

Daniel in Exile

The Story: part 18

February 12, 2017

DAY 1: The king's dream and its interpretation (Daniel 2)

1. We pick up God's larger story in Babylon, far away from the promised land. Daniel and three of his Jewish friends have been recruited as part of the king's counselors because of their wisdom.
2. King Nebuchadnezzar has a dream that is tremendously troubling to him. He knows the dream is significant, but he has no idea the significance of the dream. He wants to ask his wise men the significance of the dream, but it seems that the interpretation of the dream might be rooted more in gaining favor with the king than the real interpretation. So, he tells the wise men that they must not only give the interpretation, but also tell what dream he had! And, unless they do that, he will kill all of them!
3. Daniel goes to fervent prayer! And miraculously, God reveals the king's dream to Daniel, and its interpretation! Daniel goes to the king in the nick of time! The dream is a large statue that represents four world powers, Babylon being the first.

Daniel 2:39 "After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth. ⁴⁰ Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron--for iron breaks and smashes everything--and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others.

⁴¹ Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay.

⁴² As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle.

⁴³ And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay.

*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 itself endure forever.***

⁴⁵ This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands--a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. "The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy."

⁴⁶ Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell prostrate before Daniel and paid him honor and ordered that an offering and incense be presented to him.

⁴⁷ The king said to Daniel, "Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery."

4. The coming kingdom will be launched at the time of Jesus. What is different between the four world powers versus this new kingdom?

DAY 2: Refusing to bow down to an idol (Daniel 3)

1. King Nebuchadnezzar created a ninety-foot state that he called a god. The command was given that when the horn sounded, everyone was to fall down and worship it. To disobey this command meant execution! What would Daniel and his friends do?!

2. The king heard that Daniel's three friends did not bow down and worship. He was furious, and called them in to give account for their actions. Here was their response:

Daniel 3:16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter.

¹⁷ If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king.

¹⁸ But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up."

3. From a smaller story point of view, their response was the signing of their own death warrant!

4. What did these three young believers know about:

a. God?

b. What was the right thing to do?

c. What strikes you about their commitment to God?

5. The king is furious, and orders the furnace to be super-heated. The three are to be thrown into the furnace.

Daniel 3:24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, "Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?" They replied, "Certainly, O king." ²⁵ He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods."

²⁶ Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!" So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, ²⁷ and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers 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.

²⁸ Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.

6. Think of the magnitude of God's larger story, the king of Babylon, and the harrowing nature of the three friends' smaller story. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 3: The writing is on the wall! (Daniel 5)

1. About forty years have passed since Daniel 3. The new king of Babylon was Belshazzar. He was an arrogant and egotistical king. He held a banquet for a thousand of his nobles, using the gold and silver goblets stolen from the temple in Jerusalem about fifty years before. This was not missed by God! Even worse, they flaunted God by praising the “gods” of gold and silver. Watch what happened during the banquet!

Daniel 5:5 Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote. ⁶ His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way.

2. No one could read what the solitary hand had written on the wall. The king offered some impressive clothes, jewelry and a big promotion to any man who could interpret what the hand had written. When none of the “wise men” could interpret the handwriting, the queen suggested Daniel, who “had the spirit of the holy gods in him.”

3. Daniel is brought to the banquet. His message to the king was a reminder that his father had been humbled by God, a lesson which had obviously eluded this king!

*Daniel 5:22 "But you his son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this. ²³ Instead, **you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven.** You had the goblets from his temple brought to you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines drank wine from them. You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand. **But you did not honor the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways.***

²⁴ Therefore he sent the hand that wrote the inscription. ²⁵ "This is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, PARSIN ²⁶ "This is what these words mean: Mene: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end. ²⁷ Tekel: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting. ²⁸ Peres: Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."

³⁰ That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain, ³¹ and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two.

4. We can live as if God doesn't exist, or we can flaunt God by living any which way we golly well want to live ... for a while. But the world we live in is God's world, governed by His character and laws.

5. When we live any way we want, driven by our pride, the day of reckoning will be crashing into our lives, just like it did for King Belshazzar. Just because judgment for sin is delayed, doesn't mean it's not coming.

6. What strikes you from today's story?

DAY 4: Prayer and lions' den (Daniel 6)

1. Daniel and his three friends gained “rock star” status in the government, and the governmental officials were very jealous of Daniel. They planned a way to do him in!

Daniel 6:7 The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or man during the next thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the lions' den. ⁸ Now, O king, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered--in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed." ⁹ So King Darius put the decree in writing.

2. How would Daniel respond to the new law?

Daniel 6:10 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.

3. The king had his hands tied. Daniel broke the new law and was taken to the lions' den.

Daniel 6:16 So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!"

4. The next morning, the king raced to the lions' den and spoke to Daniel. Here is his response.

Daniel 6:21 Daniel answered, "O king, live forever! ²² My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king."

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.

5. What happened to the men who cooked up this wicked scheme?

Daniel 6:24 At the king's command, the men who had falsely accused Daniel were brought in and thrown into the lions' den, along with their wives and children. And before they reached the floor of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.

6. God's larger story keeps moving on, no matter how bleak our smaller story may appear. Conversely, no matter how great our smaller story may appear, our pride can create chaos!

7. What's your biggest take away from this story?

DAY 5: (Daniel 7-12)

1. The last part of the book of Daniel deals with future times. Because there is so much material, let me summarize each of the last chapters.

2. Daniel 7:

Even in a culture where evil has gotten rotten, you can remain true to God and His plan.

3. Daniel 8:

Never confuse the life you're supposed to live here on earth with an idyllic childhood or even heaven.

4. Daniel 9:

The more you allow yourself to be open to God exposing the deeper sin in your heart, the greater the opportunity to learn His wisdom about life.

5. Daniel 10:

Part of what will happen will be overwhelming to you. No matter what, be strong.

6. Daniel 11:

Though you don't see the future with all that much clarity, God does. Though God's story may seem to even be losing, do not fear. God gets to write the final ending and the epilogue to the story! You'll be glad He does.

7. Daniel 12:

Wickedness will be dealt with. And for those whose hope has turned to God, they will be like the brightness of the stars on a dark night.

8. As we finish the story of Daniel, you can see God's larger story in every chapter. No matter how daunting human power may appear, God overrules even the strongest and mightiest of kings and kingdoms!

9. What are a few of the lessons or stories that have stuck with you this week?