

# THE MAJOR LESSONS OF THE MAJOR PROPHETS

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## CONNECT BREAK THE ICE AND GET PEOPLE TALKING

- What is the funniest dream you have had lately?
- Whose opinions matter the most to you? Why?
- Have you ever read the Old Testament Prophets, and if so, what was your experience like?

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## TRUTH UNDERSTAND AND DISCUSS THE SCRIPTURE'S MEANING

In this short series, we will be exploring the four Major Prophets of the Old Testament, and the timelessness of their teachings. The lessons they sought to impart to the people of God from generations past are, in so many ways, still so relevant for us today. In order to understand the ministry of Jesus in his time, and our own time, we must understand that we are all a part of the same story, nearing a climactic end when Christ returns. This week we will be studying two key sections in the book of Daniel in order to help us better understand the entirety of his works. For more background on the book of Daniel, we recommend watching the video provided on the Bible Project website.

### TO BE IN BABYLON, WE MUST SEE BABYLON FOR WHAT IT IS

**READ:** Daniel 7:1-7

**DISCUSS:** How do Daniel's descriptions of the four beasts help us characterize them in opposition to God?

Most commentators agree that Daniel uses the graphic images of the four beasts to characterize four great empires—Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome—though the fourth great beast is also considered an archetype for any great, powerful, and destructive nation. These empires all share one great theme of being opposed to God as idolators and persecutors of God's people. They exercise and revel in their own might and power, and in so doing, each one comes to be defined as "beastly."

### TO BE IN BABYLON, WE MUST HEAR GOD'S WORD ON BABYLON

**READ:** Daniel 7:8-12

**DISCUSS:** How does the posture of God in these verses indicate his response to the four beasts?

In these verses, God—called the Ancient of Days—seats himself on his throne in the position of judgment. Before him are his servants and his witnesses, and he prepares to pronounce his decree. Interestingly, we are not given God's condemnation of the beasts, but the effects of his judgment are seen immediately—the great beast is killed

and destroyed. God's word is declared in word and in deed, and the destruction of the great beast indicates to us that no power opposed to God, no matter how great, can truly stand before him.

## TO BE IN BABYLON, WE MUST KNOW GOD AS KING OVER BABYLON

**READ:** Daniel 7:13-18

**DISCUSS:** How does the appearance of the Son of Man affirm the goodness of the rule exercised by God?

In these verses, the Son of Man is depicted as a servant of the Ancient of Days, and also as his instrument in the world. In contrast to the rule of the four beasts, his rule over the coming kingdom is one that is unifying for all peoples, nations, and tongues. Further, his kingdom—an everlasting one—is shared alongside the saints of the Most High.

## TO BE IN BABYLON, WE MUST DECIDE WHEN TO SAY YES OR NO TO BABYLON

**READ:** Daniel 1:8-21

**DISCUSS:** In what ways did Daniel prioritize saying 'yes' to God over Babylon, and at what risk?

Daniel and his companions received much honor in their exile in Babylon—they were brought into the king's court and given many privileges; however, they did so by way of obedience to God despite the risks. In order to obey God, they would inevitably have to stand against Nebuchadnezzar's decrees in the presence of their enemies. The potential risk involved was great, but it was their faithfulness to God alone who ordains all things that preserved them.

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## GRACE SEE HOW THE PASSAGE CONNECTS TO JESUS

The vision of Daniel concerning the four beasts and their ultimate demise offers to each of us a glimpse into the sort of lives that Daniel and his companions lived. The vision invokes the images of kings and empires opposed to God, and how they are judged and eventually destroyed. This end is accomplished through God sending a servant, the Son of Man—Jesus' own favored reference to himself, to establish a new kingdom where those faithful to God are saved. Daniel lived under the reign of one of these kings, and in his faithfulness to God, we read how God preserved him and his companions through the opposition they faced. Ultimately, the Son of Man is coming to establish a holy, everlasting kingdom, and through it, we all, if we place our faith in him, will be saved.

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## CHANGE APPLY THE PASSAGE TO OUR THOUGHTS, FEELINGS, AND ACTIONS

- How are you currently living life in work, school, family, etc., in ways that show God's glory?
- How are you seeking and listening for God's Word to find reassurance amidst the world around us?
- How are you currently saying 'yes' to God in the face of opposition or potential risk?

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# PRAYER

RESPOND TO THE PASSAGE IN PRAYER

- Pray that God would have the humility of heart to hear the message of the prophets speaking to us.
- Pray that we can remain faithfully loyal to God as he is faithful to us.