC - Soon after conquering the Assyrians, the Babylonian empire also defeated the Egyptians, which was the only other remaining empire.
- 606 BC - Nebuchadnezzar became king after Nabopolassar's death, then he took siege of Jerusalem, launching the 70 year exile period. Daniel and his 3 friends (Shadrach Meshach and

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Abednego) are taken captive to serve the king. Jerusalem is allowed to remain its own city, but only under Nebuchadnezzar's appointed rulers.

Babylonian Religion and Culture

The religions of the ancient Mesopotamian regions were polytheistic and deeply influenced by the occult. These cultures embraced beliefs in multiple gods, demons, astrology, and they followed practices that are strictly forbidden in scripture, like magic rituals, divination, idol worship, and even human sacrifice. As Babylon conquered other empires, they readily imposed their beliefs and practices on their subjects. Most conquered kingdoms adapted quickly to their captor's religion because they were already animistic, polytheistic, or pagan. However, with the Israelites, the Babylonians encountered a great deal of resistance due to their monotheistic belief system that adamantly rejected pagan and occult practices. These practices were strictly forbidden in scripture. We find examples of this type of resistance during the period of the exodus as well as during the period of exile through the stories about Daniel and his friends, and more in the books of the prophets. This excerpt from an article called, *Mesopotamian Magic in the First Millennium B.C.*, summarizes some of the ancient Mesopotamian religious practices:

“For people living in ancient Iraq and the imperial peripheries in Syria, Anatolia, and Iran during the first millennium B.C., magic was a part of everyday life. Far from being considered irrational, it was the guiding principle by which Mesopotamians understood various natural phenomena and their positive and negative consequences. For example, celestial omens could reveal the Assyrian king to be in imminent danger, or portend fortuitous circumstances in war. Magic could also be used to combat the negative actions of ghosts, demons, and human sorcerers, as well as protect against the curse...that resulted from unknowingly committing a sin, and thus losing the favor of one's personal god or goddess...”¹

Strong scriptural foundation exists for the case against Babylonian religions. These religions effectively and permanently turned the hearts of people in ancient Mesopotamian regions against the God of Israel, immersing them into idolatry and the occult. It is clear that the religion of the Babylonian empire was in direct opposition to the monotheistic Judaic tradition, and how this caused major concerns for Daniel, his friends, and the exiles.

Chapter 1 Exegesis

¹ Met Museum: *Mesopotamian Magic in the First Millennium B.C.*

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Discussion Question #1: What are some ways that Christians today face pressure to assimilate to the ways of this world? How can we remain faithful to God in the face of such pressure?

Daniel 1:1-7 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god. Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring into the king's service some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility—young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians. The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service. Among those who were chosen were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

Discussion Question #2 - What were the circumstances under which Daniel and his friends moved to Babylon? Why were they chosen for the king's service?

Discussion Question #3 - What are the literal meanings of the original names (Daniel, Hananiah, Michael, and Azariah)? And what were the literal meanings of their new, Babylonian names? Why would the Babylonian authorities have seen fit to rename these young men?

Daniel 1:8-16 But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way. Now God had caused the official to show favor and compassion to Daniel, but the official told Daniel, "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." Daniel

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then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, "Please test your servants for ten 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." So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days. At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.

Discussion Question #4 - What was the test that Daniel proposed? How do you think the other men felt toward Daniel and his friends after their choice foods were taken away? What does that say to you about Daniel's faith?

Daniel 1:17-21 - 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. At the end of the time set by the king to bring them into his service, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom. And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.

Discussion Question #5 - How were Daniel and his friends able to thrive as faithful believers in the one true God, even in a hostile, pagan culture? What core principles are needed to remain faithful while under pressure to assimilate?

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Session 2 Content

Dreams and Interpretations (Daniel 2:1)

The Babylonian Magi vs. Daniel (2:2-18)

Daniel's Interpretation (2:19-49)

Dreams & Interpretations

"In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams.." - Daniel 2:1

What are dreams? The various world religions hold wildly divergent views about dreams, and for all of its many advances, modern science remains mostly confounded by them. As believers, what should we make of our dreams?

The Most Common Dreams Reported by Country

[borrowed from a pop culture commentary (timeout.com) on a dreams survey conducted by *BedGuide*, a British sleep research firm]

Looking at the results, it's safe to say that dreams can say a lot about a country's psyche. The UK, for example, supposedly dreams most about teeth falling out, which apparently can mean you've been feeling anxious or stressed. Which, to be honest, probably feels about right.

The USA, Canada and Australia also both had lots of toothless dreams, but the most common dream around the world concerned snakes. The slithery bastards featured as the most common dream in more than a third of all countries, from Brazil and India to Kazakhstan and Egypt. Other animal-based dreams featured mice, lice, doves, squirrels and fish.

While animals featured a lot in the study, there were plenty of other popular subjects. These included ex-relationships (Japan, Togo, Madagascar), falling into water (South Korea), being cheated on (Andorra) and the dead (Costa Rica, Hungary).

Other countries ranked with slightly more positive subjects. Iceland apparently dreams a lot about snow, Greece about hats, Ethiopia about shoes, Bhutan about rainbows and Albania about breasts. Others dreamt about marriage, pregnancy, money, and cutting their hair.

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“In the ancient Near East dreams were considered one of the ways in which the gods communicated with humans. Since kings were believed to stand in a special relationship to the gods, their dreams were of particular importance. Several reports of dreams are found in royal inscriptions from Egypt and Mesopotamia. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream is an example of a symbolic dream, the meaning of which is not obvious and needs to be interpreted. Until this was done, he would not know whether it foretold good or ill. Dreams played only a secondary role in Mesopotamian divination. They were more important in the reigns of some kings than others, perhaps a reflection of the king’s personal piety. Dreams were thought to be messages from the gods brought by a spirit messenger whose Akkadian name was Zaiqu. Basically two types of dreams were recognized as communications from the gods. In message dreams a divine being spoke directly to the dreamer, so that interpretation was not needed. A symbolic dream involved the dreamer seeing or experiencing something, the meaning of which was not obvious; thus, interpretation was needed. All known records of this kind of dream come from Sumerian or Babylonian sources rather than from Assyrian ones. Interpretation could be done in one of two ways. Deductive interpretation relied on consultation of collections of dream omens (called “dream books”), which contained lists of things that might occur in dreams and assigned meanings to each one. Intuitive interpretation depended simply on the wisdom and insight of the interpreter. There is no evidence of a specific group of professionals who devoted themselves wholly to dream interpretation. Instead, this was done by priests, both male and female, who were competent in several types of divination. When a dream presaged something bad, there were rituals that could be performed to prevent the calamity from happening. This is one reason why it was important to discover the meaning of a dream as soon as possible.” (Dr. Craig Keener, *NIV Cultural Backgrounds Bible*)

Ancient Egyptians thought of dreams as simply a different form of seeing, with trained dreamers serving as seers to help plan battles and make state decisions. The ancient Greeks and Romans believed that dreams were equal parts predictions of future events and visitations by the dead.

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Throughout the Bible, God is often the source of dreams:

Dreams of the Bible

There are 21 dreams recorded in the Bible. 10 happen in the book of Genesis.

6
Six dreamers are kings

1
Only one is a woman.

2
Two are named Joseph.

All of them are asleep when the dream happens.
That's a no-brainer. It's also the key difference between dreams and visions in the Bible.

The Dreams

Abimelech's warning
God stops Abimelech, the king of Gerar, from sleeping with Sarah (Abraham's wife).
Dreamer: Abimelech (Genesis 20)

Jacob's ladder
Jacob sees angels ascending and descending a ladder between earth and heaven.
Dreamer: Jacob (Genesis 28:12)

Go home, Jacob
The Lord tells Jacob to return to the land of his father.
Dreamer: Jacob (Genesis 31:10-11)

Laban's warning
God warns Laban not to bless or curse Jacob as he heads home.
Dreamer: Laban (Genesis 31:24)

Joseph's grain
One sheaf stands straight up; 11 other bow to it.

Joseph's stars
The sun, moon and stars bow down to Joseph.

Both dreams signify that Joseph's family will bow to him.
Dreamer: Joseph (Genesis 37:1-10)

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3 branches

The cupbearer presses grapes from a vine and gives them to Pharaoh.



3 baskets

The baker carries three baskets of bread on his head, and the birds eat it.

Both dreams signify these men's fates after three days. The cupbearer is restored to honor; the baker is executed.

Dreamer: Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker (Genesis 40)



Pharaoh's cows

Seven fat cows come up from the Nile to graze, but seven thin cows devour the fat cows.



Pharaoh's stalk

Seven plump ears of grain grow on a single stalk, but seven thin ears swallow them.

Both dreams signify that Egypt will undergo seven years of plenty and then seven years of famine.

Dreamer: Pharaoh (Genesis 41)



Runaway barley loaf

A piece of bread rolls* into Midianites' camp and turns over the tents, foreshadowing Gideon's victory.

Dreamer: Unnamed man (Judges 7:13)

*bun intended?



Solomon's blank check

The Lord appears to Solomon, the new king of Israel, and offers him anything. Solomon chooses wisdom.

Dreamer: Solomon (1 Kings 3:5-15)



Nebuchadnezzar's statue

A great statue made of various materials (symbolizing future empires) is crushed by a stone (symbolizing the kingdom of God).

Dreamer: Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2)



Nebuchadnezzar's tree

An enormous tree is hacked to earth, signifying Nebuchadnezzar's future seven years of insanity.

Dreamer: Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4)



Daniel's four beasts

A lion, a bear, a leopard, and a mysterious beast with 10 horns are judged by God, and a Son of Man is given dominion. The beasts represent four kingdoms.

Dreamer: Daniel (Daniel 7)



Backstory for Joseph

An angel tells Joseph (the carpenter) not to divorce Mary; her child is the Savior.

Dreamer: Joseph (Matthew 1:18-24)



Magi's warning

God warns the magi not to return to Herod from Bethlehem.



To Egypt!

An angel tells Joseph to escape before Herod slaughters all male babies.



Back to Israel

An angel tells Joseph to return to Israel with Jesus, because Herod is dead.



But not Judea

Herod's son is on the throne in Judea, so God warns Joseph to steer clear.

These dreams were all given to protect the young Jesus Christ.

Dreamer: Joseph of Nazareth, Magi (Matthew 2)



The Jesus nightmare

Pontius Pilate's wife has a nightmare concerning Jesus' trial, because she knows He is innocent.

Dreamer: Pontius Pilate's wife (Matthew 27:19)

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In modern times, experts from various fields of study have agreed to disagree:

- **Carl Jung:** emotions or thoughts released by the deep subconscious and entrained into narratives by higher regions of the brain.
- **Sigmund Freud:** repressed sexual desires.
- **Max Planck 2017 Study:** the brain's way of freeing up storage by sifting through short-term memories by transferring some into long-term memory storage and discarding others altogether.
- **Threat Simulation Theory:** dreams are the brain's response to potential future danger by running what amounts to fire drills while we sleep, to keep us sharp. That may be the source of the persistent dream about failing to study for finals — with finals as a stand-in for a presentation you have to write for work in your adult life. Dreaming about losing some or all of your teeth — reported by a surprising number of respondents in studies — appears to be about anxiety over saying the wrong thing at the wrong moment. It may also be about bodily deterioration — something we all fear even in childhood.

TABLE CONVERSATIONS: *What role have dreams played in your life, and what meaning (if any) have you attached to them? (5 mins)*

The Babylonian Magi vs. Daniel

Read: Daniel 2:2-18

Who were the *magi*, and what was Daniel's relationship with them? (see Daniel 1:17 and 2:48)

What does the "Nativity" story in Matthew's gospel tell us about the *magi*, and about God? How and why did God use pagan sorcerers and kings in the Bible? (See 1 Chronicles 6:15, Jeremiah 25:9)

Daniel's Interpretation

Read: Daniel 2:19-23

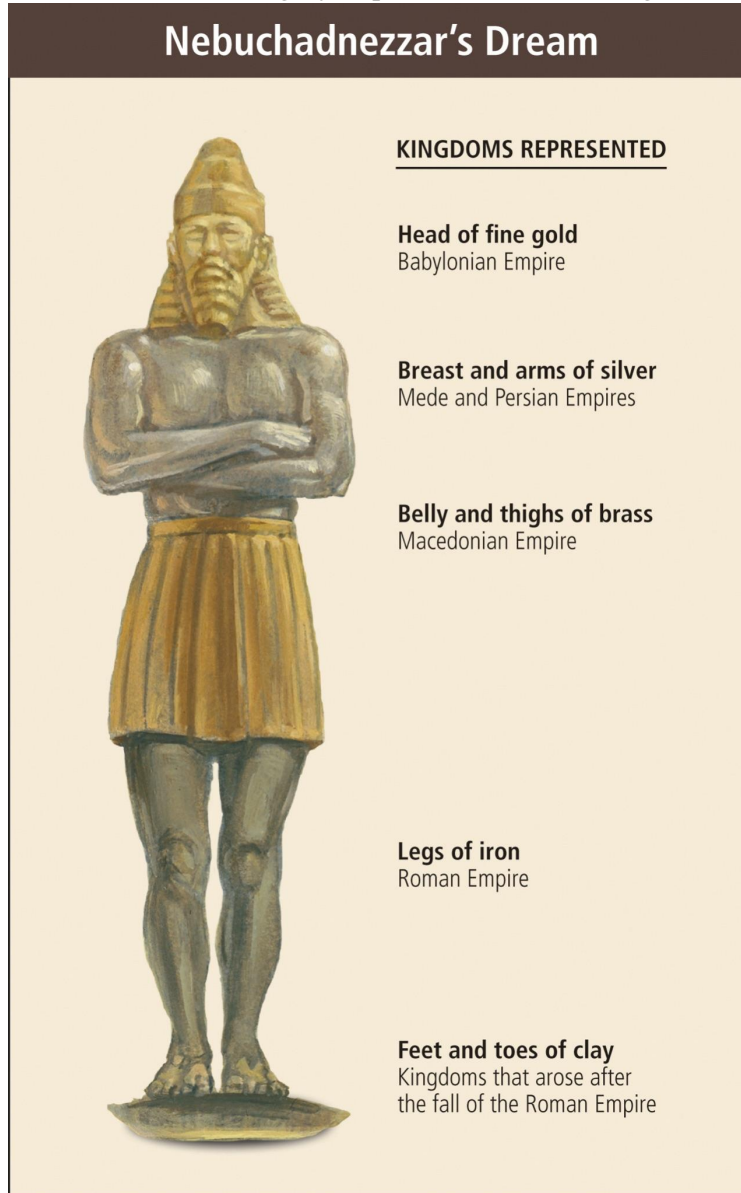
After God miraculously revealed the king's dream to Daniel, the young man took time to offer worship and praise to God. Why do we often skip this step when God comes through for us?

Read: Daniel 2:24-43

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Daniel began his interpretation with humility before God (v.28) and before King Nebuchadnezzar (v.30). Next, he thoroughly explained what the king saw in his dream:



Read: Daniel 2:44-45

What was the meaning of the “rock” in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream? (see also: Isaiah 9:6-7)

Table conversations: *How would it change our conversations with others - especially our political conversations - if we shared Daniel’s confidence in the absolute sovereignty of God?* (5 minutes)

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Session 3

Free Will and the Quest for Power

The Precursor to Nebuchadnezzar: Nimrod

Preamble: The Tower of Babel & the Birth of Babylon

Nebuchadnezzar Builds a Great Statue

Nebuchadnezzar Acknowledges God's Power

Free Will and the Human Quest for Power

Premises of free will:

- God given gift based on His great love for us, and based on His desire to be in relationship with us
 - Makes love a choice
- It allows us to decide who we worship and serve
 - It allows us to forge our own destiny
 - It allows us to choose or reject salvation

The precursor to Nebuchadnezzar: Nimrod



-Means "Rebel"

-Could have been one man or a group of men who led a rebellion against God

-Led the rebellion through the tower of Babel

-Described in scripture as a hunter and warrior (Gen 10:8-12)

-Could have been a giant (descendent of Nephilim)

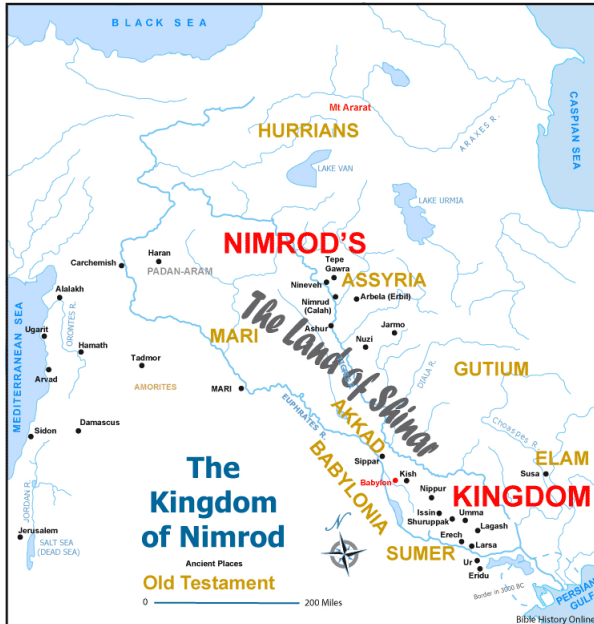
-Since the patron god of Babylon, Marduk, was also a hunter, warrior, and king, there are theories suggesting the legend of the god Marduk came from Nimrod's story.

-Nimrod's story is one of the first "societal" rebellions against God's created order and will recorded in scripture

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Cautionary Tale and the Origins of Babylon: The Tower of Babel



“Although the name “Babylon” is derived from the Akkadian word babilu meaning “gate of god,” it is an evident counterfeit of God’s eternal city. The opposition to the rule of God by world powers or the exile of God’s people from the land of blessing is conveyed properly through the metaphor of Babylon.”

The Tower of Babel is a story that serves as a great preamble to Nebuchadnezzar’s story. Ruled by Nimrod, the kingdom in the land of Shinar was the first earthly empire where people’s rebellion against God’s sovereignty and thirst for power took center stage. Nimrod’s thirst for power led him to start a rebellion against God. He built a structure that defied God, a monument to human “autonomy” and the desire to rule over the earth. Here’s an excerpt from the Book of Josephus, Book 1, Chapter 4:

1. Now the sons of Noah were three, - Shem, Japhet, and Ham, born one hundred years before the Deluge. These first of all descended from the mountains into the plains, and fixed their habitation there; and persuaded others who were greatly afraid of the lower grounds on account of the flood, and so were very loath to come down from the higher places, to venture to follow their examples. Now the plain in which they first dwelt was called Shinar. God also commanded them to send colonies abroad, for the thorough peopling of the earth, that they might not raise seditions among themselves, but might cultivate a great part of the earth, and enjoy its fruits after a plentiful manner. But they were so ill instructed that they did not obey God; for which reason they fell into calamities, and were made sensible, by experience, of what sin they had been guilty: for when they flourished with a numerous youth, God admonished them again to send out colonies; but they, imagining the prosperity they enjoyed was not derived from the favor of God, but supposing that their own power was the proper cause of the plentiful condition they were in, did not obey him. Nay, they added to this their disobedience to the Divine will, the suspicion that they were therefore ordered to send out separate colonies, that, being divided asunder, they might the more easily be Oppressed.

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2. Now it was Nimrod who excited them to such an affront and contempt of God. He was the grandson of Ham, the son of Noah, a bold man, and of great strength of hand. He persuaded them not to ascribe it to God, as if it was through his means they were happy, but to believe that it was their own courage which procured that happiness. He also gradually changed the government into tyranny, seeing no other way of turning men from the fear of God, but to bring them into a constant dependence on his power. He also said he would be revenged on God, if he should have a mind to drown the world again; for that he would build a tower too high for the waters to be able to reach! and that he would avenge himself on God for destroying their forefathers !

3. Now the multitude were very ready to follow the determination of Nimrod, and to esteem it a piece of cowardice to submit to God; and they built a tower, neither sparing any pains, nor being in any degree negligent about the work: and, by reason of the multitude of hands employed in it, it grew very high, sooner than any one could expect; but the thickness of it was so great, and it was so strongly built, that thereby its great height seemed, upon the view, to be less than it really was. It was built of burnt brick, cemented together with mortar, made of bitumen, that it might not be liable to admit water. When God saw that they acted so madly, he did not resolve to destroy them utterly, since they were not grown wiser by the destruction of the former sinners; but he caused a tumult among them, by producing in them divers languages, and causing that, through the multitude of those languages, they should not be able to understand one another. The place wherein they built the tower is now called Babylon, because of the confusion of that language which they readily understood before; for the Hebrews mean by the word Babel, confusion. The Sibyl also makes mention of this tower, and of the confusion of the language, when she says thus: "When all men were of one language, some of them built a high tower, as if they would thereby ascend up to heaven, but the gods sent storms of wind and overthrew the tower, and gave every one his peculiar language; and for this reason it was that the city was called Babylon." But as to the plan of Shinar, in the country of Babylonia, Hestiaeus mentions it, when he says thus: "Such of the priests as were saved, took the sacred vessels of Jupiter Enyalius, and came to Shinar of Babylonia."

Discussion Questions:

Why do humans have a tendency to reject God and His will for the world and humanity?

Do you personally find it hard to live according to God's will?

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Pluralism: The Religious Foundation of the Babylonian Empire

The Babylonian empire was polytheistic and pluralistic. One of their key practices was allowing the easy integration of additional gods into their pantheon. This practice became well established as they conquered other kingdoms and sought the assimilation of other cultures into the Babylonian religious and cultural ethos. They realized they didn't need to change the beliefs or practices of other cultures in order to assimilate them. Instead, they needed to streamline the process by simply adding their deities to their already long list of gods and goddesses.

This practice of religious pluralism was and it continues to be antithetical to the most basic premise of scripture. Through the very first commandment God instructs us to not compare the God of Israel to any other gods and issues a stern warning against idolatry, Exodus 20:

And God spoke all these words:

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

"You shall have no other gods before me.

"You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your

God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

Pluralism also asserts that there are many "truths" that serve as pathways towards spiritual discovery and enlightenment. Adherents to religious pluralism in Babylon often manipulated deities in order to achieve their own purposes or desires, and aside from a rejection of exclusive "truth" claims, there weren't strong moral or ethical boundaries to abide by. Religious pluralism gave birth to some reprehensible religious practices.

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Nebuchadnezzar Builds a Great Statue

Read Daniel 3:1-18

“Shadrach, Mesach and Abednego replied to the king,
‘O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter.
If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it,
and he will rescue us from your hand, O king.

But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king,
that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.’”

Daniel 3:16-18



Key Details:

- Nebuchadnezzar’s statue was built in the same location as the tower of Babel in the land of Shinar (Genesis 11:2). The purpose of both was the same - a defiant attempt to build a monument to the legacy of an earthly kingdom. There is a subtle implication that Nebuchadnezzar’s majestic statue would finally accomplish the “unification” process that the tower of Babel failed to achieve (Daniel 3:7)
- Through the statue Nebuchadnezzar attempts to build a lasting legacy of his glory and power - we know this by his gathering of satraps, the prefects, the governors, advisors, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and provincial officials for the dedication of his statue (Daniel 3:2). But this list was not limited to the empire’s ruling class, and it also included “peoples, nations and men of every language) as we find in Daniel 3:4.
- He attempted to “unify” his kingdom through the worship of his image: This is common practice in totalitarian states (even in our day and age). Again, Nebuchadnezzar did not alienate people from the religions of their birth or ask them to renounce their beliefs. Instead, he wanted to subordinate the people in his kingdom by forcing them to pledge their allegiance to the Babylonian empire first.

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But how does this apply to us today? In our modern world, Babylonianism is alive and well, and modern day scholars call it syncretism and/or religious pluralism. The practice of syncretism and religious pluralism blends several cultural norms and religions into one, even when the individual doctrines and beliefs of those religions seemingly contradict each other. In today's society, polytheism is also still alive, and several religions are often blended through syncretism. The most prominent of these religions is "New Age." Authors Steven Bancarz was deeply immersed in New Age, and he summarizes how people utilized syncretism and pluralism to turn people away from Jesus in his book, "The Second Coming of the New Age":

"Unity has become the god of the New Age movement by exalting the absence of conflict over the presence of truth. A false peace is enforced by eliminating every idea that may cause some level of separation between us and our fellow man, even if these ideas correspond to reality. Disagreement is the enemy because it breeds negativity, so to avoid disagreement, 'tolerance' is redefined to mean 'complacency' --even in the presence of error.¹

There are also many totalitarian regimes in our world where the practice of religions that are not "sanctioned" by the state is forbidden and religious persecution is a daily reality.

Discussion Question?

What is the relevance of Nebuchadnezzar's actions in chapter 3 for us today?

How can we faithfully love and serve God in our own pluralistic society?

¹ Steven Bancarz and Josh Peck: "The Second Coming of the New Age." Pg 224.

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The Great Reversal: Nebuchadnezzar Acknowledges God's Power Read Daniel 3:19-30

"Then Nebuchadnezzar said, 'Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who says anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way.'"

Highlights:

- Something powerful happens in this chapter through a "Christophany," (as some theologians suggest), which would be an appearance of Christ prior to the incarnation. Or at the very least, the appearance of an angelic being who rescues the three friends. Verse 25 is one of the biggest reminders in scripture that even when we feel alone in the midst of the struggle, we never really are. The supernatural protection that God provides for His children leaves the king in awe, not even their clothes are harmed in this incident. This is also a prophetic fulfillment from Isaiah 43:2 - "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze." We are not promised that we will not encounter troubles or even persecution, but that God's grace will find us wherever we are.
- Nebuchadnezzar's rage against Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego points to his feelings of rage against them. His response leads us to think he finds them ungrateful after all the hospitality and privileges they've been afforded in Babylon. It is shocking to him that they're unable to set aside their faith in God in order to conform to his requests.
- The actions of the three friends are admirable in every way because they are the only individuals in the entire kingdom who stand up for their faith. But they soon realize that there are serious consequences for their non-conformity. They know Nebuchadnezzar's request is a command they cannot obey because they answer to a much greater authority. This author writes it well: "It is worth noticing that there were only three men in the whole vast crowd who refused to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's statue. This highlights the fact that standing up for God will often be a lonely activity."
- God's power comes into contrast with the vengeful "power" of Nebuchadnezzar. Up to this point, Nebuchadnezzar dealt with many gods who were powerless, so the powerful God of Israelites leaves him in awe, and the experience humbles him. He has no control

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over this God, and it becomes clear to him that his ability to demand allegiance from his subjects does not compare to the power and willingness to save displayed by the God of the Israelites. Nebuchadnezzar's power is merely human and God's display of power is miraculous at best. It is something Nebuchadnezzar could never achieve.

- Last, but not least, the furnace represents a "purifying" fire that all believers go through at one point or another, when our faith is tested and refined. Our actions speak louder than many words when it comes to our faith in God. The actions of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego leave us in awe of their faithfulness to God. It should also remind us of the temptation Jesus faced prior to fulfilling his mission on earth:

"[Jesus] experienced all the pressures and the weary paths of this world, yet remained utterly without sin. This was not because his commitment to holiness went untested. On one occasion, Satan came to him and offered to give him all the kingdoms of this world if Jesus would just bow down and worship him (Matt. 4:9). Think of what Satan was offering: the kingdom of the world could have become the kingdom of Christ without the agony of the cross...So, unbowed, Jesus responded to Satan with words of Scripture: It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" (Matt. 4:10).

Has your faith been tested lately? If so, do you think you passed the test?

Have you ever been in a situation when you felt God came to your rescue at your hour of greatest need?

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Session 4: Chapter 5

Exegesis (the critical analysis or explanation of a text)

Daniel 5:1-31

Daniel 5:1 - "King Belshazzar..."

The events of Daniel 5 take place in 539 BC, a full 23 years after the events recorded in the previous chapter. King Nebuchadnezzar died in 562 BC, forty-five or so years after his first armies began conquering Jerusalem and transporting Hebrew exiles into Babylon. He was succeeded on the throne by King Nabonidus who, according to several ancient sources, chose to "work remotely" by ruling Babylon while living in modern-day Saudi Arabia. Twenty-three years into his reign, he appointed his son Belshazzar as "coregent" or "King Consort" over Babylon.

5:2 - "...the gold and silver goblets...taken from the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them."

Such artifacts were commonly seized by the victors and claimed as the spoils of war. While the seizure of these objects would have been considered standard operating procedure for conquering royalty, partying with the cups that belonged to defeated, foreign deities was intentionally insulting and humiliating.

5:4 - "...they praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone..."

All these gods are represented in lifeless, elemental substances. They have no unique identity, and no real power, will, or life of their own.

5:5 - "...fingers of a human hand..."

In the days of the Babylonian Empire, it was quite common for an army, after winning a battle, to keep track of their enemy's casualties by severing the hands of their dead. They would collect the dismembered hands as trophies and/or reminders of how many of the enemy's soldiers they killed, and how many remained alive. Thus, the image of a severed hand was meant to represent the apparent defeat of Babylon's enemy (presumably Israel).

5:5 - "...and wrote on the plaster of the wall..."

The reanimation of this severed hand could symbolize/foreshadow the Resurrection.

5:7 - "clothed in purple...gold chain...third highest..."

As is typically the case, this shallow, worldly ruler's incentives are shallow and worldly. Purple was the color worn by royalty. Gold chains were indicative of great wealth and power. "Third highest" probably meant "highest in authority" after King Nabonidus and Belshazzar.

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5:11 - "There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him."

Secular/pagan/polytheistic people will often attribute the true power of the true God to their lesser conceptions of gods.

5:17 - "Keep your gifts..."

Daniel knows corruption and pride when he sees it, and refuses to so easily conform to Belshazzar's ways. This line also harkens back to Daniel's refusal of Nebuchadnezzar's food and wine in Ch.1.

5:21 - "...until he acknowledged that the Most High God is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and sets over them anyone he wishes."

At the end of his life, Nebuchadnezzar apparently professed his faith in the one true God.

5:22 - "But you, Belshazzar...have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this..."

In his arrogance, Belshazzar did not learn from Neb's mistakes (or from his turnaround).

5:25 - "...MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN..."

These words appear to carry multiple meanings. First, they sound a lot like the most common units of weights and measures (MINA, SHEKEL, PERES), which also were known to be forms of currency. A *mina* was far more valuable than a shekel, and the word "parsin" could also mean "half," leaving us with the phrase "*Mina, Mina, a Shekel, and a half*" which may have been God's way of foretelling Babylon's coming decline. Finally, the word "Mene" sounds a LOT like "Mede" while "Parsin" sounds quite similar to "Persian", and we know the Medes and the Persians were the two kingdoms that would soon conquer the Babylonian Empire and divide it in half.

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Modern Day Belshazzars

This chapter reminds us that "not everything that glitters is gold." Although Belshazzar possesses all the wealth and power that this world can afford, God's judgment on him is severe. Belshazzar's deeds were weighed by God and he was found "wanting," although he had everything going for him according to this world's standards, God finds him corrupt. It's a great reminder of 1 Samuel 16:7, when God sends Samuel on a quest to anoint the next king of Israel. David's dad expected Samuel to anoint his more handsome and gifted sons, but God chose the most unlikely prospect, David. Samuel proceeds to remind David's father that God doesn't choose according to the world's standards, but he chooses according to what he finds in our hearts. Two key passages to remember:

"People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7

"I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward each person according to their conduct, according to what their deeds deserve." Jeremiah 17:10

Beshazzar also has a great ability to ignore reality in order to pursue pleasure, and that is something that is still relevant to us today. In chapter five, he continued to feast while the armies of his adversaries were encamped right outside the palace. To make matters worse, he also brought sacred goblets from the temple to continue his drinking feast and worshiped false gods while drinking the wine.

Sadly, we are also prone to turn a blind eye to the need for God that exists all around us. We've also all been tempted to forsake our calling from God in order to pursue leisure or pleasure. Belshazzar's story should serve as a reminder that we're called to put God first in our own hearts, and to let God's light shine through us, even when it is inconvenient. Also, it should remind us that we should never give into peer pressure in the same way as the noble men and women of this story. In contrast to Daniel and his friends, the nobles easily give into the king's requests. These words from Timothy Keller's book *Counterfeit Gods* are an important reminder for us:

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"Whatever controls us is our lord. The person who seeks power is controlled by power. The person who seeks acceptance is controlled by the people he or she wants to please. We do not control ourselves. We are controlled by the lord of our lives." (15)

Who are some of the modern-day Belshazzars that we idolize in our culture?

What makes us idolize these people, is it their wealth and glamor?

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Session 5:

Chapter 7

The Beasts from the Sea & The Son of Man

The final visions, chs.11 & 12

Summary Chapter 1-6

- Daniel deported as teenager
- He's from the line of Judah
- He strengthens and solidifies his relationship with God
- He's tested and tried

Summary Chapters 7-12

- Instead of interpreting other dreams, God gives Daniel dreams and visions
- Chapters 7-12 are prophetic in nature
- Even in the New Testament, Jesus authenticates Daniel as God's prophet in his famous passage about "the end times," read Matthew 24:15-22:

"So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' **spoken of through the prophet Daniel**—let the reader understand— then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the housetop go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak.

The Impermanence of World Empires

Similar to Revelation, there are various ways to interpret Daniel. A popular view correlates Daniel chapter 2 and 7 to ancient empires, readily identifying their innate characteristics, while another popular view finds both chapters merely allegorical and relating to the impermanence of worldly empires and the (human) never-ending quest for power. The allegorical interpretative lense insists that, just like Revelation, the prophetic portions of Daniel are meant to instill God's hope in our hearts without digging into historical matters. And it certainly does, the book of Daniel puts God's power into contrast with worldly powers, and there are stark differences. However, it is far more interesting to read it through the lens of ancient history that reflects events that are yet to come. In chapter seven, the historial/futuristic view clarifies many of the matters relating to the fourth beast, which are truly hard to read without a historial/futuristic lens.

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Historical/Futuristic View of the Kingdoms

Gold - Babylon
Silver - Persia
Brass - Greece
Iron - Rome I
Iron + Clay - Rome II

Allegorical View

Chapters 2 and 7 do not represent historical kingdoms and they could very well be current kingdoms such as the “Russian bear, the Chinese dragon, or the American eagle.” Same with rulers - “Nebuchadnezzar turns into a Darius, who becomes an Alexander the Great and then Antiochus Epiphanes, the Selucid King who brutally oppressed the Jews in the mid-second century BC.”

Chapter 7: Exegesis

-Dreams and visions - he saw and recorded the revelation given to him

-(Vs.3) “The Great Sea” is also used in revelation to denote a “mass of humanity” - See Revelation 13. This suggests the beasts rose and will rise from specific and powerful societies, countries, or empires.

-The revelation given to Daniel saw four beasts. Each of the bests is an empire:

-Beast 1 - Lion

- Allusion to Babylon. One of the ancient cultures that adopted the lion as a symbol is Babylon - the “winged” lions were the main feature displayed through the “Ishtar” gate.



-Beast 2 - Bear

- (Vs. 5) Allusion to the Persian Kingdom due to its strength. Cyrus built a powerful kingdom with a powerful army 2.5 million men, they were formidable and intimidating to their subjects.
- 3 ribs in his mouth: allusion to the conquest of three major ancient kingdoms that established it: Babylon, Egypt, and Lydia.



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Beast 3: Leopard

- (Vs. 6) Allusion to the Greek empire. Leopard with wings - a fast moving beast
- Allusion to Alexander the Great - in just a few years he conquered most of the ancient world, by 29 y/o - all the way to India
- Dies at young age
- Four of top generals divide - becomes the Greek empire

Beast 4:

- (Vs. 7) Different from the other beasts
- Dreadful and terrible
- Strong and merciless - not content with subduing other empires, it breaks them into pieces and devours them. Previous 'beasts' conquered and *took* empires, but this beast destroys instead of taking advantage of them. Nebuchadnezzar assimilated and even used the brightest from other kingdoms for Babylon's advantage. Same thing with Persians, Greeks, and Romans, there are Jewish leaders and leaders from other empires found in their historical records. Romans even offered citizenship after 25 years of service.
- Daniel doesn't ask a lot about the first, second, or third beasts, but the fourth beast he seems to struggle to describe, couldn't even give it an "earthly animal" comparison. But he makes it clear it is a "beast" - the allusion is to a human beast.
- It had 10 horns, parallel to the 10 toes in Daniel 2. (Vs. 8) There's an 11th horn. This one comes up from among the 10. Three of the horns refuse to accept the 11th horn. It's important to remember that in primitive cultures the power of an animal was symbolized by the horn. A horn means authority or power, and the bigger the horn, the stronger the beast.
- Daniel presents the 11th horn as a person that has "eyes like a man." Yet it is important to understand the symbolism because in Revelation this man is also presented as a "beast from the sea," the son of satan himself, Revelation 13:1-4:

"The dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. It had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on its horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was filled with wonder and followed the beast. People worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, "Who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it?"

- Revelation 13:3 interlude: The rise to power of this beast has to do with a "mimicking" of the resurrection, it survives a deadly wound

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- Several mentions and names for this beast:
 - + Little Horn: Daniel 7:8-11, 21-26, 7:9-12, 23-25
 - + Emerging King - Daniel 9:26
 - + Beast: Revelation - 11:7, 11:13, Daniel 7
 - + False Prophet - Revelation 13
 - + Antichrist - 1 John 2:22
 - + Lawless One - 2 Thessalonians 2
 - + Man of Sin - 2 Thessalonians 2:3
 - + Intellectual Genius - Daniel 7:20, 8:23
 - + Great Orator - Daniel 7:20, Revelation 13:2
 - + Great Politician - "By peace he shall destroy many..." - Daniel 8:25, 11:21
 - + Rich - Revelation 13:17, Daniel 11:38-43
 - + Military Leader - Daniel 8:23-24, Revelation 6:2, Revelation 13:4
 - + Religious Guru (Son of Satan) - 2 Thessalonians 2:4, Revelation 13:2
- 2(Vs 8 & 11) Speaks great things, boastfully, in Revelation it's expanded to great 'blasphemies' against God. Compare to Revelation 13:5: "The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for forty-two months." This beast does not come to power by making war, but by bringing forth "fictitious peace."
- (Vs. 11, 26, 27) The beast will be judged and thrown into the fire, but the same theme continues in Revelation with the beast being destroyed in blazing fire. Important to notice:
 - + Although the other beasts were also fearsome, they were not destroyed in the same manner, they were stripped of their authority instead: "The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time."
 - + The fourth beast had to be dealt with with divine power. Also see Daniel 8:23-25: "In the latter part of their reign, when rebels have become completely wicked, a fierce-looking king, a master of intrigue, will arise. He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause astounding devastation and will succeed in whatever he does. He will destroy those who are mighty, the holy people. He will cause deceit to prosper, and he will consider himself superior. When they feel secure, he will destroy many and take his stand against the Prince of princes. Yet he will be destroyed, but not by human power"

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Q&A

Why do these prophetic passages regarding the fourth beast should matter to modern day Christians? Read: Matthew 24:4-6

Do you find the vision regarding the sovereignty of God hopeful as it relates to the eschaton (end times)?

Further Interpretation of Daniel's Vision:

Key Themes:

- Sovereignty of God, "The Ancient of Days," is present amidst the chaos of the kingdoms of this world, see verses 9, 10, 13, 17, 18. The key verses are 9-10 and 16-18, declaring the victory of the Most High and His people:
 - "As I looked, "thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened. (Read Revelation 5)
 - "The four great beasts are four kingdoms that will rise from the earth. But the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it for ever – yes, for ever and ever."
- Christ Foreshadowing: There is a prophetic foreshadowing of Christ in chapter 13, the vision of the "son of man." The 'Son of Man' is given everlasting dominion and glory (purchased through the cross):

"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like the **son of man**, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory, and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed." Daniel 7:13-14

Other important themes:

- (Vs. 21) Made war against saints and prevailed against them - parallel to Rev 13 "overcame saints" for a time, but only as permitted by God: "...until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the holy people of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom."

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- (Vs. 23) “It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crashing it” – alluding to the global kingdom “united” by the government of the ‘beast’. This is an ancient pursuit since the tower of Babel, and it has been proven over time that the perennial reign of anyone other than God inevitably leads to tyranny. In this situation, the world will be governed by the son of satan himself.
- (Vs. 24) Ten kingdoms will rise from the world - it’s hard to speculate who this “beast” will be because we do not know the key players. People speculated for a while that it’s the European Union, but we simply do not know.
- (Vs. 25) It’s presumed that the “beast” will turn Judeo-Christian norms and holidays upside down and establish new ones that center around the establishment of his rule: “He will speak against the Most High and oppress his holy people and try to change the set times and the laws.”
- (Vs. 25) “The holy people will be delivered into his hands for a time, times and half a time.” This timeline is not unique to Daniel, and it’s the exact same timeline provided in other parts of scripture:
 - + Time, times, and half a time: Daniel 7:25, Daniel 12:7, Revelation 12:14
 - + 3 ½ years: Daniel 9:27, 12:7
 - + 42 months: Revelation 11:2, 13:5
 - + 1260 days: Revelation 11:3, Daniel 12:6

Conclusions: Chapters 11 & 12

The Prophecies of a World Ruler, World Religion, and World War

The King Who Exalts Himself - Daniel 11:36-39

“The king will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place. He will show **no regard for the gods of his ancestors** or for the one *desired by women*, **nor will he regard any god, but will exalt himself above them all**. Instead of them, he will honor **a god of fortresses; a god unknown to his ancestors** he will honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts. **He will attack the mightiest fortresses with the help of a foreign god and will greatly honor those who acknowledge him**. He will make them rulers over many people and will distribute the land at a price.”

Important references:

2 Corinthians 4:4

“Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don’t believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don’t understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.”

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Matthew 4:8-9

Again, the devil took him [Jesus] to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

Revelation 13:1-8

The dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. It had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on its horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was filled with wonder and followed the beast. **People worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, "Who is like the beast? Who can wage war against it?"**

The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise its authority for forty-two months. It opened its mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. It was given power to wage war against God's holy people and to conquer them. **And it was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the Lamb's book of life, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world.**

Revelation 13:15

"The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed."

Matthew 24:22-28

The Destruction of the Temple and Signs of the End Times

"If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Messiah!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you ahead of time. "So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the wilderness,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather."

Revelation 13:15-17

"The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, **17** so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name."

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Chapter 11 is one of the most complex and confusing chapters in scripture. Although it presents a pretty detailed and complex account of wars, it is again hard to determine which kingdoms Daniels saw in his vision. Some interpretations (like the one from the Bible Project) attempt to assign ancient kingdoms to Daniel's vision, but unfortunately, they are not exactly accurate based on historical battles and events. Some important things to be mindful of regarding chapters 11 and 12:

1. *(11:40-45) Trouble for Israel*

"At the time of the end the king of the South will engage him in battle, and the king of the North will storm out against him with chariots and cavalry and a great fleet of ships. He will invade many countries and sweep through them like a flood. **He will also invade the Beautiful Land.** Many countries will fall, but Edom, Moab and the leaders of Ammon will be delivered from his hand. He will extend his power over many countries; Egypt will not escape. He will gain control of the treasures of gold and silver and all the riches of Egypt, with the Libyans and Cushites in submission. But reports from the east and the north will alarm him, and he will set out in a great rage to destroy and annihilate many. **He will pitch his royal tents between the seas at the beautiful holy mountain.** Yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.

2. *A time of great suffering, destruction, judgment, and reward of the righteous*

The prophetic precision between Daniel, Jesus' own words in Matthew, and Revelation are astounding, especially regarding the reign of the "antichrist," desecration of the temple, and end times.

The End Times | Daniel 12:1, 12:11-13

"At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. **But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered.** Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.

Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. But you, Daniel, roll up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge."

"From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days. 'As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance.'"

Jesus' Warning Regarding the End Times Parallel to the Prophetic Outlook of Daniel Chapters 11-12

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Summer Bible Study: The Book of Daniel

Matthew 24:15-24

“So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand— then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let no one on the housetop go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak. How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. **21** For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again.

“If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you ahead of time.”

Matthew 24:30-31

“Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.”

Revelation 16:12-16

“The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East. Then I saw three impure spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. They are demonic spirits that perform signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.

‘Look, I come like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and remains clothed, so as not to go naked and be shamefully exposed.’

Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.”

Revelation 19:19

“Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to wage war against the rider on the horse and his army. But the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who had performed the signs on its behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. The rest were killed with the sword coming out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.”

