



# BEYOND the BEAST

7 week series in Daniel

faith in a world of  
power and pride

‘Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his. He changes times and seasons; he deposes kings and raises up others. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning. He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him.’

- Daniel 2:20-22 -



# Beyond the Beast

Imagine being torn from your home, marched hundreds of kilometres away, and forced to serve the empire that destroyed everything you knew. This is exactly what happened to Daniel and his friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586BC. They and many others were invited into the service of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. The book of Daniel follows their story. The main challenge they encounter is this: How do they remain faithful to Yahweh, their God, while facing the Beast?

In Daniel, the Beast isn't just one person. It's a pattern of a way human power often operates: violently, pridefully, and without regard for God. It appears in empires, kings, and cultures, and in every human heart. Daniel and his friends had to choose their battles. What could they tolerate? Where must they draw the line? And how could they live with integrity and faith in a world that opposed their God?

Yet Daniel is also full of hope. The Beast may seem unstoppable, but it's not the true ruler. Over all the noise and power plays of empire stands the Ancient of Days. And one day, He will rise in judgment over the Beast and bring deliverance to his people.

At the heart of Daniel's story are questions that still echo today: How do we stay faithful to God in a world that doesn't recognise him? In what ways are we complicit with the Beast? And where can we find real hope Beyond the Beast?

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### Warming up:

Have you made a hard choice that others didn't understand? What caused you to make the hard choice and how did you follow through?

### Read: Daniel 1:1-21

1. Jehoiakim was king of Judah from 608-597B.C. What does Daniel 1:1-2 tell us about the situation? (See 2 Kings 23:31-37 and 2 Chronicles 36:1-8)
2. What did Nebuchadnezzar order Ashpenaz to do? What traits was he to look for in the Israelite men? What were they being prepared for?
3. What does v.5 tell us about what life was like for these young men?
4. The young Israelite men were given the best food from the king's table, new Babylonian names, and a Babylonian education. What do you think Nebuchadnezzar's goal was in doing these things? What might it do to their identity and culture?
5. What does Daniel refuse to do? Why?
6. What does Daniel ask for instead? What happens to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah?
7. Nebuchadnezzar sought to indoctrinate Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah like the other men. What does God do for them instead?
8. What was God preparing Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah for?
9. Do you find it surprising that God prepared them to serve Babylon rather than fight against it? Why?
10. Cyrus and the Persians conquered Babylon in 539BC, which means that Daniel served for approximately 70 years. How does this show God's faithfulness in preparing Daniel but also in seeing his calling through?

### Rubber hits the road:

Are there areas in your life where you are tempted to compromise your values? How can you stand firm in your beliefs without being confrontational? Ask God to help you trust him and do what is right.



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Heavenly Father, thank You for the example of Daniel and his friends. Lord, please grant me that same courage and clarity in my own life. Help me to honour You in the small things, even when no one else sees it. Please help me to stand firm in my faith without arrogance, and to live with integrity rather than compromise. Like Daniel, may I be respectful, wise, and faithful in my choices and let my life reflect a quiet strength that points others to You. Give me grace to choose what is right over what is easy, and to trust that You are with me. Make me faithful, Lord, just as You have always been faithful to me. In Jesus' name, **Amen.**



### Warming up:

Do you remember any of your dreams? What happened in your dream?

### Read: Daniel 2:27-49

1. What do we know so far about Daniel and the land where he lived?
2. Who has a dream in this passage? Summarise the dream.
3. How did Daniel come to interpret this dream? (Read Daniel 2:1-26)
4. What does Daniel tell the king before he interprets his dream? What does this tell us about dreams? What does it tell us about God?
5. How would you feel if you had this dream?
6. Many ancient cultures saw dreams as portals into the the future. How does our culture see dreams today?
7. In vv.36-44 Daniel interprets the dream. Who empowers Daniel to do this? How would you summarise his interpretation?
8. The traditional interpretation of Daniel 2 identifies the statue's parts as representing successive kingdoms: Babylonian (head of gold), Medo-Persian (arms and shoulders of silver), Greek (thighs of bronze), and Roman (legs of iron). The final part, the feet of iron and clay, symbolise a future, mixed kingdom that will be destroyed by a 'stone' representing the eternal Kingdom of God, which will fill the earth. What do you think about this interpretation?
9. What is the response to Daniel's interpretation?
10. What does this passage tell us about faith in a world of power and pride?

### Rubber hits the road:

What does the Bible teach about dreams? How can we apply this to the dreams we have? How might we respond when someone shares their dreams with us?



## This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, typical of notebook or legal stationery. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.

God of all power and might, thank you that you are sovereign, holy, divine, and true. Thank you that I can trust you with my dreams. You are the God of Joseph who saw through his dreams and persevered. You are the God of Daniel who interpreted the dreams of others and endured. Help us, Holy Spirit, to catch your vision for this world and to dream your dream. May we trust you with all our lives, in all circumstances. **Amen.**



### Warming up:

Have you ever been in a situation where standing up for what you believed came at a personal cost? What happened?

### Read: Daniel 3:19–30

1. How does Nebuchadnezzar respond to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's refusal to worship the golden statue? What does this reveal about pride and power when it's challenged?
2. What details in the text highlight the extremity of the punishment (e.g. the heat of the furnace, the fate of the soldiers)? Why do you think the writer includes these details?
3. What surprises Nebuchadnezzar as he watches the furnace? How would you describe the 'fourth figure'? Why is this significant?
4. What might this story suggest about God's presence in our own 'fiery trials' today?
5. What is the result of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's obedience to God, even under threat of death? What is remarkable about their condition when they come out of the furnace?
6. How does Nebuchadnezzar's response change after witnessing the miracle?
7. How do you think this story speaks to Christians today who live in societies where faithfulness to God can bring social, political, or personal cost?
8. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego didn't know they would be saved; they simply trusted God whether God delivered them or not. What does that kind of faith look like in practice?

### Rubber hits the road:

Where in your life might you be facing pressure to conform rather than stand firm in your faith? What step of obedience might God be calling you to take, even if it's costly?



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God of the furnace and the flame, thank you that you are with us in every trial, especially when we are tested for our faith. Give us courage like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to stand firm even when the pressure is intense and the outcome is uncertain. Help us to trust not in the comfort of this world, but in your unfailing presence and power. May our lives reflect your glory, and may others see our faith and be drawn to you. In Jesus' name, **Amen.**



### Warming up:

Can you think of a time when success or achievement led you (or someone you know) to become proud or self-reliant? How did that situation turn out?

### Read: Daniel 4:24–37

1. What is Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream? How does he urge the king to respond, and what does that show about Daniel's character?
2. What sins or attitudes are at the heart of Nebuchadnezzar's downfall? Why is pride such a serious issue in the eyes of God?
3. A year later, Nebuchadnezzar boasts about his achievements. How does this prideful declaration contrast with Daniel's earlier warning?
4. How does God respond to the king's arrogance? What stands out to you about the way God humbles Nebuchadnezzar?
5. In what ways do we see similar patterns of pride and downfall in leaders, nations, or even in our own lives today?
6. What does Nebuchadnezzar finally come to realise about God? How does this reflect a change in his understanding of power and control?
7. How does the chapter end? Is this a story of humiliation or restoration—or both? What does it teach us about God's character?
8. Nebuchadnezzar's story is a rare example of a powerful ruler being humbled and publicly acknowledging God's authority. What encouragement or warning does this offer to people in leadership today?

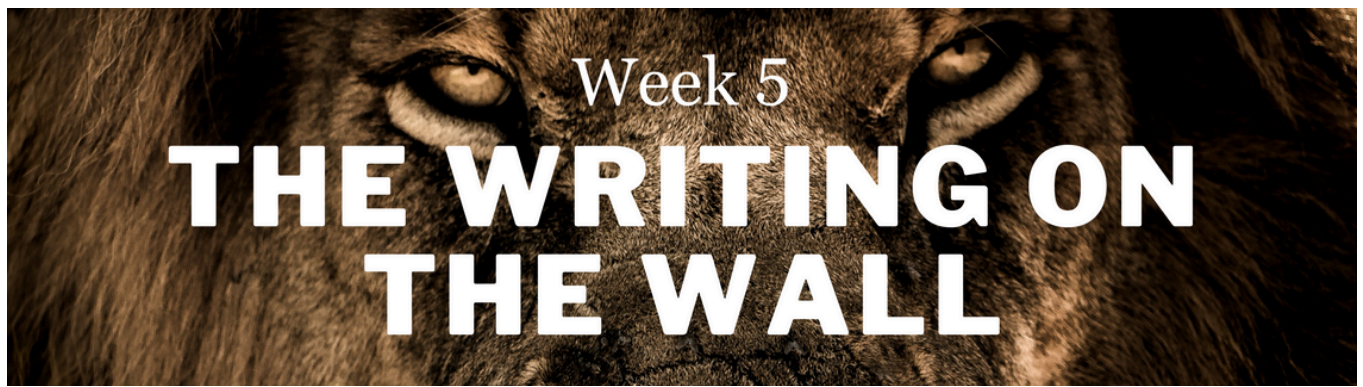
### Rubber hits the road:

Where might pride be creeping into your own heart—whether in success, security, self-image, or control? What might it look like to 'humble yourself before God' this week?



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Sovereign God, You are the Most High, and your kingdom endures from generation to generation. Forgive us for the times when pride takes root in our hearts and we forget that every good thing comes from you. Teach us to walk humbly, to listen to your warnings, and to honour you in all we do. May our lives reflect your glory, and not our own. Restore us when we fall, and remind us that true greatness comes through surrender to you. In Jesus' name, **Amen.**



### **Warming up:**

Do you regularly have dreams? Have you ever had a dream that you felt had a significant meaning?

### **Read: Daniel 5:1-12**

1. Nebuchadnezzar is no longer king. Who is the new king? What is he doing? Does he seem similar or different to Nebuchadnezzar?
2. What happens in vv.5-9? How did this change the mood of the party?
3. By now, Daniel had been serving in Babylon for approximately 70 years. What does the Queen do? What does she say about Daniel? Why are these things significant?
4. The Queen uses Daniel's Jewish name. Why is this significant?

### **Read: Daniel 5:13-30**

5. What does the king say about Daniel? What does king Belshazzar offer Daniel in return for an interpretation?
6. How does Daniel respond to the king in v.17?
7. What does Daniel tell us about Nebuchadnezzar in vv.18-21?
8. What accusation does Daniel bring against Belshazzar in vv.21-22?
9. What does the inscription say? What does Daniel interpret the words to mean?
10. What happens in vv.29-31? What does this tell us about how temporary the awards and accolades of this world are?

### **Rubber hits the road:**

Belshazzar should have known better—he had access to the story of Nebuchadnezzar but still he chose arrogance over humility. How can we choose humility and how can we honour what we know about God and his plan of salvation and hope for the world?



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Heavenly Father, You are the Sovereign King over all nations and rulers. Just as You held Belshazzar accountable for his pride and irreverence, so too You weigh our hearts. Forgive us, Lord, for the times we have treated Your Word, Your presence, and Your gifts casually. Help us to walk in reverence, not arrogance—to remember that all we have comes from You. Give us a heart like Daniel's: faithful, wise, and unafraid to speak the truth in love. May our lives not be found wanting but full of Your Spirit and aligned with Your will. We surrender our pride and ask for a spirit of humility. Use us, O Lord, for Your glory. In Jesus' name, **Amen.**



### **Warming up:**

Has your faith ever gotten you into trouble? What happened and what did you learn from this experience?

### **Read: Daniel 6:16-28**

1. What have we learned about Daniel so far in this series?
2. What have we learned about God so far in this series?
3. Why was Daniel thrown in the lions' den? (See Daniel 6:1-15)
4. What do we learn about Daniel's prayer life in vv.10-12? How could we apply this to our own prayer lives?
5. Did the king want to throw Daniel to the lions? Why / why not?
6. What happens to Daniel? Who helps him and why?
7. What are the parallels between Daniel's story here and the account of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection in the gospels?
8. What happens to Daniel's enemies after he is thrown to the lions?
9. What do vv.25-28 tell us about God?
10. What are your most important take-aways from the story of Daniel in the lions' den?
11. Is the persecution of God's people a thing of the past? How can the story of Daniel in the lions' den bring hope in persecution today?

### **Rubber hits the road:**

How is our world similar to the world Daniel lived in? What lessons from Daniel's life (you can choose from other parts of the book here) can we apply to our lives? How can we teach future generations these lessons as well?

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Saving God, thank you that by your grace I am saved. Thank you that in you, no weapon formed against me will prosper. When my faith is weak and my prayer life is waning, help me to remember the example of Daniel, and when my back is to the wall help me to walk by faith and not by sight. **Amen.**



### Warming up:

Have you ever discovered that you have little say or control in a situation? How did that feel?

### Read: Daniel 7:1-8

1. Who is dreaming this time? Why is this important?
2. What style of literature is this? How does this help us to understand it?
3. Where have we heard of four great powers previously in Daniel?
4. What is important about these four beasts? Does it matter who they represent?

### Read: Daniel 7:9-12

1. What happens next in Daniel's vision?
2. Who is the Ancient of Days? What does this name convey?
3. How does the Ancient of Days compare to the four beasts? What does he do with them?
4. What does the fourth beast do to provoke the Ancient of Days?

### Read: Daniel 7:13-14

1. Who is the son of man? What happens to him in this passage?
2. Why is it important that this is Jesus' favourite title for himself?

### Rubber hits the road:

When you feel overwhelmed by your powerlessness in the world, consider who is really in charge. How can this knowledge give you courage and confidence when you face opposition and challenges for your faith?



[illegible]

O Ancient of Days, you alone are God. We thank you that, even when the world is troubled and restless, when your people rebel against you, you still rule from your throne in heaven. Give us the strength of faith to see this. Help us to trust you when it is most hard to trust. And help us to proclaim, by word and deed, the good news that Jesus, the Son of Man, is Lord over all! **Amen.**



‘In my vision at night I looked,  
and there before me was one like  
a son of man, coming with the  
clouds of heaven. He approached  
the Ancient of Days and was led  
into his presence. He was given  
authority, glory and sovereign  
power; all nations and peoples of  
every language worshiped him.  
His dominion is an everlasting  
dominion that will not pass away,  
and his kingdom is one that will  
never be destroyed.’

- Daniel 7:13-14 -



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