



## Daniel Masterclass

Copyright © Chris Hamer-Hodges, Living Rock Church, 2021

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage or retrieval system without permission in writing from the author.

# Contents

---

## The Life of Daniel

### 1.4 Daniel 5

Belshazzar

Gold and Silver goblets

The writing on the wall

Interpretation

Outcome

### 1.6 Daniel 6

Daniel's Character

Unjust Law

Lion's Den

The Outcome



# | The Life of Daniel

## 1.4 Daniel 5

---

### Belshazzar

In this chapter we are introduced to a new king. The last of the Babylonian kings, Belshazzar. He was not actually the son of Nebuchadnezzar, but his grandson. The words “father” and “son” in the Bible can also mean “ancestor” and “descendant” – e.g. “Son of David.” His mother, the Queen mentioned in this passage, was Nebuchadnezzar’s daughter; hence her insights into his reign.<sup>1</sup>

It is clear from the text and from Daniel’s reaction to him that he was a wicked and self-indulgent king. The scriptures record nothing about his life or reign, only his end. Daniel does not honour him with respect and royal titles as he did towards Nebuchadnezzar, nor does he want any of the king’s rewards. It is obvious from the passage that the king had never consulted Daniel during his entire reign. It is likely that he was a brash youth with no regard for the lessons learned by his forefathers, it is clear anyway that he had not learned from history.

Daniel would no longer be a youth at this point; in fact he was likely in his eighties. But from chapter 1, we know that he remained in royal service until the first year of King Cyrus, so he had not yet retired. He was still going strong; it was the king’s choice to marginalize him during his reign.

### Gold and Silver goblets

The silver and gold goblets that the King and his party guests drank from were the sacred treasures from the temple of God, that had been consecrated for exclusive use before God. This alone would have been enough to invoke the wrath of God.

“Now what have you against me, O Tyre and Sidon and all you regions of Philistia? Are you repaying me for something I have done? If you are paying me back, I will swiftly and speedily return on your own heads what you have done. For you took my silver and my gold and carried off my finest treasures to your temples. You sold the people of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks, that you might send them far from their homeland. “See, I am going to rouse them out of the places to which you sold them, and I will return on your own heads what you have done.

**Joel 3:4-7**

---

<sup>1</sup> We know this from the historical record of the Babylonian Kings. The events of Daniel 5 occurred in 539 BC, 66 years after Daniel was exiled, and 23 years after Nebuchadnezzar’s death.

## They praise false Gods

Not content with desecrating God's holy treasures, the King and his guests use them to raise a toast to false Gods. They praise the gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone.

Gold, silver, bronze and iron are the same materials that occur in the dream of the statue in Chapter 2. The statue in Chapter 3 was also a false god. Putting these three together, it would seem to represent the nations, and the rulers of nations who set themselves up in the place of God; and the vanity of man's efforts that are destined to be destroyed and vanish without trace.

The gods of wood and stone are references to the pagan gods that occur throughout scripture. It was prophesied that if Israel did not stop rebelling against God, he would hand them over to the nations that worshipped them.

The LORD will drive you and the king you set over you to a nation unknown to you or your fathers. There you will worship other gods, gods of wood and stone.

**Deuteronomy 28:36**

Then the LORD will scatter you among all nations, from one end of the earth to the other. There you will worship other gods--gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known.

**Deuteronomy 28:64**

They say to wood, 'You are my father,' and to stone, 'You gave me birth.' They have turned their backs to me and not their faces; yet when they are in trouble, they say, 'Come and save us!'

**Jeremiah 2:27**

Once again we find a parallel passage in the book of Revelation. Here, those who worship these false gods represent the wicked who refuse to repent under God's judgements.

The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshipping

demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood--idols that cannot see or hear or walk.

**Revelation 9:20**

## The writing on the wall

### The Finger of God

The judgement on Belshazzar, and on the whole nation of Babylon, came in the form of an inscription from disembodied fingers. Once again, it is only Daniel who can give the interpretation. The judgement was written by the finger of God.

The phrase “finger of God” is an *anthropomorphism*. This is the term used when human attributes are ascribed to God. God is spirit; he exists outside of the space-time material world he created. He is not a man, nor does he have a man’s body, but in order for us to understand God better, he is often described in human terms that we can relate to. This particular anthropomorphic phrase occurs several times in the scriptures and it is useful to examine them to see what light they shed on this passage.

### The 10 Commandments

When the LORD finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the Testimony, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God.

**Exodus 31:18**

The first occurrence is the writing of the 10 commandments. These also were inscribed by the finger of God.

### The plague of gnats

But when the magicians tried to produce gnats by their secret arts, they could not. And the gnats were on men and animals. The magicians said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God.” But Pharaoh’s heart was hard and he would not listen, just as the LORD had said.

**Exodus 8:19**

The next occurrence is after the plague of gnats that Moses brought onto the Egyptians. This was the third plague. After the first two plagues the Egyptian magicians were able to duplicate the plagues with their own magic arts, but with this one they could not. They all acknowledged that this was unmistakably from God.

## Driving out demons

But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you.

**Luke 11:20**

Finally the phrase is used in the gospels after Jesus is accused of driving out demons by the power of Satan. Jesus explains that when he drives out demons it is proof that the kingdom of God has come.

In each case the phrase “finger of God” is used at a dramatic point, to demonstrate that it is God himself and no one else who is doing these things, whether it was to bring law, judgement or deliverance.

## Unmistakably God

Although the phrase is not explicitly used in Daniel 5, it is implicit in the imagery. Why did God do it this way? Why not just with another dream or vision? The reason is, he wanted all to know that the impending fall of Babylon was not just an unfortunate turn of events for the kingdom of Belshazzar. It was the unmistakable judgement of God on Babylon, just as he had promised through the prophets.

“But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt,” declares the LORD, “and will make it desolate forever. I will bring upon that land all the things I have spoken against it, all that are written in this book and prophesied by Jeremiah against all the nations. They themselves will be enslaved by many nations and great kings; I will repay them according to their deeds and the work of their hands.”

**Jeremiah 25:12-14**

What God promises He always fulfils, it does not matter how much time elapses between the promise and the fulfilment. What God says will always come to pass.

## Interpretation

Only Daniel could bring the interpretation to the writing. Notice again that Daniel has no reservations in sharing the judgement on Belshazzar as he did with the judgement on Nebuchadnezzar. The interpretation itself is significant.

### Mene, Mene

The first word means, “Numbered”. The fact that it is repeated twice is also very significant. In prophetic communications, repetition is God’s way of using bold or underlines. It means what is being communicated is very important, and firmly decided.

The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon.

**Genesis 41:32**

It meant that the time of Babylon’s reign had been numbered and brought to an end. But it is more significant than that. A cursory reading through the book of Daniel will reveal that numbers occur everywhere. All the trials of God’s people that are predicted by Daniel are numbered. Right from the beginning of the book with the seemingly trivial test for 10 days, right to the end with the mysterious 1290, and 1335 days. This is one of the great themes of the book – trials may come, but they only last an allotted time. God has numbered each and every one of them before any of them comes to be. Even if we could tell nothing else about the numbers in Daniel, this in itself is the most important point. When we come to a time of trial God wants us to know – *it will not last forever*.

“Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink.

**Daniel 1:12**

The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or man during the next thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the lions’ den.

**Daniel 6:7**



He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time.

### **Daniel 7:25**

Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to him, "How long will it take for the vision to be fulfilled--the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, the rebellion that causes desolation, and the surrender of the sanctuary and of the host that will be trampled underfoot?" He said to me, "It will take 2300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated."

### **Daniel 8:13-14**

In the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years.

### **Daniel 9:2**

"Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven `sevens,' and sixty-two `sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble.

### **Daniel 9:25**

But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia.

### **Daniel 10:13**

"From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1290 days. Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1335 days.

### **Daniel 12:11-12**

This can also help us to understand some other difficult passages of scripture. The beast in Revelation 13 is also numbered. Thus even before we gain any

insight into the significance of the number itself, we already know because he is numbered, that he is under God's judgement, and his time will not last.<sup>2</sup>

## Tekel

The next word means weighed. This again symbolises the judgement of the Lord on both Belshazzar and Babylon. The image of the weighing scales to represent just and righteous judgement is one that is preserved today in the criminal justice system. God is the great judge who weighs all the deeds of men.<sup>3</sup>

All a man's ways seem innocent to him, but motives are weighed by the LORD.

**Proverbs 16:2**

"Do not keep talking so proudly or let your mouth speak such arrogance, for the LORD is a God who knows, and by him deeds are weighed.

**1 Samuel 2:3**

Not only is Belshazzar weighed, but he is also found wanting. He has failed the test. This is in direct contrast to Daniel and his friends who right from chapter 1 were tested and proven worthy in every respect.

## Parsin

The final word means "divided". This is a word of judgement over the Kingdom of Babylon, as well as a prophetic announcement of what was to take place. For a kingdom divided cannot stand.

Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them: "Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall."

**Luke 11:17**

## Outcome

<sup>2</sup> Rev 12:12

<sup>3</sup> It is interesting that the number of the beast – 666, also occurs elsewhere in scripture as a measure of weight. 1Ki 10:14. This might suggest that the Beast in Rev 13 is also "Numbered and Weighed"; further indication that he is under God's judgement.



As in all the previous chapters, the outcome of chapter 5 is that God's will prevails again. He fulfils his prophetic word, the wicked are judged and the righteous exalted. It shows once again the great theme of Daniel – that God is sovereign. He holds our very lives and our ways in His hands.<sup>4</sup> We must never forget our complete dependence on him, nor become proud or conceited with our own position or achievements, but continue to walk humbly before the God we serve.

Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility towards one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

### **1 Peter 5:5**

He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

### **Micah 6:8**

---

<sup>4</sup> Daniel 5:23

## 1.6 Daniel 6

---

### Daniel's Character

In chapter 6 we see Daniel right in the thick of the action again, and excelling in everything he is given to do. Daniel was not just excellent in spiritual matters, but in practical matters too. He is thus an outstanding example for all who serve God in secular employment. We should not just seek to be excellent in the church, but at work too. God made Daniel excellent at his job, and he was promoted because of it.

### Enemies jealous

Although the King obviously had the greatest of admiration and respect for Daniel, it is clear that not everyone was in the Daniel fan club! His peers were intensely jealous of Daniel and plotted to kill him. This is the mark of a true man of God – people will either love you or hate you. This is how people were with Jesus; the crowds loved him, but the Pharisees plotted to kill him. This is how people will be with us too. Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians explains why:

For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task?

**2 Colossians 2:15-16**

### They could find no fault with him

Daniel was a man of remarkable character. This is shown by the fact that nothing bad is recorded about him. This is very unusual in the scriptures where even the great heroes of faith such as Abraham, Elijah, David and Peter are presented warts and all. But about Daniel we as readers are in the same position as the governors in chapter 6 – we can find nothing to fault him on.

The prophet Ezekiel also sings his fellow prophet's praises:

Son of man, say to the ruler of Tyre, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: "In the pride of your heart you say, "I am a god; I sit on the

throne of a god in the heart of the seas." But you are a man and not a god, though you think you are as wise as a god. Are you wiser than Daniel? Is no secret hidden from you?

**Ezekiel 28:2-3**

Son of man, if a country sins against me by being unfaithful and I stretch out my hand against it to cut off its food supply and send famine upon it and kill its men and their animals, even if these three men--Noah, Daniel and Job--were in it, they could save only themselves by their righteousness, declares the Sovereign LORD.

**Ezekiel 14:13-14**

Daniel's righteousness and faultless life are yet another way in which he is a type of Christ.

## **Windows opened towards Jerusalem**

We find some revealing details about Daniel's life in this chapter. One of these is that his windows opened towards Jerusalem. This was not some religious ritual for Daniel, bowing down three times a day towards Jerusalem the way that Muslims bow towards Mecca. It shows that Daniel had chosen carefully where he lived, and which room he prayed in, and these choices show where Daniel's heart was. He had never forgotten where he was from. Even though he lived and worked as a servant in captivity, in his heart he was still a free child of Zion. He lived as a stranger and alien in Babylon, never settling in his heart, just as we are exhorted to do in the world.

All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth.

**Hebrews 11:13**

Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.

**1 Peter 1:17**

Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.

**1 Peter 2:11**

## Man of prayer

Daniel is also a tremendous example in the area of prayer. We discover that he not only prayed daily, but three times a day. He unfailingly had three devotionals a day - and we find it hard to be consistent with one! If we want to know the secret of Daniel's success, then surely we don't have to look any further. In all he was doing, amongst all the business and all the responsibilities of his office, he still took the time to take everything before the Lord in prayer.

## Unjust Law

The King is duped by Daniel's enemies into passing an unjust law, but Daniel is not swayed an inch either by the edict or the fear of what will happen to him if he is caught breaking it. It is interesting that whilst Daniel has submitted himself to every rule and requirement that has been placed on him, when a decree is passed that is contrary to the way of his God, then just like in chapter 1, he does not bat an eyelid in rejecting it. So too we have a duty to submit ourselves to all the laws of the land, except those that oppose the will of God.

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.

**Romans 13:1**

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men.

**1 Peter 2:13**

But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God."

**Acts 4:19**

## Cannot be repealed



The King's edict could not be repealed. In this respect it is a pale imitation of God's law.

I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

**Matthew 5:18**

It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law.

**Luke 16:17**

## The King cannot save him

The King, despite his great power and position is unable to save Daniel, though it is clear that he leaves no stone unturned in trying to do so. This shows that we should put our trust in God and not men. God is able to save us even when the best that man has to offer comes up short. God can heal us, even if the best doctors in the world cannot. God can meet our financial needs even if the banks turn us down. Even the greatest among men will let us down, but God never will.

## Lion's Den

And so Daniel is thrown into the Lion's den, this great story that we know so well. But even in familiarity there can be fresh revelation to find...

## Similarities with Christ's Tomb

This is a type of death and resurrection for Daniel. He is sealed in his tomb, but he rises victoriously. It is not just a type of *a* death and resurrection, but of *the* death and resurrection of Christ himself. There are many similarities:

- Sealed with a stone
- Run to tomb at first light of day
- Stone rolled away
- Angel of God
- Discovery that he is alive
- Exalted to highest position

- Enemies destroyed

## Lions

Christ overcame all the power of the enemy. Daniel overcame the power of the Lions. In the New Testament, our enemy is likened to a Lion. The Lions represent the power of the enemy.

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

**1 Peter 5:8**

But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

**2 Timothy 4:17-18**

Daniel's victory is described both here and in Hebrews 11:33 (where he stands among the heroes of faith) as "shutting the mouths of lions" Our enemy Satan is "the accuser", but praise God, through Christ, God has shut his mouth as he now has no grounds to accuse us!

But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation.

**Colossians 1:22**

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,

**Romans 8:1**

Once again this shows that we need not fear Satan. We should be alert, but never afraid. God preserves his servants from all the powers of the enemy. The fact that he sent his angel shows again that he is always near to us in times of trial.





## The Outcome

As we come to the end of the first 6 chapters of Daniel, the first half of his book that describes his life, we see that all the chapters end in the same way. God's purpose prevails! No matter what trials the righteous go through they emerge even stronger than they were before. The schemes of the wicked do not harm the righteous, but recoil on their own heads. And God displays his great and amazing sovereignty by using even the actions of wicked and evil men to forward his purpose – taking the message of his glory out to the ends of the earth.

---