

# Four Studies in the Book of Daniel

## Daniel – A Gutsy Man

### 1 Read Daniel Chapter 1

Every time I read the book of Daniel, I develop more and more respect for the man. He was a man of conviction, willing to stand up for his beliefs and faith in the Lord. Yet he was also courteous to those who did not understand. He stood for what he believed but did not become obnoxious.

In chapter 1 of Daniel, he had already been exiled. Normally, the exile of conquered people in Daniel's day was a process deliberately designed to humiliate and degrade people. Therefore, the exile of Daniel could not have been something he was used to or liked. By the time Daniel became part of a process of training for Babylonian royal service he had already gone through tremendous change in his life: being conquered, humiliated, traveling long distances by foot, resettling in a strange land with its corresponding strange language and customs.

In Western societies, we have lost touch with the concept of royalty, kings and queens. In Daniel's day, a king such as Nebuchadnezzar had absolute power over all aspects of life and death. The king's word was final, he could create any law he chose, anytime he wanted. When Daniel made the decision to refuse politely the royal food allowance we could easily ignore the magnitude of the type of decision he made. He was defying King Nebuchadnezzar and refusing the hospitality offered to him but doing it in a respectful manner. It could have cost Daniel and the Babylonian official their lives. Why did he determine not to eat the royal food? He did not want to defile himself with the type of food they served and he wanted to remain obedient to the Lord. However, we need to remember that Daniel, by this time, had lost everything in his life. The only thing he had left was the Lord. This was the one area he would not part with and it was here that he would consistently take a stand. Even to the point of death.

## Daniel and the Impossible Situation

### 2 Read Daniel chapter 2

Sometimes, through no fault or effort on their part, people are placed into impossible situations. In this chapter, we see Daniel caught up in a situation that would have ended his life and the life of his friends. He played no part and contributed nothing to the probable outcome of the situation - death to all the wise men. In short, Daniel found himself in an impossible situation that was not humanly possible to resolve.

To Daniel's credit, he realized quickly that the resolution to the situation was to pray to the Lord for mercy. He and his friends prayed and received the answer that night. For many of us, the answers to our problems and circumstances don't always come that fast, but that wouldn't be my point.

The key is to realize that our dependency needs to be on the Lord. Whether the situation we are in can be resolved by human effort or not, the source of wisdom needed to resolve it is from the Lord. Whether we caused the circumstances or not, the source of wisdom needed to resolve it is from the Lord.

Sometimes we forget about that and it takes circumstances like Daniel's, a situation not resolvable by human means, to remind us.

## All Powerful yet Easily Manipulated

**3** Read Daniel chapter 6

Many people long to be in a situation where they are well known and powerful. They would love to have a great effect on the people around them and maybe even on society in general. Some are so ambitious that they will not stop until they are tops in their field, business or government. Statistically, few people ever attain to country or world leader status, let alone CEO of a major corporation. Most of us will have to settle for wondering what it would be like to be the leader of a country or major business with all the corresponding power and fame. It would seem to be “cool” to be in that situation but few survive the process and the costs are great.

This chapter illustrates a little known issue in leadership. The more powerful you become the greater the possibility of others trying to manipulate you. Darius had recently become leader of the Babylonian empire after conquering it and killing its king. Darius was now one of the most powerful men in the region if not beyond. However, with all those powers come others who want to share and bask in that influence. Many people in government have good motives and want to serve sincerely. A few are just interested in the power and position. Power becomes an addiction that must be fed at all costs.

Daniel was one of those who wanted to serve sincerely and please the Lord. He had such a distinguished reputation that it was IMPOSSIBLE to find anything wrong with him. It is a sign of our times that few of us can hardly imagine that type of person serving in government. Others in the government of the Medes-Persians found that threatening, so they decided to destroy and kill Daniel. We sometimes forget that our walk with the Lord can be a threat to others; they can't handle it. Therefore, their first instinct might be to destroy you.

Since they could not find anything from his personal life to destroy Daniel, they decided to manipulate King Darius and create a series of circumstances that would trap Daniel. The king easily went along with their suggestions and without giving it a second thought approved their plan. Here was King Darius, one of the most powerful men in the world and yet he was **easily manipulated** to destroy people with out giving it a second thought. To his credit, when King Darius realized he was tricked he did everything he could to rectify the situation.

If you find yourself with a strong desire to achieve incredible things, maybe even become a powerful person of business or government, you need to be careful. You need to recognize when people want to befriend you because they see you as a means to an end. That is not friendship. That is manipulation.

Another important point of leadership is delegation of authority. You need to surround yourself with people who want to help others, not on helping themselves. The wrong type of person will find achievements by others threatening. A true leader is a servant leader. He is willing to see others succeed, even if it means dying for others.

*“This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. **There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.** You are my friends if you do what I command.” John 15: 12-14 New Living Translation **emphasis added***

## There but by the grace of God. . .

### 4<sup>1st</sup> read Daniel chapter 4

Writing about this chapter presents somewhat of a problem for me. On the one hand I can easily just do a small study of Nebuchadnezzar. The issues, problems and solutions are all laid out in the chapter.

What led up to his mental collapse, what caused it and how was he healed. It would be all too easy to write about. The problem starts when I go beyond the simple lesson and start applying it to my life. OOPS!!! Everything seems to break down after that! So here's what I'll do. Let's first do the easy part, a short study on Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4. After that let's discuss the hard part, applying it to my life (Or anyone's life for that matter).

#### The Easy Part: What happened to Nebuchadnezzar?

Nebuchadnezzar clearly had a massive ego, something all too common among rulers of countries. A chapter earlier three Jewish men defied the Babylonian ruler and refused to bow down to a statue the king had set up of himself. The Bible records that Nebuchadnezzar was so furious that his face was distorted with rage. He punished the three men by trying but failing to have them burned alive. In Daniel chapter 4 we then see the king getting a forewarning vision from the Lord concerning his future. Daniel's interpretation was that the king was going to learn a lesson the hard way. He needed to learn that it was the Lord who installed people into leadership and the Lord could just as easily "uninstall" them. Unfortunately for the king, the Lord knew that the only way to learn the lesson was to let him suffer the consequences of his actions.

A year later while the king was taking a stroll he looked around and started bragging and boasting to himself. To his way of thinking he did all the work to bring Babylon to this point. Within a split second he came under divine discipline. Within the hour he went insane and was driven from society. It was seven years until he regained his mind and sanity.

Why did this happen to the king? It happened to the king because the Lord **hates** pride. He **detests** pride! He will humble **every** single person that displays pride and arrogance. We have His word on that issue. What happened to him was to **show** the king and us how much the Lord hates pride. The Bible clearly states that what happened to Nebuchadnezzar was not just for him but to be a lesson to all of us. ". . . so that **everyone** may know that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world. He gives them to anyone he chooses-even to the lowliest of people." *Daniel 4:17b (New Living Translation- NLT) bold emphasis added.*

That issue was not lost on King Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel 4:37 is the last line of a letter he wrote to his subjects: "*Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and glorify and honor the King of heaven. All his acts are just and true, and he is able to humble the proud.*" To me, the letter is extraordinary. Not just because it is in Scripture but because the king was finally willing to admit his faults and errors to his subjects. How many times have you seen anyone in government do that?

#### The hard part: applying it to my life

The hard part, to me, is trying to apply this to my life. When I was younger I used to mentally pat myself on the back because I thought I didn't have nearly the number of problems in my life that I saw in others. At the time I didn't realize that was pride. Oh the folly and ignorance of youth!!! As I have gotten older and made more than my share of mistakes I have come to realize that I am fallible and frail just like everyone else. What a shock to my system!!! Yet now, for me, there is a freedom in knowing that I am weak. There is a joy in knowing that Yeshua is there to guide me.

When I was much younger in the knowledge and wisdom of the Lord I might have thought that if I was in Nebuchadnezzar's shoes I would never have acted like he did. I thought that I knew better than that. As I have gotten older and wiser I think differently. I realize that I need the grace of God everyday. I need His power to

move forward, constantly praying for His help and guidance.

Now when I read stories like Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel chapter 4, I am not so arrogant to think it would never happen to me. When I read newspaper accounts of business scandals I stay sober. I recognize that if I don't stay alert and watchful I could easily fall prey to the same problems and errors that plagued King Nebuchadnezzar or anyone else on this planet. As Yeshua told His disciples at the Mound of Olives, *"Why are you sleeping? he asked them. "Get up and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation." (NLT)*

I **now** realize my complete dependence upon Yeshua in all situations.

*"Yes, I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:5 (NLT)*