

From Babylon to Jerusalem - (Daniel)

ch.4:1-5:31

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen's sermon explores Nebuchadnezzar's transformation from pride to humility, emphasizing the importance of recognizing God's sovereignty and the need for repentance.

Duration: 1:00:59

Scripture: Daniel 4:10-13, Daniel 4:27-28, Micah 6:8, Matthew 3:10, Luke 13:6-9

Topics: "From Babylon To Jerusalem"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of Nebuchadnezzar and his encounter with God. Nebuchadnezzar had a vision of a great tree that provided shade and food for all living creatures. However, an angelic watcher appeared and commanded the tree to be cut down, leaving only a stump. This was a punishment for Nebuchadnezzar's pride and arrogance. The purpose of this punishment was to teach Nebuchadnezzar and all people that God is the ruler over all and can appoint even the lowliest of men to positions of power.

Transcript

We'll turn today to Daniel chapter 4. The last study we considered how Nebuchadnezzar made this image, wanted people to worship it and Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego stood against it. Now we find something that happens many, many years later. Many years later.

Nebuchadnezzar, the king. This is actually a testimony. The whole chapter, verses 1 to 37, is a testimony, it's like a tract that Nebuchadnezzar the king wrote.

It's quite an amazing thing that the tract that king Nebuchadnezzar wrote has been included in the inspired scriptures which shows what a tremendous work God was able to do in this heathen king's life and primarily through the witness of Daniel. So the whole chapter is a tract that Nebuchadnezzar wrote to all the nations over which he was king. He was giving a testimony concerning what God had taught him and that's the best type of tract to write, what God has taught me through my experiences.

Nebuchadnezzar the king to all the peoples, nations and men of every language that live in all the earth and like the King James version says, may your peace be multiplied. He sounds like an apostle, just like when Peter writes his epistles, may peace be multiplied unto you and he says it has seemed good to me

to declare the signs and wonders which the most high God has done for me. Nebuchadnezzar realized that when God had done something for him it was necessary for him to give a testimony concerning that for the glory of God.

It would be a wonderful day when all believers recognize that as well, that when God does something for them they are obligated to testify to that fact, to all their acquaintances and to the people God brings them in touch with. Nebuchadnezzar realized it. God had done something for him and he was very grateful and he was not going to keep quiet about it.

He was going to tell others about what God had done for him and there Nebuchadnezzar, as I said, can put many, many, even so-called spirit-baptized believers to shame. How great are his signs! How mighty are his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and his dominion is from generation to generation. You'll notice something as Nebuchadnezzar gives his testimony here and it's a wonderful example for all those who want to give a testimony.

You read through this tract and you'll see how we should give a testimony. A heathen king who was humbled by God can give us an example. Many people when they give their testimony they glorify themselves but you read through this and you find Nebuchadnezzar humbles himself in the eyes of others.

He glorifies only God. He doesn't show what a wonderful person he was but he shows what a wonderful person God is. How great are his signs! How mighty are his wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and his dominion is from generation to generation.

Nebuchadnezzar is not ashamed here to humble himself and show what his condition was, how God humiliated him and what God finally did for him at the end. He says here, I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease. That's how it began.

In my house and flourishing in my palace. And this was part of the problem with Nebuchadnezzar. This word, my, had a very big I and my had a very big part to play in his life.

We find that later on also in this tract how his preoccupation with what he had accomplished and what he was and his whole house and his palace was what occupied his mind. It reminds us of a passage of scripture that Jesus spoke in Luke chapter 12. I just want to read it.

You know the story of the rich man who said one day he began to reason with himself in Luke 12 17. I have no place to store my crops and I will tear down, verse 18, my barns and I will store my grain and my goods. This was Nebuchadnezzar's attitude.

This is my house, my palace. Just like this rich ruler, this rich man said my grain, my goods, my barns. And God came to him that night and said to him, verse 20, there's only one thing that's really yours, verse 20, and that's your soul.

What about that? And that's a very good thing for us to realize. That there's only one thing about which I can say my. That's not my house, it's not my property, it's not my grains, it's not my barn, it's not my palace, it's my soul.

Well that's what Nebuchadnezzar realized at the end of his experience that God took him through. And he had a dream. And this was a second dream that God gave to Nebuchadnezzar to warn him.

God warns through dreams, I saw a dream. It made me fearful and these fantasies as I lay on my bed and the visions in my mind kept alarming me. And so I gave orders to bring into my presence all the wise men of Babylon that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream.

Then the magicians, the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the diviners came in and I related the dream to them but they could not make its interpretation known to me. Now this is quite an amazing fact. 32 years earlier, in Daniel chapter 2, he had already tested out these Babylonian magicians and discovered that they didn't know a thing.

And at that time Daniel alone was able to interpret the dream. But 32 years later, here in Daniel chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar is still depending on his magicians and his Babylonian diviners. It's an amazing thing how slow man is to respect a true man of God like Daniel.

How slow man is to learn the lesson that God was trying to teach him. He still hadn't learned it. He was still depending on these people 32 years later.

And of course, they could not make its interpretation known to me. It was just the same old story as it was 32 years earlier. Now Daniel was no longer a young man.

He was 53 years old. A middle-aged man we could say. 53 years old now.

And finally Daniel came in before me. And there we see something of the humility of Daniel. That though as we read in Daniel chapter 2, he had been exalted to a very high place in Babylon.

He was a man who loved to keep himself hidden. He wasn't out there in the front taking the prominence because if he was, he would have been called in first. He was there waiting in the wings as they say, waiting to be called in last.

And he came in finally. And he was quite happy to come in last. He wasn't offended by that.

And Daniel came in before me, Nebuchadnezzar says. And according whose name is Belteshazzar, according to the name of my God, notice after 32 years, who is Nebuchadnezzar's God? Bel. Still Bel.

That was his experience. He hadn't learned his lesson, neither from what God spoke to him in chapter 2, nor what God spoke to him in chapter 3. And he says to Daniel, in you there is the spirit of the holy gods, and I related the dream to him, saying, O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians. He still calls him a magician.

Since I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you, and no mystery baffles you, tell me the vision of my dream, which I have seen, along with its interpretation. And then in verses 10 to 18, we find Nebuchadnezzar giving a description of this dream. And I'll just read through it quickly so that we get an idea of what this dream was, through which God was trying to warn Nebuchadnezzar.

Now these were the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed. I was looking, and behold, there was a tree in the midst of the earth, and its height was great. The tree grew large and became strong, and its height reached to the sky, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth.

Its foliage was beautiful, its fruit abundant, and in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, and the birds of the sky dwelt in its branches, and all living creatures fed themselves from it. He saw a vision of this tree, and all the animals and birds under it.

And I was looking in the visions in my mind as I lay in my bed, verse 13, and behold, an angelic watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven. He shouted out and spoke as follows, chop down this tree and cut off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit, and let the beasts flee from under it and the birds from its branches, yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground. In other words, don't pull it out by the roots, leave a little bit of it still there, and protect that with a band of iron and bronze around it in the new grass of the field.

And let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him share with the beasts in the grass of the earth. Let his mind be changed from that of a man, let a beast's mind be given to him, and let seven periods of time, that is seven years, pass over him. And the purpose of this is, this sentence is by the decree of the angelic watchers, and the decision is a command of the holy ones.

And here is the purpose, in order that the living may know that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whom he wishes, and sets over it the lowliest and basest of men, teaching us that the emperors whom God appoints over various kingdoms, and the great rulers, are very often the basest and lowliest of men in his eyes, the worst of the lot, whom the world considers the greatest. This is the dream which I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now, you, Balthasar, tell me its interpretation, inasmuch as none of the wise men of my kingdom is able to make known to me the interpretation.

But you are able, for a spirit of the holy gods is in you. And as we read from verse 19 onwards, we find Daniel giving the interpretation of this dream. And then Daniel was appalled for a while, as his thoughts alarmed him.

He waited on God for the interpretation of this dream. And when he got the interpretation, he discovered that it was an interpretation bringing judgment to Nebuchadnezzar, who was the greatest king on the earth at that time. Now, in the previous dream, all that he had said was that after your time, Nebuchadnezzar, another kingdom is going to rise up.

But this time, it was a vision of judgment. That's why Daniel was astonished. And the king said to Balthasar, don't let the dream or its interpretation alarm you.

And Balthasar, he loved Nebuchadnezzar, and he said, I wish the dream applied to your enemies, because it's a dream of judgment. And as you go through, you find Daniel faithfully interpreting the dream to Nebuchadnezzar. He didn't tone it down, he didn't water it down.

And there we see the faithfulness of a true man of God, that even when he stands before the greatest king on the face of the earth, he's absolutely true to his convictions, faithful to speak the truth, even though it meant something which is not very good to hear. And I believe that's something very important for us to bear in mind as we approach the end of time. And we are called to stand forth as God's witnesses, that we never water down the truth of God, even when it is not pleasing to the ears of those to whom we are called to proclaim it.

See, we've been considering in the book of Daniel, what it means to be an overcomer in the last days. We can learn a lot of lessons from Daniel's own attitude. Just like John the Baptist spoke faithfully to King Herod and told him exactly what his problem was.

Whenever King Herod called John the Baptist to preach, John the Baptist had only one point in his sermon, and that was, you must not live with your brother's wife. He didn't have any other points in his

sermon. And that's what infuriated Herod's wife.

And that's the mark of a true man of God, that where he sees a lack, he speaks on that. He's got only one point until that lack is rectified, whether it is an individual or a congregation. That's how it was with Daniel.

He spoke faithfully. And he said here, the tree that you saw was, which became large and grew and whose height reached to the sky, whose foliage was beautiful, etc., verse 21, with the beasts in the field and beasts of the field and the birds dwelling under it, verse 22, that tree is a picture of you, O King. For you have become great and grown strong, and your majesty has become great, and your dominion has reached to the end of the earth.

But, O King, you don't realize that the way you're living, the way you're conducting your kingdom is being watched from heaven. That was a problem with Nebuchadnezzar, and that's a problem with a lot of people even today. They don't realize that they are being watched.

And in that, the king saw an angelic watcher, a holy one, who had watched this man's life for 32 years. God had spoken to him through a dream in Daniel, chapter 2, spoken to him through the supernatural deliverance of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in chapter 3, given him 32 years. It's a long period of time, and he still hadn't humbled himself.

Finally, God's judgment comes. Chop down the tree and destroy it. But along with judgment, there is mercy.

Give him a chance to repent. Leave the stump with its roots, till seven periods of time pass over him. And this is the interpretation, verse 24.

O King, and this is what the Most High God has decreed to come upon you, that you, here's the interpretation, you are going to be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field. And you're going to behave like an animal. In other words, you're going to lose your senses.

You are going to become insane. God is going to make you mad. And the doctors will tell you that you've just got to adjust the chemistry in our blood just a little bit to make a person mad.

Well, God can do that in just a few seconds. Well, that's exactly what happened, that Nebuchadnezzar was going to be made mad. Madness is a judgment of God.

It is never the will of God for any of his children to become mad, or mentally deranged, or mentally imbalanced. God may allow physical illness at times, like a thorn in the flesh, but never is mental derangement or madness the will of God for any of his children. That was a judgment.

Let's never forget that. I want to show you an Old Testament verse in Deuteronomy chapter 28 and verse 28. Deuteronomy 28 and verse 28.

The Lord said to the Israelites through Moses, verse 15. Deuteronomy 28 15. If you don't obey the commandments of the Lord, the Lord will smite you, verse 28, with madness and with blindness and with bewilderment of heart.

That was part of God's judgment under the curse. And if madness comes on anyone, you can be sure that's a judgment. That's not God's will.

That's not God's will for any of us. It wasn't God's will for Nebuchadnezzar. It was a judgment, because the man wouldn't humble himself.

And he was going to be so mad that he was going to think he was an animal. That's a particular type of disease. And he was going to eat grass, it says in verse 25, like the cows.

And he was going to be out in the field. He wouldn't live in the room. He'd live like an animal out in the field, drenched with the dew of heaven, verse 25, for seven years, until you recognize that you have not conquered this great kingdom, but the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever he wishes.

One of the things that God wanted to teach Nebuchadnezzar was that apart from the grace of God, you are just an animal. There's a verse in Psalm 49 that says that. I just want to read it.

Psalm 49 says, Psalm 49, verse 11 and 12, the inner thought of many men is that their houses are forever and their dwelling places to all generations. They have called their lands after their own names, which is a very common habit among people. Buy up a plot of land and put your own name on it.

But a man in his pomp will not endure. He is like the beasts that perish. And that's exactly what Nebuchadnezzar had to learn.

That if he didn't give the glory that was due to God, he was just like an animal. But God wasn't going to remove him forever. Daniel 4.26, in that it was commanded to leave the stump with the roots of the tree, your kingdom will be assured to you after you recognize that it is heaven that rules.

You see, this was the lesson that God wanted to teach Nebuchadnezzar, that it is God who rules the world. That's the lesson God wants to teach us. I believe it's one of the greatest truths that we need to know in the last days, that God in heaven rules over everything and everyone.

And then, look at the way Daniel, the man of God, speaks to the king. Therefore, O king, may my advice be pleasing to you. And he says, I want to tell you three things.

He says to Nebuchadnezzar, and if you do these three things, perhaps God will be merciful to you. And the madness may not strike you. Just like Jonah preached in Nineveh, he had 40 days, and Nineveh will be destroyed.

But Nineveh repented, and so Nineveh was not destroyed. In the same way, there would have been hope for Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel knew about Jonah and Nineveh.

And he said, therefore, even though God has predicted judgment, yet you can avert that judgment, if, one, you stop sinning. Remember this, that the first message of a true man of God is always, stop sinning. Always.

Second, do righteousness. That's the second part of the message. And third, be merciful to other people.

It's amazing. We think Daniel was preaching in our assembly or something. He says, stop sinning, do righteousness, and be merciful to other people.

That was his message to king Nebuchadnezzar. And that message never changed in all these 26 centuries. He says, if you stop sinning, and you do righteousness, and you are merciful to other people,

well, God may not bring that judgment on you.

But do you think Nebuchadnezzar listened? He didn't. Many people learn only the hard way. As we read here in verse 28, this is still part of the tract, Nebuchadnezzar is writing the tract, and he's explaining what happened to him.

All this happened to Nebuchadnezzar the king. Twelve months later, he's writing about himself. Notice, twelve months after the dream.

Why didn't it happen immediately? You remember the story Jesus said about a man who had a tree in his garden, and it wasn't producing any fruit for two years, and the gardener said, leave it alone for one more year. Let's see. And after that, if it still doesn't bear fruit, cut it down.

Well, God gave Nebuchadnezzar one more year. To do what? To listen to Daniel's sermon. To stop sinning, to do righteousness, and to show mercy to others.

Those are the three things that are required in any leader, whether it's a leader of a government, or a leader of God's people. Micah chapter 6, there is a verse very similar to this, Micah chapter 6, verse 8, which says, God has told you, O man, what is good for you, and what does the Lord require from you? To do righteousness, that is to stop sinning and do righteousness, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God. And Daniel had studied the prophecy of Micah.

Micah lived before Daniel's time, and Daniel knew what God required, and what he was telling Nebuchadnezzar was what Micah had said many years earlier. Stop sinning, do righteousness, show mercy to others, be merciful to others, and walk humbly with your God. And that's a word we can listen to as well.

Do righteousness, be merciful to others, and walk humbly with your God. And God hoped that Nebuchadnezzar would listen to that message and repent, but 12 months went by and he didn't. And he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon one day, and the king reflected and said, just like we saw earlier, isn't this Babylon which I have built, by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty? And it's true that Babylon was a fantastic place.

History, secular history tells us that Babylon was a huge city, bigger than Bangalore, 14 miles by 14 miles. It had walls around it that were 350 feet high. That's higher than the utility building.

Walls, and do you know the thickness of the walls? The walls were 90 feet thick. That's three times the width of this hall. 90 feet thick and 350 feet high.

And the hanging gardens of Babylon, which Nebuchadnezzar built to please his wife, was considered one of the seven wonders of the world. It's truly a fantastic thing that Nebuchadnezzar did in all those 32 years. The only thing he didn't learn to do was to walk humbly with his God, to do righteousness, and to be merciful to others.

All the other great things in the world he did. And he said, this is Babylon which I have built by my power, for my glory. And I want to tell you brothers and sisters that that is the essence of Babylon.

These three things mentioned in verse 30. First of all, according to my plan, by my power, and for my glory. Many, many years ago the tower of Babel we read in Genesis 11 was built on the same principle.

And Babel, by the way, means Babylon. It's the same thing. In Genesis 11 you read the world, people in the world gathered together and they made a plan.

And by their power and for their glory they built a tower and God judged it. Many, many years later Nebuchadnezzar, he made his plans and by his power and for his glory he built a city and God judged it. And today when Christian work is done according to man's plan, not God's will in the scriptures, when it's done in human power, not the power of the Holy Spirit, when it's done for man's glory and honor, not the glory of God, we can write across it Babylon.

Everything, even if it's you and I who do it, you can get out of a Babylonian system of Christianity. And yet what I do without seeking the will of God is part of Babylon. What I can do where I don't need to pray about it, I don't need the power of the Holy Spirit, I can do it all by myself, is Babylon.

And what I do in order to bring some credit or honor from men for myself is Babylon. Never forget this. This is how Babylon is built today.

It's not by false doctrine, it's by wrong motivation, it's by wrong power, not seeking the will of God. Jesus lived his life quite the opposite of that principle. He never did his own will, he never lived by his own power, and he never did anything for his own glory.

And that's how Jerusalem, the church of God, is built. And if we keep these three principles in mind, we'll be saved from building Babylon. So much of what we do is for our own glory.

I want to just show you one verse which is very significant in this connection. Nebuchadnezzar built something and he gloried in it. Acts chapter 7, Acts of the Apostles, chapter 7 verse 41, there is a phrase in the last part of that verse which says, rejoicing in the works of their hands.

They made a calf, it's referring to the time when the Israelites made a calf and brought a sacrifice to that idol, a calf, and rejoiced in the work of their hands. What does it mean to rejoice in the work of our hands or to worship the work of our hands? You make an idol with your own hands and then you bow down to it and worship it. But there are other ways of worshiping the work of our hands.

I may have accomplished something and sit back and congratulate myself over what I have done. It can be such an innocent thing like a housewife who has cooked a meal and then she worships the work of her hands and sits back and thinks how people appreciate her for her wonderful cooking. Do you realize that's idolatry? Do you realize that's exactly what Nebuchadnezzar did? He may not have cooked a meal, he did something far greater and he said, this is what I have done.

He really sat back and appreciated the fact that all the people admired him for what he had done. It can penetrate into all types of things. If we are not careful to judge ourselves that we never touch the glory of God in anything but give the glory to God, we can easily end up with the spirit of Babylon in our lives as well.

In so many things I do something and it's been done well and I don't give the glory to God, I take it to myself. That's exactly what Nebuchadnezzar did. I have done it and it brings glory to me.

I rejoice in the work of my hands. It can be a sermon, it can be a prayer that I prayed that tells us what Babylon is like. Daniel 4.30, is not this Babylon the great? Is not this the prayer I prayed or the message I shared or the food I cooked or whatever it is that I did by my power and it brings glory to me? That's

Babylon.

And while that word was in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven saying, King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared, sovereignty has been removed from you. You'll be driven away from mankind. Your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the fields.

You'll be given grass to eat like the cattle. You'll be humbled because you do not know how to give the glory to God. Because he did not know how to judge himself.

If he had judged himself, God would not have judged him. The Bible teaches us that. That very often sickness comes because we haven't judged ourselves.

If we judge ourselves, we will not be judged. And if Nebuchadnezzar had judged himself, he would not have been judged. And he was judged quite severely.

It says here, he began to eat grass like cattle, verse 33. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven. His hair grew like eagle's feathers and his nails like bird's claws.

Imagine madness that comes upon a person, the judgment of God. But finally, God was merciful. God had already warned him many times before, but he hadn't listened.

At the end of that period of seven years, I, Nebuchadnezzar, he's still writing this tract, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me. I came back to my senses and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored him who lives forever. And I think it's quite likely that Nebuchadnezzar was converted as a result of this experience.

And history tells us that two years later he died. We trust he continued in that same frame of mind and believed in the true God, in which case he entered the kingdom of God. But certainly here, you find a different attitude of mine.

He says his dominion is an everlasting dominion. His kingdom endures from generation to generation. And here is a fantastic, one of the most comprehensive descriptions of the sovereignty of God that's found in the entire scriptures.

And Nebuchadnezzar is the one who writes it. All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing before this God, and that includes me, Nebuchadnezzar says. God does according to his will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.

No one can ward off his hand and no one can say to him, what has thou done? And when he acknowledged that God was sovereign, at that time, my senses, my reason returned to me. My majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom. My counselors and my nobles began seeking me out, so I was re-established in my sovereignty and surpassing greatness was added to me.

Something like the experience that Job went through. After Job was humbled, God raised him up. That's always God's desire when he judges us and humiliates us and humbles us.

His ultimate desire is to lift us up if we have learned our lesson. The same lesson that Job learned when he said, Lord, I'll keep my hand over my mouth. What can I say? You can do everything.

There's nothing that you cannot do. You are sovereign. And that's the lesson that many believers have to learn.

Some the easy way, some the hard way. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, have stopped praising myself and this wonderful city of Babylon that I have built or the wonderful works that I have made, which I rejoice over. Now I praise and exalt and honor the king of heaven for all his works are true and his ways are just.

And here is the great lesson which he learned. He is able to humble those who walk in pride. Have we learned that lesson? That, my dear brothers and sisters, is the greatest lesson that men and women have to learn.

That God can humble those who walk in pride. Now I'll tell you something. Nebuchadnezzar learned it with one humiliation.

There are very few believers who've learned it with one humiliation. God has to work with some believers so many times, put them down in so many situations, and they still haven't learned it. This Old Testament heathen king puts us to shame.

Have we learned it? That God is seeking to humble us and bring us down, we who have such high thoughts about ourselves, we who spend our days worshiping the works of our own hands. Well, may God help us to learn this lesson. Notice something which occurs four times in this chapter.

Verse 17, the last part, that the most high is ruler over the realm of mankind. Verse 25, the last part, the most high is ruler over the realm of mankind. And verse 26, the last part, it is the heaven that rules.

Verse 32, the most high is ruler over the realm of mankind. It's again repeated in verse 35, five times. One lesson, God is sovereign.

Blessed are those who have learned it and who have humbled themselves under the mighty hand of God. Now we come to chapter 5 where we read of another king. This was the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar.

His name was Belshazzar, and he was reigning along with his father Nabonidus. Nebuchadnezzar had died, 70 years had gone by. Daniel was now an 87 year old man, and Belshazzar was the new king of Babylon.

And he was reigning as the prince along with his father, joint ruler. He's called here the king, and he had a great feast. I want to tell you something from history that was happening at this particular time.

Outside the walls of Babylon, the Medo-Persian army had come to fight against Babylon, led by Cyrus and his uncle Darius. And Babylon was protected by these massive walls. But there was one weak spot in Babylon, and that was the river Euphrates that flowed right down the middle of the river.

Sorry, the middle of the city. But because that river was full, there was no possibility of anyone coming that way. There were gates that closed up the river, but they were open because the river was full.

And history tells us that Cyrus thought of a brilliant scheme, and he dug another channel to divert the river Euphrates into another lake, to bypass Babylon. The result was the river dried up, and the Medo-Persian army entered and captured Babylon that night. And this chapter is referring to that particular night.

Belshazzar the king, at a time when he should have been fasting and seeking God, he was feasting, like many Christians, and like the spirit of Babylon, feasting rather than fasting. For a thousand of his nobles, and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand, and Belshazzar tasted the wine, he gave orders to bring the gold and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple from Jerusalem, and he ordered that the king, his nobles, his wives, concubines might drink from them. Then they brought the gold vessels, and they began to drink from them.

And verse 4, they drank the wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver and bronze and iron and wood and stone. They worshipped idols, and they worshipped their bellies. Suddenly, the fingers of a man's hand emerged, verse 5, and began writing opposite the lampstand, on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace.

And the king saw the back of the hand that did the writing, and the king's face grew pale. That was the finger of God. I just want to mention here that there are only two places in the Bible where we read of the finger of God writing something.

One is when God wrote the laws, the ten commandments, and two tablets of stone, and gave it to Moses. You read of that in Exodus chapter 31, and also in Exodus chapter 34, because when Moses destroyed the first tablets of stone, God wrote it a second time. And the only other place where we see the finger of God writing something is here.

It's significant. And this was to a heathen king. And the king's face grew pale, and his thoughts alarmed him, and his hip joints went slack, and his knees began knocking together.

And the king called aloud. He was just like Nebuchadnezzar before his humbling. He called the magicians again.

Imagine, here was this great man of God, Daniel, who had been there for 70 years, and this Belshazzar was such an ungodly person, he didn't even know of the existence of Daniel. He called all these wise men and said, if anyone can read this inscription, and explain its interpretation, it was written in another script, something like the gift of tongues, and it needed to be interpreted like the gift of interpretation. He said, if anyone can do this, I'll flow them with purple, and give them various honours.

And the king's wise men came, and of course they couldn't interpret it. They couldn't read it either. And then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, and his nobles were perplexed.

And then the queen, that is the queen mother, the mother of Belshazzar, entered the banquet hall and said, O king, live forever, don't let your thoughts alarm you. There is a man in your kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods. You see, the queen mother knew about Daniel.

There is a man in your kingdom, you don't know about him, but he has illumination, insight, wisdom, and Nebuchadnezzar, your father, the king, appointed him chief of the magicians. Verse 12, because he had an extraordinary spirit, knowledge and insight, interpretation of dreams, explanation of enigmas, and solving of difficult problems. This is the mark of a man of wisdom, that he can solve difficult practical problems that people are in.

And the exact translation of the word there is a dissolver of knots. That means when you find your life is tied up in 101 knots, that the devil's tied around your life, a man of wisdom can untie those knots. That is a beautiful definition of wisdom, a man who can untie the knots that the devil's tied up in your life.

This Daniel was brought before the king. Verse 13, now Daniel was now 87 years old, he was an old man, and Belshazzar didn't even know him. That shows what an ungodly person he was, and shows another thing, that it's only when some problems arise that we appreciate the value of a true man of God.

As long as we don't have problems, we are full of our own conceit, and think we can handle everything, we're all right, we don't need anybody, we despise men of God, etc. And then problems come, and God humbles us, and then we are thankful if there is a man of wisdom around whom we can go to. Then we learn to appreciate.

But blessed are those who don't have to wait till problems come, before they appreciate men like Daniel. And he says to Daniel, I heard that the spirit of the gods is in you, and if you can, verse 16, if you can read this inscription and make its interpretation known to me, you will be clothed with purple, and wear a necklace of gold around your neck, and you'll have authority as the third ruler of the kingdom. And I want you to notice something here in verse 17, which is the mark, another mark of a true man of God.

Daniel says, you can keep your gifts for yourself, and you can give your rewards to somebody else. I want to tell you brothers and sisters, in these days of tremendous deception, when so many people claim to have the gift of interpreting the handwriting of God, what is that? The gift of interpreting the scriptures. How to distinguish between the Babylonian magicians and the Daniels? Here is one good test.

A Daniel will say, keep your gifts to yourself brother, and give your honor to somebody else. I don't want it. I don't want your money.

I don't want your honor. There are two things that Daniel refused. There were two things the king offered, money and honor.

And those are the two things that are offered even today. And by this test, we can distinguish the Daniels from the Babylonian magicians. And if you keep this in mind, you will not be deceived by the Babylonian magicians, of which there are plenty in these days.

Keep your gifts for yourself. And in his attitude to gifts, in his attitude to rewards, you discover the true man of God. Just like Abraham.

You remember when the king of Sodom came to Abraham and said, here take all these things, Genesis chapter 18. Abraham said, no, keep it. I'm not even going to take a shoelace from you.

You remember Elisha, when another great man, Naaman came before him and said, here is eight lakhs rupees worth of gold and ten fancy suits. And Elisha said, no, thank you. Keep it yourself.

And so it is with Daniel. And I want you to see something here, brothers and sisters, that the services of a true man of God are always free. Any man who charges for his services is not a man of God.

A man who says, I'll interpret the word of God for you, but you've to pay me so much of a salary every month. He's not a man of God. He's a Babylonian magician.

Even if he calls himself a pastor or priest or whatever it is. A man who takes a salary is a Babylonian magician. If he says, I'll interpret the handwriting of God, but tell me what your salary is and how much the increment is.

You see people like that? There are plenty of them. And yet so blind is Babylonian Christianity today, that even though these things are written so plainly in scripture, they haven't seen it. God has blinded their eyes because they do not love the truth.

That's the reason why the Apostle Paul refused to take a salary for his services. He trusted God to provide his needs. He was not going to get a salary for his services.

He trusted God to supply his needs. And if Daniel had needs, he trusted God to supply them. But he was not going to take a charge for interpreting God's handwriting and woe unto those who charge people for interpreting God's handwriting, whether on the wall or in the Bible.

And he says, I'll give you the interpretation and it's free. You don't have to pay me anything like you pay your magicians. And here it is.

The reason it's free is because it's a message of judgment. If you paid me, I'd be scared to tell you the truth. But since you don't pay me, I can tell you the truth.

And here it is. O King, the Most High God granted sovereignty, glory and majesty to Nebuchadnezzar your father. And God gave him peoples, nations, men of every language feared and trembled before him.

And whom he wished he killed, whom he wished he spared a life. But when his heart was lifted up, just like Lucifer, the spirit of Lucifer got into Nebuchadnezzar and his spirit became so proud. That's the root of his downfall.

And he behaved arrogantly. Notice how the progression, his heart was lifted up. His spirit became proud.

He behaved arrogantly. God pushed him down from the throne and his glory was taken away from him. He was driven from mankind and his heart was made like that of the beasts.

His dwelling place was of the wild donkeys. He was given grass to eat like cattle and his body was drenched with the view of heaven. Until he recognized, notice this emphasis coming again and again in the book of Daniel, that the Most High God is ruler over the realm of mankind and that he sets over it whomever he wishes.

Twice in verse 18 and 19, Daniel uses the word, God gave Nebuchadnezzar. God gave Nebuchadnezzar. I want to tell you this brothers and sisters, salvation from pride, from our heart being lifted up, from verse 20 being written about us, you know, our heart was lifted up and our spirit became proud and he behaved arrogantly.

If we want to be saved from that, here is the solution. Verse 18 and 19, recognize that God gives us what we have. James 1.17 says, every good and perfect gift is from above.

And there's a wonderful verse in 1 Corinthians 4, verse 7, which we should always keep in mind. What have you got that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you glory over another person as though you had not received it? Have you got intelligence? Are you proud of your intelligence? Who gave you that intelligence? Do you know that God can reduce the iodine in your body by just a few grams, a little bit of a gram really, and make you an idiot overnight? That's all your intelligence is really. It's that easy for God to make you an idiot and yet we we're such idiots to glory in our intelligence.

Who gave you your beauty? Who gave you your job? Who gave you your position? Who gave you your abilities? Whether it is to speak or to cook food or whatever it is. 1 Corinthians 4.7, what have you got which you did not receive? And if you received it, spiritual abilities, knowledge of the word, you received it. If you received it, how in the world can you be such an idiot as to exalt yourself over another human being, thinking that you're superior to him.

Thinking that that person is from a low caste. What caste are you from? The same old Adamic caste that every human being came from. Having a flesh in which dwells nothing good.

There are many Nebuchadnezzars building Babylon's and Christendom today. And Belshazzars who have not learned from the Nebuchadnezzars. That was the trouble with Belshazzars.

Verse 22. Yet you his son Belshazzar, his grandson actually, his descendant, have not humbled your heart even though you knew all this. What shall we say about us? The word of God to us will be, and you who know about Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar and many others in the scriptures, you still haven't humbled yourself.

Well, that's much more serious. Belshazzar had only one example before him. That was Nebuchadnezzar.

We've got many. Our responsibility before God is more. And it's a sad thing when we don't learn from the way God judges others.

But you have exalted yourself. You have done exactly the same thing that your grandfather did. And you have despised the Nebuchadnezzar party and you've been drinking wine and you've praised these idols.

But the God in whose hand, verse 23, the last part, your life breath is, you have not glorified. That's the verse that teaches us that our breath is not in the devil's hands for him to take away anytime he likes. Our breath is in God's hands.

And therefore, Daniel says, this hand has been sent from God and now I'll read out the inscription. Now, none of those magicians could read the inscription or understand it. Mini, this is the inscription, mini, mini, tequil, uparsin.

Now, I want you to notice something. These words were in the language of the Babylonian people. It was the Babylonian, Chaldean or Aramaic language.

But it was written in another script so that they couldn't read it. And it's a picture of God's word. When God writes with his finger, God's word is a picture of that.

We can read it in English. We can't understand it. God has hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and he's revealed them to babes.

It comes by supernatural revelation of the Holy Spirit. That's why I say it's the height of stupidity to join a Bible school to understand God's word. That's to become a Babylonian magician.

You can't get the revelation of the Holy Spirit there. Impossible. You've got to humble yourself like Daniel, seek God in fasting and prayer and God opens the scriptures up to us.

That's how Daniel knew it. He didn't get it from any Bible school. And he says, now I'll interpret God's word to you.

Many. That means God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it. God had told the Israelites through Jeremiah, 70 years you'll be in Babylon, after that I'll bring you back.

And 70 years were up and God's time had come. The hour had come and God kept his timetable and destroyed the kingdom of Babylon exactly 70 years later and raised up another king called Cyrus whom Isaiah had prophesied about in Isaiah 45 and brought him in and delivered the Jews out of Babylon. So God has numbered your kingdom.

Your time is up. Second, tequil, you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient. That means you've been put in the balance and you're not heavy enough.

You're too light. During your earthly lifetime you have not accumulated any character. Character would have given you weight.

Humility would have given you weight. Godliness and righteousness would have given you weight but you're too light. All you've got is gold and silver.

That doesn't give you any weight. All you've got is honor and position. That doesn't give you any weight.

But character, God gave you a whole lifetime to accumulate character and all you did was stupidly accumulate money, stupidly accumulate degrees after your name, position and honor and greatness and character nil. Mercy, goodness to others, generosity, unselfishness. You haven't got any of these things.

You're weighed in the balances. These are the things God weighs. He's not weighing how much money we got in our bank account or what our education is, what people thought about us.

These things count for nothing. There's a message to us. What's our weight? When God finally weighs us, I wonder how much we're going to weigh.

And I'll tell you, he's not going to count the number of meetings we went to. It's going to be character. How much of righteousness there's been in our inner life, how much of purity, how much of meekness and gentleness, how you've lived with your wife, the way you've behaved with your wife is a million times more important than the number of meetings you sat in.

You'll discover that in the final day, sure. What's your weight? That's the important thing, your weight. There it is.

Your kingdom has been divided. Judgment has come and it's been given to the Medes and the Persians. God determined that and it was fulfilled.

You see, these three words are symbolic of the message that God wants us to proclaim to Babylon today. Because in Christianity today, there is what the New Testament calls Babylon. And in these last days, the finger of God is again writing over Christian Babylon, these same words.

You, God has finished your kingdom. The time is up. God has allowed you for so many years to build Babylon.

But now the time has run out. And I believe that if you have the eyes and the ears of a Daniel, you will see that handwriting on the wall today over religious Babylon. Many.

God has numbered your days. Time is running out. Come out of her, my people.

This is not the time to stay in those dead denominations. There may have been a time to be there, but not now. The time is up.

God has numbered those dead denominations building Babylon and he's finished with them. He who has an ear to hear, let him hear. And the second message is, the second point of God's message to Babylon is, you have been weighed on the scale.

There's no character in your Christianity. You're only involved in activity, evangelism, casting out demons, social work, and a lot of activity. But character, nil.

Inner purity and righteousness, very little. You're weighed in the balances and you're found wanting. And third, God has judged you.

The kingdom is taken away from you. And those of us who are called to stand like Daniel against Babylon in these last days have to be faithful in proclaiming that message of judgment on religious Babylon today and to stand apart from it completely, just like Daniel. And we read here that Belshazzar gave orders and they clothed Daniel with purple and put a necklace of gold around his neck and issued a proclamation concerning him that he had now authority as the third ruler in the kingdom.

And that same night, Belshazzar, the Chaldean king, was slain and Darius the Mede received the kingdom at the age of 62. So Daniel knew, there's no question of my being third ruler, the kingdom's gone in any case, and this fellow is just putting something on top of my head. It's worth nothing, because he's no longer the king as far as God's concerned.

God's finished with him. It meant nothing what Belshazzar gave to Daniel. And that night he died according to the judgment of God.

And as God had determined, the head of gold which we saw in the statue was finished and the breast of silver took over the Medo-Persian kingdom. So what do we learn from these two chapters? God's sovereignty over all the governments of earth. God's sovereignty bringing sickness to Nebuchadnezzar and healing from sickness.

God's sovereignty humbling the proud Nebuchadnezzars and Belshazzars of the earth. And the overcomer, Daniel, standing true, proclaiming, whether it's to a Nebuchadnezzar or to a Belshazzar, the truth, the judgment of God, receiving no favors, not interested in their gifts or their honor. And brothers and sisters, that is our calling.

We don't want the gifts or the honor, either of the world.

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