

A People of the Book
8-Year Curriculum
Year 5, Quarter 4

A Study of
Selected Texts from

Daniel

Mike White

Daniel

1. Chapter 1 - The Big Decision in Babylon - 2 October
2. Chapter 2- Prayer with your back against the wall - 9 October
3. Chapter 3 - Obedience Regardless of the Consequences - 16 October
4. Chapter 4 - The Sovereignty of God - 23 October
5. Chapter 5 - What Goes Around Comes Around in this World- 30 October
6. Chapter 6 - A Death Penalty for Prayer -6 November
7. Chapter 7 - A Deeply Troubling Vision - 13 November
8. Chapter 8 - "The Future A'int What it Use to Be."- 20 November
9. Chapter 9 - The Flight of the Messenger to Answer Prayer - 27 November
10. Chapter 10 -The Man Highly Esteemed - 4 December
11. Chapter 11 - The End Game for the Jewish Theocracy-11 December
12. Chapter 12 - Finishing Strong in Persia -18 December
13. Pop Quiz - 25 December

Daniel

- 605 BC - Nebuchadnezzar defeats Egypt and deports Daniel to Babylon
- 586 BC - The Fall of Jerusalem
- 562 BC - Nebuchadnezzar dies
- 539 BC - The Fall of Babylon
- 539 BC - Daniel prays to God for the Jews to return to Jerusalem
- 538 BC - Cyrus decrees return of Jews
- 536 BC - Daniel dies in Persia
- 535 BC - Temple construction begins
- 515 BC - Temple completed
- 443 BC - Walls of Jerusalem rebuilt
- 333 BC - Alexander the Great defeats Persia
- 323 BC - Alexander the Great dies and the kingdom is split four ways
- 198 BC - Antiochus III the Great occupies the Beautiful Land
- 175 BC - Antiochus the IV Epiphanes assumes power and occupies Palestine
- 168 BC - Antiochus the IV Epiphanes stops the daily sacrifice and erects the abomination of desolation in the Temple
- 165 BC - Temple is rededicated following the victory of the Maccabees over Antiochus IV Epiphanes
- 20 BC - Herod the Great begins reconstruction of the Temple
- 6/5 BC - Jesus is born
- 6 AD - Judea becomes a Roman province

30 AD - Jesus crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension

67 AD - Paul and Peter Martyred in Rome (tradition)

70 AD - Destruction of Jerusalem and end of the Jewish Theocracy

Daniel

Welcome to our study of Daniel. I think you will enjoy this study since the subject material is emotionally rewarding and intellectually stimulating. That Daniel was an elite person of his day is not to be denied and it is well demonstrated in the Book of Daniel that his wisdom, discernment, and political skills were world class. But the real focus our God wants us to take with this man is his character, courage, and consistency of life over six plus decades in service to foreign masters. We know Daniel was special to God because he is called by Gabriel the messenger from God "highly esteemed". Daniel was God's perfect person for his time because he allowed God to use him and Daniel was fearless in his representation of God to the great men of his day.

As your teacher I have three big take-a-ways from the Book of Daniel:

1. The sovereignty of God
2. The essentiality of prayer
3. The character of Daniel as a blueprint for Christian behavior

I will come back to these themes over and over so it is good that I point you to what shameless repetition I will embrace.

My recommendation is that you read the text first and then read the lesson summary I have briefly outlined at the start of each lesson. Next answer the questions of the readings so you might understand the textual facts. Then complete the Thought Questions that ask for a deep dive on some of the thinking displayed in that chapter. I have ended each chapter with a compilation of devotionals that I wrote for the Summit Church of Christ web page on the Book of Daniel in July, August, and September.

May God Bless your study of Daniel. I hope you have as much fun as I did.

Daniel

Read Daniel Chapter 1

Lesson Purpose: To acquaint ourselves with Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah including their background, character, and spiritual challenges they faced as God's people in a foreign land and culture. More importantly in our study we must seek to understand the power and sovereignty of God in the affairs of men. For Daniel and his three friends uprooted and transported in slavery to Babylon from Judea there were immense hurdles to overcome in order to live godly lives in an ungodly world. The same is true for each one of us today in our own lives so that the Book of Daniel is rich in meaning for our daily walk in Christ. The key point about the character of the Hebrew children for these young men were likely teenagers is there "resolve" to put God first and focus on him. Later in the Book of Daniel it is brought out that God highly esteemed Daniel because he (1) set his mind to gain understanding, and (2) humbled himself before God (Daniel 10:12). It is certainly true that God used the exceptional abilities these boys possessed to bless them and God's people, but that was only possible because Daniel and his friends loved God, placed God foremost in their lives, and sought his guidance and power in their lives at every point of need. As we shall see God never ever let them down. May our God Bless your study of Chapter 1.

Review of the Reading

1. What kind of king was Jehoiakim? What does this say about the nation of Judah at that time? (Daniel 1:1)
2. How did Nebuchadnezzar capture Jerusalem? (Daniel 1:2)
3. Nebuchadnezzar carried articles from the temple into captivity and he placed them in the temple of his gods. Why did this happen? (Daniel 1:2)

4. How were Daniel and his friends described? (Daniel 1:3-4)
5. Who was Ashpenaz? (Daniel 1:3)
6. What was Ashpenaz to teach them? (Daniel 1:4)
7. How long was their training to be? (Daniel 1:5)
8. Upon graduation the four young men were to do what? (Daniel 1:5)
9. Daniel and his friends were given name changes by the Chief Official. What were their new names? (Daniel 1:7)
10. Daniel drew a line in the sand on one thing. What was it? (Daniel 1:8)
11. How did Ashpenaz feel about this and why? (Daniel 1:9-10)
12. So what was Daniel's response and what does this tell you about Daniel? (Daniel 1:11-14)
13. What happened at the end of 10 days? Daniel 1:15-16)
14. What did God give these young men? (Daniel 1:17)
15. What did Nebuchadnezzar think about Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? (Daniel 1:19-20)
16. How long did Daniel last as a counselor? (Daniel 1:21)

Thought Questions

1. Daniel allowed his name to be changed without questioning it but drew the line on food from the king's table. Why the one and not the other?
2. Daniel was very courageous in his leadership. Is courage an essential quality of the Christian character?
3. What does Daniel's approach to Ashpenaz say about our communication/speech to the world?
4. Do you believe in such a thing as the favor of God? What is it?

Devotionals from Daniel 1

Daniel 1:8 "But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself in this way." (NIV)

The key to the Book of Daniel is to understand the character of Daniel as God developed and used it to further his purposes on this earth. So as we examine our devotional text we find the key word to promoting a godly character is when we see that Daniel resolved not to defile himself. There it is the key word "resolved" which is an expression of the human will to choose the things God rather than the things of men. Daniel was a leader with a will of iron dedicated to honoring God and he and the other young boys (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) resolved that they would not compromise their worship and devotion to the Lord regardless of what it might cost them including their very lives. As I stand and look back over history some 2700 years ago and find these young boys uprooted from their homes in Judah and transported to Babylon for the training of the elite young men who would run the world's mightiest power, I am struck by the maturity, courage, and loyalty to God of

these boys. Neither Daniel nor his friends blamed God, threw a pity party, or grew bitter for being captured and removed from their homes. They got on with their lives putting God first and giving their very best to God and Babylon. What an example for us of the stewardship of their talents and abilities. Daniel and his friends were young men without physical defect, handsome, with an aptitude for learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve at the highest levels of government (Daniel 1:4). When we recognize the quality of these young men it is an awesome thing for them to resolve not to defile themselves with the king's food likely because of religious food laws and the practice of healthy eating. Notice that Daniel as the leader spoke to the chief official and appealed to him to feed them only vegetables and water to drink. The chief official was obviously concerned because any deviation from Nebuchadnezzar's plan could mean his death. But Daniel was able to convince him to set up a test with him and his friends and after ten days see who was looking better than the rest of the boys. At the end of the ten days Daniel and his friends looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food (Daniel 1:15). I marvel at the wisdom and courage of Daniel at such a young age and what is so very clear is that Daniel was going to serve God and not men regardless of the consequences. The spiritual axiom is that if you honor God then God will honor you. This is confirmed for us in Daniel 10:12 when the angel of the Lord tells Daniel: "Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard and I have come in response to them". Here we see the discipline of leadership applied by Daniel not to operate in fear but in the sweet spot of the Lord's protective circle. How is this done?

- (1) Set our minds to gain understanding. Simply put we must choose to be a God seeker first, foremost, and always in our lives.
- (2) Humble ourselves before the Lord by surrendering our will for his and accepting his guidance and direction for our lives. Go with God's flow in our lives and do not resist the Spirit's workings.
- (3) Pray to God for help! Note that God hears our prayers when we seek him first and humble ourselves before him.

Daniel resolved to be God's person in a foreign land and in a strange world and it made all the difference for him and his friends. Daniel refused to operate out of fear and was bold toward God who made a way for Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. TODAY FATHER I WILL RESOLVE TO BE A GOD SEEKER FIRST AND

OBEY YOUR WILL FOR ME NO MATTER WHAT THE CONSEQUENCES JUST LIKE DANIEL BECAUSE I KNOW YOU WILL MAKE A WAY FOR ME.

Daniel 1:20-21 "In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom. And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus." (NIV)

What does it take to be ten times better in anything compared to others who are also talented, skilled, and learned? I'm telling you that it cannot be done without the supernatural involvement of the living God either in Daniel's era or today. God is the difference maker for all people, at all times, in all places. Do you have this rock solid confidence in the Lord sufficient to cling to him without fear, regret, or shame when facing both good and bad times? Do you stand up and acknowledge that you are a Christian and the motivation and intent of your heart is to live out Jesus Christ in your body through love? Our beloved Daniel and the other three Hebrew children were a formidable team indeed not because of their own prowess but because they were on the Lord's team in a strange land. Think about it that young men probably in their teens or early twenties were counselors to King Nebuchadnezzar the most powerful and cruel man on the planet. These boys were flying close to the flame but God protected them in every way so much so that they were acknowledged as being 10 times better than all the others. Why was this? How could it be that mere boys were recognized as excellent and elite in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar? Let's look at three key points:

- (1) Daniel was a man of prayer. In all things throughout the book of Daniel time and time again we see Daniel seeking God for wisdom. Do you regularly seek God for wisdom?**
- (2) Daniel was a man of courage. You cannot be a Christian without being bold in Christ (Proverbs 28:1, Acts 4:29, Philippians 4:13). Are you courageous or do you lay back, bury your talent, and shrink from the battle for the souls of men?**
- (3) Daniel was a man of tact and wisdom because he walked in the grace and favor of our Lord. Daniel was a disciplined soul and always sought to make the moment better and God's glory greater. Christians are admonished to adopt the same disposition in Colossians 4:5-6 and 1 Peter 3:15. Disciples are disciplined by Christ in the school of his word which is administered in the spirit of his love.**

When God is with us there are two clear markers for the righteous man and woman in their dealings with the world system as evidenced in the life of Daniel. First, it is in every matter that God showers his favor on us and not simply a few or every other one. God gives us consistency in our outreach to the world. Secondly, God gives us longevity, durability, and resiliency in our lives to withstand the inevitable ups and downs in life. Notice that Daniel outlasted Nebuchadnezzar and those that followed him and he was still serving God when the great King Cyrus showed up on the pages of history. Daniel survived because he thrived in all circumstance both good and bad because he was one with God. TODAY FATHER LET ME FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF DANIEL TO PUT GOD FIRST AND HAVE THE COURAGE TO STANDUP IN THIS DARK WORLD TO LIVE OUT CHRIST IN MY LIFE. AMEN!

Daniel

Read Daniel Chapter 2

Lesson Purpose: To understand how Daniel thought, made decisions, and lived before God and men within the Babylonian Empire under the kingship of the great Nebuchadnezzar. What we find is a blueprint for dealing with challenges we may face in this world none of them quite like what Daniel and his friends faced. Nebuchadnezzar has a dream that had God as its source and through Nebuchadnezzar's intense and brutal approach all of the wise men in Babylon were threatened with murder. Only Daniel has the favor of God in this thing and he seeks God in prayer and enlists his friends to do the same so that God may show them mercy and favor and provide the exact nature of the dream and what it meant. God provides this insight to Daniel who tells Nebuchadnezzar the dream and its interpretation. As a result the wise men of Babylon are spared and Daniel is elevated along with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to high office. But before this happens Nebuchadnezzar gives testimony to the preeminence of God. The big takeaway is to understand the nature of the extraordinary favor of the Lord in answer to prayer and to seek it out in our lives as Daniel did in his. May God Bless your study of Chapter 2.

Review of the Reading

1. What was Nebuchadnezzar's problem? (Daniel 2:1)
2. What did Nebuchadnezzar do about it? (Daniel 2:2)
3. What was the incentive Nebuchadnezzar gave his wise men for knowing and interpreting his dream? (Daniel 2:5-6)
4. What do the wise men admit to about all magic arts? (Daniel 2:11)
5. What was mild mannered Nebuchadnezzar's reaction to the wise men? (Daniel 2:12)

6. Who was assigned this unhappy task? (Daniel 2:14)
7. How did Daniel respond to Arioch? (Daniel 2:14)
8. Did Daniel go to the king? (Daniel 2:16)
9. What did Daniel then do? (Daniel 2:17-19)
10. What was the dream Nebuchadnezzar dreamed? (Daniel 2:31-35)
11. What did the dream mean? Daniel (2:36-45)
12. What was the rock and what did it mean? (Daniel 2:44)
13. What was Nebuchadnezzar's reaction to Daniel's interpretation?
(Daniel 2:46-49)

Thought Questions

1. Who gave Nebuchadnezzar the dream and why?
2. As you see how Daniel responded to this threat in his life what should we take away as a blueprint for what we should do under situations of great stress?
3. As you view this statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream what does it tell us about our God and history?

4. Daniel and his friends were given extraordinary favor by God. Does God still extend extraordinary favor to his people today?

Devotionals from Daniel 2

Daniel 2:14 “When Arioch, the commander of the king’s guard, had gone out to put to death the wise men of Babylon, Daniel spoke to him with wisdom and tact.” (NIV)

There is an old saying that power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. We have one fine case of the latter in King Nebuchadnezzar who threatened to kill all the wise men of Babylon because they failed not only to interpret his dream, but also they had to tell Nebuchadnezzar what his dream was. Now Nebuchadnezzar was apparently a spoiled brat of a man and when he got angry with you then heads would roll quite literally. So Arioch the commander of the king’s guard is assigned this unhappy task to round up the wise men of Babylon and murder them. I’m sure fear was rampant among the community of wise men which just happened to include Daniel and his friends. Do we find brave Daniel quaking in his boots? Do we find him paralyzed with fear and uncertainty as to what to do? Absolutely not since Daniel is God’s representative in this wicked kingdom and immediately he finds Arioch and asks a question of “why did the king issue such a harsh decree?” The devotional text speaks to the fact that Daniel spoke to him with wisdom and tact. God was with Daniel and guided his thinking and words and ensured that Arioch would give Daniel full favor. My friends there are no substitutes for the favor of the Lord in our lives. It is not a matter of our own efforts, energy, and intelligence, nor is it a matter of how lucky we are. When we humbly seek God’s favor and live righteously before him he will gladly bestow it on us. And in Daniel’s case Arioch, who really didn’t want to carry out this command, let Daniel go to speak to Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel went into the king and was obviously able to calm the King’s spirit, speak rationally to his mind, and convince him to have more time to interpret the King’s dream for him. What an awesome thing to do for all the wise men and their families, but most importantly Daniel was between a rock and a hard place and the ONLY way out was through the power of Almighty God. So without fear and in absolute control Daniel marches into this brutal and volatile king and buys time to interpret his dream. Daniel could not have possibly functioned in this manner without knowing that God would be there for him no matter what. What I want us to see about this devotional text and this young man Daniel is his ability to function effectively when no one else could. What was the reason for this difference? Simply put Daniel operated out of faith and not out of fear. Daniel was fearless in this world because he had absolute cosmic certitude that God was sufficient for any problem, challenge, or threat he faced. And as we shall soon see, Daniel was absolutely correct in his trust of our great God of the universe. FATHER I PROMISE TO FUNCTION IN FAITH AND NOT IN FEAR OF THE WORLD SYSTEM AS I ALLOW YOU TO DIRECT MY LIFE TODAY! YOUR STRENGTH IS SUFFICIENT FOR ME!

Daniel 2:17-18 “Then Daniel turned to his house and explained the matter to his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. He urged them to plead for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this

mystery, so that he and his friends might not be executed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven.” (NIV)

Do you see God as the source of every answer and of all power regardless of how difficult it may get in life? My father would always tell me that before any business meeting he would pray to God for help and in every case God never let him down. I chose to adopt the same practice throughout my professional life and I was always amazed at how God made a way for me. Daniel was an intimate of God’s and was absolutely certain when he returned to his house that night that he didn’t have the answer to the dream, but he knew who did! Our devotional text lays out the pattern for what went on that night when all of their lives hung in the balance. Daniel first returned to his house and explained the matter to his friends and urged them to plead for mercy from God with a specific prayer request that they not be executed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. During the night while Daniel was praying, the mystery was revealed to him by God. What was Daniel’s first reaction? Daniel praised God. I see a grand pattern here of encouraging one another to pray to God for specific outcomes and after receiving God’s answer praising God for his blessing. This scene in Daniel echoes the life practice of the Psalmist found in Psalms 92:2: “to proclaim your love in the morning and your faithfulness at night.” God expects us to practice starting our day with him in raising our request to the Father and praising him at night for his faithfulness in operating in our lives. Now that is a “best Christian practice” that all of us should commit to just as Daniel practiced it. I want all of us to understand that Daniel didn’t stop with himself but involved his three friends. Always give people the opportunity to join in your sincere prayers to God. In Daniel’s prayer of praise you can read the rock solid confidence of faith that God is in control. Daniel left his room that morning with a purpose to see Nebuchadnezzar and interpret his dream while giving God the glory for revealing it to him. Daniel always honored God even as God honored him. His testimony speaks to this practice in his life: “Daniel replied, “no wise man, enchanter, magician, or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mystery” (Daniel 2:27-28). What bold courage from Daniel than for him to enter the presence of Nebuchadnezzar without fear to speak truth to power. TODAY I WILL HANDLE WHATEVER COMES MY WAY KNOWING THAT GOD IS THE SOURCE OF HELP AND I WILL PLEAD FOR HIS HELP IN FAITH AND PRAISE HIM WHEN I RECEIVE IT.

Daniel 2:44 “In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will endure forever.” (NIV)

What is amazing to me is how God is sovereign over history and time. In the Book of Daniel we have a story of King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream that God has placed on the king’s mind. In the king’s search to understand the dream he comes close to murdering all of his wise men, and only Daniel is able under God’s inspiration to reveal the mystery dream to the king. The dream was about a statue who had a head of pure gold, its chest and arms were of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. Now that is most interesting because immediately we must have an answer as to those body parts and what they were made of symbolized. Daniel gave the interpretation to Nebuchadnezzar which foretold the history of the nations. The golden head

represented the Babylonian empire of King Nebuchadnezzar. The next kingdom represented by the chest and arms of silver was the Medo-Persian Empire. The third kingdom represented by the belly and thighs of bronze would rule over the earth which was Greece under Alexander the Great. The fourth kingdom of iron legs and feet partly of iron and baked clay was represented by the Roman Empire which would crush and break all other kingdoms. But then with the vision of this great statue there was a rock cut out not by human hands and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and obliterated the statue without a trace, but the rock that had done this became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth. From our devotional text we understand this rock to be the Kingdom of God, his Church, that will never be destroyed and it will endure forever. Here we have the sovereignty of God in history emphasized with Daniel's prophetic interpretation of the Lord's Church. This verse tells us much about the Church of Christ:

- (1) The church is from and of God and not men. It came about not by human initiative, influence, or effort but was strictly brought about from the mind of God and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. (Daniel 2:34)
- (2) The church will fill the whole earth just as the rock which became a mountain did.....we know the church is world-wide and Jesus Christ has commanded us to go to all nations (Matthew 28:19).
- (3) The church will never be destroyed and will be on this planet when the Lord comes again.

I cannot tell you if the United States will be here 100 years from now, but I can say with the proof of God's Word that his church will be here. God is sovereign over people, space, and time and his holy will must be accomplished. Whatever uncertainty exists in your life about institutions and their permanence; the Church of Christ will never be worn down, worn out, or obliterated from the face of this earth. All other kingdoms of men will come and go but the Kingdom of God will endure forever!
TODAY FATHER I WILL SERVE YOU IN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST KNOWING THAT YOUR CHURCH WILL NEVER FADE AWAY AND WILL BE HERE ON EARTH WHEN CHRIST RETURNS TO CLAIM HIS BRIDE.

Daniel

Read Daniel Chapter 3

Lesson Purpose: To understand how the three Hebrew young men remained faithful to their God in the extremity of life when threatened with violence and death by the great King Nebuchadnezzar. Some time has passed since Daniel interpreted the king's mystery dream and pointed out that Babylon was the head of gold. Apparently Nebuchadnezzar had forgotten those lessons on the sovereignty of God and decides to set up a statue which is a gold object 90 feet high and 9 feet wide. I believe the king was influenced by what he saw in Egypt and wanted to provide a common object of worship for his kingdom. The king had one problem when he summoned his governing elite because there were three Jews who would not bow down as directed by Nebuchadnezzar. This was quickly pointed out to the king by the other wise men that were jealous of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. When presented with the non-compliance to his edict, king Nebuchadnezzar became furious with rage and ordered the young men be thrown into a fiery furnace which had been built for the expressed purpose of encouraging everyone to bow down to the statue when the music played. Nebuchadnezzar ordered the furnace heated up 7 times greater than normal and he bound the three men and threw them into the furnace losing the soldiers who threw them into the fire when they were consumed by the flames. Then the king noticed something quite dramatic, three men were walking around in the flames with a fourth man who looked like the son of the gods. He immediately called for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to come out and to the amazement of all their bodies were not harmed nor their clothes scorched nor was the smell of fire on them. At that point Nebuchadnezzar ordered that the Jews be given special consideration and declared that no one say anything about their God. Nebuchadnezzar also at this time elevated the three men in the leadership of Babylon because "they trusted God and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than to serve or worship any god except their own God." What a testimony to the courage of faith in an ungodly world

sufficiently so to have these three men honored in the Hall of Fame of Faith when the writer states in Hebrews 11:34 "who through faith quenched the fury of the flames". What an awesome story of faith and courage, and may God Bless your study of Chapter 3.

Review of the Reading

1. What did Nebuchadnezzar do on the plain of Dura? (Daniel 3:1)
2. What did Nebuchadnezzar command his people to do? (Daniel 3:4)
3. What was the penalty for disobeying the king? (Daniel 3:6)
4. What happened when the music played? (Daniel 3:7-12)
5. How did Nebuchadnezzar react to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? (Daniel 3:13-15)
6. What did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego do when confronted by the great king Nebuchadnezzar? (Daniel 3:16-18)
7. Was the king happy with this response? (Daniel 3:19)
8. What did Nebuchadnezzar then do? (Daniel 3:19-23)
9. What amazed the king as he viewed the fiery furnace? (Daniel 3:25)
10. When the young men came out of the fiery furnace what was noticed about them? (Daniel 3:27)
11. How did Nebuchadnezzar respond to all of this? (Daniel 3:28-30)

Thought Questions

1. Does God expect Christians do risk death for their faith?

2. Who was the fourth man who looked like a son of the gods walking around in the fiery furnace?

3. What impressed Nebuchadnezzar most about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego?

4. What does this story tell us about walking by faith and not by sight?

Devotionals from Daniel 3

Daniel 3:17-18 "If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up." (NIV)

There is a rule that we should all well remember in the affairs of men that nothing is beyond the evil of man's thinking and action to elevate himself in the eyes of others. When I say "nothing" I sincerely mean it. That is why we all must be alert because we are living at the end time. Peter writes "The end of all things is near. Therefore, be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray." (1 Peter 4:7) My friends never misunderstand the challenges of the storms of life because we are either in a storm, coming out of a storm, or going into a storm. Storms will arise and we must face them as all men do, but shall we face them in our own squalid strength or with the awesome power and presence of almighty God? So in Daniel chapter 3 after the three young men Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are promoted to high places, we find Nebuchadnezzar building an image of gold 90 feet high and 9 feet wide and insisting that when anyone hears all sounds of music they must bow down to the image. Nebuchadnezzar had a penalty if you didn't comply with his edict which was to have yourself thrown into a fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar was in search of uniting all peoples in Babylon around a common object of worship. But there was a problem with the Hebrew children who resisted this as an idolatrous act of worship and refused to obey Nebuchadnezzar. Now their refusal to bow down was conveniently pointed out by some wise men of Babylon who were jealous that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had been promoted over them. This made Nebuchadnezzar furious with rage which had to be an intimidating thing to behold by these young men. But in calmness of spirit and discipline of soul they told the king that they didn't have to defend themselves in this matter because they obeyed a higher power. In fact they testified to Nebuchadnezzar that their God whom they serve would rescue them from Nebuchadnezzar's hand. Further, even if their God did not they refused to bow down to any image of gold the king had set up. This push back made Nebuchadnezzar very mad indeed and he ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual and he had soldiers bound the three young men and throw them into the fiery furnace. The text also informs us that the flames

killed the soldiers who threw the boys into the furnace. When I read this story I am overcome with emotion as to the holy integrity of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and their willingness to face death in a furnace rather than to defile themselves before their God who they had a personal relationship with and knew that their God had the power to deliver them from the king's evil scheme. This story teaches me three things about these boys and about our faith:

- (1) First, we must have a personal relationship with God that is a daily walk with great prayer and study of his word. God must be real to us and if he is not the storms of life will sort this out for each one of us. Life is about preparing for what follows and when the stress of the storm arrives will we be prepared for it?
- (2) A storm can show up unexpectedly and we must be able to face the storm with the help of God. If we haven't lived with him at our side, and followed him then we will crumble with fear when the storm comes crashing down. We will never stand firm in the faith when we are running here and there in a futile attempt to save our skin.
- (3) We must have the character to resist the world which requires an extraordinary ability to focus our minds, calm our spirit, and put steel into our hearts to resist the evil one regardless of the consequences. Do I really trust God or am I playing church?

TODAY I WILL REMEMBER THE HEBREW CHILDREN WHO REFUSED TO BE INTIMIDATED BY THE WORLD BUT CHOSE GOD OVER ALL OTHERS AND OBEYED HIM REGARDLESS OF THE CONSEQUENCES.

Daniel 3:26-27 "So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the fire, and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisors crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them." (NIV)

Have you ever been so unfortunate as to have had a fire in your home where belongings and clothes were burnt? I experienced this many years ago and what remains on my nose is the smell of burnt belongings and scorched clothes. Most of you know exactly what I am describing since there is no mistaking that smell! In our devotional text the great king Nebuchadnezzar had thrown Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the fire and was shocked to see four men walking around unharmed in the fiery furnace including one who looked like the gods. Nebuchadnezzar approached the furnace entrance and commanded the young men to come out immediately. As they exited the furnace all the elite gathered around and were amazed that there was no smell of fire on these boys. There we have the unmistakable hand of the living God who had delivered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego just as the boys said that God would. Faced with this reality the king praised God and honored the young men promoting them in the province of Babylon. Say what you will about Nebuchadnezzar but a Pharaoh he was not since when presented with the reality of God he would stop, think, humble himself, and praise the God of heaven. Nebuchadnezzar was truly God's vessel to further his purposes in this wicked world. My friends the sovereignty of God in the affairs of men is one of the most comforting confidences that we can have in Christ as children of God! This story of the three Hebrew children before the powerful, wicked, and violent Nebuchadnezzar always brings me to tears to see the simplicity and purity of their faith in God to protect them which gave them enormous freedom to

live out their example of faith. Will we do the same? Do we trust God enough to act or do we shrink back in fear of the world system? God will be with us anywhere at any time with anyone. Hold next to your heart mighty man and woman of God Isaiah 43:2: "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze." Do you think the young Hebrew men had read that verse from Isaiah? I think they did and they took God at his word with everything on the line. Will we walk unspotted in a dirty and soiled world or will we be contaminated with the world's schemes and devices? Will we have the courage to trust God in our fiery furnace? Now that is the material question for each one of us, is it not? TODAY FATHER I CHOOSE TO LIVE HOLY IN AN UNGODLY WORLD AND WILL WALK HAND IN HAND WITH YOU THROUGH MY FIERY FURNACE TO SECURE YOUR BLESSING AND VICTORY.

Daniel

Read Daniel Chapter 4

Lesson Purpose: To understand how God worked with Nebuchadnezzar, to impress on him God's sovereignty over the affairs of men. God's patience, love, and concern for Nebuchadnezzar is an aspect of this story that never opened itself to me until this study. Nebuchadnezzar was raised up by God for a purpose and that purpose was to bring destruction to the Jewish people for their unfaithfulness (Habakkuk 1:6). God also used Nebuchadnezzar to further his glory through Daniel. What I find important in understanding this relationship between God and Nebuchadnezzar is that every time presented with his own weakness and God's power Nebuchadnezzar chose to honor and glorify God including giving extreme favor to Daniel, Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego. Nebuchadnezzar was a great man and this story teaches me that God is no respecter of persons. God dealt with Nebuchadnezzar at his point of need which was the king's great pride. How God went about this in putting the great Nebuchadnezzar out in the fields of nature for seven years in his wrong mind is an extraordinary event in human history. We know Nebuchadnezzar was watched over by God for during his absence no one took his place. God was protecting Nebuchadnezzar so as to not destroy him but rather teach him about God's rule in this world! At the end of this fearful episode the great King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon stood before his nation Babylon and wrote: "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" (Daniel 4:37). It is a wonderful thing to see our God deal with Nebuchadnezzar severely and yet preserve him through this ordeal and gently return him to his kingship. God cares for each person no matter how great or small. This story about Nebuchadnezzar is one that we should draw comfort from for God is active in our life and will provide us every opportunity to submit our will to his. May God bless your study of chapter 4.

Review of the Reading

1. What did Nebuchadnezzar do for his people? (Daniel 4:1-3)
2. How did Nebuchadnezzar's dream impact him while lying in his bed? (Daniel 4:4-5)
3. Who did he finally choose to interpret the dream and why? (Daniel 4:8-9)
4. What were the details of Nebuchadnezzar's dream? (Daniel 4:10-18)
5. What was the key message from God to Nebuchadnezzar in his dream? (Daniel 4:17)
6. What was the interpretation of the king's dream by Daniel? (Daniel 4:19-27)
7. How did Daniel feel about providing this interpretation to the king? (Daniel 4:19)
8. What specifically will happen to Nebuchadnezzar and for how long? (Daniel 4:24-26)
9. Daniel told the king Nebuchadnezzar to repent in Daniel 4:27. Did the king repent? (Daniel 4:28-30)
10. What did God tell Nebuchadnezzar when the king was praising himself on the roof of the royal palace? (Daniel 4:32-33)
11. What did Nebuchadnezzar look like? (Daniel 4:33)
12. Was Nebuchadnezzar restored to his kingship? (Daniel 4:36)

Thought Questions

1. Did God love Nebuchadnezzar or did he just want to use him?
2. What was Nebuchadnezzar's big sin problem(s)?
3. What was the big lesson that God wanted to teach Nebuchadnezzar?
4. Do you think Nebuchadnezzar repented toward God?

Devotionals from Daniel 4

Daniel 4:27 "Therefore, O king, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue." (NIV)

How stubborn are you? Have you ever been presented with the truth of the facts and still stick to your own stubborn way and absolutely oppose to changing the trajectory of your life? God is a gracious and loving God who exercises extreme patience with all of us because we know in our hearts how we have resisted God in our past. So we come to our devotional text with a firm understanding of what Nebuchadnezzar faced in his heart when Daniel without fear encouraged him to humble himself toward God and repent of his self-willed wickedness. It is my judgment from my study of the word and the experience of my life that God always provides multiple warnings to each one of us in order that we might understand who he is and turn to him in humble trust and obedience. God doesn't have favorites but he favors those who need him. Nebuchadnezzar hears words of advice from Daniel a man that he respected and favored as Daniel urged him to repent and do right perhaps to avoid the devastating judgment of Nebuchadnezzar's Lord. What did Daniel advise him of doing? Look at Micah 6:8 and you will see the same advice for each one of us: "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." There it is for all of us to see the themes of justice, mercy, and humility are the foundation for Christian character. Nebuchadnezzar was well aware of the power of God having seen it displayed

through the lives of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Nebuchadnezzar knew what God wanted from him, Nebuchadnezzar knew that God had the power to fulfill this dream of terror, and yet he did nothing about it. In short Nebuchadnezzar stiffed the God of the universe and continued in his wickedness for another 12 months. Why do any of us ignore, disbelieve, or reject the word of God for our lives? I think there are three primary reasons:

- (1) We simply don't want to change and surrender control of our lives. Change requires humility, submission, and obedience and this cannot be achieved without a reverence for God in our lives to seek his help to change from our destructive ways.
- (2) We think we have plenty of time before anything really bad happens. As we shall see in Nebuchadnezzar's life all things can change for us in the blink of an eye. There are no time guarantees for men.
- (3) We refuse to reverence God and those things in the spiritual realm. We choose the mind of the flesh over the mind of the spirit, and therefore we fuzz up our thinking, desensitize ourselves to relationships, and slowly change our character toward self-focus alone. Simply put when we refuse to reverence God we are controlled by our sinful nature.

Even when we lock onto our stubborn and selfish will God provides speed bumps through friends, circumstances, intercessory prayer, and his word to warn us of the detour we have taken in our lives. Our refusal to choose God's way rather than our own way always leads to painful and devastating consequences in our lives. **TODAY, I WILL HEED GOD'S WARNINGS IN MY LIFE AND REPENT OF MY SUBBORN HEART AND RETURN TO MY GOD TO DO HIS WILL IN THIS WORLD. AMEN!**

Daniel 4:29-31 "Twelve months later, as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, he said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as my royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?" The words were still on his lips when a voice came from heaven, "This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you." (NIV)

As human beings we get into the habit of assuming this and assuming that about ourselves and our affairs which often leads us into a state of complacency, entitlement, and false security for our lives. The truth of the matter is that not one of us has a right to any material thing, person, or place outside our relationship with Jesus Christ. James writes in James 4:14: "Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a while and then vanishes." In our devotional text we find the great man, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon on the roof of the royal palace a year after having been warned by Daniel of God's intention toward Nebuchadnezzar. Apparently, Daniel's warning message was rejected by Nebuchadnezzar who bathes in self-adulation as he praises the work of his hands as a great builder of ancient civilization by stating that this was all because of his mighty power for the glory of his majesty. The Lord hates pride and arrogance (Proverbs 8:13), and we know as Christians that "pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall". (Proverbs 16:18) So the God of the universe having warned Nebuchadnezzar that he was sovereign and gave the nations to whomever he willed, spoke immediately to the king that his royal authority had been taken from him. Immediately Nebuchadnezzar was driven from his people

and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird. Nebuchadnezzar stayed in this sorry state for seven years just as Daniel had foretold and finally at the end of that time raised his eyes toward heaven and his sanity was restored. For seven long years Nebuchadnezzar was in his wrong mind but when he lifted his eyes toward heaven he was put back in his right mind and restored whole to his throne. Nebuchadnezzar praised the Most High and honored and glorified him who lives forever. This story is a beautiful example of God's care and love for all men but particularly his servant Nebuchadnezzar who God used to further his purposes in this world. I believe Nebuchadnezzar was loved by God and his dealing with the king reaped fruit in Nebuchadnezzar's life in repentance and praise for Almighty God.

Nebuchadnezzar would state as the final words recorded from his lips: "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." (Daniel 4:37) What can we learn from Nebuchadnezzar's pride and the suffering he endured because of it?

- (1) Always recognize that it is not us but God in us that will produce the victory in our lives.
- (2) Never engage in self-praise and false pride. Keep yourself sober in this world since we are not in control.
- (3) When bad things happen lift our eyes to heaven and keep them focused on God for from there and from there alone will come our help(Psalms 121:1-2)
- (4) No matter what happens in our lives good, bad, or ugly always praise God for his supernatural love and help that strengthens us through every trial, problem, and challenge.

Nebuchadnezzar offers a great example of leaning on the Lord and praising him following his great suffering.

Nebuchadnezzar was a cruel man who did much evil but he also was a man of integrity because God used him for his purposes effectively, and in every instance when God intervened in his life he responded with faith and praise in Almighty God. FATHER, TODAY MAY I DO JUSTICE, LOVE MERCY, AND WALK HUMBLY BEFORE YOU IN THIS WORLD AS I LIVE OUT THE SIMPLE LIFE OF TRUST AND PRAISE.

Daniel

Read Daniel Chapter 5

Lesson Purpose: To understand God's sovereignty in removing Babylon from the world stage and giving the kingdom to the Medes and the Persians. Time had passed and Nebuchadnezzar died which sent the Babylonian Empire into steep decline as the struggle for leadership was dominated by intrigue and murder. King Belshazzar is in power who was likely the son of Nabonidus who had murdered his way to power and then had retired to Arabia leaving his son in charge. Clearly Belshazzar lacked character and a moral compass because we find him in the midst of a significant threat to his kingdom getting drunk and profaning God by bringing the temple objects from Jerusalem into the banquet hall to drink wine from. So clearly Belshazzar is spineless, dissipated, and cowardly, and his miserable life is soon to end at the hand of Darius the Mede. As he was making merry an unknown hand appeared and wrote on the wall "MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN". Belshazzar was terrified and asked his wise men what these words meant, but none could answer him. His mother the Queen recommended Daniel who she knew from previous experience that Daniel had the spirit of the holy gods in him. Daniel was brought forward and he interpreted the dream for the king that God had numbered the days of his reign and brought them to an end, and Belshazzar had been weighed by God on the scales and found wanting. Finally, the kingdom of Babylon had been divided and given to the Medes and Persians. Although Daniel specifically told the king he did not want a reward, the king clothed him in a purple robe and a gold chain. That very night as God ordained, the great kingdom of Babylon fell and was no more as Darius the Mede took over the kingdom at the age of 62. This chapter is an important historical marker to explain the transition of rule to the Medo-Persian Empire but also to see that God is in control and gives kingdoms of men to whomever he will. It is also most important to see Daniel at an older age yet still using his gifts for a holy God. Daniel's life was remarkable in his consistency of faith and obedience before God. Very importantly for us today is to answer what the differences were between the

great Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar that should be noticed for our learning today. May God bless your study of chapter 5.

Review of the Reading

1. What was King Belshazzar doing in our story? (Daniel 5:1)
2. Did Belshazzar reverence the Lord? (Daniel 5:2-4)
3. What happened as the king and his nobles partied? (Daniel 5:5)
4. What was the king's reaction? (Daniel 5:6)
5. Who did the King seek to interpret the dream? (Daniel 5:7-9)
6. Who pointed Belshazzar to try Daniel and why? (Daniel 5:10-13)
7. Did Daniel want the King's reward? (Daniel 5:17)
8. Why did Nebuchadnezzar lose his throne and why was it restored to him? (Daniel 5:20-21)
9. What did Belshazzar think of God? (Daniel 5:22-23)
10. What did the inscription say and what did it mean? (Daniel 5:25-28)
11. What happened that very night? (Daniel 5:30-31)

Thought Questions

1. What did you notice as character differences between Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar?

2. Why wasn't Daniel used more as a counselor after Nebuchadnezzar?

3. Why did our Lord chose to write on the wall rather than just to tell King Belshazzar?

4. Why do you believe that God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men today?

Devotionals from Daniel 5

Daniel 5:12 "This man Daniel, whom the king called Belshazzar, was found to have a keen mind and knowledge and understanding, and also the ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve difficult problems. Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means." (NIV)

When I was in the Army there was a saying that was very useful for me in dealing with life during my Army years and to be truthful throughout the rest of my life. The saying was "Expected the unexpected." Now that is good advice for anyone of us since Jesus himself said that "each day has enough trouble of its own." (Matthew 6:34) So years have passed after Nebuchadnezzar's death and the Babylonian kingdom has been weakened through neglect, political intrigue, and assassination. The Medo-Persian Empire is literally at the gates of Babylon and we find the kingdom in the hands of a weak and dissipated king Belshazzar who is in the midst of a drinking binge with the ruling elite when suddenly fingers of a human hand wrote on the plaster of the wall MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN. Belshazzar was so frightened his knees knocked together but he could find no answers for the writing which terrified the king even more. The Queen (likely his mother) knew from past experience that one man could answer the mystery and that man was Daniel who was stuck somewhere in the corner of the palace unheard from and unused for years. But on that night of nights Daniel received the unexpected call because of his unblemished reputation. In this fearful time, the Queen said Daniel will know what to do. The point I want to make is that Daniel's character and reputation was still intact because of righteous living and steady obedience over the many years of his life. Because of this perseverance of faith when Daniel was called by God he was prepared and ready to fulfill God's purposes. Daniel made it clear that the writing on the wall signaled the defeat of Babylon since God had given the kingdom to the Medo-Persian Empire. Daniel demonstrated his integrity and courage in telling Belshazzar a most difficult truth that his kingdom was to be taken away from him. Further Daniel indicted Belshazzar with these words: "But you his son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled

yourself, though you knew all this.” So on this same night that the great Babylonian Empire falls Daniel is elevated to the highest status in Babylon. God will favor Daniel during this transition between kingdoms because of Daniel’s consistency of faith and perseverance even when all others ignore him. What does this teach us about Christian character?

- (1) First and foremost it teaches us that what is important is our daily walk with Jesus Christ our Lord which builds and sustains Christian character. During the quiet times of our lives we need to walk with Jesus to build faith just as Daniel did.
- (2) Secondly, we must be aware of our reputation and guard it for then God can use it for his purposes. Never yield to the weakness of the flesh or the appeal of the moment, but always remember to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.(James 1:27)
- (3) Finally, we must be ready for God’s use upon demand if he calls us. We must expect the unexpected and when God calls say “Here am I. Send me!” (Isaiah 6:8)

TODAY FATHER I WILL WALK WITH YOU IN YOUR WAY AND ALWAYS BE PREPARED FOR YOUR HOLY CALLING TO SERVE YOU WITH INTEGRITY, COURAGE, AND TRUTH REGARDLESS OF THE CONSEQUENCES.

Daniel 5:30 “That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain, and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two.” (NIV)

When God call us to himself, he calls us for a lifetime. There is no quitting on the Lord nor giving up and dropping out for those who take seriously their relationship with him as did Daniel. Life is a marathon and not a sprint and we can expect mountain peaks and valleys as we live out our lives. One confidence we have as Christians is God is with us and will never leave nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). What this meant to Daniel was the extraordinary favor of the Lord who brought Daniel to the highest visibility as the great wise man the very night that Babylon fell and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom. Daniel was still there serving God after Babylon was gone and after Nebuchadnezzar was gone. Daniel persevered because he was God’s person in a changing world. This is the material point for all of us in considering Daniel’s long life to recognize that he was consistent in his practice of faith and commitment to God throughout his life. As we shall see Daniel was a great man of spiritual integrity who served God regardless of what world power had dominance since to Daniel only God was sovereign over the affairs of men. Christian if we are to run the marathon of life we must be consistent and not pulled by the world’s extremes demonstrating a quiet confidence in our God just like Daniel. If we are to be consistent over a lifetime we must be consistent each day and that can only come about by the practice of faith. There are four truths to make this a reality in our life just as Daniel made it a reality in his:

- (1) We must practice the presence of God. Daniel throughout his life would turn to God first in prayer and make every decision based upon his relationship with him.
- (2) We must practice the courage of our faith regardless of the consequences. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego never were disloyal to God because of fear. They were bold in the Lord!

- (3) We must be prepared for the unexpected and respond immediately and obediently to God's call for us. Daniel throughout his life was ready on call at God's point of need to serve and we too must be ready.**
- (4) We must remember the boundary of the day. Live in today where God is there to help you. One day at a time is all we have and we must stay firm in our faith for that day. Daniel lived one day at a time and because of that he persevered with God's strength over the years.**

FATHER, HELP ME TODAY TO STAND FIRM IN MY FAITH WITH COURAGE OF HEART SO THAT I WILL NOT FEAR TO OBEY WHEN YOU CALL ME TO SERVICE.

Daniel

Read Daniel Chapter 6

Lesson Purpose: To understand God's unchanging presence in our life by understanding God's rescue of Daniel from the mouths of lions. In our study chapter we find Daniel now an old man with some scholars putting his age in the eighties. Daniel is seen as a gifted leader because Darius who many believe to be the great king Cyrus recognizes the wisdom and intellect of Daniel and plans to make him one of three administrators over satraps who were assistants to the king. Now Daniel represents a real problem for these satraps who would rather have Daniel look the other way when they make deals for graft. Daniel has too much integrity for that so because of envy, greed, and a desire for control they hatch a plot to entrap Daniel in a way that will end his threat to their plans once and for all. However, they soon realized that the only basis on which to charge Daniel on was something to do with his God. With that thought in mind they work up an edict that would put to death anyone who prayed to any god or man except to king Darius. This clever group got Darius to sign it and then when the implications became clear in regards to Daniel, the king immediately regretted it. Regardless, when Daniel learned of the king's decree he went home and opened his windows to pray to God in the direction of Jerusalem three times a day as was his daily practice. Daniel had to pray and nothing not even the threat of death was going to interfere with that practice. It is a wonderful thing that these evil doers when they went to arrest Daniel found him praying and asking God for help! Then Daniel is brought to the king and it is clear that the king understands his mistake and appeals to Daniel's God to protect him as a stone is used to seal Daniel in the den of lions. All night the king wrestles with the dreadful thought of his foolish action resulting in Daniel being thrown into the lions' den. After a sleepless night the king rushes to the den of lions only to find Daniel secure with no wounds. The text makes it clear Daniel was saved because he trusted God (Daniel 6:23). The king was brutal in throwing all those who perpetrated this cruel entrapment on Daniel including their wives

and children into the lions' den where they were all mauled and killed. Darius issues a decree praising the living God and the chapter ends with Daniel enjoying prosperity during the reigns of Darius and Cyrus the Persian. Daniel was a servant of God and God used him in mighty ways because Daniel was a God seeker above all else. May God bless your study of chapter 6.

Review of the Reading

1. How was the Medo-Persian Empire organized? (Daniel 6:1-2)
2. What kind of person was Daniel? (Daniel 6:3)
3. Were some people jealous of Daniel? Why? (Daniel 6:3-4)
4. These men finally decided to accuse Daniel about what? (Daniel 6:5)
5. So how did these men decide to entrap Daniel? (Daniel 6:6-9)
6. What did Daniel do about this? (Daniel 6:10-11)
7. Did the king realize that he had been duped by these half too clever satraps when he realized his edict was used simply to entrap Daniel? (Daniel 6:12-16)
8. How did the king feel about Daniel during the night he was in the lions' den? (Daniel 6:18)
9. What happened early the next morning? (Daniel 6:19-23)
10. What happen to Daniel's accusers? (Daniel 6:24)
11. What is the theme of Darius's decree about the God of heaven? (Daniel 6:25-27)

12. What happened to Daniel? (Daniel 6:28)

Thought Questions

1. How important to God is our reputation among unbelievers using Daniel as an example?
2. How important to our consistency of faith is a discipline prayer life like Daniel's?
3. What does Daniel teach us about the life of faith the night he was thrown into the lions' den?
4. The Bible makes it clear that Daniel prospered under kings Darius and Cyrus. Do you believe prosperity is a consequence of faith?

Devotionals from Daniel 6

Daniel 6:5 "Finally these men said, "We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of God." (NIV)

Someone once asked if you were being tried in a court of law for being a Christian would there be enough evidence to convict you? In our devotional text we find the answer to that question for Daniel. Daniel was an extremely gifted and powerful man who enjoyed a close, intimate, and personal relationship with God. Daniel's wisdom and power came directly from God and it is clear that Daniel had a disciplined practice of faith that included prayer three times daily in the same room at the same times and his accusers knew exactly that fact about Daniel as they set to entrap him. Daniel was a man of prayer discipline who sought the presence of his God daily. Prayer was an essential element of Daniel's life and no one person, law, or thing was going to keep Daniel away from his time alone with God. Daniel was a great man and leader so the accusers could find nothing in his character, conduct, or communication to bring him down so they concocted an evil thing to use Daniel's commitment to

prayer to entrap and destroy him. These men were able to persuade the king to sign a decree that made it unlawful to pray to anyone other than king Darius. The accusers knew how Daniel would react to this decree and he did just that. Upon hearing of the decree Daniel went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened to Jerusalem and prayed to God giving him thanks. In fact when his evil accusers came to arrest Daniel they found him praying and asking God for help. I have given mentoring advice to many over my life and one of the most important transfer thoughts is to recognize that if we will honor God then God will honor us. Daniel is one of the Bible's greatest examples of this reality. Notice that Darius meets Daniel the night Babylon falls and the next thing we know Darius was ready to appoint Daniel one of three administrators (Daniel 6:2). Then we find that Daniel possessed exceptional qualities so much so that the king planned to set him over the entire kingdom. It is clear from the text (Daniel 6:4) that his accusers knew Daniel was a man of integrity who would not compromise his ethical or spiritual beliefs to allow for Darius's officials to get rich because of their own greed. So to them Daniel had to be dealt with and they took advantage of king Darius but forgot one key point: Darius liked Daniel a lot because of God's favor. We can learn much about the Christian life when we examine the example of Daniel.

- (1) If God is for us who can be against us? (Romans 8:31) These evil accusers were half too smart because they forgot it was not about Daniel, but rather, it was about God in Daniel.
- (2) Faith drives out fear and gives us the freedom to obey God and leave all the consequences to him. My friends the only way to the place of courage and no fear is through the love of God which drives out all fear. (1 John 4:18)
- (3) Finally, finish strong in the Lord. Daniel was now an old man likely in his eighties but he was still too much for others because he was so close to his God. What was the secret of Daniel's life? He took it one day at a time and practiced prayer which is faith spoken consistently over his many years in captivity. Daniel refused to be shaken by anyone including the great king Darius.

Daniel's consistency of prayer was a habit that allowed him to respond rightly even with threats of violence and death. Prayer was a difference maker for Daniel and if we are going to be convicted of our Christianity it must be a difference maker for us. TODAY FATHER I WILL GO TO THE UPPER ROOM IN MY MIND AND PRAY TO YOU THREE TIMES EVERY DAY SEEKING YOUR HELP. AMEN! Weekly Devo

Daniel 6:10-11 "Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help." (NIV)

There are many things we can admire about Daniel but in my judgment the most important lesson we learn from Daniel is the role of consistency in his practice of faith. Daniel had a practice of discipline in his walk with God. He prayed in the same place, facing the same direction, at the same time every single day of his life. The only reason the evil accusers could find Daniel was because they knew exactly where he would be at given times during his day. The only other Bible person who had this same consistency in his daily spiritual practices recorded in the Word was our Lord who had a practice

of praying to God very early in the morning (Mark 1:35). In fact Judas knew where to find Christ when he betrayed him because of Jesus's consistency of the discipline prayer life where he went out as usual with his disciples to the Mount of Olives (Luke 22:39). The example of godly habits in stressful moments cannot be underestimated in helping us to order our lives, collect our thoughts, and calm our minds in turbulent and changing times. We now live in the most perilous of times with the pace of change accelerating all around us, and it has never been more important to have habits of prayer and praise and study just as Daniel did so many years ago. Consistent practices produce courage in chaotic times because they enable us to work out unexpected challenges in our lives within the framework of our faith in the living God. As Christians we must also take note that the focus of Daniel's prayer was on asking God for help! Now that is encouraging to me that such a man of wisdom, courage, and faith was utterly dependent upon help from God. All of us have our troubles in this life and absolutely no one is exempt, and we know as we live our lives that those we love and who are close to us need the help and strength of the Lord's hand too. So when we pray for the trouble we are in or for others let us remember that these prayers count with God and mean everything to us and those we intercede for (James 5:13, 16). As Diane and I traveled through the southwest we spent some time with an old high school friend I knew 40+ years ago. As we discussed lives over an open high school year book his eyes misted and he said "what do people do who don't have a God in their lives to help them?" I said softly "I don't know". If we are to boost our confidence in the Lord and live examples of encouraging faith for others we must practice consistency in our spiritual lives as Daniel did or when people really need us we won't be able to offer a vision and confidence for the future because we will go wobbly in the absolute conviction that no matter what happens our God is in control! **LORD I WILL PRACTICE A CONSISTENT FAITH BY PRAYERFUL HABITS, A DEPENDENT SPIRIT, AND A THIRST FOR YOUR WORD TODAY AND EVERY DAY BECAUSE I WILL NOT GROW WOBBLY IN MY CONFIDENCE IN YOUR STRENGTH.**

Daniel 6:23 "The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God." (NIV)

As Christians we are to make a difference in this world by being examples of faith, love, and courage. When we fulfill this role as Christians then people will take notice and praise our God and respect our loyalty to him. It happens over and over again in scripture when someone or several stand firm and let their light of faith shine in a dark world. The Sanhedrin took note of the courage of Peter and John who were ordinary men by human standards inspired to extraordinary actions, and remarked that these men had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13). I love the story of the Gerasene man possessed by demons that Jesus healed and allowed the demons to go into the pigs who promptly threw themselves over the cliff into the Sea of Galilee. When the people gathered around and saw this man sitting at Jesus's feet, dressed and in his right mind; they knew Jesus had made a difference and they were afraid (Luke 8:35). This principle or secret of making a difference is found in 2 Corinthians 3:18 wherein referring to Moses who was changed physically as his face was radiant because he spent time with the Lord on the mountain; Paul says the same will happen to us if we focus on the Lord and reflect his glory as we too will be transformed into his likeness and ever increasing glory. If we will stay close to God and focus on him then we will be transformed in extraordinary ways that will bring

glory to God because people will see our godly character and recognize the good deeds of our lives of faith. This is the material point from our devotional text that Daniel was a radiant man of faith because he spent time with God and the great king Darius knew that! My friends, people will know who we are when we will act on God's behalf without fear or timidity. If we are to be recognized as Christians in this world we must have a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline (2 Timothy 1:7). Daniel made a difference and Darius knew it was because of Daniel's walk with God. If we too will take a stand like Daniel then the world will notice us in that same way. The issue is always about trusting in God through tough times. All too often when times get hard and the day long, we succumb to fear and break and run. If we grow wobbly and give up on God we will be known all right, but only as those who were half-hearted and weak-willed Christians. Daniel calls us to a life of trust even in the den of lions. None of us will get out of this world alive, and when we cross to the other side only one question will matter: Did we live for God courageously so that those around us knew we made a difference because of God's power in our lives just as Daniel did? FATHER GIVE ME THE COURAGE THAT COMES FROM TRUSTING IN YOU THAT WILL ENABLE ME TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THIS WORLD FOR YOUR NAME AND GLORY.

Daniel

Read Daniel Chapter 7

Lesson Purpose: To understand that God is knowledgeable and sovereign in the affairs of men and has ensured our victory in Christ over the forces of Satanic evil. This chapter of Daniel represents a change from the story of Daniel and his three friends and moves into the area of various visions and their interpretations. To say that everybody has an opinion of this vision wouldn't be too far from fact. However, my view of teaching Daniel is focused on understanding what God has revealed to us in Holy Scripture and how it gets applied in our individual lives today. Chapter 7 is out of chronological order and should precede chapter 5. Daniel is provided a vision from God during the first year of Belshazzar's reign in about 552 BC prior to the fall of Babylon to the Medes and the Persians. In this vision which is closely correlated with but different from the vision of chapter 2, Daniel sees four great beasts coming out of the turbulent chaos of a churning sea. The first beast was like a lion, the second beast was like a bear, the third beast was like a leopard, and the fourth beast which was more terrifying and frightening than the others because it had large iron teeth to devour its victims and it trampled underfoot what was left. Very strangely Daniel saw that this terrifying beast had ten horns. As Daniel was thinking about this there appeared another smaller horn which caused three other horns to be uprooted. This smaller horn had eyes and a mouth like that of a man and spoke boastfully. Then Daniel saw a throne room and one who looks like the Ancient of Days takes his seat to judge as the books were opened. The little horn spoke boastfully even in front of the Ancient of Days before the beast was slain and thrown into the blazing fire. At this moment Daniel saw one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven and approached the Ancient of Days. The son of man was given authority, glory, and sovereign power. All men worshiped him for his dominion is everlasting and will never be destroyed or pass away. This vision was extraordinarily troubling for Daniel who asked for its meaning from one standing there. What Daniel was told is that the beasts

represent kingdoms that will rise from this earth. But the saints of the most will receive the kingdom which can never be destroyed and possess it forever. Daniel wanted to know more about this fourth beast and the little horn, and as he spoke he watched as the horn waged war against the people of God until the Ancient of Days intervened and pronounced judgment on behalf of the saints of the Most High. The explanation of the fourth beast that appears on the earth will be different than all others, and even one king represented by the little horn will arise to oppress the saints for a periodic time, times, and half a time (most scholars think $3 \frac{1}{2}$ years). But ultimately the fourth beast and little horn will be completely destroyed, and the sovereignty, power, and greatness of all kingdoms will be handed over to the saints of the Most High and all will worship and obey the son of man. Daniel turned pale and was so deeply troubled he kept the matter to himself. This chapter and in fact much of the 2nd part of Daniel (chapters 7-12) is a fertile battleground for those of a pre-millennial persuasion, however, if you get anything out of chapter 7 get one thing: His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom and all rulers will worship and obey him (Jesus Christ). May God bless your study of chapter 7.

Review of the Reading

1. When did Daniel have this dream? (Daniel 7:1)
2. What was the dream? (Daniel 7:2)
3. What was each of the beasts like? (Daniel 7:4-7)
4. Why was the fourth beast more terrifying than the others? (Daniel 7:7)
5. What was the little horn like? (Daniel 7:8,11)
6. Who is the Ancient of Days? (Daniel 7:9-10)
7. Who is the son of man? (Daniel 7:13-14)

8. What was the little horn doing as Daniel watched? (Daniel 7:21)
9. What happened to the little horn? (Daniel 7:22)
10. The saints will be handed over to the king who is represented by the little horn for time, times, and a half of time. What does this mean? (Daniel 7:25)
11. Who will be handed over the sovereignty, power, and kingdoms of under the whole heaven?
12. Who will be worshipped and obeyed by the rulers? (Daniel 7:27)
13. Although Daniel was greatly troubled did he share this dream with the king? (Daniel 7:28) Why his motivation in this regard?

Thought Questions

1. Why do beasts represent the kingdoms of the earth?
2. Who in history is the little horn?
3. What is the key lesson for today's Christian from this chapter?
4. Who do you think the term "son of man" refers to and why?

Devotionals from Daniel 7

Daniel 7:9-10 "As I looked, "thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with

fire, and its wheel were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated and the books were opened.”

Have you ever had to go to court and stand before a judge? Once upon a time I had to witness such proceedings and I was awestruck with the power society has placed in the hands of the judge to review evidence and make decisions on the lives of people and their futures. Another feeling that I experienced was that in many instances good people had made mistakes and had to pay a price. The impact of all of this put a chill down my spine. Can you imagine if a local criminal court filled me with such apprehension and fear what it will be like for each one of us when we face the judgment of God? Many in this world think the judgment is a figment of someone’s imagination and completely reject the notion of an accountability of one’s life toward a sovereign God. But for those who believe the word of God we know what Hebrews 9:27 states: “Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.” Yes, there will be a judgment and the proceedings in Daniel 7:9-10 are the same of those in Revelation 20. God will judge the living and the dead and in his grace, mercy, and love will hold us all accountable for the deeds we have done and haven’t done. When we view this picture of our God the Ancient of Days as he takes his place on the throne attended by thousands and thousands and the books are thrown open we know that fear will be in our hearts unless we take the time to know our God with the living and not wait until that time where every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:10-11). Daniel was allowed to have a vision of our awesome God in sovereign control of the nations and the future. When we see this picture of the Ancient of Days what thoughts flood your mind? I have three:

- (1) The eternity of God who exists outside of time. As his creatures we are all time bound but not our God and this should be a signpost to our submissive obedience to his will.
- (2) The awesome power of God who is above all and through all and has all power and authority in his person to make judgments on all men.
- (3) The holiness of God who is clothed in white and his hair is white like wool. God is holy, holy, holy and none of us on our own can reach him or touch him.

No this will be a terror filled moment IF we are not in Christ when the books are opened. But happily Hebrews 9:27 doesn’t leave the reality of the judgment alone but combines it with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to take away the sins of many, and with the great news he is coming back not to bring death but salvation to those who wait for him. When the books are opened the only thing that will mean anything will be “am I in Jesus Christ?” That alone will be the difference on judgment day between eternal death and eternal life. Are you ready to meet your God the Ancient of Days? **FATHER GIVE ME TODAY ANOTHER CHANCE TO BE IN CHRIST THROUGH BAPTISM AND FAITHFUL OBEDIENCE TO JESUS. THANK YOU FOR THE BLOOD OF CHRIST AND FOR YOUR SAVING GRACE.**

Daniel 7:27 “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.”

I find it amazing that Daniel’s thinking and Spirit inspired writing is so apocalyptic in terms of its reach and meaning that this Old Testament prophet has produced in the modern era countless debate and critique of what his writings in the 2nd half of Daniel really mean. A few weeks ago I stopped by Kyle Field the football home of the fighting Texas Aggies to look at the Aggies 2011 edition. The Aggies are an up and down bunch that can be a great joy on a Saturday afternoon or break your heart depending upon whether or not they win. So as I enter the 2011 football season I have great expectations for A&M, but know I must prepare for afternoons of pain as well. There is no guarantee of victory if you are an Aggie rooter. But in our devotional text Daniel maps out the cosmic certitude of the victory of the saints, the people of the Most High. Daniel makes it clear that the saints are on the winning side at all times and in all ways because God is in control. The outcome of all of this according to Daniel is that the saints will enjoy a kingdom that is everlasting where all rulers will worship and obey God who will establish his holy, peaceful, and eternal rule. To find this soaring spiritual thought of faith in the Book of Daniel is such an encouragement to me for it exposes the thinking and focus of Daniel’s mind on the great struggle that continues into our own time between good and evil. What Daniel shouts to us is that the saints of God always are on the winning team. Paul speaks to the same thought with a question in Romans 8:31: “If God is for us, who can be against us?” The inevitable direction of history is found in Revelation 11:15 when loud voices in heaven say that the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever. So our question is do we want to be on the winning side or not? In Daniel’s life it was clear each and every step of the way he chose the God of the universe and because of that Daniel was so highly esteemed by the heavenly order that he was given these visions of the great victory and overcoming by the people of God. Why should we squander the one precious opportunity to pass through this life? Please let us simply commit ourselves to the Lord. The cosmic outcome is certain and the incredible benefits are real by choosing the kingdom of God and not the kingdoms of men. When Joshua stood before the Israelites that day and challenged the Israelites to choose for themselves this day whom they will serve it was a choice between being right or wrong and between winning and losing in life (Joshua 24:15). Only the choice of God secures his powerful presence in our lives and the blessing of eternal life along with it. Today choose God and not the world! TODAY FATHER I CHOOSE THE WINNING SIDE SINCE I UNDERSTAND THAT ONLY JESUS CHRIST HAS SECURED MY FUTURE AND I SURRENDER ALL THAT I HAVE TO BE SAINT OF THE MOST HIGH!

Daniel

Read Daniel Chapter 8

Lesson Purpose: To understand that God reigns supreme even when events on earth seem out of control and under the domination of the world system. Chapter 8 finds us in the 3rd year of Belshazzar's reign or about 550 BC. Chapter 8 is out of sequence with chapter 6 but does follow chronologically chapter 7. Daniel received another vision from the Lord and this one is very specific in terms of what God wanted Daniel to know. Remember Daniel's period of service is primarily set in the 6th century BC and the events that are to unfold in the vision are two to four hundred years into the future during the 4th to 2nd century BC. The vision God revealed to Daniel was that of a ram with two horns one greater than the other standing by the Uli canal near the Medo-Persian Empire's citadel of Susa. This ram had very long horns but one was longer than the other. The ram charged toward the west, south, and north, and no animal could stand against him. Suddenly a goat with a prominent horn between his eyes came forth from the west crossing the whole earth without touching the ground, and he attacked the two horn ram knocking him down and trampling on him. The ram was helpless before the goat. The goat became very great, but at the height of its powers the horn was broken off and replaced by four prominent horns. Out of the horns came a small horn which grew in power to the south and to the east and to the beautiful land (Israel). This small horn grew until it took on the heavenly powers even setting itself up against the Prince of host. The small horn desecrated the temple and stopped the daily worship and prospered in everything it did and threw truth to the ground. Daniel overheard the question of how long will it take for this vision to be fulfilled? The answer is that it would take 2300 evenings and mornings or about 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ years until the sanctuary will be reconsecrated. Then Gabriel tells Daniel the meaning of the ram which represents the kings of Media and Persia. Further Gabriel said that the goat represented the king of Greece (Alexander the Great) and the large horn between the eyes is him. The four horns that replace the one large horn that is broken off is replaced

by four horns that represent four kingdoms without the same power of the one large horn. When the Israelite nation has become completely wicked a stern faced king, a master of intrigue, will arise and become strong not by his own power and cause great devastation to the people of God. This king will even stand against the Prince of princes, and then will be destroyed. At the end of the vision Daniel was exhausted by the ordeal and appalled at the vision. Yet Daniel went on about the king's business. May God bless your study of chapter 8.

Review of the Reading

1. When did Daniel have a vision? (Daniel 8:1)
2. What was the vision? (Daniel 8:3-12)
3. Describe the ram? (Daniel 8:3-4)
4. Describe the goat? (Daniel 8:5-6)
5. What happened to the large horn at the height of its power? (Daniel 8:8)
6. What replaced the large horn? (Daniel 8:8)
7. Describe this little horn? (Daniel 8:9-12)
8. How long will this go on? (Daniel 8:14)
9. Who explained the vision to Daniel? (Daniel 8:16-17)
10. Who did the ram represent? (Daniel 8:20)
11. Who did the goat represent? (Daniel 8:21)

12. What does the little horn do? (Daniel 8:23-25)
13. What was Daniel's reaction to the vision? (Daniel 8:27)

Thought Questions

5. Why was Daniel given the privilege to receive this vision?
6. Who was the little horn in history and what made this person so dangerous?
7. Do we allow evil into our lives because of our own rebellion? (Daniel 8:23)
8. Daniel was exhausted by this vision. When we are exhausted how should we refresh ourselves and does Chapter 9 gives us special insight on this in Daniel's life?

Devotionals from Daniel 8

Daniel 8:27 "I, Daniel, was exhausted and lay ill for several days. Then I got up and went about the king's business. I was appalled by the vision; it was beyond understanding." (NIV)

Have you ever been through a stressful time and as you came out of it you were overwhelmed with exhaustion mentally, emotionally, and physically? In our devotional text Daniel receives a vision of events from God that will impact the future of world history and as he seeks to understand its meaning and implications he is drained of all his power and strength as a human being and collapses in a state of exhaustion and illness. What does one do when we find ourselves at the end of our ability to move forward? One thing we should do is sleep and allow the healing process to begin and get back

to eating our meals as Elijah did in his great time of stress when fleeing Jezebel when he had become exhausted (1 Kings 19). It is clear that God knows our limitations and he expects us to take care of ourselves to be prepared for his service. One thing we don't do is make decisions whenever we are too:

1. **H**ungry
2. **A**ngry
3. **L**onely
4. **T**ired

As you can see we have an acrostic spelling out HALT to remind us that making decisions when we are exhausted and ill is not the wisest thing to do. Daniel gives us a great example of how we should respond to these overwhelming moments when we must rest and relax.

- (1) Daniel slept as the text clearly records that he lay ill for several days to replenish himself.
- (2) Daniel then got up and went about the king's business as he got back to his life's routine and activity. Daniel didn't grow discouraged and depressed and drop out of life, but quickly got himself back into his life's flow.
- (3) It is also clear that Daniel spent time in reading and meditating on the word of God as we immediately find in Daniel 9:1-2. In fact as a result of coming out of his exhausted state, Daniel finds a great insight into the word of God that would drive the expectations of the exiles to return to Jerusalem from Babylonian captivity as God had revealed to Jeremiah.

If Jesus can sleep in a storm absolutely confident of God's power to care for and protect him, we too need to relax in the Lord and never put ourselves in an overworked, exhausted, and burned out state. Relax in the Lord! TODAY FATHER I WILL SEEK BALANCE IN MY LIFE THAT KEEPS MY BODY AND SPIRIT FRESH AND RELAXED IN ABSOLUTE CONFIDENCE THAT YOU WILL BLESS ME AS YOU PROMISED IN YOUR WORD. AMEN!

Daniel

Read Daniel Chapter 9

Lesson Purpose: To understand that God is faithful to his promises and to his people through time and circumstances. Daniel is an old man as the Medo-Persian Empire comes to power with the fall of Babylon. Daniel was a spiritual man of prayer and clearly was familiar with the word of God as we see in this chapter. Daniel understands from Jeremiah 25 that the captivity was to last for 70 years, and as result of Babylon's fall he prays to God for the return of his people to Jerusalem. Daniel's prayer took place about 539 BC the very time of Cyrus's decree authorizing the Jews to return to Jerusalem. Daniel's prayer is one of the most revealing prayers in the Bible and it exposes the intimacy between Daniel and his God. Daniel was a solitary figure that spent much time alone with his God and you can readily see this in his words and passion of his prayer before God on behalf of his people. What a great example of intercessory prayer for his people and their future and he uses the Word of the Living God in shaping his prayer. While Daniel was still praying the angel Gabriel came to Daniel in swift flight from God at the time of the evening sacrifice. Gabriel tells Daniel that he is highly esteemed and that God sent him with an answer as soon as Daniel began to pray as to the timing of these events. What ensues in this text is a most difficult prophetic passage which has produced much study and many opinions as to what these times mean. Let me say straight away that no one interpretation will fit a chronological application which leads me to an understanding of a symbolic interpretation. I believe the 70 weeks is divided into three phases:

1. Phase I-7 weeks to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple.
2. Phase II-62 weeks until the Anointed One (Jesus Christ) is cutoff (killed).
3. Phase III-1 week that includes the death of Christ which put an end to the efficacy of sacrifice and offering in the temple. It also predicts the

fall of Jerusalem and its destruction in AD 70 by the Romans under the leadership of Titus.

There is no method that allows the mathematics to be validated but the intent of the explanation to Daniel by Gabriel seems clear to me in looking at it from the rear view mirror of history. I do reject a pre-millennial view of this passage that says the 70th week has not arrived yet. I believe the 70th week was brought to closure with the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of temple worship.

I find it such a wonderful thing to think that God thought so much of Daniel that he wanted to give him insight into how transgression would be finished, sin would end, wickedness would be atoned for, and how everlasting righteousness would be brought. This answer is only found in Jesus Christ and his death on a cross, his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension to his throne at the right hand of God. I am readily opened to robust discussion on this vision, but you have the framework of my own understanding and judgment on the matter. May God bless your study of chapter 9.

Review of the Reading

1. When did Daniel understand from Jeremiah that the desolation of Jerusalem would last 70 years?(Daniel 9:1-2)
2. When Daniel was reading Jeremiah and the end of the captivity entered his mind what did he do? (Daniel 9:3)
3. What kind of God did Daniel worship? (Daniel 9:9)
4. How did Israel respond to God? (Daniel 9:11)
5. Did the Lord hesitate to bring disaster on his people? (Daniel 9:14)
6. Why do we make requests of God? (Daniel 9:18)

7. Who is *Gabriel*? (Daniel 9:21)
8. Why did *Gabriel* come immediately to Daniel? (Daniel 9:23)
9. What does the “seventy of sevens” decree for the people of God? (Daniel 9:24)
10. Who does the Anointed One refer to? (Daniel 9:25)
11. What does destroying the city and the sanctuary refer to? (Daniel 9:26)
12. Who will put an end to sacrifice and offering? (Daniel 9:27)

Thought Questions

1. Should we pray using God's scripture to appeal to God as Daniel did?
2. Do you believe in angels such as *Gabriel*?
3. Do you see Jesus Christ referred to in the explanation of time given to Daniel by *Gabriel* on the “seventy of sevens”?
4. What does the abomination that causes desolation refer to?

Devotionals from Daniel 9

Daniel 9:2-3 “in the first year of his (Darius) reign, I Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the Lord given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sack cloth and ashes.” (NIV)

Daniel was above all else a man of prayer who always humbled himself before his God. No matter what the time or life circumstance Daniel would always seek his God for revelation, direction, and help. That was Daniel’s practice of faith and spiritual discipline and in our devotional text we find Daniel praying consistent with his practice of seeking God’s answers and help for all things. In this instance we find Daniel during the first year of Darius who defeated the great Babylonian Empire and shook the foundations of world history. The great Babylon had fallen and this caused Daniel to read the scriptures intently in an attempt to understand the duration of the Jews captivity. As he read the prophet Jeremiah’s writings he found in Jeremiah 29:10 what he was searching so urgently for: “This is what the Lord says: “When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place.” What great news! Daniel’s first and only reaction was to seek God out in prayer with humility of spirit and plead for his people that God would be true to his promise. What I want us to sense is the passion Daniel had as he interceded for the Jewish people so we might adopt the same as we practice intercessory prayer. Here are some key points of interceding for others that we should learn from Daniel:

- (1) Be in the word of God and use God’s promises to his people as part of our prayers. Daniel did this because God had promised it to Jeremiah, and God has promised his people in the Christian age much and we should pray for the promises to be unleashed in the lives of those we intercede for.(Daniel 9:3)**
- (2) Approach God recognizing that he is in control and is faithful to all he says while caring for us with his great love. The love of God is a mighty force of confidence in the human life. (Daniel 9:4)**
- (3) Recognize that we are totally dependent upon the mercy and forgiveness of God because too often we fail to listen and rebel against his authority and will. (Daniel 9:9)**
- (4) Always understand that we don’t succeed in prayer because we are great righteous people of prayer, but we succeed in prayer because of God’s great mercy and faithfulness. (Daniel 9:18)**
- (5) Have absolute confidence that God hears and acts on our prayers with answers. (Daniel 9:23) God is always there with us....may we fill up with this great hope!**

Daniel was greatly beloved or esteemed by God and his prayer was heard and an answer was sent by God with the angel Gabriel back to Daniel. Daniel approached the throne of God in humility of heart with integrity of mind based on promises in the word of God not simply to secure blessings for himself but to seek God’s power to give Daniel a spirit of service to lead his people home. Intercessory prayer is never about our self-interests but only how can God use us effectively in the lives of another person. One other point that matters is that Daniel’s prayer lasted long enough for Gabriel to be sent from heaven and arrive to talk to Daniel while he was still in prayer. Do we have a habit of pouring

our hearts out in our quiet time or are we too busy for prayer? Daniel's example of intercession is a great model for all of us. **FATHER TODAY I WILL INTERCEED FOR OTHERS BASED UPON THE WORD OF GOD AND GOD'S LOVING DESIRE TO SEE ALL MEN HEALED AND LIVING WHOLE IN THE CENTER OF THE CIRCLE OF GOD'S WILL .**

Daniel 9:23 "As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed." (NIV)

Does God know where to meet you in your quiet time? Does he know the place and time that you have carved out to spend time with him alone, seek his face, and calm your soul? Daniel was a man with a habit of praying to God in a set place at set times no matter what (Daniel 6). Daniel would spend all night praying to God for his help and revelation (Daniel 2). When his life was on the line with king Nebuchadnezzar Daniel always spent time alone with God because he loved the character and nature of our holy God and wanted to be close with him (Daniel 4). What drives such people to develop those habits? I can tell you why Daniel became this man of prayer:

- (1) He was committed to God. Daniel demonstrated this immediately upon his arrival in Babylon in regards to the king's food (Daniel 1).
- (2) Daniel set his mind to gain understanding and gaining understanding only comes about by being a God seeker (Psalms 53:2).
- (3) Daniel was a great man but he always humbled himself before God. Daniel knew he was on sacred ground in his quiet time with the God and he was focused spiritually even when arrested at his place of prayer (Daniel 6).

Gabriel arrived to give Daniel his answer at the time of the evening sacrifice or 3PM. Prayer has a daily rhythm do it, does it not? We are a busy people and run to and fro doing this and doing that and going nowhere fast. God will give us the strength to do all things (Phil. 4:13) if we will commit to him first. Our problem is that too often we have a big dose of casual Christianity which majors on activities and minors on the quiet time in prayer with Jesus Christ. Your Christianity is only as deep as your quiet time with Jesus because only he has the capacity to give you competence, power, and strength. How many answers has God sent to you while in prayer but you were so busy that you had moved on to doing this or that? I think we miss the beauty of the Christian walk when we are too busy to take Christ's hand and walk with him in quiet solitude. Jesus always had quiet time with his Father. Do we as well? John writes in 1 John 2:6 "Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did." **FATHER HELP ME TO BE LIKE DANIEL AND BE CONSISTENT IN MY QUIET TIME ALONE WITH YOU AND MAY I LISTEN TO YOUR SOFT ANSWERS FOR MY LIFE.**

Daniel

Read Daniel Chapter 10

Lesson Purpose: To understand that God is faithful to us throughout our lives and that we exist in a world of heavenly objects of both good and evil as we live out our lives. Daniel was now about 84-85 years old and he had seen the first Jews return to Jerusalem just as God had told Jeremiah they would. God in his infinite care and concern gives Daniel a vision of a great war. Daniel's response to this vision was to mourn for three weeks and I'm sure to pray to God. And then one day Daniel was standing by the Tigris River and as he looked up there was a man dressed in linen, with a belt of the finest gold around his waist. His body was like chrysolite, his face like lightening, his eyes like flaming torches, his arms and legs like the gleam of burnished bronze, and his voice like the sound of a multitude. The description here is very similar to the description of the risen Christ in Revelation chapter 1. Daniel fell down helpless and his men ran away although they could not see the vision. Then Daniel felt a hand touch him and a voice saying Daniel, you who are highly esteemed consider carefully my words and stand up. The voice told Daniel he was highly esteemed because Daniel had set his mind to be committed to the Lord and seek the Lord with humility throughout his life. Now as an old man Daniel who had been mourning and praying for the prior three weeks was told by the man (the angel Gabriel in my view) that he was delayed by the prince of the Persian kings for 21 days until Michael (angel) came to release him from his detainment. This allowed Gabriel to continue to Daniel to explain what will happen to his people in the future. Although Daniel was still weak and overcome with anguish, Gabriel touches him again and said do not be afraid but be strong now, be strong! Daniel was strengthened by these words and Gabriel told him that soon he had to leave to fight against the prince of Persia and when he goes the prince of Greece (Alexander the Great) would come. But first the man would tell Daniel what is written in the Book of Truth. When I read this chapter my thoughts are opened to the cosmic struggle between good and evil in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 6:12)

as the backdrop for God's extraordinary intervention in the life of Daniel now a very old man. May God bless your study of chapter 10.

Review of the Reading

- 1. When did Daniel receive this revelation? (Daniel 10:1)**
- 2. What did the vision concern? (Daniel 10:1)**
- 3. What was Daniel's response to the vision? (Daniel 10:2)**
- 4. What did Daniel see on the banks of the Tigris River? (Daniel 10:5-6)**
- 5. What happened to Daniel after seeing the vision? (Daniel 10:7-9)**
- 6. Did God send someone to talk to Daniel? (Daniel 10:10-11)**
- 7. Why did God do that? (Daniel 10:12)**
- 8. How many days was the messenger from God delayed? (Daniel 10:13)**
- 9. Who came to his aid? (Daniel 10:13)**
- 10. The messenger was able to help Daniel in what way? (Daniel 10:18-19)**
- 11. Why did the messenger come to Daniel? (Daniel 10:20-21)**
- 12. Who in history was the prince of Greece? (Daniel 10:20)**

Thought Questions

1. Daniel clearly had angels in his life. Do you believe that angels exist and serve Christians today?
2. Was the vision of the man Daniel saw on the banks of the Tigris one of the pre-incarnate Christ?
3. What were the qualities in Daniel's character and life that caused God to esteem him?
4. Is there another source of strength in this world besides God for the Christian?

Devotionals from Daniel 10

Daniel 10:12 "Then he continued, "Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them." (NIV)

The messenger from God who I believe to be the angel Gabriel was launched from heaven to answer Daniel's prayers, and it took him 21 days to get there because of the prince of the Persian kings resisting him. Only when arch-angel Michael showed up to help him did Gabriel escape detainment from the prince of the Persian kingdom. There is much in what I have just written that is hard for us to get our minds around, but one fact is crystal clear that God was going to answer Daniel's prayer no matter what the obstacles in the heavenly realm. One great truth of being a Christian is that God listens to us and God is attentive to answer our prayers (1 Peter 3:12). Nothing is more crucial to living the life of confidence, peace, and victory than our personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus must be preeminent in our lives! The great question for each one of us: "is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ our first priority?" God was certainly the priority in Daniel's life and our devotional text points us to

why that was. It is enlightening for us to examine what God said through his messenger so many years ago to Daniel and ponder the characteristics of this man so highly esteemed by his God that should be present in our lives as well. There are three that should be highlighted:

- (1) Daniel set his mind from the first day to putting God first. It was a decision of his will as a young teenager in Babylon to refuse the king's food in order to stay true to his God and he never wavered from that attitude the remainder of his life (Daniel 1).
- (2) Daniel consistently was a seeker of understanding and one must seek God in prayer when seeking understanding (Psalms 53:2). Throughout Daniel's life he gave glory to God by boldly speaking God's truths to the greatest men of his day, and in every matter he was recognized for his trust in God.
- (3) Daniel humbled himself before his God and shamelessly depended upon his God without equivocation as evidenced by going straight to his room to pray to God even though the death penalty had been signed for anyone doing so (Daniel 6). Daniel never separated himself from his God because he was determined to obey his Lord regardless of the consequences.

Are we highly esteemed by God? Are we committed to him by seeking his understanding and depending on his direction in every aspect of our lives, or are we too busy with the affairs of the world to allow God the preeminent place in our lives? TODAY FATHER HELP ME TO BE HIGHLY ESTEEMED BY COMMITTING TO PUT YOU FIRST AT THE START OF EVERY DAY AND TO PRAY TO YOU IN HUMILITY AS I WAIT EXPECTEDLY FOR YOUR DAILY POWER IN MY LIFE.

Daniel 10:18-19 "Again the one who looked like a man touched me and gave me strength. "Do not be afraid, O man highly esteemed", he said. "Peace! Be strong now; be strong." When he spoke to me, I was strengthened and said, "Speak my Lord, since you have given me strength." (NIV)

One of the most terrible situations any one of us can experience is being helpless to the circumstances that surround us and without strength to take on life's situations. I remember many years ago that I had an attack of cellulitis in my knee during Army training and was unable to move to do much of anything. Overwhelmed and alone I limped a mile to an Army medical station and was immediately transferred to the Army Hospital at Ft. Benning. At our moments of overwhelming weakness and vulnerability all human beings are looking for that special spark in their lives that must transcend our own power to get us back on track. So what do we do when the stress of life and difficulties begin to overwhelm us? To do nothing simply reinforces the weakness we have in our life and often creates a vicious downward spiral. To deal with our weakness with self-medication or denial may paper over our needs for a while but this approach too surely will create more weakness, despondency, and despair in our lives. What happen to Daniel in our devotional text is the secret for the Christ led life and that is that only Christ can strengthen us to do all things (Philippians 4:13). There are some steps that we must employ when we are struggling with people, circumstances, and even ourselves if we are to receive that spark and get back on track.

- (1) First we must not be afraid. Fear is a depressant in one's life and only by accepting God's helping hand will we not fear! (Isaiah 41:13)

- (2) Second, we must accept the grace of God's strength to be absolutely confident that "if God is for us, who can be against us"? (Romans 8:31)
- (3) Third we must receive the peace of God in our lives to retain our strength for the moments of the day. God's perfect peace is a result of the Spirit living on the inside of us (Galatians 5:22), and it is a peace that passeth understanding (Philippians 4:7) because it will guard our hearts and minds in Christ. One cannot operate in strength if fear and anxiety are ever present.

Daniel was given strength because he was touched by the angel Gabriel as he received the powerful message that God was with him and much more that God was on Daniel's side. Strength doesn't come by better eating habits, more exercise, or building a better you. Real Godly strength has one source and one source only and that source is God. The character of Godly strength is always found in the center of the will of God where no fear or anxiety exists, but only God and his inexhaustible power. TODAY FATHER I WILL SEEK YOUR STRENGTH BY WAITING ON YOUR TOUCH TO HELP ME OVERCOME MY FEARS AND ACCEPT YOUR GREAT HOLY SPIRIT IN MY LIFE. AMEN!

Daniel

Read Daniel Chapter 11

Lesson Purpose: To understand that God is awesome in his power, wisdom, and faithfulness in over watching his creation and ensuring his plan of salvation for the nations. Chapter 11 is such an extraordinary chapter because it addresses with great precision in prophecy the events of the inter-testament period and ends with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. This incorporates over 500 years of time into the future and the detail of the prophecy which occurred with exacting accuracy is a faith builder for those in Christ today. My interpretation of the vision of Daniel 11 is not from a pre-millennial perspective which adopts the theory that the "king" referred to in Daniel 11:36 represents the anti-Christ and his activities have yet to occur and awaits the end time of history. In this position I am odds with many if not most evangelical scholars who form this link in the text of Daniel with a future yet to come. God begins the chapter by having Gabriel reveal with great detail a series of future events that occurred exactly as prophesied.

- 11:2-3: The Kingdom of Persia was a great kingdom but one ruler was wealthier and greater than all. I believe this to be the King Xerxes who we find in the Book of Esther. Xerxes agitated greatly against the Greeks attacked them and was defeated.
- 11:3-4: Here is none other than Alexander the Great who in 9 years conquered the world while changing its culture and at the very zenith of his power died suddenly as a young man. His kingdom was divided among four of his generals.
- 11:5-20: Much back and forth between the Kingdom of the South = Egypt and the Ptolemys versus the Kingdom of the North = Seleucids. During this period Antiochus III gains control of Palestine (the beautiful land (vs. 16). Antiochus III is defeated by the Romans and returns home crippled with a Roman tax and dies robbing temples to fund his kingdom.

- 11:21-35: The contemptible Antiochus IV Epiphanes assumes power treacherously and goes about gaining power with flattery, intrigue, and deceit. He is a shrewd man who will build a great Army and invade the kingdom of the south and defeat the Ptolemys. He returns home with great wealth but also with a hatred for the Jews of the Covenant. Antiochus Ephianes invades Egypt again but is stopped by the rising power of Rome on the seas and loses heart. He retreats in vengeance on the Jews by forcing Hellenization of the culture and on December 14th 168 BC sets up a statue to Zeus in the Temple and has a pig sacrificed on the alter. Daniel refers to this in vs.31 as the "abomination that causes desolation". This is a great time of testing for the Jews since many will desert their God while many others will resist the wicked Antiochus Ephianes to the death. During this time Jewish fighters led by the Maccabees resist the Seleucid army and win a great victory. On December 14th 165 BC the Temple was purified and the alter re-dedicated. This was a most difficult time for all Jewish people to stay faithful to God and it cost many their lives (vs. 33-35).
- 11:36-45: The text now makes an obvious turn to a new time and a new king who will do as he pleases and exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard of things against the God of gods. Truly we have a great villain here and we must make a sober judgment of how to interpret the text at this point. I believe it is Rome that is referred to by the term king in verse 36. I also believe the dominion of Rome is perfectly attested to in these verses. I also believe the time of the end of verse 40 has reference to the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the Jewish age. I also believe that Matthew 24 confirms this position that we are talking about Rome and the end of the age = the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. The order of Jewish temple worship was forever destroyed at that point in time. Therefore, God's vision for Daniel takes him to the end of the Jewish theocratic kingdom. What a blessing for Daniel to see the full future events of his people as a nation unfold. May God bless your study of chapter 11.

Review of the Reading

- 1. Who was the fourth Persian king referring to? (Daniel 11:2)**
- 2. Who does the mighty king refer to? (Daniel 11:3)**
- 3. What happened to him and his kingdom? (Daniel 11:3-4)**
- 4. Who is the king of the South? (Daniel 11:5)**
- 5. Who is the king of the North? (Daniel 11:6)**
- 6. Who are the violent men and what does that say about them? (Daniel 11:14)**
- 7. What is the Beautiful Land? (Daniel 11:16)**
- 8. Who is this contemptible person? (Daniel 11:21)**
- 9. How does this person grow in power? (Daniel 11:21-24)**
- 10. Antiochus IV Epiphanes focused his government on destroying what? (Daniel 11:28-30)**
- 11. What will he set up in the temple? (Daniel 11:31)**
- 12. When tough times come what choices are opened to God's people? (Daniel 11:32-35)**
- 13. Who is the king that will do as he pleases? (Daniel 11:36)**

Thought Questions

1. Does God cause men to make decisions in such a way that they are not left freely to choose? How else do you explain the perfect harmony with the history of the period since these prophecies referred to events 400-500 years in the future?
2. Is it wrong to take up arms in the name of God?
3. What explains the world success of Antiochus IV Epiphanes and why did he hate the things of God so much?
4. Do you agree that the vision given to Daniel ends with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 or does it apply to some future event at the end of time?

Devotionals from Daniel 11

Daniel 11:32 "With flattery he will corrupt those who have violated the covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him." (NIV)

Many years ago Diane and I lived for four years in Berlin, Germany. This was during the Cold War period when Germany and Berlin were divided. The division of Germany was a direct result of the aggression and crimes of Adolph Hitler who before he wreaked havoc on the world intimidated and brutalized his own people. What I found by visiting the sites and living where all these things occurred was a reminder that every Christian has the responsibility to stand firm in the faith regardless of the

consequences. Dictators and bullies such as Hitler or in our devotional text the “contemptible person” Antiochus IV Epiphanes try to separate us from our God through tactics of fear, pain, and isolation. If they get their way in our lives then we have lost our moral and spiritual compass. What we decide and what we do is determined by our character which is a result of our continuous relationship with God before the great storms of life appear.

- (1) First, note in our devotional text that those who have violated the covenant or people who have put the world system first will be corrupted when the storm comes and pursue their own ease, comfort, and pleasure. Because they are opposed to the things of God in the easy times they will not stand when the difficult times arrive.
- (2) Second, the people who know their God will firmly resist him or the world system and all that it represents. We know that if we resist the evil one he will flee from us (James 4:7). We are also taught that if we do not stand firm in our faith we will not stand at all (Isaiah 7:9).

So what is the difference maker? We must walk with God at all times in all places obeying him in all things. God engineers the little things into our life and says to us: obey me! If we refuse to obey God and trust him in the little things then when the hurricanes of life hit us we will be rootless and the moment will rob us of our joy as we flee in fear because of the concerns of life. We must allow God to build himself into us day by day as we live life out in our normal day. If we can't depend, trust, and obey God during our normal days we will never stick with him during the storms. Notice what was happening in Jerusalem as Antiochus IV Epiphanes ended the evening sacrifice and erected the abomination that causes desolation in the temple to desecrate the sacred place. Christians can't fear men because they don't control us or where our strength comes from or where we are going at the end of our lives. If we want to stand strong in the faith we must practice the daily discipline of the boundary of the day by being faithful in the small things to build us up for the onslaught during the storms. Your example in the storm may mean life for others including those closest to you. TODAY FATHER HELP ME TO DO THOSE SMALL TASKS YOU CALL ME TO IN ORDER TO BUILD UP MY CONFIDENCE IN YOU SO THAT I WILL FIRMLY RESIST THE WORLD WHEN THE STORMS OF LIFE INEVITABLY COME.

Daniel

Read Daniel Chapter 12

Lesson Purpose: To understand that God cares for us lovingly, intimately, and faithfully throughout our lives and guarantees our salvation through Jesus Christ as God's power will raise us in the resurrection on the last day. Daniel now an old man in his mid-eighties is able to sense God's caring arms surround him and tell him to go his way till the end and rest because at the end of time Daniel will rise to receive his reward (Daniel 12:13). Chapter 12 closes out the Book of Daniel by continuing the explanation of the vision contained in Daniel 11. Michael the angel of the Lord who protects the Jewish people will arise during a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations till that time. Only those who are found in the book of life will be delivered! Therefore, not the nation but only the faithful will be saved. Clearly Daniel is told of the resurrection of the dead (Daniel 12:2). The key to being on the right side is wisdom that leads many to righteousness so very firmly we are told that wisdom is critical to salvation and the source of all wisdom is God and not the world-system (Proverbs 2:6). Daniel is told to close up the scroll until the time of the end. As Daniel looked up he saw two others standing on opposite banks of the river and one of them spoke to a man clothed in linen that was above the waters of the river asking "how long will it be before these astonishing things are fulfilled?" The man clothed in linen raises both arms and swearing by him who lives forever says "It will be for a time, times, and half a time. When the power of the holy people has finally been broken all these things will be completed"(Daniel 12:7) I believe this is a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of temple worship in AD 70 under the power of an ungodly Roman Empire opposed to the things of God in every conceivable way. Daniel is told to go his own way for the words are sealed up till the time of the end. As throughout time even in this terrible time some will be purified and spotless and others will be wicked. Human character doesn't change and it is only those who understand will be changed and understanding only comes by seeking God (Psalms 53:2). I am befuddled by

the mathematics of the 1290 and 1335 days and see no perfect insight or interpretation of them. But I strongly believe the end time described in this vision to Daniel is AD 70 with the destruction of the Jewish nation and temple worship. I do not believe the pre-millennial view that these events will happen at a future time. The last verse honors Daniel's faithfulness with rest and God's assurance that Daniel will be raised to receive his allotted inheritance. Daniel is a great servant of the Lord Most High! May God bless your study of chapter 12.

Review of the Reading

1. Who is Michael and what is his assignment? (Daniel 12:1)
2. How bad will the distress be? (Daniel 12:1)
3. If you are delivered where must your name be? (Daniel 12:1)
4. Does Daniel teach a resurrection of the dead? (Daniel 12:2)
5. What is the key for those who are raised to everlasting life? (Daniel 12:3)
6. What did Daniel see by the river? (Daniel 12: 5-6)
7. What did the man dressed in linen above the river do and say? (Daniel 12:7)
8. Will the wicked understand the things of God? (Daniel 12:10)
9. What do the 1290 days and 1335 days refer to? (Daniel 12:11-12)
10. What will happen to Daniel? (Daniel 12:13)

Thought Questions

1. What do you think the end time refers to?
2. How bad is the time of distress going to be?
3. Do you believe that angels protect today's Christian?
4. What is your interpretation of Daniel 12:11-12?

Devotionals from Daniel 12

Daniel 12:13 "As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance." (NIV)

As we come to the conclusion of the Book of Daniel, yea, the very last verse we see Daniel as an old man probably in his eighties being told to go his way to the end. Daniel's life was clearly nearing to a close as all of us will experience should the Lord tarry. Daniel would enter a much deserved rest and then one fateful day will arise to receive his allotted inheritance. Daniel will be gone from this earth but he will not be forgotten and his God will raise him up and reward him on that great day soon and very soon. When you look back on Daniel's life one has to be impressed with his consistency of fidelity toward his God. From that very first day in Babylon to the lion's den to the awesome vision of Israel's future Daniel was consistent in his commitment to prayer, worship, and praise. Daniel refused to be dominated by the fear of men or to be intimidated by the threats and discouragement of Satan, and as a result, he finished strong in the Lord! I have visited many saints as they came to the close of their earthly days and my encouragement to them has been simply two words: "Finish Strong!" When you look at Joseph's life or Moses's life or Paul's life you see that same fire of commitment to God at the end as at the beginning. They may have been yesterday's children but they were strong and vibrant men on the inside committed to the person and things of God. Our Lord and savior could have turned back at Gethsemane but he didn't because he was committed to the will of God to finish strong! There

are a few remembrances about Daniel's discipline of faith that we should recall when we are tempted to drift away in those darker moments:

- (1) Prayer is always the prescription for crisis. Prayer is essential to finishing strong.
- (2) Intimacy with God in our sacred place of the heart is critical to withstanding the hurts and pains that Satan can throw our way as we grow more mature and aged. Practice the presence of God!
- (3) Seek God's word in all things each day since the word of God is transformative and energizing. Being in the word is essential to being in the circle of the will of God.
- (4) God is in control no matter how dark the clouds, fierce the wind, or heavy the storm and we can be 100% confident in God's sovereignty to chart the course to that final victorious outcome on that great day.
- (5) Don't quit on God and don't retire from the Lord! God's power and energy, and our acuteness of mind come as we allow him to work through us. Every day is a new day a day for the Lord. Psalms 118:24 says: "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."

Daniel finished strong and God promised not to forget him and to raise him on that great day. Now I think that is a wonderful way to finish the Book of Daniel. God will never forsake, forget, or leave us so let's keep our humor and finish strong in life just as Daniel did each and every day. FATHER THANK YOU FOR BEING MY DAILY COMPANION AND HELP ME TO FINISH STRONG IN LIFE JUST AS DANIEL DID!

A People of the Book

8-Year Curriculum

	January - March	April - June	July - September	October - December
2007	<i>Matthew</i>	<i>Genesis</i>	<i>Galatians & Ephesians</i>	<i>Isaiah</i>
2008	<i>Exodus</i>	<i>I & II Timothy, Titus</i>	<i>Hebrews</i>	<i>Minor Prophets I (Hosea-Obadiah)</i>
2009	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy</i>	<i>Romans</i>	<i>Jeremiah & Lamentations</i>
2010	<i>I & II Thessalonians</i>	<i>Joshua, Judges, Ruth</i>	<i>James, I & II Peter</i>	<i>Minor Prophets II (Jonah-Habakkuk)</i>
2011	Luke	I & II Samuel	I Corinthians	Daniel
2012	Acts	Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther	II Corinthians	Minor Prophets III (Zephaniah-Malachi)
2013	Gospel of John, I, II & III John	Job	Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon	Psalms
2014	Philippians, Colossians, Philemon & Jude	Kings & Chronicles	Revelation	Ezekiel

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