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Why Was Daniel So Special? (Part III)

Daniel 2:47: (NASB) *The king answered Daniel and said, Surely your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery.*

When you begin to grasp the life and times of Daniel the Prophet, what you find in your hands is pure inspiration, integrity, faith and courage. Here is a man who lived out his entire life far from his home in Israel and who, by God's grace, turned captivity to a pagan nation into an opportunity to reveal the greatness of the One God and eventually win over the King who made him captive. When we grow up, we should all want to be like Daniel! Stay with us as we continue his story.



Please refer to "Why Was Daniel So Special? (Parts I and II)" from our program broadcasts on March 23 and April 6, 2014.

A quick review: After Daniel dramatically reveals the dream, its source and its interpretation, the King elevates him to the highest position in Babylon - at the King's own right hand.

The "Lion's Den LESSON" of FAME AND FORTUNE: Such recognition as this only comes as a result of bold and decisive action. So often our initial response to such praise and honor will reveal the truest fabric of our heart. Prepare from the inside out so that fame and fortune, should they come, will merely be reflected in your life as a changed outward circumstance and not a change of heart!

Are we prepared from the inside out when fame and fortune may come our way?

The next event in the account of Daniel happened about 20 years after this dream event and did not include Daniel but focused on his three Hebrew companions, Mishial, Hannaniah and Azariah. They refused to bow down to the golden image the King erected. Their punishment was death by fiery furnace. They were miraculously delivered and the King lauds their God (though he does not proclaim him as THE God over ALL).

The "Lion's Den LESSON" of POWER AND COMFORT: Even in the context and comfort of the greatest powers of the greatest men that rule the kingdoms of this earth, there must only be one place where God's chosen ones find their rest and loyalty. Again, this is a result of an "inside out" faith that has its roots firmly in your heart and is often developed and cultivated through fellowship. Power and comfort are circumstances; faith and actions are characteristics.

The "Lion's Den Test" of INTEGRITY: True integrity can only be fully appreciated after the fact, for it is in hindsight that we are able to observe all of the moving parts that were affected by the actions of such integrity.

Another 10 or so years have passed. Babylon flourishes under the rule of the mighty King Nebuchadnezzar. All is well, until one day...Daniel 4:10-16: All of the King's "seers" could not interpret this dream, so Daniel is called in.

Daniel 4:19: God had blessed Daniel with instant knowledge of this dream and it was BAD NEWS! Daniel establishes the object of the message: Daniel 4:20,22 Daniel establishes the source of this message: Daniel 4:23-24: Daniel clearly pronounces the Most High God's message of judgment. Daniel 4:25: Daniel gives urgent counsel to the King to humble himself with selfless acts of goodness. Daniel 4:27: (NRSV) *Therefore, O king, may my counsel be acceptable to you: atone for your sins with righteousness, and your iniquities with mercy to the oppressed, so that your prosperity may (possibly) be prolonged.* What a lesson for all of us! Knowledge breeds responsibility. Nebuchadnezzar had seen the workings of the Almighty God for many decades by this point. **The consequence for unheeded warnings:** Daniel 4:28-32: Now for the next seven years Babylon was without a king. Daniel most likely served mightily assisting in his absence as the king roamed about as a beast, now completely irrelevant to the great kingdom he had built. Seven times = seven years...

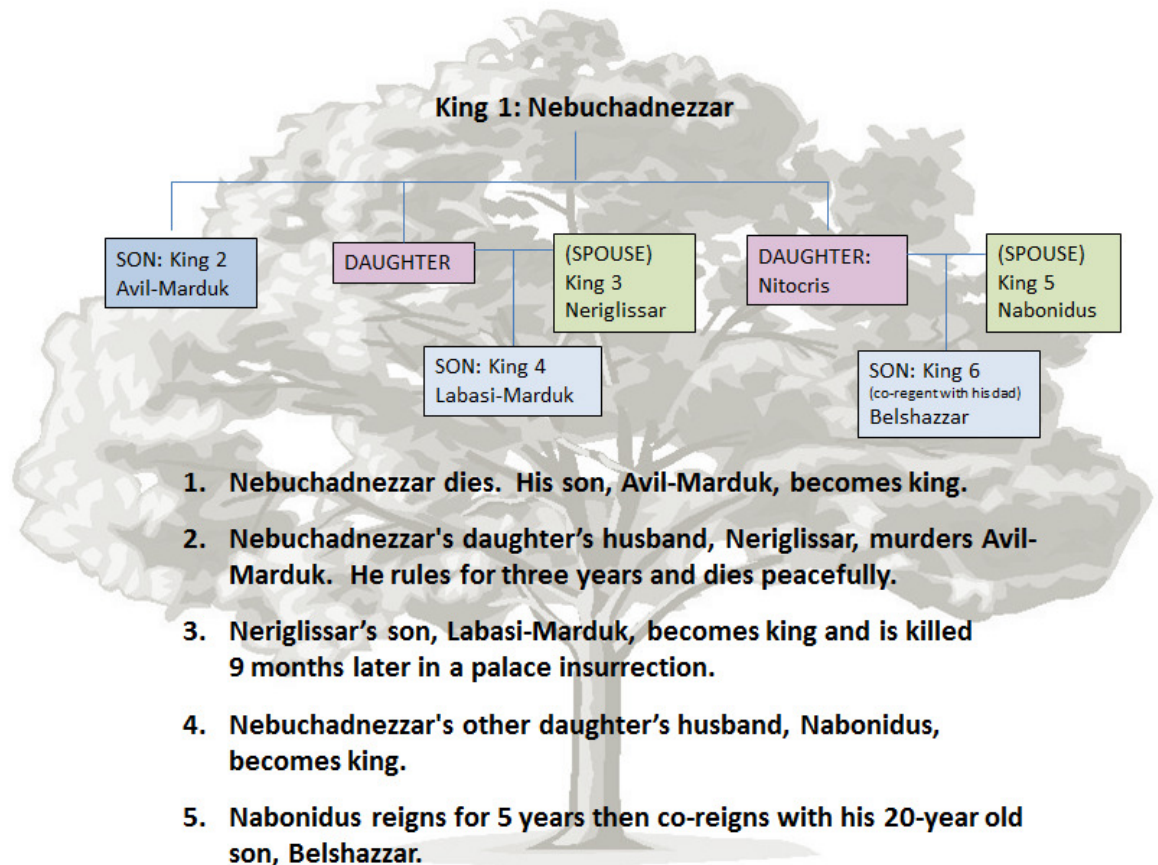


King Nebuchadnezzar reflects on his seven years of difficulty - he has a truly humbled heart: Daniel 4:34-37 First Lesson: God is Lord over all that we build - His kingdom is mighty and everlasting! Second Lesson: God is the ultimate destination of all our praise and worship! Third Lesson: God is Lord over who we are, from “the inside out!”

The “Lion’s Den LESSON” of INTEGRITY: There are times in life when we are called upon to do or say those things which are simply awkward, patently uncomfortable or absolutely dangerous. If our conviction is truly from “the inside out,” then the courage to stand in honesty and truth will be present as it was with Daniel. This test is also for those who might be on the receiving end as the King was. They, as we ourselves, must also find the humility to stand for only that which is true and righteous.

The “Lion’s Den Test” of TIME AND OBSCURITY: Daniel is now probably in his 60’s, and his life is about to take an entirely different path. For the last 40+ years, he had faithfully served King Nebuchadnezzar, now deceased. Now with the “head of gold” gone, Babylon would slowly begin its unraveling process.

There is about a 13-year gap between the death of Nebuchadnezzar and the beginning of Chapter 5. As we review this gap, it is important to realize that Daniel is no longer an advisor to royalty, rather, he is just a normal citizen.



King Nebuchadnezzar had represented great stability in Babylon.

Daniel 5:1: (NRSV) *King Belshazzar made a great festival for a thousand of his lords, and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand.*

(Bible commentary from A.O. Hudson) Nabonidus was a better archaeologist than king; his devouring passion was the collecting of relics of the civilizations that were as much older than his own time as his time is older than ours. After reigning five years, the growing aggressiveness of the Persians under Cyrus demanded a younger man- and that led him to associate himself with his son Belshazzar as joint king. This event marks what the book of Daniel calls “first year of Belshazzar the king”... Belshazzar at little more than twenty years of age became the real Ruler of Babylon.



Daniel 7:1: Daniel’s vision of the 4 beasts...

Daniel 8:1: Daniel’s vision of the ram and the goat...

Daniel has now been held in captivity for more than 50 years. He spent the first forty of those years in active duty to the world’s mightiest king followed by thirteen years spent in quiet meditation, writing the prophecies of Daniel 7 and 8. He was no longer in public service.

Now after more than 50 years, the prophet is finally tuned in enough to see the most far reaching visions of world history and the overruling power of the Almighty ever given anytime, anywhere. He was praying three times a day and was looking for deliverance for his people. He knew the prophecy involved 70 years of captivity and time was getting close!

The “Lion’s Den LESSON” of TIME AND OBSCURITY: While there are impactful lessons and examples we see from those in the limelight, there are perhaps even more dramatic examples from those who are in obscurity, for they carry a banner that no one sees, and yet they carry it. God’s heroes truly do stand firm and devout through the test of time...

Here is what the Apostle Paul wrote while in prison - he is still faithful even though he is no longer in public view: 2 Timothy 4:6-8

The “Lion’s Den Test” of RIGHTEOUS COURAGE: Nine years have passed since the visions of Chapters 7 and 8 and Daniel is now in his 80’s! Belshazzar, the young egotistical co-king, now in his mid-30’s or so, makes a great feast as we open this next chapter of Daniel’s life. Daniel 5:1: *This feast is to one thousand of his lords, and he drinks wine before them.* Daniel 5:2-3: This was not a good decision! His drunken revelry expanded and degraded to now defile the temple vessels. He included women in his folly, and they all drank from the sacred vessels of God. Daniel 5:4-6: It is amazing how fast things can change when the wrath of God comes down upon you...!

Would you be courageous enough to tell a drunken king that he was about to lose everything?

Daniel 5:7-8: Just like the old days! The King panics, calls in the astrologers, Chaldeans, soothsayers and offers a reward for understanding of the mysterious writing.

Daniel 5:9-16: This king is desperate! He offers riches and position - third in the kingdom. Why third? Because Belshazzar was second, still under the shadow of his aging father, Nabonidus. This was essentially the same rank Daniel had when he was under the rule of Nebuchadnezzar, but his life was not about outward recognition. Daniel 5:17: *Then Daniel answered and said unto the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known unto him the interpretation.*

Daniel recapped the history of King Nebuchadnezzar and then directly faced the arrogance of this young, prideful man: Daniel 5:22-23,25: ²²*And thou his grandson, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this;* ²³*But hast lifted thyself up against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee,* ²⁵*And this is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and UPHARSIN.*

Belshazzar was held accountable because he lived through Nebuchadnezzar’s experience and absolutely knew better.

MENE: God hath numbered thy kingdom, and hath finished it.

TEKEL: Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.

UPHARSIN: Thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and the Persians.

Daniel 5:29-31: (NRSV) ²⁹*Then Belshazzar gave the command, and Daniel was clothed in purple, a chain of gold was put around his neck, and a proclamation was made concerning him that he should rank third 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.*

This was the wrath of God against the pride of kings poured out by an old prophet. This King reaped the judgment of his actions.



The "Lion's Den LESSON" of RIGHTEOUS COURAGE: Righteous courage is action - not reckless action or a knee jerk response - based in that which is true and necessary. It is always met with the resistance of this world's influences. Righteous courage is rare, inspiring and transformative!

The "Lion's Den Test" of CERTAIN DEATH: In his 80's, Daniel is back in the limelight solely by virtue of his character and godliness: Daniel 6:1-3: Darius obviously has some wisdom and he observed who he could appoint to keep the kingdom running after the death of Belshazzar. Daniel rises to the top and it is noticed that he is different.

So, now is it finally time for the Lion's Den?!?

Once again Daniel is honored, this time under the Medes and Persians. And now, more than 67 years after being taken captive, the final *public* test arises - not a test necessary to prove Daniel, but a test necessary to witness to the greatness of the Almighty.

Daniel 6:4-5: So they conspired for a decree to trap Daniel by not allowing anyone to worship any god for thirty days...except King Darius! **Darius signs the decree into law:** Daniel 6:10-11: Daniel's loyalties are unchanged. Like a man of integrity, Daniel continues his worship of and communion with his God. So, just like children, the conspirators run to the King and remind him of the decree and the firmness of his word. They tell the King that Daniel, his faithful and trusted servant, had blatantly disobeyed his word.

Daniel 6:14: The King's heart was right, but his "advisors" would not let him change what he had done. Daniel 6:16-17: Daniel faces sure death for no good reason as the King reveals his prayer for Daniel.

Daniel 6:18-22: Once again, the impossible is overcome! Daniel lived his life faithfully.

Daniel 6:26-28: (NRSV) ²⁵Then King Darius wrote to all peoples and nations of every language throughout the whole world: May you have abundant prosperity! ²⁶I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people should 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 has no end. ²⁷He delivers and rescues, he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth; for he has saved Daniel from the power of the lions. ²⁸So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and (even) the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

The "Lion's Den LESSON" of CERTAIN DEATH: This test is the result of a lifetime of growth - to put all on the table, to spend and be spent. *Be thou faithful unto death and I will give you a crown of life.*

We need to make the choice to live our lives every day in this same context of putting God first! Dare to be a Daniel! Daniel was a special prophet. Learn his lessons to put them into practice in your life!

**So, why was Daniel so special?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!**