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## Christ and Culture

### Week 5: Worldviews Workshop; Christians and Politics

Today, we'll try to put into practice the worldview lessons taught by Nancy Pearcey's *Total Truth*. Our goal is to understand the world we are living in now, so we can best shape the timeless lessons of the Bible to the immediate social and spiritual culture we face.

[Key reference: Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from Its Cultural Captivity* (2004)]

Along with this, we will begin to ask hard questions about what Christians in America should expect from government... present and future.

#### I. The Three Basic Questions of Worldview (Again)

Pearcey says this three-fold grid of Creation – Fall – Redemption can be used to generate a Christian perspective on any topic and any competing worldview

- A. **Creation:** How did God create this aspect of the world originally? What was God's intention in its original nature and purpose?
- B. **Fall:** How has it been twisted and distorted by the Fall? How has it been corrupted by sin and false worldviews? Cut off from God, creation tends to be either divinized or demonized—made into either an idol or an evil
- C. **Redemption:** How can we bring this area of the world under the Lordship of Christ, restoring it to its original, created purpose?

#### II. Education

##### A. God's Original Patter of Education

*Deuteronomy 6:4-9 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. <sup>5</sup> Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. <sup>6</sup> These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. <sup>7</sup> Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. <sup>8</sup>*

*Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. <sup>9</sup> Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.*

Families passing on truth both in formal instruction and also informal daily learning.

#### B. Christian Passion for Education

1. In every generation, Christians have taken the lead in education
2. Founding schools, promoting literacy, even preserving the common grace wisdom of the surrounding culture
3. After the fall of Rome, when barbarian hordes were ravaging western culture, monks (mostly in Ireland) preserved the great literary and philosophical masterpieces of the classical world... they painstakingly copied ancient manuscripts and kept the torch of learning burning in the Dark Ages
4. The Reformers carried on this tradition...
  - a. Luther and Calvin were classically trained in humanism and widely read of the ancient scholars, but evaluated everything by the Scriptures; John Knox said that, in Geneva, Calvin had established “The most perfect school of Christ since the times of the apostles.”
  - b. The Reformers also established catechism schools all over Europe to teach children the principles of the faith from an early age
5. The Puritans established a university (Harvard) to train ministers within six years of their landing in the Massachusetts Bay... 1636
6. So also the First Great Awakening established schools (e.g. Princeton) to teach true biblical doctrine in light of the New Birth once Harvard and Yale had gone corrupt

#### C. Applying the Grid to Education

1. **Creation:** children are created in the image of God, able to know him and to study his creation for the praise of his glory; therefore they have great dignity and also have the capacity for love, morality, rationality, artistic creation, scientific enquiry, etc. Education should address ALL aspects of the human person and ALL areas of the universe God made. We must reject any behaviorist philosophy that sees children as complex stimulus-response machines... nor should we just see them as organisms needing merely to adapt to their surrounding environment... they are created in the image of God, not machines needing to respond to an environment formed by nonpersonal forces operating by chance

BUT... the biblical worldview of children is realistic as well:

2. **Fall:** children are (like adults!!) prone to sin and in need of moral and spiritual guidance, as well as intellectual rigor. The word “education” from the Latin actually means “to lead OUT”... godly education effectively leads children out of the wreckage caused by the Fall; Puritan poet John Milton said “The goal of learning is to repair the ruin of our first parents.” In the aftermath of the Fall, God gave us revelation to enable us to order our lives by timeless universal truths that would be lost to us were God not to have revealed them
  - a. Christian realism will NOT accept the Enlightenment optimism that unaided human reason, apart from divine revelation, is able to attain a “God’s-eye perspective” of the world
  - b. NOR will we accept Romanticism’s sentimental view of children as “little angels” who come into the world pure
  - c. Both of those views, along with all child-centered views of education give birth to progressive methods in education that refrain from teaching students truth, and right from wrong, but expect children to discover their own “truths”... we see that especially recently in the transgender curriculum which helps students discover their true “gender identity” for themselves apart from “parental interference”; it even extends to mathematics in which basic mathematical laws and principles are avoided as racist or the construct of a dominant and oppressive regime...
  - d. Instead... Christian education deals forthrightly with the sin nature of children and the existence of timeless universal truths in all areas
3. **Redemption:** children learning the sufficiency of the gospel and scripture in reversing the effects of the Fall and pointing ahead to a perfect world in which all sin will be forever removed
  - a. Pearcey is very clear on helping children take their place in the Cultural Mandate (Genesis 1:28-29: “Fill the earth, subdue it, rule over it”)... humanity’s sin as the cause of the Fall, and humanity’s responsibility to mitigate aspects of the Fall
  - b. SO every subject should be taught from a solidly biblical perspective so that students can grasp the systems of truth flowing from the Bible and how interconnected they are

***2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work***

D. Worldview Enemies are ZEALOUS for the Minds of Children

1. Christians need to be very aware how zealous our ideological enemies are to control education
2. Proponents of virtually every ideology seek access to the classroom to shape the future by training young vulnerable minds to think like they do
3. Many educators feel free to use the classroom of government schools simply to recruit and train the next generation of footsoldiers in their social causes
4. Christians should be ready to stand up for Christianity in the sphere of public education... Al Mohler says Christians should be serving on school boards out of love for their neighbors... whether they are Christians or not

### III. Utopian Visions of the State and the Family

- A. Utopian visions of society... make up their own visions of the perfect world out of their own conceptions; the State (government) is a big part of that vision
- B. Western political and social thought has been extremely hostile to the role of the family in their proposed visions of the ideal society
  1. Pearcey: "Secular intellectuals from Plato to Rousseau to BF Skinner to Hillary Clinton have been enamored with the idea of putting the child directly under the care of the state rather than the family."
  2. The Nazi Party under Hitler openly asserted to German families that their children belonged to the state to shape and mold as they saw fit.
  3. But the Creation—Fall—Redemption grid exposes this flawed conception
- C. **Creation:** The Bible tells us the family was the first human structure established by God, with marriage being primary;
  1. The nuclear family is not an arbitrary social construct to be molded as we see fit; rather the nuclear family can be seen in every culture and all ages of human history
  2. Any utopian scheme that seeks to cast the traditional family into the dustbin of history is directly working against God's original design and against human nature itself
- D. **Fall:** Utopians who deny Creation also deny the Fall... that human nature is inherently corrupt and prone to evil

*Mark 7:21-23 For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, <sup>22</sup> greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. <sup>23</sup> All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'*"

*Ephesians 4:17-19 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. <sup>18</sup> They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. <sup>19</sup> Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.*

1. Instead, utopians redefine all problems as temporary disorders that can be resolved through their version of education and social engineering

“Utopians are motivated by a desire to overcome the effects of the Fall without relying on divine redemption.... Most utopians wish to be gods (Genesis 3:5) through self-will and human engineering, not through the blessings of heaven.” Bryce Christensen

E. **Redemption:** A seductive vision of redemption through the creation of a new Eden—a return to the original state of innocence

1. YET amazingly, virtually every actual historical attempt to establish a man-made Utopia has ended in a COERCIVE, TOTALITARIAN STATE
2. Why? Because contrary to the utopian vision, sin is real and it cannot be simply engineered out of existence
3. What do you do with those who don't agree with your vision? Or won't live accordingly? You must incarcerate or kill them.
4. Thus the state always has to find a way to FORCE people to fulfill its utopian schemes
5. The destruction of the family is often simply one tool for increasing government power over individuals by eliminating competing loyalties in an attempt to create total allegiance to the state
6. To defend the family against state agendas, we must make the case that only the biblical drama of Creation—Fall—Redemption gives a realistic yet hopeful account of human nature and the purpose of the family in society

#### IV. The Worldview Next Door

A. Every Worldview Must Address These Same Three Issues

1. **Creation:** Ultimate origins: where did it all come from? Who are we and how did we get here?
2. **Fall:** What explanation does this worldview give to the source of evil and suffering? What has gone wrong with the world? Why is there warfare, conflict, and misery?

- 3. Redemption:** To engage people's hearts, every worldview has to instill hope by offering a vision of redemption—an agenda for reversing the Fall and setting things right again

## B. Marxism

(Pearcey calls it a religious heresy, since it fits into Creation-Fall-Redemption so neatly)

Despite the almost worldwide collapse of communism as a viable economic theory, yet the ideas are still dominant in American culture. "A French political philosopher said nowadays when he wants to debate a Marxist, he has to import one from an American university" (where they are not hard to find at all!!)

Modern liberation movements are generally neo-Marxist... the Black Lives Matter founders were openly Marxist; socialism is just Marxism lite. They are called Neo-Marxist because they use Marxist forms of analysis to groups identified by race or gender, urging them to raise their consciousness and throw off their oppressors. Critical Race Theory is thinly-veiled Marxist analysis.

- 1. Creation:** For Karl Marx, the ultimate creative power was matter itself; matter is not static but dynamic, capable of change and development. Marx made matter into God. His prime disciple, Vladimir Lenin, used explicitly religious language:

"We may regard the material and cosmic world as the supreme being, the cause of all causes, the creator of heaven and earth." [Lenin]

Marx's counterpart to the Garden of Eden was the state of primitive communism. Early man equally shared all resources fully.

Note: Pearcey says humanity is always defined by how it relates to its view of "god" ... whatever its view of ultimate reality. For Marx, we are defined by the way we relate to matter—the way we manipulate it and make things out of it to meet our needs... in short, by the "means of production." That's why Marx defined everything from politics to science to religion as mere superstructure built on economic relations...  
EVERYTHING GOES BACK TO THE ECONOMY!

- 2. Fall:** Humanity fell from its state of innocence into slavery and oppression through the creation of private property. From this economic "Fall" arose all the subsequent evils of exploitation and class struggle.
- 3. Redemption:** This comes about by reversing the original sin—destroying the private ownership of property. And the "redeemer" is the proletariat—urban

factory workers, who rise up in revolution against their capitalist oppressors. As one communist historian put it very religiously: “The savior proletariat will, by its suffering, redeem mankind and bring the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.”

Historical note: Marxism is a secularized vision of the kingdom of God, with an answer to all the aspects of the worldview issues we are studying. That’s why it persists in various new forms despite its obvious failure to produce a classless society and equitable distribution of all wealth. It taps into a human hunger for redemption... an answer to these problems. Marxism is “myth masquerading as science.” It is a religion... a secular faith, a vision for social salvation.

### C. Jean Jacques Rousseau and Revolution

1. Pearcey: Rousseau is responsible for most of the ideas that bloodied the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His writings inspired Robespierre in the French Revolution, as well as Marx, Lenin, Mussolini, Hitler, and Mao
2. Get a grip on Rousseau, and you will have a key to understanding much of our modern messed-up world
3. Rousseau said the way to grasp the essence of human nature was to imagine what it would be like if it were stripped of all social relationships, morals, laws, customs, traditions... basically of civilization itself. This original he called the “state of nature”... lone, disconnected, autonomous individuals whose sole motivating force is the desire for **self-preservation**... what he called “**self-love**”
4. All subsequent human relationships are not ultimately real, but secondary, created by individual choice
5. Therefore, if our true nature is to be autonomous individuals, then society is actually **CONTRARY** to our true nature... it is artificial, confining, oppressive.
6. Rousseau’s most influential work, *The Social Contract*, opens with the famous line: “Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains.” By this, he did not mean political oppression, but the oppression of personal relationships that confine him: marriage, family, church, workplace.
7. NOTE: This is a stark departure from the Christian conception of all human relationships founded on the Trinity... perfect oneness in three-ness... permanent harmonious relationship from separate centers of personality

***John 17:20-23 I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, <sup>21</sup> that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May***

*they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. <sup>22</sup> I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: <sup>23</sup> I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity*

8. For Christians, relationships (including marriage, family, friendships, church) are not the creations of autonomous individuals who can make and break them at will. They are part of the original created order and therefore are essentially good... they are also central to our eternal future in the New Heavens and the New Earth as revealed in the Book of Revelation.
9. Social relationships are thus not chains, a form of bondage invading our autonomy but expressions of our true nature and our true destiny.
10. By participating in our civilizing institutions of family, church, state, and society, each with its own sense of working together for the common good, we fulfill our social nature and prepare for eternity in perfect oneness in heaven.
11. SO Rousseau's vision was truly radical and deeply destructive... proposing that individuals are the sole ultimate reality. He denounced all social structures and conventions as artificial and oppressive
12. AND... what can liberate us from this oppression? The STATE! The state can destroy all social ties, releasing the individual from loyalty to anything except itself

"Each citizen would then be completely independent of his fellow men, and absolutely dependent on the state."

[Pearcey commented: no wonder this philosophy inspired so many totalitarian regimes.]

Three-part grid analysis:

13. **Creation:** Rousseau's starting point, his substitute for the Garden of Eden—"The state of nature"... the autonomous individual's self-love. For Rousseau, the state of nature is a complete blank slate, free and able to create oneself... to develop and transform oneself.
14. **Fall:** society or civilization, which interferes with an autonomous individual's freedom to shape and create oneself; any relationship not the product of free choice is oppressive, including biological bonds of family, the moral bonds of marriage, the spiritual bonds of church, the genetic bonds of class or race. Thus the only social bond in which an individual is free is one he makes up himself by the "SOCIAL CONTRACT" The sovereign individual, freed from all oppression of convention, tradition, family expectation, makes up by agreement whatever he wants to do



15. **Redemption:** The State... based on social contract... the consent of the governed.

It may seem weird to think that this radical individualism could result in so many totalitarian states, but... individuals severed from all loyalties, clans, groups... disconnected, isolated... are actually the most likely to be oppressed by totalitarian regimes.

The best way to protect from totalitarian governments is actually to strengthen the rights of groups like families, churches, schools, businesses, voluntary associations. These are best at protecting individual rights!

“Sphere sovereignty” is a vital theological concept: Families have one realm, churches another, the state another... and it is wrong for one to encroach upon another. Limited jurisdiction of each!

## V. Christians and Politics

### A. Significant Quandary: What Should American Christians Do About Politics?

1. American politics becoming more and more divisive among Christians
2. Most Evangelicals agree: we are heading toward more and more overt hostility from our surrounding culture
3. Mixed signals from the Supreme Court
  - a. June 26, 2015: Redefinition of marriage; Obergefell v. Hodges... permitting same-sex marriage
  - b. June 24, 2022: Roe v. Wade overturned; Constitutional protection for abortion no longer the law of the land
4. Radically different views of government role... Democrat vs Republican
5. Wide-ranging differences in views among evangelicals on the level of involvement in politics...
  - a. Some are ardent activists... “God and Country” folk... America is a Christian nation, we need to reclaim our heritage; others go so far as to advocate “Christian nationalism” or even “theonomy”... the idea that all of society can and should be ruled by divine law as revealed in scripture
  - b. Others are separatistic from politics, saying “Let the dead bury their own dead.”
  - c. Others are more middle of the road

## B. Paul's Doctrine

***Romans 13:1-7*** *Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. <sup>2</sup> Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. <sup>3</sup> For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. <sup>4</sup> For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. <sup>5</sup> Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. <sup>6</sup> This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. <sup>7</sup> Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.*

## C. But... Revelation 13

***Revelation 13:1-8*** *And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name. <sup>2</sup> The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. <sup>3</sup> One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was astonished and followed the beast. <sup>4</sup> Men worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, "Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?"*

*<sup>5</sup> The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months. <sup>6</sup> He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven. <sup>7</sup> He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. <sup>8</sup> All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast-- all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.*

## D. Different Settings, Different Eras, Different Callings

1. In ancient Rome, Christians had literally no power to affect government policies

2. So also in many countries at various times in history... no power, no influence, no role
3. In other settings, Christians have been the ruling power, able to make laws that they feel best suits their Christian convictions
4. In other settings (like America), Christians have varying levels of power and influence
5. We recognize that the freedoms we have in America are not guaranteed to all on planet Earth and could be lost through negligence: freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom to dissent from the government without fear of penalty. Along with this, the power to influence policies by the ballot box
6. These represent a massive stewardship

#### E. Definition of Terms

##### 1. Patriotism

“Patriotism is the love of country. It is different from nationalism, which is an argument about *how to define* our country. Christians should recognize that patriotism is good because all of God’s creation is good and patriotism helps us appreciate our particular place in it. Our affection and loyalty to a specific part of God’s creation helps us do the good work of cultivating and improving the part we happen to live in. As Christians, we can and should love the United States – which also means working to improve our country by holding it up for critique and working for justice when it errs.” [Paul D. Miller, CT, February 3, 2021]

##### 2. Nationalism

“Most scholars agree that nationalism starts with the belief that humanity is divisible into mutually distinct, internally coherent cultural groups defined by shared traits like language, religion, ethnicity, or culture. From there, scholars say, nationalists believe that these groups should each have their own governments; that governments should promote and protect a nation’s cultural identity; and that sovereign national groups provide meaning and purpose for human beings.” [Miller]

##### 3. Christian Nationalism

“Christian nationalism is the belief that the American nation is defined by Christianity, and that the government should take active steps to keep it that way. Popularly, Christian nationalists assert that America is and must remain a ‘Christian nation’ – not merely as an observation about American

history, but as a prescriptive program for what America must continue to be in the future. Scholars like Samuel Huntington have made a similar argument: that America is defined by its “Anglo-Protestant” past and that we will lose our identity and our freedom if we do not preserve our cultural inheritance.” [Miller]

#### 4. The Problem with Nationalism

“Humanity is not easily divisible into mutually distinct cultural units. Cultures overlap and their borders are fuzzy. Since cultural units are fuzzy, they make a poor fit as the foundation for political order. Cultural identities are fluid and hard to draw boundaries around, but political boundaries are hard and semipermanent. Attempting to found political legitimacy on cultural likeness means political order will constantly be in danger of being felt as illegitimate by some group or other. Cultural pluralism is essentially inevitable in every nation.”

“When nationalists go about constructing their nation, they have to define who is, and who is not, part of the nation. But there are always dissidents and minorities who do not or cannot conform to the nationalists’ preferred cultural template. In the absence of moral authority, nationalists can only establish themselves by force. Scholars are almost unanimous that nationalist governments tend to become authoritarian and oppressive in practice.” [Miller]

#### 5. What Do Christian Nationalists Want That Is Different from Normal Christian Engagement in Politics?

“Christian nationalists want to define America as a Christian nation and they want the government to promote a specific cultural template as the official culture of the country. Some have advocated for an amendment to the Constitution to recognize America’s Christian heritage, others to reinstitute prayer in public schools. Some work to enshrine a Christian nationalist interpretation of American history in school curricula, including that America has a special relationship with God or has been “chosen” by him to carry out a special mission on earth. Others advocate for immigration restrictions specifically to prevent a change to American religious and ethnic demographics or a change to American culture. Some want to empower the government to take stronger action to circumscribe immoral behavior.” [Miller]

#### 6. How Can Christians Be Politically Engaged Without Being Christian Nationalists?

“American Christians in the past were exemplary in helping establish the American experiment, and many American Christians worked to end

slavery and segregation and other evils. They did so because they believed Christianity required them to work for justice. But they worked to advance Christian principles, not Christian power or Christian culture, which is the key distinction between normal Christian political engagement and Christian nationalism. Normal Christian political engagement is humble, loving, and sacrificial; it rejects the idea that Christians are entitled to primacy of place in the public square or that Christians have a presumptive right to continue their historical predominance in American culture. Today, Christians should seek to love their neighbors by pursuing justice in the public square, including by working against abortion, promoting religious liberty, fostering racial justice, protecting the rule of law, and honoring constitutional processes.”  
[Miller]

## F. Lessons on Politics from the Book of Daniel

### 1. Daniel 1:

- a. Daniel and his three Jewish friends (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) resolved not to defile themselves with Babylonian food; they were ten times more excellent than all the others in the government program, and were established in governmental posts as a result
- b. Lesson: Christians can be excellent in government service, but it is vital that they not compromise their principles and maintain personal holiness through discipline of their appetites.

### 2. Daniel 2:

- a. Nebuchadnezzar has a dream in which a succession of world empires is depicted on a statue—head of gold; chest and arms of silver; belly and thighs of bronze; legs of iron; feet partly iron, partly clay. The statue is struck by a rock of supernatural origins, which turns the entire statue into a pile of rubble that a wind sweeps away without leaving a trace. The rock becomes a mountain that fills the whole earth.
- b. Lesson: The Kingdom of Christ will destroy all human kingdoms and bring them to a complete end, and it will itself fill the whole world for all eternity.

### 3. Daniel 3:

- a. Nebuchadnezzar makes a golden idol and commands all his government leaders to bow down to it and worship it. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refuse to do so, and they are thrown into a fiery furnace. God protects them and rescues them from Nebuchadnezzar’s hand.

- b. Lesson: Christians must never yield to oppressive government laws that compel them to disobey God's clear commands. God will protect his people who make such a stand for his glory.

#### 4. Daniel 4:

- a. Nebuchadnezzar has a dream in which he is represented as a mighty tree that shelters and feeds all manner of birds and animals and which can be seen to the ends of the earth. God commands that the tree be felled and stripped... specifically, that his mind is changed to that of an animal for seven years until he humbles himself and recognizes that God rules over all the kingdoms of the human race, and that God demands that all governments be kind to the poor and needy and not oppress them.

***Daniel 4:34-35 At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. <sup>35</sup> All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"***

***Daniel 4:37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble***

- b. Lesson: All rulers should humble themselves before God and use their power wisely for the blessing of their people; God has absolute power to judge all rulers, and he is sovereign in establishing one and destroying another.

#### 5. Daniel 5:

- a. Belshazzar has an idolatrous feast in which he openly blasphemes God. God responds by sending a prophetic warning, which he cannot read—the “writing on the wall.” Daniel reads it—it says, “Your days are numbered and now brought to an end.” That very night he died and his empire ended.

***Daniel 5:23 you did not honor the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways.***

- b. Lesson: God will judge all wicked and idolatrous rulers who do not live for his glory, and their end can come very swiftly and violently.

#### 6. Daniel 6:

- a. Daniel is a skillful and powerful magistrate in the Medo-Persian kingdom, competent and hard working. His power causes others to feel jealous and

they conspire against him. Daniel's personal piety—his practice of praying three times a day—is the only way his enemies can think to attack him. So they manipulate King Darius into a wicked edict that results in Daniel being thrown into the lions' den. But God rescues Daniel miraculously.

- b. Lessons: Christians can have very powerful and important positions in pagan governments, and they can develop very close and even loving relationships with pagan rulers. It is vital for them to be skillful and hardworking at their jobs, but also faithful in prayer and personal godliness. God can protect his people from evil attacks.

#### 7. Daniel 7:

- a. Daniel has a vision of four great beasts coming from the sea. These beasts represent a succession of wicked human empires which dominate the history of the world through their power and oppression. Because of their wicked power, even the saints are crushed by their oppression for a limited time. But God, ruling on a heavenly throne of fire, overrules all things and has power to bring all nations in subjection to King Jesus, the "Son of Man." Secondarily, the "little horn" represents a coming ruler, the Antichrist, who will be the final phase of wicked human government.
- b. Lesson: Jesus is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and his coming Kingdom will rule over all the earth. But in the meantime, wicked empires dominate human history resulting in much suffering for the people of God.

***Daniel 7:13-14 "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. <sup>14</sup> He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men 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 7:25-27 [The Antichrist] will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws. The saints will be handed over to him for a time, times and half a time. <sup>26</sup> "But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. <sup>27</sup> Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.***