

He's in Control

Daniel

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It's now two minutes to midnight. In January, a group of scientists declared that the world just got closer to the worst catastrophe ever. Using the symbolic Doomsday Clock to illustrate mankind's proximity to a global disaster, scientists moved the clock's minute hand forward by 30 seconds. The Doomsday Clock is now set at merely two minutes to midnight - nearer to a global catastrophe than at any time in over 60 years!

Hurricanes, fires, earthquakes, tsunamis, global warming, political and cultural division, stock market swings, nuclear proliferation. When you look around our world today, do you get the sense that everything's under control?

Five hundred years before Christ, for Judah, the clock had made its final tick. Doomsday had arrived! It was now midnight. Things couldn't have been worse; completely out of control. During the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon comes to Jerusalem and

destroys it; conquers it. And the remaining survivors are hauled off, taken as captives back to Babylon. For Judah, it looks like the world around them is spinning out of control and the end has arrived.

chapter 1 Among the captives, are four young men - Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Their new, Babylonian names? Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And despite **being taken captive**, God is with them. Completely vulnerable and powerless, God works through them. He does that for us too, you know. *As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.*

chapter 2 And King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon has a number of dreams that Daniel interprets, each concerning future events; what will happen to the king, and his kingdom, and other world empires. World events, real history - from Daniel's time, with Babylon as the world superpower, to the Persian (Iranian) Empire, to the Greeks, to the Romans (up to, and including, the time of Christ and the New Testament), and ultimately, extending all the way to our day and beyond, to the last days, before Christ returns.

And in these dreams, we see what? Kingdoms rise and kingdoms fall. And at the height of their glory, they're supremely powerful and seem invincible, overpowering lesser peoples, with no one to stop them, completely in control. But what happens? They're all only temporary and eventually all their glory comes to an end.

The first dream for Nebuchadnezzar, the mighty king of Babylon, is of **a great statue**, representing four successive world empires. Starting from the top and going down to the toes, the statue has a head of gold – representing the present empire of Babylon. Next, the statue's chest and arms are made of silver - representing the next empire, Persia (or the Medes and the Persians). The statue's middle and thighs are made of bronze - representing the third empire to come, Greece. Finally, the legs of iron, and feet partly of iron and partly of clay - representing the fourth empire, the Roman Empire.

All of these empires have their day in the sun, their time of glory. Seemingly invisible, unstoppable. But eventually, what happens to all these powerful, dominating world empires? *44 And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed ... It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and*

bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever.

What's this vision of this great statue telling us? Hurricanes, fires, earthquakes, global warming, political and cultural division, the rise of communist China, stock market swings, even nuclear proliferation. When the clock is closing in on midnight, and things seem to be completely out of control, and nobody seems to be in charge, and all hope is gone, things *aren't* as out of control as we might think they are.

chapter 3 We see it again with three of the four young men taken captive to Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar makes an image of gold ... and all the peoples, nations, and languages fall down and worship the golden image. All, except - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. And so, the king does what? He threatens them, that if they didn't fall down and worship the image, it's over! They will be ***thrown into the fiery furnace.*** Things were completely out of control for these three young men, with no hope of survival. How do they respond in such a hopeless situation? "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. *17 If this be so, our God whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace.*

And so, what happens? Just as they had believed, they're thrown into the fiery furnace. Yet not a hair on their heads is burnt and the king ends up praising their God and promoting the three of them. Again, things weren't as out of control as they may have appeared. There was One who was in ultimate control.

chapter 4 Nebuchadnezzar has a another dream, where he sees **a tree** growing and growing and growing, until it reaches up to heaven and is visible to the ends of the earth. But then, something happens to this mighty tree. Someone chops it down, with nothing left but a stump. God had caused the kingdom of Babylon to grow, and grow, and grow, until it had grown into a world empire. But it all goes to king Nebuchadnezzar's head, and he takes all the credit for it, and he ends up exalting *himself, even* above God.

And so what happens? What does God do? He drives this mighty king out into the wilderness, where he ends up living with the beasts of the field, and eating grass like an ox. God brings the king to the end of himself. Why? To show who's really in charge. To show who's the Ultimate King over all kingdoms and peoples.

chapter 5 Ever heard the phrase, “The Handwriting’s on the Wall”? Any idea where that comes from? Daniel, chapter five. What does it mean? If you’re an aging quarterback or lineman, the handwriting’s on the wall. Your days are numbered. All indications, are that the end for someone is coming. They’re about to get fired. Their business is going to fail.

For the next king, King Belshazzar, his kingdom is coming to an end. God will see to that. ***The handwriting’s on the wall,*** literally. Why? The king is throwing a great feast. And while they’re all partying, he arrogantly commands 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. *4 They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.*

5 Immediately the fingers, of a human hand appeared, and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace ... And the king saw the hand, as it wrote. 6 Then the king's color changed, and his thoughts alarmed him; his limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together.

13 Then Daniel was brought in before the king to read, translate, and interpret the handwriting. ... 18 O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father kingship and greatness and glory and majesty. ... 20 But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was brought down from his kingly throne, and his glory was taken from him [being driven into the wilderness] ... until he knew that the Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will.

22 And you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this, 23 but you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven. ... and the God in whose hand is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not honored.

*24 "Then from his presence, the hand was sent, and this writing was inscribed. ... 26 This is the interpretation of the matter: God has **numbered the days** of your kingdom and brought it to an end ... you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting ... your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."*

Nothing is ultimately out of control. There is One who is in charge of kingdoms, nations, human history, your life.

chapter 6 You've heard of Daniel and ***the lions' den***? Talk about things being out of control, hopeless ... *19 Then, at break of day, the king arose and went in haste to the den of lions. 20 As he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish. The king declared to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?"*

21 Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! 22 My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me ..." *23 ... So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. Are things as out of control as they might appear? Not at all.*

chapter 7 One night, as Daniel lies in bed, he has a dream; a vision of **four great beasts** coming up out of the sea – a lion, a bear, a leopard, and a fourth beast, representing the same four world empires mentioned earlier – Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome.

... 9 "As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was

fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire. 10 A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.

13 ... and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. 14 And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

chapter 8 Daniel has another vision; this time of a **Ram** and a **Goat**, once again, representing two of the four empires, the middle two, Persia and Greece and its subsequent rulers. ... *23 And at the latter end of their kingdom ... a king of bold face ... shall arise ... and he shall cause fearful destruction ... and destroy mighty men and the people who are the saints. ... and he shall be broken - but by no human hand.*

Living in a sinful world that opposes God and His children, things can really seem to be getting out of control. So we need to be reminded of who's we are,

and in the end, who's in ultimate control.

chapter 9 2 ... *I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, **seventy years**.* God knows what's coming next. He not only knows, but He's directing it all; guiding all of these "uncontrollable" events, according to His good and gracious will, turning straying hearts, back to Himself - as He continues to do today, turning your straying heart, back to Him.

Romans 8:28 *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*

... 13 *As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this calamity has come upon us; yet we have not entreated the favor of the Lord our God, **turning** from our iniquities and gaining insight by your truth.*

... 17 *Now therefore, O our God, listen to the prayer of your servant and to his pleas for mercy, and for your own sake, O Lord, make your face to shine upon your sanctuary, which is desolate. ... 19 O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act.*

chapter 10 Daniel has another vision, more terrifying than the others; a vision of **heavenly beings**, angels at battle. As the Apostle Paul says to us in Ephesians 6:10 *Finally, **be strong in the Lord** and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.*

chapter 11 A series of Kings that will rise and fall. Verse 36 seems to transition from New Testament times and kingdoms all the way to the very end of time and the anti-Christ. *"And the king shall do as he wills. He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods. 45 ... Yet **he shall come to his end**, with none to help him.*

chapter 12 1 *"At that time shall arise **Michael**, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people **shall be delivered**, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book.*

Hurricanes, fires, earthquakes, tsunamis, global warming, political and cultural division, stock market swings, nuclear proliferation. It's now, two minutes to midnight. According to some, we're nearer to global catastrophe than at any time in over 60 years.

If you have the feeling that things out of control, you're not alone. Why did God reveal to Daniel all that was to come? So that in a world that seems to be spinning out of control, with no one in charge, he would learn to **trust** the One who is in control.

For us today, who look back in history and see how all that God said came to pass, that we too, when things seem out of control in our world, might **trust** that **God is in control** of affairs, of kingdoms, of world events, of our personal lives, working in all things, to turn our wondering hearts back to Him, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; to the one kingdom that will never end!