

## Week of October 3 - 9

### Daniel 5 The End of Babylon

It is now seventy years since Daniel 1. Nebuchadnezzar died, and his son Nabonidus replaced him. Ultimately, Nabonidus' son Belshazzar became king of Babylon.

Belshazzar was a man of richly wasteful habits that brought about the judgment of God. Having thrown a feast for a thousand of his lords, his wives, and his concubines, he was guilty of the unspeakable sin of using the sacred vessels from the Temple of God in a drunken feast. Consequently, there appeared mystic handwriting on the wall detailing the doom of Belshazzar and the greatest kingdom on earth at that time, Babylon.

The wise men were unable to interpret the meaning of the writing, and Daniel, who the king did not seem know, was asked to come and interpret the writing.

Daniel was full of dignity and loyal to God. He declined the king's gifts and charged him with his sin. He proclaimed God as seated high over the thrones of earth and then interpreted the writing, explaining God's knowledge of Belshazzar's kingdom and God's plan to end his reign and divide his kingdom and give it to the Medes and Persians.

That night, Belshazzar was killed, and Darius the Mede entered the city and began reigning at the age of sixty-two.

*To Belshazzar, life was a party of drunken orgies where you worshipped created things, praising the gods of gold and silver and stone. Are we living extravagantly with a craze for the pleasures of this world, neglecting the Creator?*

### Daniel 6 Daniel in the Den of Lions

*This chapter is one of the most-loved stories in the Old Testament. With Belshazzar dead, the Medes and Persians take over in one day. Darius, the Mede, appoints Cyrus to be king. Daniel is in his eighties by now, but still an extraordinary man. He was different. God in his life was evident. Now jealousy steps up. People don't like people who are different, who cannot be controlled, and who are Godly. As a result, he has powerful enemies.*

Darius reorganized the government and distributed the administration among one hundred-twenty governors, who, in turn, were responsible to three presidents, of whom Daniel was one. Daniel was so distinguished by his abilities that Darius proposed to set him over the whole kingdom. This naturally stirred up jealousy among the other presidents and governors, who cunningly planned Daniel's downfall.

Knowing that they would be unable to find anything against him except his relationship to his God, they persuaded Darius to sign a decree that for thirty days no one should ask a request of God or man, except the king. This was intended to flatter Darius and to bring Daniel into discredit with him since Daniel's habit of prayer was well known. However, Daniel's loyalty to his Lord never swerved. He continued to observe his acts of worship in prayer as had been his custom.

Unable to escape from his decree, the king was compelled to send Daniel to the den of lions. The sovereignty of God over all the kings and councils of earth was obvious in the supernatural deliverance of Daniel from the lions' den. Darius then issued a command to execute Daniel's

accusers and declared that all peoples, nations, and languages should tremble and fear before the God of Daniel.

### **Daniel 7 Daniel's First Dream of Four Beasts and Its Interpretation**

*We come now to the remaining chapters of Daniel, which consists of Daniel's visions and their interpretations. During the reign of Belshazzar one vision was given to him.*

The vision was of four beasts rising from the sea, the last of which was too dreadful to describe. Each was ultimately destroyed. Then came a vision of thrones being established and of the appearing of the Ancient of Days who overcame the beasts and received dominion and glory and a kingdom. Then came one like a son of man to the Ancient of Days who, in turn, presented to the son of man ruling power and glory over all the nations.

These visions troubled Daniel, so an interpretation was given to him. The beasts symbolized four kings who would someday rule the earth, and a final vision showed that the people of the Most High God would ultimately rule the world forever.

An interpretation of the meaning of the fourth beast and its horns was then given to Daniel. It would brutally rule the earth and defy the Most High God and wear down the saints with persecution. Ultimately, the Ancient of Days would come and destroy the beast, restoring God's people to power. The whole matter troubled the prophet, but he kept it in his heart.

### **Daniel 8 Daniel's Second Dream of a Ram and a Goat (Persia and Greece)**

Two years later, in the third year of King Belshazzar's reign, another vision came to Daniel. It was of a ram with two horns pushing in all directions. As Daniel watched, a male goat attacked the ram and overcame it, and became proud and powerful. Four horns appeared, out of one of which came another, which grew and became strong. Ultimately, it defiled the Temple, and evil prospered.

Again, he was puzzled over the vision and answer and sought to understand it. Finally, an interpretation was given to him. The two-horned ram represented Media and Persia and the male goat was the king of Greece, Alexander the Great. The Persian empire is overthrown by the king of Greece, whose empire is afterward divided into four kingdoms, from one of which a power arises that forms the main subject of the prophecy. Against him, the fierce hand of God would arise destroying him.

Daniel grew faint and was sick for several days, distressed by the dream, not understanding it.

### **Daniel 9**

In the first year of the reign of Darius over Babylon, Daniel, who was not only a man of prayer but a student of the prophet Jeremiah, recognized that the seventy years of judgment on Jerusalem prophesied by Jeremiah were near the end. He sought the Lord by personal prayer and penitence on behalf of his people, confessing their sins, and pleading their cause. He pours out his heart in confession to God, acknowledging the sin of the people and their kings, the hardness of their hearts, and the righteousness of God in bringing evil upon them. He then pleaded for the Lord to end his punishment on Jerusalem and, as many of the prophets had done before, based his plea on the honor of the Lord.

The angel Gabriel came to him, urging him to consider the matter and understand the vision. Seventy weeks were decreed on the people and Jerusalem.

One interpretation of the seventy weeks is that the decree in verse 24 was Cyrus's decree of 538 B.C., that the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 occurred toward the end of the 70th week, and that the prince to come (v. 26) was Titus, the Roman Caesar. The slaughter of over one million Jews occurred during the following three-and-one-half years. Others see the prince to come as the antichrist, yet to come.

*Rather than trying to determine what this vision means, to me, it's important to consider that Daniel's intercessory prayer reveals a man familiar with God and keenly conscious of the sinfulness and failure of his people.*