

## Ancient Cliff Notes

### Daniel

November 11, 2018

Courage Church, Detroit, MI.

**scriptures:** Jeremiah 29:4-11, Daniel 2:44, Daniel 5:2-6, Daniel 6:3-5, Daniel 6:25-28

Today we are back on Ancient Cliff Notes, we will be on this until the end of the year... we will take a week off from Cliff notes on December 23 to have a Christmas service, and the week before that, Sunday December

16, we will do an Ancient Cliff Notes look at the Old Testament prophecies that point to Christmas. In early 2019, we are going to start a series going line by line through the book of Romans.

It is going to be the bulk sum of our year next year, which we are all very excited about and have already begun really studying for it and working on it.

But just as a reminder for you, since we did take a few weeks off of Cliff Notes and are now back on it...

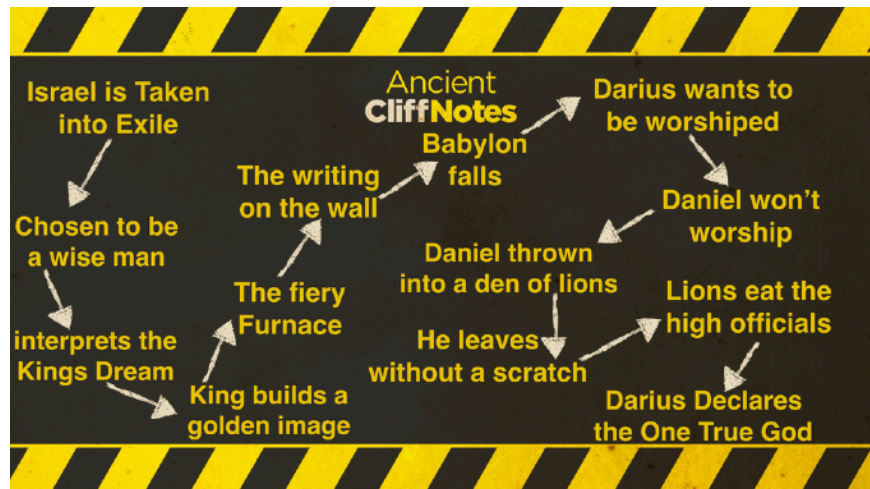
In this series, Ancient Cliff Notes... what we are doing is we are looking at stories

in the Old Testament, and asking ourselves these three questions:

What happened then?

What does it mean for us now?

and how does it point to Jesus?



And this morning we are going to look at one of the most famous stories in the entire Bible, and that is the story of Daniel... it will culminate at the Lion's Den, but we are going to look a little before that moment as well...

Because it is significant, what lead up to that happening, and really hone in toward the end, on what the cost of following Jesus really can be.

But the way that we will do this this morning, is we are going to plow through the cliff notes of the narrative fairly quickly, I will interject a few thoughts along the way, but then at the end I am going to really shift it to our world, and our lives today.

But I am actually going to begin today by reading a passage in Jeremiah. We will do a cliff notes on Jeremiah coming up, but what I want you to see is that God gave Israel a very clear mandate for how to use the time spent in Exile in Babylon... and as we will see, Daniel really embodies the heart of God very very well.

You guys know this passage, but lets read it together. Jeremiah 29:4-11.

“Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream, for it is a lie that they are prophesying to you in my name; I did not send them, declares the Lord. “For thus says the Lord: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. For I know the **plans** I have for you, declares the Lord, **plans for welfare and not for evil**, to give you a **future and a hope.**”

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The book of Daniel covers an enormous span of time during Israel's exile in Babylon. In the early chapters of the book Daniel is very young, but the later chapters, which is where we will focus most of today, he is much older... likely around 80 if not even older than that. We know that the entire exile lasted 70 years, and around 50 years into it the Persians defeated Babylon and essentially took the reigns... and the Bible says that Daniel served under Nebuchadnezzar all the way to Cyrus, who led the Persians.

The book begins with Daniel being swept up into Exile with the rest of Israel...

and of course, the natural inclination of all of Israel in this situation would be to what? Fight Babylon... or at least hide... stay away. Not be friends with them... wait for God to rescue them... bunker down together and have your world APART from the world you were living in, in Babylon.

But God asks them to do something DIFFERENT than that. He actually tells them to involve themselves with the city... work for the city... build homes and plant gardens and raise your kids there... because you are going to be there for 70 years, and if the city thrives, so will you.

So before God promises Israel that he knows the plans that He has FOR THEM... and they are FOR THE WELFARE OF ISRAEL... first he tells ISRAEL...

you need to seek the welfare of Babylon.

It's actually the Hebrew word "shalom" - which is often translated as "peace" - though there are several words you can use here, the word ultimately, more than anything means "wholeness" - or "completeness" - but it's used both places... verse 7 - "seek the welfare of the city" -

verse 11 - I know the plans that I have for you... plans for your welfare.

Seek the city's wholeness. Believe that it can be better than it is. Work for it to be better than it is because in order for you and your family and your children and your nation to have wholeness, first, Babylon... whom you may even consider your enemy...

must have wholeness.

Therefore, resist the temptation to hide away... to separate... instead, be a part of making sure that the city thrives.

So the first temptation that Israel would have been faced with under circumstances like this, would be to separate entirely from the culture and create their own, sort utopian existence apart from the evil government that held them captive.

but there is another temptation that the exiles would have also had.

because once you realized that you would be in Babylon for a while, for many of them, the rest of their lives, another temptation would be to conform INTO that culture...

embrace what they embrace... become who they are. We covered that a bit when we were talking about Esther. Esther, in order to gain influence in the Kingdom she was in Exile under, she had to compromise greatly. She had to do what THEY did... in a bit of an "end justifies the means" type of thing, she did what she had to do to be crowned Queen... which I think is very relevant to the way a lot of us handle some of the issues facing our world today.

The problem is, there will come a day when we will look back and have to ask ourselves "how did we get here?"

But I want to use this story to encourage you, that if you feel like you are wavering between right and wrong... between standing with people without throwing out the word of God... between justice and judgment...

that there is a way that you can live your faith amongst a world that has none, and actually have a shot at winning some of them to Jesus.

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Daniel was uncompromising in his dedication to the Lord and yet God still used him to impact society.

and very early on He gains influence there because he has a prophetic gift and is able to interpret peoples really bizarre dreams. In fact, basically the whole second half of the book gets incredibly prophetic, apocalyptic even... it has a lot of similarities to the book of Revelation Which I believe bares mentioning, though we won't focus there today. For the Ancient Cliff Notes series, we are focusing in most instances on the actual narratives that take place... its a 12 chapter book, and after chapter 6 it shifts quite a bit, so half the book is really really prophetic which we won't cover.

So Daniel is in exile, but is growing in influence and continues to get promoted.

He was one of the young men selected by the King to learn the literature and the language of the Chaldeans (1:3-6). He was being trained as "wise man" -

Also among those selected were Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. And they were gaining favor but right away, even when Daniel is still very young, we learn something about him.

He is in Babylon... He is serving the Babylonian King even though he is doing it from the place of being an exile there... yet He also stands his ground on what he believes and on the things that set him apart. He doesn't eat the King's food.

He allows himself to be a part of the system, the culture, and even the government... trained as a wise man... as a servant of the King... but yet there were certain things that from the beginning he would not compromise on.

This is what happens early on in the story... and then we will fast forward a few decades.

The King has a dream, and none of his main wise men can interpret the dream, so he gets mad!

In his anger, he puts out a decree that all of the wise men be put to death. But when they come for Daniel and his friends, to put them to death because they fell into the category of “wise men” - Daniel said “let me see the King. I will tell him what his dream means.”

And He does... He interprets the dream and the King is thrilled and promotes Daniel.

so things seem to be going pretty good for Daniel and his friends. Daniel becomes the ruler over ALL of the wise men... and requests that the King appoint Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to be over all of the affairs of the province of Babylon (Daniel 2:49)

- so things are going well for the boys.

Fast forward a little while, and the King gets super weird and builds a giant idol, a “Golden Image” - and basically, everyone is commanded that when they hear the music... the pipe, the horn, the bagpipe, the harp... whenever music starts playing everyone has to drop everything and bow to this image.

This is what gets Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego thrown into a fiery furnace... because when they hear the music, they don't bow. This is important... because just like Daniel... Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego SERVED THE KING. They honored the King so long as they could do it without disrupting their conscious.

BUT THEY HAD A LINE... a point in which they had to determine, I can only accept and support this government so long as it does not go against the commands of my God. It would be better to die in a fiery furnace than to live worshipping a god that's made by the hands of man... and so they told the King “you know what, we think that if you put us in that furnace... we will walk out alive. Because that is how big our God is. But even if He doesn't save us, we still won't worship your stupid statue.

King Nebuchadnezzar was so mad, he ordered the furnace turned up 7 times hotter than normal, and then had the boys thrown in it.

And get this... it was so hot, that the guards who were throwing them into the furnace were burned so bad that they died, on the spot... it is a common theme we find in the book of Daniel... the people of God up against something SO DESTRUCTIVE that everyone else who even comes near it is killed... yet God's hand just surrounds them.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego went into the furnace, and they were not burned. And the King looks, and he freaks out, because he sees that there are four in the furnace... when they only placed three in there. And he starts yelling about it, and says that it looks like one of the sons of god is in there with them... WHAT IS GOING ON?

well, this is what I think is going on... Because God could have protected them without sending an angel... or Jesus... or whoever it is. A lot of people have built a case for why it is Jesus... either way, we know that it was sent from God... something God did NOT need to do... but I like the idea that it is Jesus, and here is why:

but by doing it, God gave King Nebuchadnezzar an image of His power... of His glory...

Nebuchadnezzar had just created an image of a god with no power, and now God was giving him an image of the POWER OF GOD. It is like how Colossians 1:15 says that Jesus... the SON... is the IMAGE of the invisible God. He was sent here to SHOW US THE POWER, and MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE LOVE OF GOD. **The word image there in Colossians, is the Greek word "eikōn" an "icon" is very different than an idol.** An icon is an image that gives us at least a glimpse of what God is like... an idol is something created to be a god or take the place of God, or to be existed in addition to God. See, Nebuchadnezzar created an idol. So God gave him an icon.

To me, that is the most important part of this... I LOVE the times when God shows himself to lost people in ways that demonstrate how much He loves

His children. And what you have here is someone doing something evil... and watching with his own eyes the way that God shows up in the middle of it.

There is saving power in that.

One thing that Daniel tells King Nebuchadnezzar when he interprets that first dream, a couple chapters before this, is (Daniel 2:44):

“the God of heaven will set up a kingdom **that shall never be destroyed**, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people.”

And I think that when the King was looking into that furnace, and seeing, as the Bible says in 3:27 - that the fire HAD NO POWER OVER THOSE MEN... it was evident to him that what Daniel prophesied would surely come to pass. The Kingdom of the God that these men serve is INDESTRUCTIBLE. It lead to him proclaiming God as THE MOST HIGH GOD.

What we find in the book of Daniel, in the chapters that follow, is rulers dying, and the Kingdom being left to another, and another, and another after that.

And this is why this is so important... and Daniel and his friends all understood this:

The Empire will Fall.

It always falls.

Paul says it like this in Acts “gods made by the hands of humans are not gods at all” - and gods don’t always look like golden images... sometimes they look like empires... sometimes they look like the empires we think we are building in our own worlds... but even the things that we work to create will only last so long.



Even the most impactful governments throughout history, lead by the greatest leaders... the leaders all died, and the governments at one point collapsed... and I have news for you: THEY ALL DO.

Not long after this, Nebuchadnezzar was walking on the roof of his palace, and he started declaring "how great it is, this Kingdom that I have built" and he was stopped dead in his tracks by a voice from heaven telling him "the Kingdom has departed from you. You will now be driven out." and He was.

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So lets fast forward a bit, to Daniel 5. Daniel is a lot older now, and Belshazzar is King. And he is having a HUGE party... its an amazing feast that gets interrupted by a hand that writes on a wall, a super weird, cryptic moment... And we will get to that. But first, we need to see what was going on here...

History gives details that the Bible doesn't about this time... but just days before this party, Cyrus the great had already defeated the Babylonian empire and was coming with the Medo-Persian army... and with the Babylonian army already fallen, it meant, without a doubt that the Empire was about to collapse and Babylon would be taken over.

So they are feasting, knowing that the an army is marching toward them that has already defeated their army, and was in fact just outside of the city walls.

now... Look at verse 2-4: (we will start in verse 2)

"Belshazzar, when he tasted the wine, commanded that the vessels of gold and of silver that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem be brought, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them."

This is very very significant. When Babylon captured Israel and brought them into exile, they destroyed the temple. But before they destroyed it, King Nebuchadnezzar went into the temple and removed all of the treasure

(2 Kings 24:13)... he removed the gold and silver cups FROM THE TEMPLE OF THE LORD.

It was a day in which the script was flipped. Babylon had taken over Israel, they destroyed the most significant symbol that Israel had in that time... and they kept some souvenirs.

And at no other time in the 50 years since they destroyed the temple did they get out these cups, at least as far as we know...

Some people believe that this was a move to propagate a sense of confidence in Babylonian people, who definitely would have been uneasy during this moment. Something like “we still have it. We conquered Israel, lets toast to our greatness.”

But whatever the motive, What the King ultimately seems to be doing here was saying “let’s remember the old days. Let’s remember the time when Babylon was the one doing the conquering. Bring out the reminders that our Empire was once the greatest empire in the whole world, and lets drink to that. Lets drink to the days when we had the power.

Kind of one of those moments where you die in the past because you didn’t prepare for your future. The good ole days can’t stop what is coming.

Which is another message entirely, but I felt like I needed to say something like that... someone needs to hear this...

Your best days are AHEAD OF YOU.

Just like how the prophesy in Jeremiah says “I KNOW THE PLANS THAT I HAVE FOR YOU, and they are good!” sometimes, it may feel like you are in exile... and it may last longer than you would like it to... but don’t you dare live in the past thinking that it will make you feel better, or thinking about decisions that you made thinking “if only I had done this differently, or that differently... then I wouldn’t be here right now...”

No... you are where you are right now, and God wants to use you WHERE YOU ARE RIGHT NOW.

When you pull out the old wine glasses, and toast to the way things used to be... and THATS THE ONLY THING you can think to toast to... there is a pretty good chance that you are missing what God is doing in your life right now... THERE IS A GOOD CHANCE THAT YOU ARE MISSING WHAT GOD IS DOING IN OUR WORLD RIGHT NOW! and I am telling you, the enemy wants to keep you in the past. He will use your worst days, and he will use your BEST days... but he knows that if he can keep you looking backward, you will miss what is ahead.

But the Bible says that Jesus is making all things new... meaning the future is brighter than today... it is brighter than yesterday...

Paul says it like this, WHILE HE IS IN A PRISON IN ROME ON DEATH ROW...

Philippians 1:6 - "he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

most people... if you find yourself on death row... you are going to look to the past... to when days were better. But all Paul could do was look to the future!

but notice what happens back in Daniel, in verse 3-4 -

Then they brought in the golden vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. **They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.**"

What they were doing was taking the cups that were taken out of the temple of the living God... the only one whose Kingdom will truly last forever, and they were using those cups to toast to *other gods*.

How do we know that this is such a big deal? Look at the very next verse (5):

**“Immediately** the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace, opposite the lampstand. And the king saw the hand as it wrote.”

The Bible says that the King then lost all color in his body... his limbs locked up... basically, he froze. His limbs gave way and his knees knocked together.

A physical human hand... *just a hand*... showed up at the party and wrote something on the wall.

And suddenly, we are back to where we started.

A message that nobody could interpret.

Except Daniel.

The King tells Daniel - “interpret this, and I will clothe you in purple, put a gold chain around your neck, and make you third in command of the entire Kingdom.”

this is incredibly significant... Daniel responds saying “Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another” -

He says “I don’t want your reward... The only reason that I can tell you anything is because of God... I want to help, but I don’t want to help with any strings attached. You owe me nothing.

Daniel lived in such a way where he wanted nobody to owe him anything.

Simultaneously, it made it so that he owed nothing to anyone. He had nothing to prove to the King and understood that all of the Kings gifts were of no use to the purpose he was here for, so he didn’t wrap himself up what would bring comfort but instead with what would bring glory to God. Which does not always go hand in hand. Most of us would view the Kings reward as God blessing us for doing his work... and I don’t know what exactly Daniel saw it as... but I know that he wanted to make it very clear that he

was not here because of what the King could give him... nor was it of any value to him.

and he says this:

“this is the writing that was inscribed: Mene, Mene, Tekel, and Parsin. This is the interpretation of the matter: Mene, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end; Tekel, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting; Peres, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.”

That army on the other side of the wall? They are about to come tearing through, and the Babylonian Empire will end.

And that very night, the King was killed, and Darius, a Mede, was given the Kingdom.

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Which sets us up for the final act of the narrative.

The empire had switched hands.

Not just a new King, but essentially a new kingdom. The Medo-Persian conquest of Babylon now had leadership over the exiles of Israel.

And this was how the new King, Darius, structured things. He put 120 governors spread over the whole Kingdom, and three high officials that were over the governors. Daniel was appointed to be one of the three high officials.

King Darius really liked Daniel, and the Bible actually says that he was planning on putting Daniel in charge of EVERYTHING. (6:3) - it says that the King recognized an excellent Spirit in Daniel.

Jealousy kicked in, and the other two high officials and some of the governors began trying to dig up dirt on Daniel... they were looking for something that they could bring against him, to bring him down before the

King promoted him further... but the problem was, Daniel lived his life in such a way that nobody had ANYTHING on him. The Bible says it like this:

“they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, **because he was faithful**”

Then they say this:

“We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel *unless* we find it in connection with the law of his God.”

Then... we get to one of those moments where you can't help but wonder...

What the heck, King?

So these guys go to the King and basically butter him up a bunch and say “you are a god and deserve worship and we should make it a law that for the next 30 days anyone worships any God but you Darius... then we throw them in the lions den.

And Darius is like “awesome, where do I sign?”

How did a guy who is convinced of something like that, become King? I feel like the Kings back then just weren't all there... the same thing happened with Xerxes, in the book of Esther. Like, why would Xerxes just be like “yeah Haman, lets sign into law that on the 13th day of the 12th month everyone can kill anyone who is Jewish and be within their legal right. But only on that day.” - like, where do I sign?

WHY WOULD THE KING DO THIS?

But Darius, he signs into law this AWFUL ordinance that says for 30 days, nobody can worship any God besides him... they can't ask their gods for things, they can only ask Darius... and if they do, they get thrown into the lions den.

This was really that moment in Daniel's life when he had to not only decide but also DEMONSTRATE which side he was on.

look at verse 10. It just shows the kind of man that Daniel was:

“When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.”

In other words, Daniel won't pray to Darius. Daniel won't worship anyone other than God.

He went specifically to the place where it would be known that He was committing an act of civil disobedience, and he prayed to the God who who believed actually was worthy of praying too.

This is healthy, so long as you actually believe that it is WORTH IT.

This is a really big point. And we can't overlook this. And I know that this sermon has had like 4 mini sermons crammed into it... trying to do a whole book in one sermon is difficult...

But there will be times when you will have to stand up for something that goes against the grain... that goes against what is normal... there may even be times when you have to stand up to authority because what it is asking you to do goes against what you know in your heart is absolutely not what is right.

But I said something a minute ago that I don't want you to miss. Because in the tense, weird political climate that we are in right now, mixed with all of the social tools that are available to us... everybody has a soap box and everybody has a cause...

and there are going to be times when you need to speak up on behalf of whatever that cause is, but hear this again:

as long as you actually believe that it is worth it.

Everything comes at a cost. What makes Daniel so heroic is not that he screamed loudly in order to be heard... it is that he knew that he would be killed if he didn't compromise his faith... and it was worth it.

To lose everything, to praise God.

You can't have it both ways. You can't be an outspoken critic of something that culture has accepted and then be angry when they attack you for it. Just read the read letters and you will see, that will ALWAYS be what happens.

My encouragement to you, in this time that at least from my view, is very tense... that you hold fast to your faith... while holding your tongue when possible (and its not always possible)...

that you chose your battles with wisdom, only fighting the ones that you truly believe ARE WORTH IT.

Because every one of them will come at a cost... so make sure that the cost is worth it.

**Let me give a bit more clarification on that.** You only get so many chances to voice what you believe before people learn to tune out your voice. Even me, being a Christian, have learned to tune out OTHER CHRISTIANS on social media and beyond, because they have opinions on literally EVERYTHING and they are so loud about them. I believe that it is actually harmful to the Gospel.

There are certain things in our culture that are so important, we have to talk about them... but if you are always vocally against EVERYTHING... then the image that you are projecting to the world, as Christ's representative here, is that Christians are against everything... and that is just not true. The Gospel is that GOD IS SO FOR YOU THAT HE LAID DOWN HIS LIFE FOR YOU. But we tend to do the opposite, when we bolster our views over other people's... there is a certain humility that comes with being the one willing to lay down your rights for the sake of another, so that Jesus can be glorified.



If your faith begins and ends by the things that you are against, you will be a pretty ineffective witness for Jesus. The church should be the biggest advocate of people that there is, while understanding the reality of sin condition. And sometimes there are issues that SO important, we do have to speak up about them and make clear where we stand so that we can help people sort out, Biblically, how to navigate the things in their lives that are not as they should be.

But a lot of those things can be handled in conversations, not from platforms. How you build your platform, especially in this culture, is a very defining thing in the way that you will be able to reach the people who God has put in your life. So that is why we say “hold fast to your faith, but hold your tongue WHEN it is possible.”

And I say that, knowing without a doubt that there will be moments like the one that Daniel is facing here... where you have to draw the line in the sand, you have to take your stand, and you have to be willing to face with comes with that decision.

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So watch what happens to Daniel. The other high officials went to King Darius, and said “okay, you signed it. Daniel broke it. Throw him in the Lion’s Den”

And Darius was very grieved, because he realized what he had done... but the law had already been signed... so what he does, is he tells Daniel: “may your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you.”

and they sealed the Lions den with Daniel inside.

And of course, He does. The Lord does deliver Daniel. The lions don’t touch him the entire night. When they brought him back out, no harm whatsoever was found on him.

The King was amazed, and he realized “I am not the one to be worshipped!” and he had the men who tried to frame Daniel thrown into the

lions den, and the lions tore them to shreds before they even hit the ground.

Because those lions WERE the kind of lions that eat people. They just didn't eat Daniel.

And watch what the King says...

(Daniel 6:25-28)

25 -

"Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: "Peace be multiplied to you.

PEACE (shalom) - welfare... be multiplied to you... To you Daniel... and to you, ALL PEOPLE.

That same welfare that you have sought for our city... the city that you has worked for even though you are from somewhere else... may that same welfare now be multiplied TO YOU.

and look at what King Darius proclaims over the entire land.

26-

I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to 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 shall be to the end.**

remember this? Daniel prophesied this very thing in Daniel 2:44

"the God of heaven will set up a kingdom **that shall never be destroyed,** nor shall the kingdom be left to another people."

and here we have Darius saying the same thing... OUR KINGDOM WILL NEVER OUTLAST THE KINGDOM OF WHATEVER GOD JUST RESCUED DANIEL.

The King declares the glory of the one true God!

27 -

He delivers and rescues;  
he works signs and wonders  
in heaven and on earth,  
he who has saved Daniel  
from the power of the lions.”

So this Daniel **prospered** during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.”

In the end, Daniel stayed true to his God, while being an advocate for his city. He served his King, and was even a part of the government. He made changes, and even served as an avenue of God’s coming judgment. In fact, the name Daniel means: “God is judge”

But He always knew that he was a citizen of a different Kingdom. Yet look at what this says... HE PROSPERED IN THE LAND THAT HE WAS IN EXILE IN.

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Daniel was a living, breathing, flesh and blood example of a dude who lived out the mandate that God gave Israel in Jeremiah 29, when God told the exiles in Babylon that they needed to not separate themselves from the city, but rather needed to seek the welfare of the city. We all love the verse Jeremiah 29:11, because it tells us that God knows the plan that He has for us, and its a good plan... a plan to prosper us, because it is true, and it is beautiful, and it should be believed... But in context we also need to realize that Jeremiah was not telling the people in exile that God is going take away all of their troubles... He said that he has a plan, TO USE THE

TROUBLES, and he has a plan for them, EVEN IN THE MIDDLE OF THE TROUBLES.

If there is one thing we can take away from ALL of the stories in the narrative of Daniel, it is how to live faithfully in a Kingdom that is not your own... and its something we all need to constantly be getting better at.

But we need to remember, that when we do the things that Jesus asks of us... sometimes it is going to get us in trouble with people. How could it not? It happened even to Jesus.

There is a moment in Luke 11, when Jesus had just cast a demon out of a man who was mute... The man's world was one way... and then Jesus did a miracle and it TOTALLY CHANGED THIS MAN'S ENTIRE LIFE...

and even that... people got mad about... they said Jesus was working through evil spirits to do these mighty works... and this is how Jesus responds... and this is the ONLY time that He says this particular phrase in the entire Bible.. though we don't know for sure if they are related... it actually bears a strange similarity to what happens in Daniel chapter 5.

again... he gave this man something he had never had before... he was a captive to muteness and now is free... and Jesus is being criticized for this... and He says this: (Luke 11:20)

“if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”

The finger of God, in Luke, is declaring that the Kingdom has come... it has arrived... that which we have anticipated, is now right here in our midst.

And we read things like Daniel 5, about a weirdo hand coming out of nowhere and writing something with its finger on a wall and we just think “judgment” -

but really, we should think “justice”

Because that night was a turning point not only for Babylon, but for Israel.

When the Medes and the Persians took over, yes Israel was still in exile, technically, and would be for 20 or so more years... and yes there were still some weird moments like when Darius through Daniel in a lions den...

but Persia didn't rule like Babylon did. They didn't keep them in one place...they let them go back home if they wanted... or somewhere new if they wanted. For the most part they even began to let them worship their God. It was a swift turn in the right direction for the people of God to get back to what was intended for them.

The finger on the wall brought a whole new Kingdom for Israel, just like the finger of God created a whole new world for the mute man... and just like the finger of God at work only proves that the Kingdom of God is upon us.

and sometimes we view the things that we are going through as punishment... or as God being silent... or God not showing up... sometimes we feel like wanderers, or exiles... or outcasts...

we think the sky is falling if the world takes what we view as a lawless step backward... or if an election goes differently than we think it should...

but sometimes I think God just wants to get your attention... and remind you that He is bigger than any of it. The world is broken. That is the very heart of the Gospel. The world can't fix itself just like you and I can't fix ourselves... but Jesus died on a cross to make the broken things whole in our world... to make the broken things whole in our lives...

Jesus died for us, and has charged us with now reconciling the world back to Him...

He has a plan for your life, and its for your own welfare. And if you could just dedicate yourself to the welfare of others... then that will come full circle for you. Because if there is one thing that I know for sure, it is that God will always do what He says that He will do. He did it for Daniel, and for Israel, and I believe He can do it for you, and for our church right here in our city.

Seek the welfare of the city. Seek the welfare of your neighbors... Lets work to make it better... lets work to usher in the Kingdom of Heaven right here and now... because our city needs Jesus, and we have Him.

seek the welfare of the city church. For in it, is our welfare.