

The Man Daniel and the Purposes of God

Cornerstone Baptist Church of Pine Island, MN

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Focus I: The Man Daniel

Session #2: The Man Daniel and the Glory of God

A Preliminary Issue: Regarding the glory of God and its place in Scripture

1a. The definition of the biblical concept of glory/glorify, as used in relation to God –

1. The root word: *chabod* (כבוד)
 - literally: “heavy, weighty, possessed of gravitas”
 - therefore, the significance: “properly *weight*, but figuratively in a good sense: *splendor, honor, dignity*”
2. The implication: to the Hebrew mind, *glory* is –

2a. The Biblical Testimony: By reason first of all of *who He is*, and again by reason of *that which He has done*, God and God alone is worthy of being honored, worshiped, magnified and obeyed – i.e., of being *glorified* – by rational creatures of His making. In truth, all of human history is framed by God to manifest His glory.

SCRIPTURE:

Isa 42:8 I am Jehovah, that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise unto graven images.

Isa 44:24-28 Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself; ²⁵That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish; ²⁶That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof: ²⁷That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers: ²⁸That saith of CYRUS, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.

Psa 104:1, 24 Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty. ²⁴O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.

Rom 11:33-36 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! ³⁴For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? ³⁵Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? ³⁶For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever.

Phi 1:20 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

1Ti 6:14-16 That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: ¹⁵Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; ¹⁶Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

Rev 4:8-11 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. ⁹And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, ¹⁰The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, ¹¹Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Rev 5:11-14 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; ¹²Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. ¹³And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. ¹⁴And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

3a. The focus of our study here: to consider how Yahweh used the man Daniel to protect the divine honor – to glorify God – at a point in history when God’s name was in danger of being universally dishonored.

We will consider three familiar events from the life of Daniel as recorded in his prophetic record; in each case, we will focus specifically upon how God contrived to use that incident to manifest His own glory to the world of that day.

I. Young Daniel Interprets the Dream of King Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2)

A. The narrative of this chapter:

In the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, the king dreamed a dream several times which he knew to be a revelation from a god. Because of the character of that dream, Nebuchadnezzar was determined to really know what it meant. He knew that his counselors (magicians, soothsayers, necromancers, astrologers, etc) would simply assign an ear-tickling meaning, and so as a test he demands that they reveal to him both the dream and the interpretation. They protest, but the king insists. When the pagan wisemen are unable to do so--and publicly confess that inability--Nebuchadnezzar decrees that they are to be executed. As that decree is about to be carried out, Daniel hears for the first time about the dream and the king's demand. He insists that his God is able to interpret the dream. He prays for the revelation necessary, is vouchsafed the dream and the interpretation, and reveals it to Nebuchadnezzar. As a result, the king acknowledges the superior power of the God of Daniel, and exalts Daniel and his three companions to places of authority over the kingdom.

The dream and interpretation are also very important. Nebuchadnezzar sees a great image of a man, composed of four different metals: a head of gold, shoulders and chest of silver, stomach and thighs of bronze, and legs of iron, with the feet of iron mixed with brittle potter's clay. Then, Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream a "stone cut out without hands" which rolled out of a mountain, shattered the image, and became a fifth world kingdom which would endure forever.

Daniel reveals all of this to the king, and then gives the interpretation: there will be a succession of four world empires; Babylon would be the first (i.e., the head of gold); after Babylon would come three more kingdoms, inferior to the first as governing kingdoms, but successively more powerful and tyrannical. In the days of the fourth kingdom, a fifth kingdom--divine in its essence--would be established; that fifth kingdom would be an eternal kingdom.

B. Some instructive issues and questions:

1. An interpretive difficulty: Did Nebuchadnezzar forget the dream? (Note 2:5 – “the thing is gone from me!”)
2. A hermeneutical issue: the nature of the fifth kingdom (i.e., the stone which rolls out of the mountain).

C. How does this chapter speak to the issue of maintaining the honor of the God of Israel?

*It is important that before Daniel even heard about the king's dream/decreed, the other counselors, functionaries of virtually every pagan god known in the Mediterranean world, insist that they could never reveal both the dream and the interpretation; indeed, "there is none other that can show it before the king, except the gods whose dwelling is not with flesh" (2:11, KJV). Thus, when Daniel came and successfully revealed **both** the dream and the interpretation, the power of YHWH was demonstrated against the backdrop of the confessed impotence of pagan deities.*

D. Notice the audience of this display of the glory of Yahweh: *the royal house of Babylon*

II. Daniel's Three Faithful Friends are Cast into a Fiery Furnace (Daniel 3)

A. The narrative of this chapter:

*Some time well into the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, he determined to elicit from all those functioning in leadership in his kingdom an affirmation of loyalty **to him and to the gods in whose names he ruled.***

(Note: Very possibly, this happened in about 597 BC, in anticipation of the arrival of the 10,000 Jews whom the king was about to forcibly bring to Babylon. That is, fearing that those Jews would be as resistant to his gods as Daniel had proven to be, the monarch determined to settle very dramatically the fact that the gods of Babylon were to be honored by those in his court-- regardless of the displays of power displayed by YHWH, and regardless of the importance of the YHWH-worshipping Daniel to the administration of the kingdom.)

In order to do so, Nebuchadnezzar summoned all of his administrative personnel to a plain outside of the city of Babylon. On that plain, the king had had erected a huge statue representing his gods. He commanded that at the playing of an orchestra they were all to bow in obeisance to those gods, warning that anyone who refused to do so would be tossed into a fiery kiln/furnace standing nearby. Much to Nebuchadnezzar's dismay, three men remained erect at the playing of the music--the three companions of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. In a fit of rage, Nebuchadnezzar called those three men to the fore, offered them one more chance to bow down, and warned them that if they did not they would certainly be thrown into the fire, and then "Who is that god that can save you alive out of my hands?" The three informed the king that they had no excuse, that they could not know whether YHWH would in fact save them, but that they were not going to bow down.

Thus, Nebuchadnezzar, after taking the precaution of heating the furnace as hot as it could be made, did toss the three men into the furnace. But then, much to his horror, when he looked into the flames he saw those three alive and walking about, and in the company of a fourth being who had the appearance of "A SON OF THE GODS"! When the three emerged from the furnace, they were unharmed, without even the smell of the fire upon them! Again, King Nebuchadnezzar had been put to silence publicly by the God of Daniel. The king issued a decree that no one was to affront the God of Shadrach, Meschach and Abednego, and the three were promoted in the province of Babylon.

B. Some instructive issues and questions:

1. An interpretive issue: Where is Daniel in this account?
2. An interpretive issue: Who is the fourth being in the furnace: a created angel or a Christophany?

C. How does this chapter speak to the issue of maintaining the honor of the God of Israel?

In a dramatic way, Yahweh uses this incident to put His glory on display throughout the empire. Functionaries from every corner of the kingdom had made their way to Babylon for this ceremony, and they were all privy to the remarkable events that transpired. The next morning they would have set out on their return trips, taking with them the story of the most amazing incident they had ever witnessed. Further, the king himself had reduced this to a contest between his gods and the God of Shadrach, Meschach and Abednego; he had asked publicly what God could save those men from death if they refused to bow to his gods. Finally, the king had "issued a decree", a formal demand which necessitated that runners make their way to the furthest corner of the kingdom and that the decree be read in the hearing of all who lived under the rule of Nebuchadnezzar.

D. Notice the audience of this display of the glory of Yahweh: *the entire government of Babylon, from the lowest functionary to the official closest to the throne, and from every corner of the Babylonian empire*

II. Nebuchadnezzar's Pride and Punishment: The "Tree Vision" of the Babylonian King (Daniel 4)

A. The narrative of this chapter:

Sometime later in Nebuchadnezzar's reign, after a great military victory, the king was swelled up with pride. Again, he received a revelatory dream, sought the meaning, and finally consulted Daniel. The prophet of YHWH was much grieved, wishing aloud that the dream had been given to the king's worst enemy. The substance & interpretation of the dream was basically this: the king had seen a great tree, which represented his rule; an angelic being had commanded that the tree be cut down, but that a band of iron and brass be placed about the stump of the tree to preserve it, all of which signified that if the pride of the king went unchecked, a period of madness would descend upon him, although his life would be spared. The only way to escape this judgment from YHWH was to give Him the honor due Him.

However, after a later military conquest, Nebuchadnezzar was again overtaken with pride. As he celebrated his own prowess one night, the madness befell him, and for seven "times" he lived as an animal in the courtyard of the palace. At the end of the seven years, his reason returned, he acknowledged the power of YHWH, and he was restored to rule.

B. Some instructive issues and questions:

1. An interpretive issue: When did the events of this chapter occur?
2. An interpretive issue: Why did Nebuchadnezzar not this time demand that his wisemen reveal to him *both* the dream *and* the interpretation?
3. An interpretive issue: What is unique about the authorship of this chapter of the book of Daniel?

C. How does this chapter speak to the issue of maintaining the honor of the God of Israel?

Again, Nebuchadnezzar issued a decree as a result of this incident, and that decree concluded with this encomium of praise to the God of Israel:

At the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honored him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation:

And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, "What doest thou?"

Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment; and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.

Daniel 4:34, 35, 37, KJV

This decree was dispatched throughout the empire!

D. Notice the audience of this display of the glory of Yahweh: *the entire populace of the Babylonian empire, who would have been compelled to gather in every village as a herald of the emperor read the decree of aged Nebuchadnezzar – Daniel 4!*

THE SUM OF THE MATTER

- 1) GOD'S PROMISES WILL CERTAINLY BE FULFILLED – WHETHER PROMISES OF JUDGMENT OR OF BLESSING!
Cf. Deuteronomy 11:26-28; 28:63-66. In the formal covenant document with which King Yahweh swore to protect Israel's obedience and to punish her disobedience, God spelled out the successively more awful curses to befall the nation if they persisted in wickedness and rebellion, and the culminating judgment was to be "plucked from off the land which you go to possess." The presence of Daniel and his people in Babylon is testimony to the covenant-keeping character of their God, Yahweh.
- 2) GOD PURPOSES WILL NOT BE FRUSTRATED NOR HIS GLORY DIMINISHED BY THE WICKEDNESS OF MEN.
By reason of Israel's disobedience and the consequent demand that God punish them by raising up a nation to carry them off, the name of Israel's God was in jeopardy of being dishonored among the nations. Yahweh did not fail in His promise of judgment but He was careful to use Daniel to protect His name even in the face of the Babylonian victory over Judah.
- 3) A PERSON YIELDED TO GOD'S WILL AND OBEDIENT TO GOD'S STANDARDS WILL BE USED IN REMARKABLE WAYS TO DEMONSTRATE GOD'S GLORY.
The life of Daniel is remarkable testimony to what God can accomplish through a person who will simply trust Him even in the most awful circumstances of life.