



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

1.3 Daniel 3

Satanic Scheme

Revelation 13

Fiery Furnace

Nature of Trials

1.6.5 True Faith

Divine Outcome

1.4 Daniel 4

Revealed by the Spirit

Similarities

Tower of Babel

The Significance of Babylon

God's purpose prevails



| The Life of Daniel

1.3 Daniel 3

Satanic Scheme

Despite the remarkable vision he was given by God, it is obvious from this chapter that Nebuchadnezzar had not learned his lesson. In fact there is much here that would indicate that far from being submitted to God, he was actually being manipulated by Satan. God's purpose is for all men to worship him as the true God, for his righteous laws to be established on the earth, and for a final judgement where there will be a separation of the wicked and the good, where the righteous are rewarded and the wicked punished in hell. Here we see an evil, false and twisted version of God's plan to such an extent that it can only have been devised by the devil himself. His aim from the beginning has been to pervert the true worship and purpose of God.

Golden Statue	False God
Music of all kinds of Instruments	False Worship
Command to all Peoples	False Law
Punishment of the Righteous	False Judgement
Fiery Furnace	False Hell

Revelation 13

There is a strong similarity between this passage and Revelation 13, where the whole earth is made to worship the image of the beast.

Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon. He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men. Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He ordered them to set up an image in honour of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. He was

given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no-one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name. This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666.

Revelation 13:11-18

Here again we have an image that people were commanded to worship or be killed. We also have false worship, not only of the statue, but the second beast is described as a dragon in the appearance of a lamb. So although it gives the appearance of true worship (to the lamb) it is actually of satanic origin (the dragon).

One final intriguing similarity relates to the mysterious number of the beast: 666. The dimensions of the Statue Nebuchadnezzar set up were 60x6 in the original units of measurement.

Both these passages show that we have an enemy that wants to make us compromise our faith or destroy us. But the message of both Daniel and Revelation is that those who do not give in, who stand their ground and refuse to compromise, and persevere to the end will overcome and get a greater victory.

Fiery Furnace

False Hell

Talking about hell is not popular anymore. We prefer to talk about the grace of God than his judgements and his wrath. But the two are not incompatible. God does not have a personality disorder. Hell was never intended for the people he lovingly made and paid so much to redeem. He does not want any to perish but for all to come to repentance and be saved¹. Hell is a place of punishment, a lake of fire reserved for the devil and his angels.

Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:14-15

¹2 Peter 3:9

"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

Matthew 25:41

Later in Daniel we discover that the river of fire into which beast is thrown (i.e. Hell) comes from under the throne of God. This is important for us to understand. Satan is not Lord of hell, God is. Hell is not his satanic H.Q., it is the place of his final and eternal punishment.

"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. "Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire.

Daniel 7:9-11

He does not want to go quietly though and is determined to take as many of those God loves with him as he can. In this chapter we see a satanic fantasy where the tables are turned, where he is worshiped, and ruler and judge, and it is those who follow God who are cast into hell.

The good news, and the incredible thing about this chapter is that it shows that no matter what the devil does, even the worst outright attack on the people of God, he cannot prevail. He is destined to fail, the evil that he schemes recoils on his own head, and actually serves to continue that advance of God's purpose in the world.

Refiners Fire

One of the recurring themes, not just of Daniel but the whole of scripture is that God takes that which was intended for evil and turns it around for good, and turns it back on those who plotted the evil.

- David uses the sword of Goliath to defeat the Philistines and deliver Israel.

- Haman who plotted to destroy the people of God is hung on his own gallows and the Jews have a mighty deliverance.
- The cross – Jesus turns the most horrific form of death into the most wondrous source of life, and defeats all the powers of the enemy.

So too in this chapter we see that it is the servants of the wicked king, not the servants of God who die. And God turns this furnace that was meant to destroy them into a source of advancement for them. The fiery furnace became the refiner's fire.

These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.

1 Peter 1:7

Nature of Trials

It is important that we understand the nature of trials. This is one of the main themes of Daniel. God does not always spare us from trials; indeed sometimes we must go through them if we are to advance in the purpose of God. We cannot be victorious without a battle, or be overcomers unless we overcome.

But God is always with us in trials, and will never let them destroy us, even if that was their natural intention. God will use them like a refiner's fire to strengthen our faith, and bring us through to a position of greater strength and blessing.

Praise our God, O peoples, let the sound of his praise be heard; he has preserved our lives and kept our feet from slipping. For you, O God, tested us; you refined us like silver. You brought us into prison and laid burdens on our backs. You let men ride over our heads; we went through fire and water, but you brought us to a place of abundance.

Psalms 66:8-12

This may not seem encouraging if you are not currently going through a trial, as no trial is pleasant, and we don't like the thought of going through one. But it is of tremendous comfort and encouragement if we are currently in the midst of a trial; to know that God is still with us, that it will not defeat us, but we will

overcome it, and that it will not last forever and at the end we will come out better and stronger.

1.6.5 True Faith

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednigo's declaration is a real example for us of faith in the face of adversity.

our God is able...

The first part of their declaration is to acknowledge the power of God. Nothing is too difficult for him; no situation is impossible.

he will...

Then they go on to the second level of faith, which is to apply what they know of God personally. A theoretical faith is not enough, we need to know how what we believe applies to the situations we face. This is where belief turns to faith, mental assent into life changing trust.

even if he does not...

Here is where their faith reaches a level that is a real example for us. Their actions are not dictated by waiting for God to act first. They refuse to bow down to pressure, refuse to compromise, and refuse to surrender. It is one thing to believe that God will deliver you from trials; it is another to determine to serve God faithfully even if he does not. Many Christians who go through trials put their lives on hold until they get out the other side. The example of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednigo is to refuse to let anything the enemy throws at you deter you from your active service of God. We should never give up, because perseverance always prevails.

Divine Outcome

This is a great chapter because it shows that we need not fear Satan. Even the worst he has to throw at us cannot prevail. God is sovereign and works all things out, even the schemes of the enemy himself, to advance to his own purpose and the blessing of his people.

Satan tried to destroy the righteous and stop the worship of God, but the outcome was that the righteous were exalted, those who served evil were destroyed, God was encountered and worshipped, and the fear and honour of him spread to the whole kingdom.

1.4 Daniel 4

Revealed by the Spirit

Daniel 4 recounts the humbling of King Nebuchadnezzar and his exhortation to the whole world to honour the true God of Heaven when he is restored. These events are predicted in another one of the King's dreams, a dream that once again only Daniel can interpret. Three times in this chapter Daniel is described as a man full of the Spirit of God² (or of the Holy God's as the pagan King puts it). This shows that the future is known only to God, and those to whom he chooses to reveal it by his spirit. The King had sought the answer first from his astrologers, but the answer did not lie in the stars, but with him who made the stars.

No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"-- but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:9-10

Similarities

The dream was of a giant tree reaching up to heaven that was cut down. Some of this imagery occurs in other forms elsewhere in scripture and it is useful to have a look at these to see what light they shed on this passage.

Parable of mustard seed

The imagery of the tallest tree that the birds of the air find shelter under is found in the parable of the mustard seed.

He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches."

Matthew 13:31-32

² This is another way that Daniel is prophetic by his life; he was living filled with the Holy Spirit over 500 years before Pentecost.

In both cases the tall tree represents the extent of the rule of the two kingdoms. The Kingdom of God starts small, but grows to fill the whole earth (just as in Daniel 2). Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom also stretched to the ends of the world, as it was then known.

The birds sheltering under the tree represent those under the authority of the kingdom, and those who get their provision from it.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

Genesis 1:26

Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?

Matthew 6:26

The fall of Assyria uses the same imagery

Consider Assyria, once a cedar in Lebanon, with beautiful branches overshadowing the forest; it towered on high, its top above the thick foliage. The waters nourished it, deep springs made it grow tall; their streams flowed all around its base and sent their channels to all the trees of the field. So it towered higher than all the trees of the field; its boughs increased and its branches grew long, spreading because of abundant waters. All the birds of the air nested in its boughs, all the beasts of the field gave birth under its branches; all the great nations lived in its shade. It was majestic in beauty, with its spreading boughs, for its roots went down to abundant waters. The cedars in the garden of God could not rival it, nor could the pine trees equal its boughs, nor could the plane trees compare with its branches-- no tree in the garden of God could match its beauty. I made it beautiful with abundant branches, the envy of all the trees of Eden in the garden of God. "Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: Because it towered on high, lifting its top above the thick foliage, and because it was proud of its height, I handed it over to the ruler of the nations, for him to deal with according to its wickedness. I cast it aside, and the most ruthless of foreign nations cut it down and left it. Its boughs fell on the mountains and in all the valleys; its branches lay broken in all the ravines of the

land. All the nations of the earth came out from under its shade and left it.

Ezekiel 31:3-12

When Ezekiel prophesied concerning the fall of Assyria, he uses almost exactly the same imagery. The nation is compared to a lofty tree, higher than all others, but that is cut down by God. The birds of the air and beast of the field are compared with the nations that are allied with or submitted to Assyria.

The judgement on Assyria is also almost identical to the judgement on Babylon. It is God who enabled the nation to grow tall, but because it became proud of its height (the extent of its rule) and claimed it as its own achievement it was humbled by God.

Tower of Babel

Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth." But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other." So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city.

Genesis 11:1-8

The account of the Tower of Babel also holds some very strong similarities. Here it is the record of actual events not the imagery of a dream, prophecy, or parable; so we do not find the images of the tree and the birds, but we do find many other connections.

Daniel 4	Genesis 11
Tree touching the sky	Tower reaching to heaven

Holy one comes down from heaven	The LORD came down
Tree felled	Building stops
Fruit scattered	People scattered
Message dispatched to every nation	People dispersed to every nation
Happened in Babylon	Happened in Babel (Babel = Babylon!)

Probably the most remarkable thing is that these events both took place in the same city. Babel and Babylon are one and the same place³. The place in Shinar became the Nation of Babylonia.⁴

The Significance of Babylon

Babylon is significant in the scriptures; it represents the nations in opposition to God, and in rebellion against his will. What we see at Babel is the exact opposite of what God had commanded to Adam.

God's Command to Adam	Rebellion at Babel
Spread out	Gather together
Reach the earth	Reach the heavens
Rule in his name	Make a name for themselves

We see the contrast again in the next chapter. In Genesis 12, God calls Abraham out of that Nation⁵. The nations at Babel had sought to build themselves a city, but Abraham was looking for a city whose architect and builder were God.⁶ Zion the city of God, which represents the people of God is contrasted in the scriptures with Babylon which represents the people in rebellion against God.

³ Babel is the Hebrew word for Babylon.

⁴ In Daniel 1:2 where it says "These he carried off to the temple of his God in Babylonia" the Hebrew word for Babylonia is "Shinar".

⁵ Ur of the Chaldeans. The Babylonian wise men were still called Chaldeans in Daniel's day.

⁶ Hebrews 11:8-10

By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion.

Psalm 137:1

"Before your eyes I will repay Babylon and all who live in Babylonia for all the wrong they have done in Zion," declares the LORD.

Jerimiah 51:24

"Come, O Zion! Escape, you who live in the Daughter of Babylon!"

Zechariah 2:7

Babylon was also a place of exile, so like Egypt, Babylon came to represent the sinful world that God calls his people out of just as he did to Abraham.

So we see that Daniel 4 is far more significant than just God reminding an ancient King of his proper place. It is a prophetic drama, just like Babel, that shows that God will not let the rebellion of the wicked and the nations opposed to God continue indefinitely. There will come a day of judgement when God visits the earth, when the proud will be humbled and the wicked stripped of their power. And all those who have not come out from under the influence of the kingdoms of this world will share in their judgement.

All these points are taken up in the book of Revelation. Here Babylon represents those in rebellion against God, and the sinful world God has taken us out of. And it is here that we see the prophetic vision of the final judgement on Babylon.

After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendour. With a mighty voice he shouted: "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! She has become a home for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit, a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird. For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries. The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries." Then I heard another voice from heaven say: "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes.

Revelation 18:1-5



God's purpose prevails

Like so much of Daniel the chapter also serves to remind us of God's sovereignty, even over the mightiest of earthly powers. The nations are in his hands. He sets them up, and he can tear them down. Once again it is God's purpose that prevails, both in the King's life and in the nations. The king is brought to repentance, from pride to humility, from self-reliance to worship, from arrogance in his own abilities to an acknowledgement that God is Lord. And even though he does not forsake his gods and truly find salvation, he is still used by God to spread the testimony of his greatness to the ends of the earth.

It shows that even when we are surrounded by a whole nation of people opposed to God, we should not fear or be intimidated, because God is in control. We should also realise that we are separate, and not seek to fit in with the world that God has called us out of.
