

A Study on The Book of Daniel

A little background

Daniel focuses on four men — one of them being the namesake of the book — in exile in Babylon. These four men are from Judah, which is all that remains of the Kingdom of Israel.

What began as the twelve tribes of Israel (remember that Israel is the God-given name of the patriarch Jacob) consolidated in greatest degree during the reign of King Solomon — David's son & heir. But Solomon's kingdom quickly fell apart, splitting into the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and the Southern Kingdom (Judah) in ~931BC.

The books of the Kings (1 Kings & 2 Kings) chronicle the faithfulness and unfaithfulness of the kings of the northern and southern kingdoms. Much of the ensuing rule demonstrates the repeated unfaithfulness of Israel. This dogged unfaithfulness could only result in one thing: exile.

The Fall of the Northern Kingdom took place in ~722BC. It's first recorded in 2 Kings 17 and summarized in 2 Kings 18:9-12:

[9] In the fourth year of King Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah, king of Israel, Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria and besieged it, [10] and at the end of three years he took it. In the sixth year of Hezekiah, which was the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was taken. [11] The king of Assyria carried the Israelites away to Assyria and put them in Halah, and on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes, [12] because they did not obey the voice of the LORD their God but transgressed his covenant, even all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded. They neither listened nor obeyed.

Note that the Northern Kingdom is Samaria, which was re-settled by the Assyrian King, and was never reunited with the Southern Kingdom (Judah). Thus the fundamental separation between the people of Israel and the people of Samaria in the New Testament.

And thus, our study of Daniel does not have to do with the Northern Kingdom, but rather with what remained of the people of Israel, which was the Southern Kingdom, Judah.

Why did Judah remain even after Samaria was removed? God's patience with Judah was greater, partly because of greater faithfulness on their part (in contrast with Samaria), and partly because in Judah was the center of the whole Kingdom, *Jerusalem*. And in Jerusalem, was Israel's heart — the Temple.

But as we have seen already in the Book of Acts, the Temple — God's House — is not his *only* house and does not have the power to save God's people. And so, Judah's own

unfaithfulness meant Jerusalem and the Temple's eventual destruction. The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple takes place in 586BC.

But before their destruction, Babylon begins exiling the people of Judah. Daniel, and the three other men, are among the first to be exiled.

What to expect in the book of Daniel

The book of Daniel is about the faithfulness of four men enduring exile. (We may want to modify this sentence at the end of our study, but one thing at a time.)

Immediately we might wonder: Who are these four men and why were they exiled? Indeed, what brought about the exile of the people of Judah?

There is a clear answer to this latter question — the unfaithfulness of (the people of) Judah brought about their own exile. In fact, it all comes down to the covenant God made with his people, and the terms of that agreement. Simply put, Judah had violated the terms of the covenant, and the terms stated exile was the punishment.

But if we were to think about this purely in contractual language, we would miss the redemptive story present both in the people of Judah and in the people of Babylon.

This is, in short, how it goes:

1. The people of Judah are unfaithful and, as a result, are exiled into Babylon.
2. God reveals himself through four faithful men of Judah in Babylon.
3. Babylon comes to know who God is and has the opportunity to devote worship to him.
4. Babylon's rejection of God leads to the end of Judah's exile and their return home.

Or to put it still another way, God *always* fulfills his promises, and *always* uses his people — whether in their faithfulness or unfaithfulness — to be a light to the nations. Here, Judah's very rejection of God is what sets the stage for Babylon to receive God. And then, Babylon's subsequent rejection of God is what sets the stage for Judah to return to faithfulness to God.

Another thread woven throughout *Daniel* is how just a few men's faithfulness has enormously outsized results. And having noticed this thread, we see immediately this same thread is woven throughout the whole of Scripture.

One of the clearest and more related examples is Joseph, who, like Daniel, rises to prominence through God's favor and the interpretation of dreams. But, of course, any faithful figure in Biblical history is a candidate for this.

To repeat, at the core of this book, is the revelation that God is always working to fulfill his promises; he will keep his word.

What would be helpful to know

We will have a difficult time seeing God fulfilling his promises to his people if we have no idea what promises God has made, to whom he made them, or what his people have been doing.

We will have a difficult time understanding why God chose to resettle Samaria if we do not know what had been taking place. We will be horrified to learn that Israel had been sacrificing her children to foreign gods (2 Kings 17).

Perhaps the most obvious fact in all of religion is this — sacrifice is required. Without sacrifice, there is no religion. The question then is this: what (or who) is being sacrificed and to whom?

Repeatedly, the kings and people of Israel worship foreign gods. Take a reading journey through the books of the Kings and Chronicles. When we read about worship of foreign gods, we should immediately understand this means *sacrifice* to foreign gods. Again, one question is what sacrifices are being made to these gods.

As outlined and given by God to Moses, worship is exclusively for God (Commandment 1). So, too, was outlined what was allowable to be sacrificed and for what purposes. This can be found in Exodus & Deuteronomy.

Worship of God is *not* inert. That is, it matters if you do it, and it matters if you don't do it. There are blessings for obedience; there are curses for disobedience.

This is how it has always been (see Gen. 3 and Adam & Eve); this is what was promised to Abraham (see Gen. 12:1-3); this is what was promised to Israel (see Leviticus 26 & Deuteronomy 28, 30).

Exile is the promised curse for unfaithfulness. Hence, the book of Daniel.

The process

This study will be different. Whereas previous studies have not involved take-home study, accomplishing this study will require take-home study. Each week, we will meet to *review* what was already studied by participants during the week. Each week, participants will be given the next week's chapter to study and work through. So, for next week, you'll have worked through the verses of Chapter 1. The following week, you'll have worked through the verses of Chapter 2, and so on.

The purpose of our time together will therefore be to facilitate discussion and questions that have arisen.

DANIEL 1:1-7

[1] In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. [2] And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the vessels of the house of God. And he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his god. [3] Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility, [4] youths without blemish, of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to stand in the king's palace, and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans. [5] The king assigned them a daily portion of the food that the king ate, and of the wine that he drank. They were to be educated for three years, and at the end of that time they were to stand before the king. [6] Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah. [7] And the chief of the eunuchs gave them names: Daniel he called Belteshazzar, Hananiah he called Shadrach, Mishael he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego.

What things stand out to you right away?

Verse 1 | During whose reign (and when) did these things take place? Who was Nebuchadnezzar and what did he do?

2 | The Lord gave Jehoiakim into whose hand? What else did he give him? Where did Nebuchadnezzar take them? Where did he place them?

3 | Who was to carry out the king's command? What details are given about him? What is he to bring from Israel?

4 | Which six qualities were the royalty and nobility to possess? What were they to be taught?¹

5 | What were they daily assigned to eat and to drink? How long were they to be educated? And then what?

6 | Which four men? From which tribe?

7 | Who gave these men names? Write out the four men's new names.

¹ It is virtually certain that they would have had access to *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, which details a Flood narrative.

DANIEL 1:8-16

[8] But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank. Therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself. [9] And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs, [10] and the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who assigned your food and your drink; for why should he see that you were in worse condition than the youths who are of your own age? So you would endanger my head with the king." [11] Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had assigned over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, [12] "Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. [13] Then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king's food be observed by you, and deal with your servants according to what you see." [14] So he listened to them in this matter, and tested them for ten days. [15] At the end of ten days it was seen that they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king's food. [16] So the steward took away their food and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

What things stand out to you right away?

Verse 8 | What did Daniel resolve? Whose permission did he seek? *Note: We should be wondering why eating & drinking the king's food & drink would defile Daniel.*

9 | What did God do for Daniel? In whose sight?

10 | Write down the chief of the eunuchs name again (see verse 3). In his response, of whom was he afraid? What was he worried would happen to Daniel (if he did not partake of the same food & drink)? If the eunuch is right about his concern, what could happen to him?

11 | To whom did Daniel respond? For whom was this steward responsible?

12 | What was Daniel's response to the eunuch's worry? How long did he ask to try this out for?

13 | After the ten days, to whom was the steward to compare Daniel and his three friends? What was the steward to do as a result of this comparison?

14 | What did the steward do? For how many days?

15 | What was the result of the ten-day experiment? What was seen?

16 | What did the steward take away? What did he give them?

DANIEL 1:17–21

[17] As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. [18] At the end of the time, when the king had commanded that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. [19] And the king spoke with them, and among all of them none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Therefore they stood before the king. [20] And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom. [21] And Daniel was there until the first year of King Cyrus.

What things stand out to you right away?

Verse 17 | Daniel and his friends were old, right? What two things did God give them and in what two areas? In what two things did Daniel have special skill?

18 | At the end of what time? (Remember: How many years were they to be trained?) Who brought these four men in and before whom did he bring them?

19 | Who spoke with them? Among whom? Were any others found like these four men? What responsibility was therefore given to them?

20 | In matters pertaining to which two things? Who would inquire of these things? Who were these four men better than and by how much? According to whom?

21 | How long did Daniel remain?

What takes place in this first chapter? Write a two to three sentence summary of what you think is important or helpful. Do not include every detail.

NOTES ON CHAPTER 1

I. Exile as Curse and Promise

The first thing to note is that the exile of Judah to Babylon is the fulfillment of God's promise — in this case, the promise to curse the people of Israel for entrenched disobedience. This was God's covenantal promise — agreed to by all the people in Israel in the wilderness at the end of Moses' life — to bless Israel for faithfulness to him and curse Israel for faithlessness (see Lev. 26; Deut. 28, 30).

“The LORD will bring you and your king whom you set over you to a nation that neither you nor your fathers have known. And there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone. (Deuteronomy 28:36, ESV)

It's important also to understand that this curse was not a distant memory, not just something that was promised long ago by God through Moses to the wilderness generation, but was also brought forward as a *recent* promise on account of the *specific* sin of the King Manasseh. What did King Manasseh do?

[3] For he rebuilt the high places that Hezekiah his father had destroyed, and he erected altars for Baal and made an Asherah, as Ahab king of Israel had done, and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them. [4] And he built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, “In Jerusalem will I put my name.” [5] And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. [6] And he burned his son as an offering and used fortune-telling and omens and dealt with mediums and with necromancers.

...and Manasseh led them astray to do more evil than the nations had done whom the LORD destroyed before the people of Israel. (2 Kings 21:3-6, 9b)

This is terribly damning; Judah became neither a city on a hill nor a light to the nations, but darkness itself, becoming “more evil than the nations.” Therefore, God spoke through the prophets that Judah would be destroyed:

[10] And the LORD said by his servants the prophets, [11] “Because Manasseh king of Judah has committed these abominations and has done things more evil than all that the Amorites did, who were before him, and has made Judah also to sin with his idols, [12] therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Behold, I am bringing upon Jerusalem and Judah such disaster that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle. [13] And I will stretch over Jerusalem the measuring line of Samaria, and the plumb line of the house of Ahab, and I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down. [14] And I will forsake the remnant of my heritage and give them into the hand of their enemies, and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies. (2 Kings 21:10-14)

By the time Jehoiakim takes the throne, the curse was already going to come to pass. It's simply a question of when. And Daniel tells us: it's “in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah” that King Nebuchadnezzar lays siege to Jerusalem. The time for the covenantal curse is at hand.

II. God's Action in History

God does not, however—as we read in chapter 1 of Daniel and as we heard briefly in the introductory lesson—completely abandon his people.

Three of the all-time greats minister and prophesy at this time: Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel.

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(1) The Ministry of Jeremiah

Jeremiah is sent to prophesy precisely to this faithless people. He is to preach repentance to an unrepentant people; he warns of the upcoming destruction of Jerusalem. But Judah is only interested in hearing what they want to hear. His ministry is soul-wrenching, soul-crushing:

*[14] Cursed be the day
on which I was born!*

*The day when my mother bore me,
let it not be blessed!*

*[15] Cursed be the man who brought the news to my father,
“A son is born to you,”
making him very glad.*

*[16] Let that man be like the cities
that the LORD overthrew without pity;
let him hear a cry in the morning
and an alarm at noon,*

*[17] because he did not kill me in the womb;
so my mother would have been my grave,
and her womb forever great.*

*[18] Why did I come out from the womb
to see toil and sorrow,
and spend my days in shame? (Jeremiah 20:14–18, ESV)*

His is one of the most difficult ministries of all the prophets.

Faithful to God, Jeremiah continues to proclaim God’s Word and prophesy to the people from within Jerusalem. He endures the siege, the conquering of Jerusalem, and the destruction of the Temple. He ends up in Egypt, choosing to be numbered alongside those of the people of Israel who fled to escape exile.

(2) The Ministry of Ezekiel

Ezekiel begins ministry in Babylon, by the Chebar canal.

His work is to minister to the people of Israel in Babylon, where he is made a “watchman” for the people of Israel (Ezekiel 3:16). He is among the early exiles, and so

he foretells the siege of Jerusalem from within Babylon (whereas Jeremiah foretells of the siege from within Jerusalem).

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Though God has cursed his people, they are not abandoned. He stewards them, both those in exile and those who remain behind, through the ministries of Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel.

Though they have abandoned their mission to be a light to the nations, God will nevertheless make them a light to the nations, as we will discover throughout the book of Daniel.

III. The Ministry of Daniel

Daniel—along with his companions Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah—comes from royalty or nobility. Not only are they of noble stock, they are among those who are attractive, able, and competent. Being thus qualified, they are immediately enrolled in a three-year catechesis program to make them fit for service to the king. They are fed the food of kings.

The pressures and pleasures would be such that it would be very difficult to not conform, to not *want* to conform to this way of life. And yet in contradistinction to the reason for exile, faithlessness, Daniel immediately stands out as one seeking to remain faithful — in a foreign land, under foreign rule, near a foreign god — to the God of Israel.

Daniel expects God to remain faithful to him, to bless him, and to reveal Himself through him. He therefore rejects the rich food, food that almost certainly would have been sacrificed to the god(s) of Babylon.

Daniel is blessed, in appearance, in mind, and in discernment—and not only him, but his three companions as well.

And note, Daniel's ministry continues *through* the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, all the way to Cyrus.

IV. Foreshadowing

There will be, as we shall see, a foreshadowing of what actually took place — the siege of Jerusalem in 586 BC — with what will again take place — the siege of Jerusalem in AD 70. More on this to come.

APPENDIX FOR CHAPTER ONE

Kings of the United Kingdom (c 1025-925 BC)		
King	Relationship to Previous King	God's Judgment
Saul	none	did evil
Ishbosheth*	son	(unknown)
David	none	did right
Solomon (AKA Jedidiah)	son	did right in youth, evil in old age

* The kingdom was divided during Ishbosheth's reign; David was king over the tribe of Judah.

Kings of Judah (c 925-586 BC)			Kings of Israel (c 925-721 BC)		
King	Relationship to Previous King	God's Judgment	King	Relationship to Previous King	God's Judgment
Rehoboam	son	did evil	Jeroboam	servant	did evil
Abijam (AKA Abijah)	son	did evil			
Asa	son	did right	Nadab	son	did evil
			Baasha	none	did evil
			Elah	son	did evil
			Zimri	captain	did evil
			Omri	captain	did evil
Jehoshaphat	son	did right	Ahab	son	did evil
			Ahaziah	son	did evil
Jehoram (AKA Joram)	son	did evil	Jehoram (AKA Joram)	son of Ahab	did evil
Ahaziah (AKA Azariah or Jehoahaz)	son	did evil			
Athaliah	mother	did evil	Jehu	captain	mixed
Joash (AKA Jehoash)	son of Ahaziah	did right in youth, evil in old age	Jehoahaz	son	did evil
Amaziah	son	did right in youth, evil in old age	Joash (AKA Jehoash)	son	did evil
Uzziah (AKA Azariah)	son	did right	Jeroboam II	son	did evil
			Zachariah	son	did evil
			Shallum	none	did evil (surmised)
			Menahem	none	did evil
			Pekahiah	son	did evil
			Pekah	captain	did evil
Jotham	son	did right	Hoshea	none	did evil
Ahaz	son	did evil	Assyrian captivity		
Hezekiah	son	did right			
Manasseh	son	did evil			
Amon	son	did evil			
Josiah	son	did right			
Jehoahaz (AKA Shallum)	son	did evil			
Jehoiakim (AKA Eliakim)	son of Josiah	did evil			
Jehoiachin (AKA Coniah or Jeconiah)	son	did evil			
Zedekiah (AKA Mattaniah)	son of Josiah	did evil			
Babylonian captivity					

Color Code Legend: King did right King did evil Other

REFLECTION QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER ONE

- (1) How does Daniel demonstrate his leadership among his people and among his friends? When have you seen someone demonstrate leadership in the faith?
- (2) Were Daniel and his companions *required* to fast from the king's food? Why or why not? Why do they seem to be the only ones fasting in this way? When have you seen someone demonstrate their faith against the grain?
- (3) What is the significance of Daniel and his companions receiving new names? Where has something like this taken place in Christian history? Where do we see something like this today?
- (4) What has chapter one set us up to expect going forward?

CHAPTER 2

DANIEL 2:1–11

[1] In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his spirit was troubled, and his sleep left him. [2] Then the king commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans be summoned to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king. [3] And the king said to them, “I had a dream, and my spirit is troubled to know the dream.” [4] Then the Chaldeans said to the king in Aramaic, “O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation.” [5] The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, “The word from me is firm: if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you shall be torn limb from limb, and your houses shall be laid in ruins. [6] But if you show the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. Therefore show me the dream and its interpretation.” [7] They answered a second time and said, “Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show its interpretation.” [8] The king answered and said, “I know with certainty that you are trying to gain time, because you see that the word from me is firm—[9] if you do not make the dream known to me, there is but one sentence for you. You have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words before me till the times change. Therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can show me its interpretation.” [10] The Chaldeans answered the king and said, “There is not a man on earth who can meet the king’s demand, for no great and powerful king has asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or Chaldean. [11] The thing that the king asks is difficult, and no one can show it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.”

What things stand out to you right away?

Chapter 2 Verse 1 | During what year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign? What three things took place?

2 | Which four groups did the king summon? What did he summon them to do? How did they respond?

3 | What did the king tell them? What was troubled and why?

4 | Who responded to the king? In what language? What is their counterproposal?

5 | Did the king budge on his request? What, again, does he ask them to do? What twofold curse will he carry out if they do not meet his request?

6 | What two things (again) does the king want? What blessing will he bestow on them if they do? What does he (again) ask for them to show him?

7 | Did the king's promise of blessing or threat of curse change their approach? What do they again ask the king to do for them? What is the king referring to when he says his word is firm?

8 | What does the king think about their approach and their proposal? Of what does the king accuse them?

9 | What must they make known to the king? What will happen if they cannot and do not? What have they "agreed" to do? What will the king know *if* they can tell the dream?

10 | Who responded to the king? Who can meet the king's demand? Who has asked such a thing of them before?

11 | Has the king asked something easy? Who can show the king his dream? And yet, where do they dwell?

DANIEL 2:12–20

[12] Because of this the king was angry and very furious, and commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be destroyed. [13] So the decree went out, and the wise men were about to be killed; and they sought Daniel and his companions, to kill them. [14] Then Daniel replied with prudence and discretion to Arioch, the captain of the king's guard, who had gone out to kill the wise men of Babylon. [15] He declared to Arioch, the king's captain, "Why is the decree of the king so urgent?" Then Arioch made the matter known to Daniel. [16] And Daniel went in and requested the king to appoint him a time, that he might show the interpretation to the king.

[17] Then Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, [18] and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his companions might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. [19] Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

What things stand out to you right away?

Verse 12 | Was the king pleased with the Chaldeans and wise men and so forth? What did he command as a result?

13 | What went out? What was about to happen to the wise men? Who also did they seek and for what purpose?

14 | How did Daniel respond to Arioch? Who was Arioch and what was his task?

15 | What key word does Daniel use in his question to Arioch? What does Arioch tell Daniel?

16 | What then did Daniel request? For what reason?

17 | Where did Daniel go? Who did he tell?

18 | What did Daniel tell his companions to do? From whom and about what? For what reason?

19 | What was revealed to Daniel? How? How did Daniel respond?

DANIEL 2:20–23

[20] Daniel answered and said:

“Blessed be the name of God forever and ever,
to whom belong wisdom and might.

[21] He changes times and seasons;

he removes kings and sets up kings;

he gives wisdom to the wise

and knowledge to those who have understanding;

[22] he reveals deep and hidden things;

he knows what is in the darkness,

and the light dwells with him.

[23] To you, O God of my fathers,

I give thanks and praise,

for you have given me wisdom and might,

and have now made known to me what we asked of you,

for you have made known to us the king’s matter.”

What things stand out to you right away?

Verse 20 | How does Daniel respond to having the dream and its interpretation revealed? What belongs to God?

21 | What power does God have over times and seasons? Who sets up and removes kings? What does God give to the wise? What does God give to those who have understanding?

22 | What does God reveal? What does God know? What dwells within him?

23 | Daniel identifies God with whom? What does he give to God? What has God given to Daniel? What has God made known? Bonus: what do you make of the pronoun shift from “I” to “we”?

DANIEL 2:24–30

[24] Therefore Daniel went in to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon. He went and said thus to him: “Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon; bring me in before the king, and I will show the king the interpretation.”

[25] Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste and said thus to him: “I have found among the exiles from Judah a man who will make known to the king the interpretation.” [26] The king declared to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, “Are you able to make known to me the dream that I have seen and its interpretation?” [27] Daniel answered the king and said, “No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked, [28] but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream and the visions of your head as you lay in bed are these: [29] To you, O king, as you lay in bed came thoughts of what would be after this, and he who reveals mysteries made known to you what is to be. [30] But as for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because of any wisdom that I have more than all the living, but in order that the interpretation may be made known to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your mind.

What things stand out to you right away?

Verse 24 | To whom did Daniel go? Again, what was Arioch’s task? What three things does Daniel tell Arioch?

25 | Where did Arioch bring him? Who does he say he has found and from where? What will Daniel do?

26 | What was Daniel’s exilic name? What does the king ask?

27 | Who does Daniel say cannot fulfill the king’s request?

28 | Who reveals mysteries? What has he made known to Nebuchadnezzar? What two things does Daniel mention the king had as he lay in bed?

29 | What thoughts came? What did the revealer of mysteries make known to Nebuchadnezzar?

30 | Why has this mystery been revealed to Daniel? Surely, it's because of some special abilities of his, right? For what reason then?

DANIEL 2:31–45

[31] “You saw, O king, and behold, a great image. This image, mighty and of exceeding brightness, stood before you, and its appearance was frightening. [32] The head of this image was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze, [33] its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. [34] As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. [35] Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

[36] “This was the dream. Now we will tell the king its interpretation. [37] You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory, [38] and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the children of man, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the heavens, making you rule over them all—you are the head of gold. [39] Another kingdom inferior to you shall arise after you, and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. [40] And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things. And like iron that crushes, it shall break and crush all these. [41] And as you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom, but some of the firmness of iron shall be in it, just as you saw iron mixed with the soft clay. [42] And as the toes of the feet were partly iron and partly clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle. [43] As you saw the iron mixed with soft clay, so they will mix with one another in marriage, but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay. [44] And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, [45] just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure.”

What things stand out to you right away?

Verse 31 | What did the king see? Was it meager and dim? Was it pleasant to behold?

- 32 | Of what was its head made of? And its chest? And its middle and thighs?
- 33 | And its legs? And its feet?
- 34 | What was cut and by what? What did the stone do and where? What happened?
- 35 | Then what happened to the rest? What did they become like? What carried them away? How much was left? What happened to the stone?
- 36 | What was just told? What is Daniel about to tell?
- 37 | How does Daniel address Nebuchadnezzar? What does he say God has given him (given the king)?
- 38 | What else has God given to Nebuchadnezzar (three things)? For what purpose has God given these to him? Which part of the image does Nebuchadnezzar represent?
- 39 | What shall arise after him? And also? Who shall do what?
- 40 | And after that? What shall this iron kingdom be like and do?
- 41 | What about the final kingdom, the one of the feet and the toes? What shall it be? What will it have mixed in?
- 42 | What will this kingdom be like?
- 43 | What does the image of the iron and clay help to convey?
- 44 | In which days? What will God do? What will this kingdom be like? What will it do to all these kingdoms? How long will it endure?
- 45 | What image represents this enduring kingdom? Who establishes this kingdom? Who has made known to the king what shall be? How certain is the dream and its interpretation?

DANIEL 2:46–49

[46] Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face and paid homage to Daniel, and commanded that an offering and incense be offered up to him. [47] The king answered and said to Daniel, “Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery.” [48] Then the king gave Daniel high honors and many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon. [49] Daniel made a request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over the affairs of the province of Babylon. But Daniel remained at the king’s court.

What things stand out to you right away?

Verse 46 | How did Nebuchadnezzar respond to Daniel telling him the dream and its interpretation? What did he command be offered?

47 | What three titles does Nebuchadnezzar give to God? The king gives credit to God because Daniel has been able to reveal what?

48 | What two things did the king give Daniel? What two positions did the king give to Daniel?

49 | What request did Daniel make of the king? Who was appointed over all the affairs of Babylon? Where did Daniel remain?

WHAT TAKES PLACE in this second chapter? Write a two to three sentence summary of what you think is important or helpful. Do not include every detail.

NOTES: CHAPTER TWO

I. Two languages

Daniel is written in two languages. The book begins and ends in Hebrew; but the middle section — 2:4 - 7:28 — is written in Aramaic.

We will explore this further, but the simplest way (for now) to think about it is this — the Aramaic section is there because that's what the Babylonians spoke. Why wouldn't God, who revealed himself to the Babylonians, also reveal himself in their language?

II. Joseph

Daniel serves as a Joseph-figure in chapter two. Recall that Joseph's plan of saving during the seven years of plenty not only saves Israel (his father, his brothers, his family) from starvation, but also the Egyptians. So, too, Daniel intercedes for all the wise men, saving not only himself and his three companions, but also all the wise men from being destroyed.

III. Why Dream?

The dreams of Nebuchadnezzar are ultimately for the purpose of him encountering Daniel's God.

Notice that his encounter with God is ultimately an encounter between his gods and the God. All those who are in service to his gods fail in the task of telling the dream. By their own mouths, the wise men say: "no one can show it to the king except the gods" (2:11).

Daniel agrees, and he happens to trust his God and have faith in his God's response. And so, he turns to his companions — Hananiah, Misahel, Azariah — and asks them to seek mercy from God about this matter. They do; they pray; Daniel prays. God reveals the mystery to Daniel.

Immediately, Daniel intercedes for the wise men and goes to the king. The king promotes Daniel and appoints, at Daniel's request, his three companions to positions of authority. Daniel, through his actions as the man of faith, has elevated his companions, this Babylonian king, and all the wise men.

But the chief significance is that Daniel's God has been made known to Nebuchadnezzar. God gave Nebuchadnezzar his dream, and as a result, God receives incense, offerings, and glory from Nebuchadnezzar.

Who is the king of kings? Daniel addresses (surprisingly!) Nebuchadnezzar as the king of kings when he gives the interpretation. But by the end of this episode, Nebuchadnezzar rightly recognizes God as "God of gods" and "Lord of Kings."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS: CHAPTER TWO

- (1) How has God been working in and amongst the people of Babylon? In what surprising ways have you noticed God act in yours or someone else's life?
- (2) What stands out to you in Daniel's psalm (2:20-23)? What is repeated? What is not? Why does Daniel choose these words? Write a two verse psalm that blesses God.
- (3) Nebuchadnezzar has come to know who God is. What encounter(s) led you to God and/or caused you to return to God?

DANIEL CHAPTER THREE

DANIEL 3:1–7

[1] King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its breadth six cubits. He set it up on the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. [2] Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent to gather the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. [3] Then the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. And they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. [4] And the herald proclaimed aloud, “You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, [5] that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. [6] And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace.” [7] Therefore, as soon as all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, all the peoples, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

What things stand out to you right away?

Verse 1 | Who made an image and of what? What was its height and breadth? Where did he put it? Is this a small image? *Bonus question: What is a cubit?*

2 | Who did Nebuchadnezzar gather? For what purpose?

3 | Who came to the dedication? Where did they gather?

4 | Who gave the proclamation? To whom was this addressed?

5 | What was the signal given? What were those gathered supposed to do at the given signal?

6 | What will happen to those who do not fall down and worship? Would this be done at a leisurely way?

7 | What happened at the sound of the music?

DANIEL 3:8–15

[8] Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews. [9] They declared to King Nebuchadnezzar, “O king, live forever! [10] You, O king, have made a decree, that every man who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image. [11] And whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace. [12] There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, pay no attention to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

[13] Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the king. [14] Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, “Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up? [15] Now if you are ready when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, well and good. But if you do not worship, you shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you out of my hands?”

What things stand out to you right away?

Verse 8 | Who came forward and with what purpose?

9 | To whom did they address? How do they begin their salutation?

10 | Of what do they remind the King?

11 | Of what consequence do they remind the King?

12 | About whom do these Chaldeans bring forth a complaint? What is their current position? What do the Chaldeans say these men do not do? What is the chief complaint?

13 | Was Nebuchadnezzar pleased with this news? What did he command as a result? What took place?

14 | What does Nebuchadnezzar seek to ascertain?

15 | Does Nebuchadnezzar immediately put them in the fiery furnace? What choice does he give them? What does Nebuchadnezzar seem to assume about the God of Israel?

DANIEL 3:16–23

[16] Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. [17] If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. [18] But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

[19] Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated. [20] And he ordered some of the mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. [21] Then these men were bound in their cloaks, their tunics, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the burning fiery furnace. [22] Because the king’s order was urgent and the furnace overheated, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. [23] And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace.

What things stand out to you right away?

Verse 16 | Who answered the king? What do they say they have no need to do?

Verse 17 | What do they claim God is able to do? Where will God deliver them?

Verse 18 | What do they communicate to the king that they will not do?

Verse 19 | How did Nebuchadnezzar take this news? What happened to his face? What order did he make?

Verse 20 | Who did he order to bind the three men? Where were they to cast them?

Verse 21 | The three men were bound with what four things?

Verse 22 | In what manner was the king’s order? What was the furnace? What happened to the men who cast Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the furnace?

Verse 23 | What happened to the three men?

DANIEL 3:24–30

[24] Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, “Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?” They answered and said to the king, “True, O king.” [25] He answered and said, “But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods.”

[26] Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace; he declared, “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here!” Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire.

[27] And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king’s counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them. [28] Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king’s command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God. [29] Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way.” [30] Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

What things stand out to you right away?

Verse 24 | What was King Nebuchadnezzar? What did he do? What he declare and to whom? What did they respond?

Verse 25 | How many men does he see? Are they bound? What are these men doing and are they hurt? What is the fourth man like?

Verse 26 | Who came near to the door of the furnace? What did he declare? Whom does the king say Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego serve? What did the three men do?

Verse 27 | Who gathered together? What did they see? What was the condition of their heads, their cloaks, and their smell?

Verse 28 | Whom does Nebuchadnezzar bless? What two things does he say God has done? What three things does he say the three men have done rather than serving or worshipping any God than their own?

Verse 29 | What did Nebuchadnezzar make? To whom is this decree addressed? What are they *not* to do? What will happen if they break this command? What reason does the king give for this decree?

Verse 30 | What does the king do in response for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego?

SHORT SUMMARY: CHAPTER THREE

What takes place in this third chapter? Write a two to three sentence summary of what you think is important or helpful. Do not include every detail.

NOTES: CHAPTER THREE

I. THE GOLDEN IMAGE

The simplest explanation seems to me that Nebuchadnezzar ordered the construction of the very image he saw:

[36] “*This was the dream. Now we will tell the king its interpretation. [37] You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory, [38] and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the children of man, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the heavens, making you rule over them all—you are the head of gold. (Daniel 2:36–38, ESV)*

This head of gold and this glory given him goes to his head.

That said, Daniel himself records only that this image of gold was enormous, not what form this image or statue took: sixty cubits high, six cubits wide. A cubit being the length from your elbow to your fingertips, this often translates to about a foot and a half. So this is an image that is about nine feet wide and about ninety feet tall.

There is also the problem of what *occasioned* Nebuchadnezzar to establish the image and worship it. I could imagine that Nebuchadnezzar took his dream too seriously, thinking that because God gave him a glorious kingdom, then therefore he had the right to rule as he saw fit. In this sense, one can imagine him believing that he had the right to command worship to this image — an image which, whatever it represented, nevertheless ultimately came from this God-given dream of *his* golden kingdom.

Nebuchadnezzar commands the whole of his elite — the ruling class — to worship the image. And so, they all gathered at his command to worship the golden image. At the sound of music — the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe — they were to fall down and worship the golden image.

Because those who were summoned are the ruling class (What happened to the priestly class?), and because what is commanded is worship, what seems to be taking place is the entanglement of state and religion—that is, they are inseparable here. My take is that Nebuchadnezzar is solidifying his (actual) God-given authority *through* this worship ceremony. Those who reject this worship service, reject God’s blessing on his rule.

Or so he seems to think...

II. THE HEROES OF OUR STORY

I expect that the heroes of our story, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were well-catechized Jews, and therefore had not forgotten that their own people had once bowed down to a golden calf in the wilderness.

We see that these three men would have gotten away with their rejection of the worship of this golden image if it were not for “certain Chaldeans.”

We would do well to recall that “Chaldeans” was earlier used as shorthand for the priestly class — magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, wise men, astrologers. We can imagine that this priestly class — who still exist only because of Daniel’s intercession for them — was envious of the king’s favor towards and promotion of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. This *may* have motivated these “certain Chaldeans” to notice and tell on these men.

In any case, this accusation occasions the opportunity for these three men to demonstrate their faith in God, and for God to demonstrate his power.

III. THE FOURTH MAN

There are (at least) three contrasts to notice: (1) living vs. dead, (2) bound vs. unbound, and (3) three vs. four men.

(1) Even the men who carry out the King’s “justice” by throwing Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the furnace are killed merely by proximity to the superheated furnace. Yet the three men remain alive.

(2) The three men were bound in their clothes. But now they are unbound, and the king sees them walking.

[27] And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king’s counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them. (Daniel 3:27, ESV)

They had been bound in their tunics and clothes, and their clothes remain, without any evidence that they had been near smoke or fire. (Any griller knows the *natural* impossibility of this.) The obvious fact is that someone *unbound* them, someone *freed* them.

(3) Only three men were thrown into the fire, and yet a fourth walks beside them.

Who is this fourth man? Is this an angel? Is this the pre-incarnate Lord? Who has a “face like a son of the gods”?

We can say with certainty that this fourth man has kept the three men from death, has kept them from fire and smoke, and has unbound them. Further this fourth man serves as God’s representative to reveal God’s presence, power, and work.

In the saving of these three men, God revealed the powerlessness of fire and smoke, the inertness of the golden image, the uselessness of the king’s decree. God glorifies his Name through the work of this *fourth man* this for the sake of the three men.

Isn’t this *the kind of thing* our Lord is prone to do? Isn’t this *who* our Lord is?

IV. DANIEL IS MISSING

Where is Daniel in this story? This is a mystery to some. It will be a mystery to us if we neglect one key detail.

We know that the King summoned the whole ruling class. That would have included Daniel, given his duties as ruler of the province of Babylon and chief prefect over the wise men. But, in fact, he *delegated* his rule over the province of Babylon to his three friends, which is precisely what puts *them* in this particular mess.

Where then is Daniel and what is he doing? He was, last we heard, in the king's court. There he remains — but this brings up yet another trouble.

In the king's court, Daniel will avoid this false, evil worship. Yet he has the king's ear. How could he have blessed the king's terrible plan of erecting and commanding this golden image to be worshipped? How could he have let this happen?

I think we get an answer to this question in chapter 4.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS: CHAPTER THREE

(1) How do Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego demonstrate their faithfulness to God? Did God *have* to vindicate them? In vindicating them, what has God ultimately done *for his glory* and *for the sake of the Babylonians*?

(2) On what occasion(s) has God demonstrated who he is in your life, or in the life of someone you know? Did He receive due credit and glory for his act?

DANIEL CHAPTER FOUR

DANIEL 4:1-3

[1] King Nebuchadnezzar to all peoples, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you! [2] It has seemed good to me to show the signs and wonders that the Most High God has done for me.

[3] How great are his signs,
how mighty his wonders!
His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and his dominion endures from generation to generation.

What things stand out to you right away?

Verse 1 | The King makes a new decree. What does he give and to whom?

2 | What prompts the king's decree?

3 | What does this verse sound like? To which signs and wonders is the king referring? How does the king know that God's kingdom is everlasting?

DANIEL 4:4-12

[4] I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and prospering in my palace. [5] I saw a dream that made me afraid. As I lay in bed the fancies and the visions of my head alarmed me. [6] So I made a decree that all the wise men of Babylon should be brought before me, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. [7] Then the magicians, the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers came in, and I told them the dream, but they could not make known to me its interpretation. [8] At last Daniel came in before me—he who was named Belteshazzar after the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods—and I told him the dream, saying, [9] “O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you and that no mystery is too difficult for you, tell me the visions of my dream that I saw and their interpretation. [10] The visions of my head as I lay in bed were these: I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and its height was great. [11] The tree grew and became strong, and its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth. [12] Its leaves were beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, and the birds of the heavens lived in its branches, and all flesh was fed from it.

What things stand out to you right away?

Verse 4 | Who was at ease and prospering? In which two places?

5 | What made him afraid? What alarmed him?

6 | What did he make? Concerning who? For what purpose?

7 | Who came? What did Nebuchadnezzar tell them? What could they tell him?

8 | At last who came? What is his other name and why? What does Nebuchadnezzar say Daniel has? What did he tell Daniel?

9 | What title does he use for Daniel? Because of which two reasons does the king list?

10 | What did the king see? What about it?

11 | What did the tree do? Where did it reach? Who could see it?

12 | What were its leaves like? What did it possess? What good was the tree for the beasts, the birds, and all flesh?

DANIEL 4:13-18

[13] “I saw in the visions of my head as I lay in bed, and behold, a watcher, a holy one, came down from heaven. [14] He proclaimed aloud and said thus: ‘Chop down the tree and lop off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts flee from under it and the birds from its branches. [15] But leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, amid the tender grass of the field. Let him be wet with the dew of heaven. Let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth. [16] Let his mind be changed from a man’s, and let a beast’s mind be given to him; and let seven periods of time pass over him. [17] The sentence is by the decree of the watchers, the decision by the word of the holy ones, to the end that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men.’ [18] This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw. And you, O Belteshazzar, tell me the interpretation, because all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation, but you are able, for the spirit of the holy gods is in you.”

What things stand out to you right away?

Verse 13 | What else did the king see and what did it do?

14 | What did the watcher proclaim about the tree?

15 | What was to be left? Bound with what and located where? With what was he to be wet? His portion was to be with what?

16 | What was to be changed from a man's? And instead he was given what? For how long?

17 | Whose decree is this? Whose word? For what purpose? What does the Most High do with the kingdom of men?

18 | What does the king ask Daniel to do? Who are unable to tell the king its meaning? Why is Daniel able to do so?

DANIEL 4:19-27

[19] Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was dismayed for a while, and his thoughts alarmed him. The king answered and said, “Belteshazzar, let not the dream or the interpretation alarm you.” Belteshazzar answered and said, “My lord, may the dream be for those who hate you and its interpretation for your enemies! [20] The tree you saw, which grew and became strong, so that its top reached to heaven, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth, [21] whose leaves were beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in which was food for all, under which beasts of the field found shade, and in whose branches the birds of the heavens lived—[22] it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong. Your greatness has grown and reaches to heaven, and your dominion to the ends of the earth. [23] And because the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, ‘Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump of its roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze, in the tender grass of the field, and let him be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven periods of time pass over him,’ [24] this is the interpretation, O king: It is a decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king, [25] that you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. You shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and you shall be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will. [26] And as it was commanded to leave the stump of the roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be confirmed for you from the time that you know that Heaven rules. [27] Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you: break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity.”

What things stand out to you right away?

Verse 19 | What was Daniel? For how long? What did his thoughts do? How did the king reassure him? Who does Daniel say the dream should be for?

20 | How does Daniel describe the tree?

21 | How does he continue to describe the tree?

22 | Who is the tree? How is the King like the tree?

23 | Describe the (retelling of the) vision of the watcher and his proclamation.

24 | Whose decree has the watcher brought?

25 | What shall happen to the king? Where will he dwell? What will he eat? What shall he be wet with? For how long? Until the king knows what?

26 | What does the stump represent? What will be left for the king?

27 | What does two pieces of counsel does Daniel give the king? If the king follows Daniel's counsel, what may be lengthened for the king?

DANIEL 4:28-33

[28] All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. [29] At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, [30] and the king answered and said, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?" [31] While the words were still in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, "O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you, [32] and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. And you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will." [33] Immediately the word was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from among men and ate grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair grew as long as eagles' feathers, and his nails were like birds' claws.

What things stand out to you right away?

Verse 28 | What came to pass?

29 | After how long? What was the king doing?

30 | What does the king claim about Babylon? Who does the king give credit to?

31 | What took place “while the words were still in the king’s mouth”? What did this voice say to the king?

32 | From where shall the king be driven? Where shall his dwelling be? What shall he be made to eat? For how long? Until the king knows what?

33 | What was fulfilled and how long did that take? What happened to him? What were his hair and nails like?

DANIEL 4:34-37

[34] At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever,

for his dominion is an everlasting dominion,
and his kingdom endures from generation to generation;
[35] all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing,
and he does according to his will among the host of heaven
and among the inhabitants of the earth;
and none can stay his hand
or say to him, “What have you done?”

[36] At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and splendor returned to me. My counselors and my lords sought me, and I was established in my kingdom, and still more greatness was added to me. [37] Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble.

What things stand out to you right away?

Verse 34 | When did Nebuchadnezzar lift his eyes, and to where did he lift them? What returned to him? What did he do to the Most High? What else? How does the king describe the Most High?

35 | Who does this verse describe? What is Nebuchadnezzar proclaiming about who God is through this verse?

36 | What else returned to the king when his reason returned to him? Who sought him? What was established? What was added to him?

37 | Who does Nebuchadnezzar say God is? What does he say about his works and his ways? What can God do to those who walk in pride?

SHORT SUMMARY: CHAPTER FOUR

What takes place in this fourth chapter? Write a two to three sentence summary of what you think is important or helpful. Do not include every detail.

NOTES: CHAPTER FOUR

I. THE VISION

Nebuchadnezzar has a twofold vision: that of the tree, and of the decree that the watcher pronounces upon it.

As we heard through Daniel's interpretation, the tree represents Nebuchadnezzar, and everything about the tree — the shade, the food, its height, its placement, its visibility — represents his kingdom. The watcher proclaims that the tree must be cut down, though a stump shall remain.

Daniel, as a great prophet, rightly calls Nebuchadnezzar to repent of his sins and iniquities, and to instead practice righteousness and show mercy to the oppressed. Perhaps, by the king repenting from his ways, his property shall be lengthened. This, it seems to me — even juxtaposing this next to Daniel's interpretations and his own visions forthcoming in later chapters — yet this call to repentance is one of his greatest acts as prophet.

However the king may have initially responded, it is to no avail. The lesson that he is to have learned, he has already heard — the Most High God establishes kings and kingdoms, assigning to whom he will. But the king, even after hearing this lesson, forgets it, walking on top of his palace — on what must have been a marvelous evening! — and claims that all that is his is *his* doing — his own glory and strength!

He is made to be like an animal. Even his appearance becomes animal-like. The Most High assigns both greatness and baseness, and the king is made into something below his subjects, below those whom he was guilty of oppressing, and well below the glory that is rightly the Lord's.

When he is restored, what a truly marvelous and glorious turnaround. The king praises God, now truly giving him worship, now truly placing himself under the Most High. And as a result, his whole kingdom — which has filled the earth — comes to hear Nebuchadnezzar give glory to God.

If only his household had followed him...

II. CURIOSITIES

(1) Why is Daniel called last?

I suppose this is just the proper order of authority taking course. If Daniel was *always* called first, or among the first, whenever the king had need of help from his wise men, then that would be quite the time-burden on Daniel and would render the rest of the elites totally useless.

Just as Jethro encouraged Moses to build up judges and a system of authority, so, too, Nebuchadnezzar has this in place. And as we saw from Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's promotions, there really is a hierarchy of authority in place. Daniel is brought in last because he has been brought in at all. The rest of Nebuchadnezzar's advisors cannot provide the interpretation, and so he turns to the one who surely can—Daniel.

(2) Who are the watchers? The holy ones?

These are, on first glance, unique to Daniel. But perhaps these are members of the council we see in Job:

[6] Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. (Job 1:6, ESV)

What nevertheless seems to be the case is that these watchers — these holy ones — are a category of angels, entrusted with a particular mission: *to watch*. This opens, immediately, a whole host of questions, but also incredible reassurance. Yes, God *does* pay attention to the affairs of mankind, and, in fact, has entrusted some of his angels to do so.

Accordingly, God intervenes at the appropriate time in history, according to his own wisdom.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS: CHAPTER FOUR

(1) How does God make himself known through the humbling of Nebuchadnezzar?

(2) How has God humbled you? Was it clear to you at the time that that was what was happening? In what ways has God used you to make him known?

DANIEL CHAPTER FIVE

DANIEL 5:1-9

[1] King Belshazzar made a great feast for a thousand of his lords and drank wine in front of the thousand.

[2] Belshazzar, when he tasted the wine, commanded that the vessels of gold and of silver that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem be brought, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. [3] Then they brought in the golden vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. [4] They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

[5] Immediately the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, opposite the lampstand. And the king saw the hand as it wrote. [6] Then the king's color changed, and his thoughts alarmed him; his limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together. [7] The king called loudly to bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers. The king declared to the wise men of Babylon, "Whoever reads this writing, and shows me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom." [8] Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or make known to the king the interpretation. [9] Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, and his color changed, and his lords were perplexed.

What things stand out to you right away?

Verse 1 | Who is the king? What did he make and for whom? What did the king do in front of all of them?

2 | What vessels did Belshazzar command to be brought? For what purpose?

3 | What then was brought? Who drank from them?

4 | What two things did they do? Which gods did they worship?

5 | How soon before something happened? What appeared and what did it do? Where in the king's palace did this take place? Did anyone notice?

6 | What happened to the king? What alarmed him? What about his limbs and knees?

7 | Who did the king call? Did he do this calmly and quietly? What two things did he ask of the wise men? What three things did he offer?

8 | Who came in? Were they able to help the king?

9 | What two things happened to the king? How were his lords?

DANIEL 5:10-16

[10] The queen, because of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banqueting hall, and the queen declared, “O king, live forever! Let not your thoughts alarm you or your color change. [11] There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods. In the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him, and King Nebuchadnezzar, your father—your father the king—made him chief of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and astrologers, [12] because an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation.”

[13] Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king answered and said to Daniel, “You are that Daniel, one of the exiles of Judah, whom the king my father brought from Judah. [14] I have heard of you that the spirit of the gods is in you, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you. [15] Now the wise men, the enchanters, have been brought in before me to read this writing and make known to me its interpretation, but they could not show the interpretation of the matter. [16] But I have heard that you can give interpretations and solve problems. Now if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around your neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.”

What things stand out to you right away?

10 | Who came? What prompted her coming? How does she address the king?

11 | Who does she tell the king about? Whose spirit does this man have? What three things were found in him? Over whom did Nebuchadnezzar make him chief?

12 | What three qualities did he have? What three abilities did he have? This man was called by which two names? What does she have confidence that he will be able to do?

13 | Who was brought before the king? How does the king describe him?

14 | What four things does the king say he has heard are found in him?

15 | Who has been brought in so far? What were they unable to do?

16 | What two things has the king heard Daniel can do? What does the king ask Daniel to do? If he is able to do it, what three rewards will the king give him?

DANIEL 5:17-23

[17] Then Daniel answered and said before the king, “Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another. Nevertheless, I will read the writing to the king and make known to him the interpretation. [18] O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father kingship and greatness and glory and majesty. [19] And because of the greatness that he gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whom he would, he killed, and whom he would, he kept alive; whom he would, he raised up, and whom he would, he humbled. [20] But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was brought down from his kingly throne, and his glory was taken from him. [21] He was driven from among the children of mankind, and his mind was made like that of a beast, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. He was fed grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, until he knew that the Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will. [22] And you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this, [23] but you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven. And the vessels of his house have been brought in before you, and you and your lords, your wives, and your concubines have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know, but the God in whose hand is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not honored.

What things stand out to you right away?

17 | Were the rewards particularly motivating for Daniel? What does Daniel say he will do for the king?

18 | Who gave Nebuchadnezzar what four things?

19 | Because of what gift? What two things would all the peoples, nations, and languages do before the king? In which four powers did the king have authority?

20 | What happened to his heart and his spirit? How did he deal then? Where was he brought down from and what was taken from him?

21 | From where was he driven? His mind was made like what? His dwelling was where? What did he eat? What happened to his body? All this took place until Nebuchadnezzar knew what two things?

22 | Did Belshazzar know that this had happened to Nebuchadnezzar? What has Belshazzar not done?

23 | Against whom has Belshazzar lifted himself? What has Belshazzar done with the vessels of the house of the Lord? Who has Belshazzar praised? What can these “gods” see or hear or know? What two things does God have in his hand? But has Belshazzar honored God?

DANIEL 5:24-31

[24] “Then from his presence the hand was sent, and this writing was inscribed. [25] And this is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN. [26] This is the interpretation of the matter: MENE, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end; [27] TEKEL, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting; [28] PERES, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.”

[29] Then Belshazzar gave the command, and Daniel was clothed with purple, a chain of gold was put around his neck, and a proclamation was made about him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

[30] That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed. [31] And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.

What things stand out to you right away?

24 | Who sent the hand?

25 | Which four words were inscribed?

26 | What does “Mene” represent?

27 | What does “Tekel” represent?

28 | What does “Peres” represent?

29 | Which three things does Belshazzar give Daniel?

30 | What happened to Belshazzar that night?

31 | Who became king in his place?

SHORT SUMMARY: CHAPTER FIVE

What takes place in this chapter? Write a two to three sentence summary of what you think is important or helpful. Do not include every detail.

CHAPTER FIVE NOTES

I. THE KINGS

Nebuchadnezzar has faded from view. With his passing, comes the inevitable end of his kingdom:

[37] *You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory, [38] and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the children of man, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the heavens, making you rule over them all—you are the head of gold.*
(Daniel 2:37–38, ESV)

But, Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom did not end immediately. From extra-biblical sources, these Babylonian (Chaldean) kings ruled after him: Amel-Marduk, Neriglissar, Labashi-Marduk, Nabonidus.

The central problem for us is a threefold discrepancy in the Scriptural and extra-biblical records: (1) Belshazzar is never recorded as king outside Scripture; (2) Belshazzar is never recorded as the son of Nebuchadnezzar (as the Bible does), for he is the son of Nabonidus; and (3) confusion about the first king as Darius the Mede.

There have been many and various attempts to harmonize these discrepancies. In 1854, an artifact was discovered which had to do with Nabonidus, and on that artifact, was confirmation that Belshazzar *did rule*, though as co-regent.

Since at least the beginning of the Enlightenment period, the pressure has been for academics/scholars to doubt anything in the Bible which does not have corroborating extra-biblical evidence. Since then, the pace of rejection of the biblical record in favor of the extra-biblical record has seemed only to accelerate.

During the same time period, there have been efforts to “discover” the historical Jesus — to discover, whether or not, Jesus was, in fact, a real person who lived. In spite of the preponderance of evidence, in spite of the fact that there is more recorded about Jesus than any other person in history (none of us doubts the existence of Caesar Augustus), people have really spent their lives arguing *against* the fact that Jesus was a person who lived and died. And not only that, they have used methods (which, by the way, would cause us to doubt the existence of *any* person in history) to convince people that Jesus was not a real person.

None of this discussion proves or disproves the biblical record about Daniel. But what I am trying to get at is pull the curtains back on some of — what I’ll call — the *scams of scholarship*. Those who peddle fancy degrees to tell us that what we plainly know to be true is somehow, actually, not true.

How are we to approach the three-fold problem at hand, then?

Well, the first point of order is not to begin by dismissing the biblical evidence as “obviously” wrong since the extra-biblical evidence doesn’t *yet* support it. As I mentioned just a bit ago, the discovery in 1854 showed *extra biblically* that there was a Belshazzar who

ruled. This, while not cementing the case for Daniel's accuracy, moves the needle in that direction.

A second thing to keep in mind is that what we are comparing is the book of *Daniel* with the extra biblical evidence discovered *thus far*, not with what *really* took place or with *all* the evidence that may yet be found. It's especially important to keep this point in mind. (And to go alongside these latter two points, when we compare the veracity of the records of particular civilizations (e.g., Egypt) with the records of Israel, the latter is simply always to be preferred. Israel records its triumphs *and* its misdeeds. Egypt infamously rewrites its history to avoid the latter.)

The third point is that Daniel does not record everything. The book is not meant to be a record of the kings who ruled over Judah while in exile, but rather to demonstrate how God revealed himself — stunningly — to the entire empire through exiling his people. We start with assuming the Scriptural record, and from there we fit outside pieces *into* it, versus assuming that the outside record *must* be verbatim.

II. Apocryphal Literature

There are two apocryphal books worth mentioning in relation to Daniel.

The first is the book of *Baruch*. Everyone outside of the Protestant tradition holds *Baruch* as canonical. This book includes explicit reference to Belshazzar.

The second is the book of *Enoch*. Almost no one (only the Oriental Orthodox Church of Eritrea and Ethiopia do) holds the book as canon. There are many good reasons for this. Nevertheless, this book frequently refers to the Watchers. It would be more appropriate to read this book as a mythology speaking of heavenly things, than as Scripture stating the truth of heavenly things.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS: CHAPTER FIVE

(1) Perhaps the biggest theme here is the nature of God's timing. How is God's timing at work here (try to draw in several themes from Daniel)? Have you ever noticed God's timing at work in your life or in the life of those you know?

DANIEL CHAPTER SIX

DANIEL 6:1-9

[1] It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps, to be throughout the whole kingdom; [2] and over them three high officials, of whom Daniel was one, to whom these satraps should give account, so that the king might suffer no loss. [3] Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. [4] Then the high officials and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him. [5] Then these men said, “We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God.”

[6] Then these high officials and satraps came by agreement to the king and said to him, “O King Darius, live forever! [7] All the high officials of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction, that whoever makes petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. [8] Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked.” [9] Therefore King Darius signed the document and injunction.

What things stand out to you right away?

Verse 1 | What did Darius do? What is a satrap?

2 | What position was over the satraps and how many of them were there? What position did Daniel hold? The high officials ensured the king suffered what?

3 | How distinguished did Daniel become? Why? What was the king going to do?

4 | What did the satraps and high officials seek to do? Were they able to do so? Why or why not? Which two character traits of Daniel’s are mentioned?

5 | For any trap or complaint to work against Daniel it must be in connection with what?

6 | Who was in on the plot? Where did they go?

7 | Who were all agreed? What was the nature of the injunction?

8 | What two things do they ask the king to do? Once the law is signed, who is able to change it?

9 | What two things did the king sign?

DANIEL 6:10-13

[10] When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously. [11] Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and plea before his God. [12] Then they came near and said before the king, concerning the injunction, “O king! Did you not sign an injunction, that anyone who makes petition to any god or man within thirty days except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?” The king answered and said, “The thing stands fast, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be revoked.” [13] Then they answered and said before the king, “Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or the injunction you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day.”

What things stand out to you right away?

Verse 10 | When did Daniel go home? Which of his windows were opened, and where were they oriented? What three things did he do three times a day? Was this a change for him?

11 | Who came? What did they find?

12 | Where did these men go next? Of what did they remind the king? Was this injunction able to be changed?

13 | Whom did they accuse? What personal detail do they mention about him? How do they frame their accusation?

DANIEL 6:14–18

[14] Then the king, when he heard these words, was much distressed and set his mind to deliver Daniel. And he labored till the sun went down to rescue him. [15] Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, “Know, O king, that it is a law

of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or ordinance that the king establishes can be changed.”

[16] Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The king declared to Daniel, “May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!”

[17] And a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel. [18] Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him.

What things stand out to you right away?

Verse 14 | Did the king gladly deliver Daniel to the demands of the law? What instead did he do, and for how long?

15 | Of what did these men *again* remind the king?

16 | What then did the king do? What does the king hope that Daniel’s God will do?

17 | Where was a stone brought? Where was it placed? For what reason?

18 | Where did the king go? What did the king do? What did he do for distraction? How rested was he?

DANIEL 6:19–24

[19] Then, at break of day, the king arose and went in haste to the den of lions. [20] As he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish. The king declared to Daniel, “O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?” [21] Then Daniel said to the king, “O king, live forever! [22] My God sent his angel and shut the lions’ mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm.” [23] Then the king was exceedingly glad, and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. [24] And the king commanded, and those men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and cast into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives. And before they reached the bottom of the den, the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces.

What things stand out to you right away?

Verse 19 | When did the king arise? Where did he go?

20 | Did the king wait until he was right at the den? Was he relieved? Is his question hopeful or fretful? What does the king ask?

21 | Who responded? How does he begin?

22 | Who did God send? What was done to the lions? Was Daniel guilty of anything before God or the king?

23 | How disappointed was the king? What command did he order? How harmed was Daniel? What reason is given for this?

24 | What did the king command with regard to the men who conspired against Daniel? Was this punishment just for these men? Did the lions wait to attack them? Were they all unharmed as was Daniel?

DANIEL 6:25–28

[25] Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: “Peace be multiplied to you. [26] I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel,

for he is the living God,
enduring forever;
his kingdom shall never be destroyed,
and his dominion shall be to the end.

[27] He delivers and rescues;
he works signs and wonders
in heaven and on earth,
he who has saved Daniel
from the power of the lions.”

[28] So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

What things stand out to you right away?

Verse 25 | Who wrote and to whom did he write? What blessing does he give?

26 | Where is his decreed to be kept? What two things are the people to do before the God of Daniel? Who is Daniel's God? What is special about his kingdom and dominion?

27 | What qualities does Darius recognize God has?

28 | Who prospered and for how long?

SHORT SUMMARY: CHAPTER SIX

What takes place in this chapter? Write a two to three sentence summary of what you think is important or helpful. Do not include every detail.

CHAPTER SIX NOTES

I. A TRAP IS SET

The events of this chapter exist only because of the envy of the satraps and high officials, who deliberately and cunningly set a trap for Daniel. He is already among the top three officials who oversee the 120 satraps, and the king is ready to promote him further. This portion of the ruling class literally cannot find fault in any matters related to Daniel and his position. And so, the only possibility is to set a trap “in connection with the law of his God.” (What a testament to Daniel’s character!) This is, of course, their fatal mistake.

Their trap, of which Daniel is fully aware, is useless, though it certainly doesn’t appear that way. Daniel hears the order is signed, and continues on as usual — praying towards Jerusalem three times a day. Because he is so deliberately faithful, it’s easy for them to catch him in the act of prayer, and they do.

Darius somehow has missed this obvious trap, but to his credit, he stays up all night trying to figure out how to *legally* get Daniel out of this mess. Again, to his credit, Darius blesses Daniel with the prayer that Daniel’s God will save him.

Daniel’s God does save him. And Darius is thrilled for Daniel, and enraged against his envious, conniving ruling class. They are sent, with their families, to the Lion’s Den, and they are eaten and destroyed immediately.

Now we can pause and reflect: Who set the trap for whom?

Sure, the satraps trapped Daniel, but to no avail. In fact, they were *already* trapped by their envy, a trap from Satan which they eagerly entered. But there is a third and greater trap at play. God used the conniving of Satan and of the satraps to ensure, that once again, *God’s Name* will be vindicated and glorified throughout the entire kingdom. The envy of the satraps, the conniving of Satan, further guaranteed that God’s name is the one that will be known throughout this new empire.

II. **Satrap**, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*

“Governor who held jurisdiction over a number of provinces within the king’s domain. This official represented the authority of the king in both civil and military matters, and supplied the means for maintaining the king’s sovereignty over the whole empire. Satraps were listed among the high ranking officers of the Babylonian and Persian empires.”

REFLECTION QUESTION: CHAPTER SIX

- (1) List all of the actions that Daniel does in this chapter.
- (2) Daniel was ambushed for his faith. Has anything like this happened to you?

DANIEL CHAPTER SEVEN

DANIEL 7:1-8

[1] In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel saw a dream and visions of his head as he lay in his bed. Then he wrote down the dream and told the sum of the matter. [2] Daniel declared, “I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. [3] And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another. [4] The first was like a lion and had eagles’ wings. Then as I looked its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man, and the mind of a man was given to it. [5] And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. It was raised up on one side. It had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, ‘Arise, devour much flesh.’ [6] After this I looked, and behold, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back. And the beast had four heads, and dominion was given to it. [7] After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. [8] I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.

What things stand out to you right away?

Verse 1 | In which year of which king's reign? Does *Daniel 7* come chronologically *after* or *before* the events of *Daniel 6*? What did Daniel see? What did he write?

2 | When did he see the vision? Where did the four winds come from? What were they stirring up?

3 | What came out from the sea? Were they all the same?

4 | What was the first like? What happened to its wings? Where was it lifted up? How was it made to stand? What was given to it?

5 | What was the second beast like? How was it raised up? What was in its teeth? What was it told?

6 | What was the third beast like? What did have on its back? What did it have? What was given to it?

7 | Was the fourth beast said to be like a particular kind of animal? What three adjectives are instead given to this fourth beast? What kind of teeth did it have? What three things did the beast do? Was it similar to the other three beasts? How many horns did it have?

8 | What happen amidst the horns? What size was this horn? What did it do to how many of the other horns? Which two things did this horn have in it? What was the mouth doing?

DANIEL 7:9–14

[9] “As I looked,
 thrones were placed,
 and the Ancient of Days took his seat;
his clothing was white as snow,
 and the hair of his head like pure wool;
his throne was fiery flames;
 its wheels were burning fire.
[10] A stream of fire issued
 and came out from before him;
a thousand thousands served him,
 and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him;
the court sat in judgment,
 and the books were opened.

[11] “I looked then because of the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. [12] As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.

[13] “I saw in the night visions,
 and behold, with the clouds of heaven
 there came one like a son of man,
and he came to the Ancient of Days
 and was presented before him.

[14] 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.

What things stand out to you right away?

Verse 9 | What happened as Daniel looked? Who took his seat? How is he described?

10 | What came out before him? Do the math: (a) how many served him? b) how many stood before him? What was taking place? What was opened?

11 | What caused Daniel to look? What three things happened to the beast?

12 | What happened to the rest of the beasts? Were they also killed? What happened instead?

13 | Who came then? How is he described? To whom was he presented?

14 | What three things were given to him? Which three groups served him? Is his kingdom limited or finite? How is his kingdom described?

DANIEL 7:15–28

[15] “As for me, Daniel, my spirit within me was anxious, and the visions of my head alarmed me. [16] I approached one of those who stood there and asked him the truth concerning all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of the things. [17] “These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth. [18] But the

saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever.’

[19] “Then I desired to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the rest, exceedingly terrifying, with its teeth of iron and claws of bronze, and which devoured and broke in pieces and stamped what was left with its feet, [20] and about the ten horns that were on its head, and the other horn that came up and before which three of them fell, the horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke great things, and that seemed greater than its companions. [21] As I looked, this horn made war with the saints and prevailed over them, [22] until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints possessed the kingdom.

What things stand out to you right away?

Verse 15 | Did these visions bring Daniel peace and calm?

16 | What two things did Daniel do? What did the one whom Daniel approached tell him?

17 | What do the four great beasts represent?

18 | Who shall receive the kingdom and possess it forever?

19 | What did Daniel seek clarification about? How is this fourth beast described?

20 | What else did Daniel seek clarification about? How is the horn described?

21 | With whom did this horn make war? Was it successful?

22 | Until when? What was given to the saints of the Most High? When this happens,, what will the saints possess?

DANIEL 7:23-28

[23] “Thus he said: ‘As for the fourth beast,

there shall be a fourth kingdom on earth,
which shall be different from all the kingdoms,
and it shall devour the whole earth,
and trample it down, and break it to pieces.

[24] As for the ten horns,
out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise,
and another shall arise after them;
he shall be different from the former ones,
and shall put down three kings.

[25] He shall speak words against the Most High,
and shall wear out the saints of the Most High,
and shall think to change the times and the law;
and they shall be given into his hand
for a time, times, and half a time.

[26] But the court shall sit in judgment,
and his dominion shall be taken away,
to be consumed and destroyed to the end.

[27] And the kingdom and the dominion
and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven
shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High;
his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom,
and all dominions shall serve and obey him.’

[28] “Here is the end of the matter. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly alarmed me, and my color changed, but I kept the matter in my heart.”

What things stand out to you right away?

Verse 23 | What kind of kingdom does the fourth beast represent? Describe it.

24 | What do the ten horns represent? What shall come after these ten? And what shall this king do?

25 | What three evil things does this king do? How long shall he be able to do this?

26 | Who sits in judgment/ What shall be taken away? And what will happen to it in the end?

27 | What three things shall be given to the saints? What will his kingdom be like? Who shall serve and obey him?

28 | Is there more to this vision? How troubled was Daniel? Whom did Daniel tell about it?

SHORT SUMMARY: CHAPTER SEVEN

What takes place in this chapter? Write a two to three sentence summary of what you think is important or helpful. Do not include every detail.

CHAPTER SEVEN NOTES

I. ENVY

The satraps

REFLECTION QUESTIONS: CHAPTER SEVEN

(1) The details are difficult; the overall picture is clear. Who wins in the end? Who loses in the end?

(2) In verse 13, one like the “son of man” is presented to the Ancient of Days. How do we know, just based on this chapter, that this is about Jesus? Reflecting on all four Gospels now, why does Jesus consistently identify himself as the Son of Man?

ADDENDUM TO CHAPTER FIVE NOTES

I. Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin —> Mene, Tekel, Peres

All the words (*mene, etc.*) can be read either as nouns or as participles; this, I suspect, is part of the point, part of what allows for interpretative wordplay. As verbs, then, they mean: to number, to weigh, to divide. But as nouns, they mean measurements (specifically, weights of monetary value): 1/60th a talent, a shekel, a half mina. Or, to put it all into one denomination: 50 shekels, 1 shekel, 25 shekels.

Let us recall that Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian Kingdom was always going to end, as predicted by his own dream of *Daniel 2*. We knew from then on that Babylon, that head of gold, would come to an end. Now the kingdom of the chest and arms of silver is at hand.

[26] This is the interpretation of the matter: MENE, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end; [27] TEKEL, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting; [28] PERES, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians." (*Daniel 5:26–28, ESV*)

How does Parsin become Peres?

Again, there is wordplay. Parsin is the plural of Peres. We see that numerically *Parsin* is *half* of the *Mene* (25 shekels is half of 50 shekels). Peres means *divided* and it also means *Persia*.

So one possibility is simply that Daniel saw that Parsin was numerically half, and made the connection to de-pluralize to its singular, Peres, which means divided and Persia.

Thus, the kingdom was to be divided; half given to Persia.

How Daniel knew that the other half of the kingdom would go to the Medes is outside my understanding. But notice that he mentions the *Medes* first, and it is Darius the Mede who begins to rule once Babylon is conquered.