

Bible Stories for Adults

Daniel in the Lion's Den

Daniel 4 - 6

Opening

Gathering: Give examples of people who have changed from obvious enemies of God to lovers of God.

Today's Focus: While God used the Babylonians to bring His punishment upon the Jews for their unfaithfulness, He also used the Jews to reveal Himself to the Babylonians.

Key Verses: *Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything He does is right and all His ways are just. And those who walk in pride He is able to humble.* Daniel 4:37

Then King Darius wrote ... people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel for He is the living God and He endures forever. Daniel 6:25-26

Opening Prayer

Lesson

Nebuchadnezzar (*Jeremiah*)

Who was Nebuchadnezzar and what was his relationship with the Jews?

Jeremiah 39:1, 4-9 = King of Babylon, Attacked & destroyed Jerusalem, exiled Jews

Why did he do this?

Jeremiah 25:4, 7-9 = He was doing God's work in punishing the Jews for unfaithfulness

How did the Jews feel about Nebuchadnezzar?

Jeremiah 51:34-35 = They hated him and wanted vengeance

Did the Jews ever see the vengeance they wanted?

Jeremiah 25:11-14 = Yes, but not until 70 years had passed

Judah Exiled in Babylon (*Daniel 1*)

How did Daniel and other Judah nobility become subject to Nebuchadnezzar?

Daniel 1:1-2 = During first exile of Jehoiakim

Did Nebuchadnezzar have these noble people killed like other kings would?

Daniel 1:3-4 = No, he chose the best from them and trained them in Babylonian ways

Who were some of these best? = Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael & Azariah

Daniel 1:6-7, 17-20 = Renamed Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego

Nebuchadnezzar Dreams (*Daniel 2*)

How did Daniel become an official in the Babylonian kingdom?

Daniel 2:26-28, 48 = God revealed N's dream thru Daniel, Neb named Daniel as high official

What was the purpose of the dream?

Daniel 2:47 = To begin Nebuchadnezzar's faith & spread God's name through the world

How was this purpose further impacted after Nebuchadnezzar tried to execute Daniel's friends?

Daniel 3:28-29 = God was praised and Nebuchadnezzar told others about Him through a decree

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Nebuchadnezzar's Second Dream (*Daniel 4:1-18*)

What was happening in Babylon when God gave Nebuchadnezzar a second dream?

Daniel 4:4-5 = Nothing, Nebuchadnezzar was content & prosperous

How did Daniel get involved?

Daniel 4:6-9 = Wise men couldn't interpret, Nebuchadnezzar told Daniel since God was in him

What was the dream?

Daniel 4:10-14 = A huge tree covered the earth with shelter, angel commanded it cut down

How did the dream change strangely for its finish? = Times could be years or seasons (3.75 yrs)

Daniel 4:15-16 = Tree stump changed into a man given mind of an animal for 7 times

Was Nebuchadnezzar given any reason to think this dream had a special meaning?

Daniel 4:17 (17-18) = The angel showed that it was a decision from God, the Most High

The Meaning of the Dream (*Daniel 4:19-26*)

Did the dream have a good or bad meaning? = Took time trying to find a way to tell Nebuchadnezzar

Daniel 4:19 = Daniel was afraid to tell Nebuchadnezzar its bad meaning

What was the tree?

Daniel 4:22 (20-22) = Nebuchadnezzar & his greatness was the tree

What other nation had its greatness compared to an expansive tree?

Hosea 14:1, 5-7 = Israel, if it repented and returned to God

What was meant by the man with the mind of an animal?

Daniel 4:25 (23-25) = Nebuchadnezzar would go nuts & live like an animal 7 times

Why was the tree stump left in the ground?

Daniel 4:26 = Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom would be restored when he turned to God

The Dream is Fulfilled (*Daniel 4:27-37*)

Was there any way Nebuchadnezzar could prevent this from happening?

Daniel 4:27 = Yes, Renounce his sins & be righteous & faithful

Did Nebuchadnezzar turn to God or did the curses of the dream happen?

Daniel 4:28-31, 33 (28-33) = He continued his evil & pride for 1 year, then went crazy per dream

Did Nebuchadnezzar regain his sanity after the prescribed 7 times?

Daniel 4:34a, 36 (34-36) = Yes, and his kingdom & honor were returned

Did the dream & fulfillment have its desired effect of turning Nebuchadnezzar to God?

Daniel 4:37 = Yes, he praised God

How sincere and enthusiastic was Nebuchadnezzar's praise for God?

Daniel 4:1-3 = He documented the story and his praise in a letter to all the world

Belshazzar's Party (*Daniel 5:1-6*)

Nebuchadnezzar was followed by three short-reigned kings until Nabonidus took over in a coup

Nabonidus retired to Arabia, left his son Belshazzar in charge

Belshazzar meant *Bel protect the king* - Bel was Babylon's chief god

Did Belshazzar continue in the newfound faithfulness of Nebuchadnezzar?

Daniel 5:1-2, 4 = Used temple goblets at party to drink toasts to gods

How was Belshazzar suddenly sobered up?

Daniel 5:5-6 = Saw hand write words on the wall (white plaster)

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Just Ask Daniel (*Daniel 5:7-24*)

How did Daniel enter the scene? = *Father* used for *predecessor*, *Son* for *successor*

Daniel 5:8-12 (7-12) = Wise men couldn't interpret, queen mother remembered Daniel's ability

How did Belshazzar try to influence an interpretation and how did Daniel respond?

Daniel 5:16-17 (13-17) = Offered riches and power, Daniel declined since he worked for God

How did Daniel use the story in chapter 4 to explain Belshazzar's problem?

Daniel 5:18, 20-24 (18-24) = Nebuchadnezzar turned to God, but Belshazzar desecrated God

The Meaning of the Words (*Daniel 5:25-31*)

What words were written on the wall? = Rulers in descending value (N/B were co-regents)

Daniel 5:25 = Coins/weights in descending order, Parsin sounds like Persia

<u>Word</u>	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>Coin/Weight</u>	<u>Ruler Symbolized</u>	
<i>Mene</i>	Numbered	Mina	Nebuchadnezzar	
<i>Tekel</i>	Weighed	Shekel	Evil-Merodach	
<i>Parsin</i>	Divided	Half-Shekel	Nabonidus/Belshazzar	Persia

What judgment on Belshazzar did God pronounce with these words?

Daniel 5:26-28 (26-29) = Days *numbered*, under *weight*, kingdom *divided*

When was this judgment fulfilled?

Daniel 5:30-31 = That night, Darius Cyaxares II (Mede) took over

From historical records:

Persian army conquered Babylon in 539 BC (Judah exiled in 608 BC)

Soldiers temporarily diverted the Euphrates River and crossed dry bed under city walls

Led into city by 2 traitors during annual feast of the gods

Darius means *Lord-King* - Term used like *Caesar* or *Pharaoh*

Used later for Darius Hystaspis (Ezra 4:5) & Darius Codomanus (Nehemiah 12:22)

The Decree of Darius Cyaxares II (*Daniel 6:1-9*)

How did Darius organize his Median empire?

Daniel 6:1-2 = 120 satraps reporting to 3 admin, inc Daniel (probably >80 yrs old)

How did God bless Daniel's work and what did others think of it?

Daniel 6:3-5 = Top leader, others jealous & tried to dig up dirt

What plan did Daniel's enemies conceive to be sure they could catch Daniel?

Daniel 6:7-9 (6-9) = A decree that anyone caught praying in next month is thrown to lions

Daniel's Response to the Decree (*Daniel 6:10-15*)

Did Daniel obey the new law or did he keep on praying?

Daniel 6:10 = He remained faithful and kept praying regularly

Was Daniel ever caught illegally praying?

Daniel 6:11-13 = Enemies caught him, reminded Darius of decree, reported Daniel's crime

How did Darius respond to Daniel's blatant disregard for the law?

Daniel 6:14 = Greatly distressed, Tried everything to repeal law

Why didn't Darius just cancel the stupid decree?

Daniel 6:15 = Against law to change a king's decree, even by king

See also Esther 1:19 and 8:8

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Daniel in the Lions' Den (*Daniel 6:16-28*)

Was Darius able to find any way to save Daniel?

Daniel 6:16-17 = No way other than trusting in God

How well did Darius sleep after putting Daniel in the lions' den?

Daniel 6:18-20 = He didn't; Ran to den at dawn hoping Daniel was ok

What had happened to Daniel in the lions' den?

Daniel 6:21-23 = God protected him for his faithfulness

Could it have been that the lions just weren't hungry?

Daniel 6:24 = No, they devoured Daniel's enemies & their families

How was God's name glorified through this story?

Daniel 6:25-27 = Darius sent decree throughout the world praising God

The Rest of the Story

How else was Daniel's life blessed by God? = Given 4 visions of future – at 4 different times in his life

Daniel 7:1, 16-18 (1-28) = 4 world powers followed by *son of man*

Similar to Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2

Daniel 8:1 (1-27) = Future world powers named, destroyed by God

Daniel 9:1, 21, 25 (1-27) = Specific times given for coming of Messiah

Daniel 10:1 (10:1-12:13) = Israel's future & end times foretold

Closing Prayer

Response - Consider and meditate on one each day this week

1. When have I been content and prosperous only to have everything thrown into chaos?
Did I look to God through the situation?
(*Daniel 4; Genesis 50:15-20; Job 1-2; Luke 12:16-21; Acts 8:1-4; Romans 8:28-39*)
2. When has God been faithful to His promises in my life? How have I responded?
(*Daniel 4:33-37; 1 Kings 8:12-21; Psalm 145:13, 21; Acts 2:38-41; 2 Peter 3:8-14*)
3. When have I been caught up with the crowd and found myself easily falling into sin?
(*Daniel 5:1-4; Exodus 32; Matthew 27:1-10; Luke 22:54-62; 23:34; Acts 7:54-8:3; 26:4-5, 9-18*)
4. How do I measure up on God's scales?
(*Daniel 5:27; Isaiah 64:6; Matt. 5:43-48; Mark 6:5-6; Luke 6:37-38; James 1:2-4; Romans 3:9-24*)
5. What are some stupid things I've done or said that I have had to live with?
(*Daniel 6:12-16; Judges 11:32-39; 2 Kings 20:12-19; Matthew 5:33-37*)