

DAILY DEVOTIONAL



April 28, 2020 – Mr. Burgess
Daniel 1

*As we were focusing on Bible characters, we decided to do a series on Daniel! Daniel and his three friends are taken prisoners, forced to leave their homeland (Israel), and settle in the Babylonian king's palace. These are stories of faith under pressure and are relevant today! The young men were pressed to compromise or else face dire consequences. The theme in each of these: **In spite of how things may appear, God is in control!***



Read: Daniel 1

OT
605 B.C.

God delivers King Jehoiakim of Judah into the hands of King Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 1-4) because of the sin of the people of Judah. King Nebuchadnezzar carries off articles from the temple of God to put in the temple of his god in Babylonia.

He also takes some Jewish young men (20 years old or maybe much younger) for 3 years of training in his royal school. Qualifications: Nobility, “without any physical defect” (sounds like the description of a sacrificial lamb!), good-looking with intellectual aptitude. They were also given new names (possibly associated with Babylonian gods):

- **Daniel** (“God is my Judge”) → Belteshazzar
- Hananiah (“Yah has been gracious”) → **Shadrach**
- Mishael (“Who is what God is?”) → **Meshach**
- Azariah (“Yah is my help”) → **Abednego**

“But Daniel resolves” not to defile himself. This has to do with some religious defilement that may be more than simply wanting to eat kosher food...maybe something related to food offered to idols. Even though these young men are a long way away from their parents, they resolve to obey and follow their God in this new land. **God causes** the chief official to grant Daniel his wish for a 10-day trial to see how Daniel and his 3 friends would look after receiving only vegetables and water.

At the end of 10 days, the men look healthier and better nourished than any who ate the king's food. **God gives** them knowledge and understanding of all learning! AND Daniel could understand dreams of all kinds (important for chapters 2 & 4)! By the end of the 3 years' training, the king determines that they are 10 times smarter and better than all his men in the entire kingdom!!!

Daniel remains there until the first year of King Cyrus (the Persian who defeats the Babylonians) in 539 B.C.—66 years later! Daniel is the prophet of the Exile!

Summary:

1. **God is in control!** It may appear that God has abandoned His people. However, He is actively engaged in their lives throughout this chapter. God delivers the people of Judah into the hands of a pagan king (vs. 2). God causes the official to grant Daniel a 10-day trial period on his diet request (vs. 9). God gives the four

men knowledge and understanding, and to Daniel he gives the ability to understand visions and dreams (vs.17). God intervenes in our lives!

2. **We must remain obedient.** Daniel and his friends are no longer home; they are in a land hostile to their God. They remain godly and faithful far from home, never waver in their faith, and face various trials in the next 5 chapters. Yet God's presence is with them, and He blesses them. It is possible to live a faithful life surrounded by pagan influences. This world is NOT our home; we need to stay obedient and faithful. We will have struggles, but our faithful God will be with us and will soon take us Home (Hebrews 11:10,13:14)!



Activity:

Can you or your family think of times when life was difficult, but you also could tell that God was with you? Talk about those times when you realized that God was with you and protected you.



Prayer:

Sovereign Lord, thank You that You know all things and that You are in control of everything. Help us to be like Daniel and to be obedient and faithful to You even when it's hard. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAILY DEVOTIONAL

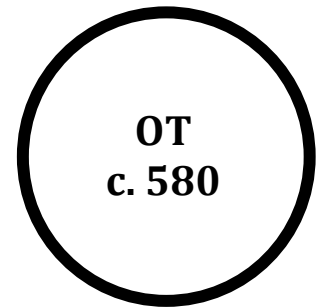


April 29, 2020 – Mr. Clum
Daniel 3 – Fiery Furnace: Faithfulness to God Above All

Good morning, WCGS! ☺ Like you, I am pressing on with full confidence in our Lord Jesus Christ. Psalm 46:1 says, “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.” A refuge is a safe place. God is our safe place. Keep in mind that there is no situation we will ever face that is out of God’s control. So the best place to be is right with Him. We love you guys! **Wishing each of you the best day.**



Read: Daniel 3:1-30
Key Verses: Daniel 3:16-18
Theme: Unwavering faith and trust in God



Yesterday, Mr. Burgess introduced us to Daniel and his three friends, Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach) and Azariah (Abednego). Yes, say the names of Daniel’s friends a few times. We learn of Daniel’s resolve, that he and his friends do not give in to peer pressure, that we have an “Audience of One” (the only thing that concerns them is what *God* thinks of them), and that God rewards our obedience.

Today we see how Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, God’s servants, are rescued from a furious King. Chapter 3 begins with King Nebuchadnezzar making a big golden statue. It is **HUGE**—ninety feet tall and nine feet wide. It is an effort for King Nebuchadnezzar to display his personal power and a desire for his kingdom to last forever. The King then demands that everyone in his empire bow down to worship the statue. There is a consequence; anyone who refuses to obey will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace (v. 6). Think about it; bow down and show respect to a statue, or be thrown into the furnace. **What would you do?**

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refuse to worship the idol, and their loyalty to God is demonstrated. The King is furious and has them brought before him. In this instance, the King gives them one more chance to bow down and worship the idol. He also asks this question, “And then what god will be able to rescue you from my power?” King Nebuchadnezzar should have known better; he failed to remember what he had just declared about God (“Your God is the greatest of gods, the Lord over kings, a revealer of mysteries for you have been able to reveal this secret.” 2:47). **I’ll ask again, what would you do?**

What happens next provides us with another wonderful glimpse into the character of these three young men. They **respectfully** tell King Nebuchadnezzar that they do not need to defend themselves before him (v. 16) as they show their allegiance and full confidence in God. I love their answer to the King. “If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. **But even if he does not** (there was no doubt in the three men’s minds as to God’s power to save them; see 2:20-23), we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your god or worship the gold statue you have set up” (v. 17-18). **Absolutely amazing!** They entrust their lives completely and fully to their God when they did not know what would happen.

The King is so furious that he orders the fiery furnace be superheated (seven times more than it was usually heated, as hot as possible), has his strongest soldiers tie up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and they **throw** them into the furnace. The flames were so hot that it killed the soldiers who threw in God's servants. Isn't it interesting that the Lord was able to protect his servants; however, the King was unable to protect his?

Suddenly, Nebuchadnezzar **jumps up in amazement** to see four men standing, unbound, and not harmed by the fire (vs. 24-25). Let's think about this. When I sit by a campfire or grill food, the smell gets into my clothing. Sometimes, I've gotten too close to the fire and have singed the hair on my arms. And yet we read that God's servants are not harmed, nor is a hair on their heads singed, and they don't even smell of smoke. Only the rope that bound them burns.

Who is the fourth person in the furnace? Is it God or an angel? We cannot know for sure. It could have been an angel or the appearance of Christ (Christophany and check out Isa. 43:2-3). One thing we can be certain of though, there is a heavenly visitor with God's servants in the fire. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego obey God. God delivers them and ultimately, HE receives the glory.

As we pull this together, take a minute to discuss some of the themes you discovered in this story. Share them with someone in your family. Here are a few of my takeaways from today's lesson in Daniel 3:

- We can trust God in every situation; our destiny is in His hands.
- God doesn't promise that we won't have problems or trials, BUT He promises His presence with us 24/7/365.
- We should be faithful to obey and serve God whether He intervenes on our behalf or not. When he does, ultimately, the glory goes to HIM!
- God desires my faithfulness to Him.



Activity:

We have two activities for your consideration today.

- First, during Missions Week 2020 we were praying for Leah Sharibu, a Nigerian teenager that was abducted by militants and who has been refused freedom because she would not renounce her faith and convert to Islam. Please pray for Leah's release. Along with that, pray for Christians who are being persecuted around the world.
- Second, there was a statute or idol in today's devotional. An idol is a thing or person that one is most concerned about, thinks the most about, or affects one's life the most. An idol takes the place of God. Some idols could be... athletics, money, work, theatre, schoolwork. There are also some idols that may not be as apparent but still take the place of God...like pride or arrogance. Take time to answer this question with those in your family. Can you identify any idols in your life?



Prayer:

Lord, help me to trust You fully with every detail of my life. You, and You alone, are worthy of our trust and obedience. Help us to be true to You no matter the circumstance. We thank You again today for Your sacrificial love and care for us moment by moment, day by day. We love You, Lord. We pray these things in Your most precious name, Amen.

DAILY DEVOTIONAL



April 30, 2020 - Mr. Burgess
Daniel 5 - The Handwriting on the Wall



Read: Daniel 5

King Belshazzar is hosting a feast for a thousand of his nobles. I have never been to a dinner with 1,000 guests! Can you imagine how big that room must have been? The king and important people were drinking out of the holy gold and silver goblets that King Nebuchadnezzar took from God's temple in Jerusalem. They are praising their gods which are made of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. These gods were *made by people!*

Suddenly, the fingers of a human hand appear and write a message on a white wall near the lampstand that could be clearly seen, though not easily understood! Everyone turns to see this startling, unbelievable sight! What is going on? Whose hand is that? The hand is clearly the hand of God!

The king's reaction:

- Face turns pale,
- So frightened,
- Knees knock together, and
- His legs give way. He falls, collapses!

He calls for all his wise men to explain the message. He offers to clothe in purple and put a gold chain around the neck of the man who can interpret the message. And this person will be the third highest ruler in the kingdom! To be third in the kingdom means to rank only after himself and his father, Nabonidus. He is desperate to know the meaning of the writing on the wall!

The "wise" men are baffled, no idea! The queen mother suddenly appears and has the solution: Get Daniel, the man who played an important role in Nebuchadnezzar's court! Daniel may be around 80 at this point. Daniel seems uninterested in the rewards the king offers. He was there on God's business, not his own.

First Daniel tells the spiritual journey of King Nebuchadnezzar, who lived like an animal eating grass like a cow "until he acknowledged that the Most High God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and sets over them anyone he wishes!" Then he confronts King Belshazzar because of his pride, the way he praised false gods, but did not honor the God who holds his life in His hand. Therefore, God sends this message written in Aramaic to the king!

The Lord numbered the days of Belshazzar's kingdom and is bringing it to an end because he was weighed in the balance and found wanting. The repetition of "Mene" may suggest that it will occur quickly! His kingdom will be divided and given to the Medes and Persians.

OT
539 B.C.

God's judgment is swift! That very night Belshazzar was killed, and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom at 62. (Apparently, he was the general who led the attack for King Cyrus of Persia.) The fall of Babylon occurred on October 12, 539 B.C.

Summary:

God is in Complete Control! Daniel explains to the last king of Babylon that the writing on the wall is a message that the true God rules over all, and in His own time He will defend His name against those who defile it, no matter how powerful they *think* they are. Today He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords! He has no peers or equals! No king or army will ever overpower Him! You can give Him your life, obey Him as your Lord, and thereby ensure that you will be on the winning side!



Activity:

When I was praying about this devotional and heading home for the day, I started my car and this song by Michael W. Smith and Jason Ingram came on. **Listen and worship** the One and Only! [ALL ARISE: Listen to the song here.](#)



Prayer:

Sovereign Lord, thank You that You are in control of all things. Your Kingdom will never be defeated or destroyed. You are the King of Kings for all eternity! I love You and want to serve in Your Kingdom! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

(I talked to a mom this week who told me that when she first heard this story as a child, she wondered why she couldn't write on the walls, yet God could! 😊)

FURTHER STUDY

The Finger of God

- In response to the plagues, the Egyptian magicians remarked, "This is the finger of God" (Exodus 8:19).
- The 10 Commandments were written by God's finger on the stone tablets (Exodus 31:18).
- Finally, the heavens themselves are the work of [his] fingers" (Psalm 8:3).

King Belshazzar makes his appearance in this chapter. (Nebuchadnezzar was not literally his father. In Aramaic, "father" can mean predecessor or ancestor.) Belshazzar was the son of Nabonidus with whom he shared co-regency during the closing years of the Babylonian monarchy.

Belshazzar's downfall and Darius's victory were a blessing to the people of God. The Persian-Median rise to power led quickly to the Decree of Cyrus (Ezra 1:1-4), which allowed the return of the Jewish people to Palestine.

ALL ARISE

There is only One Whose majesty is unending.

There is **only One**,
The King of Kings,
Never failing.
You're the King of Kings,
Never failing.

All, all arise
At the Name of our Savior,
Who is worthy.
You are worthy.

There is **only One**.
He's lifted high for the world to see.
There is **only One**,
One love alone overwhelms the grave.
Yes, Your love alone overwhelms the grave.

All, all arise
At the Name of our Savior,
Who is worthy.
You are worthy.

All praise is Yours,
Yours alone.
The Almighty who is worthy.
You are worthy.

There is power, there is power,
At the sound of your Name, Jesus!

by Michael W. Smith and Jason Ingram

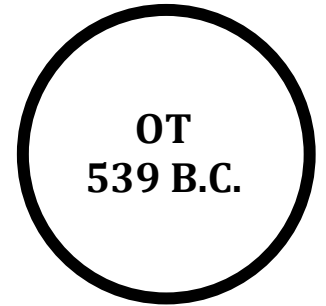
DAILY DEVOTIONAL



May 1, 2020 – Mr. Burgess
Daniel 6 – The Lion’s Den



Read: Daniel 6
Key Verses: Daniel 6:26-27



This is one of the most well-known stories in the Bible, but hopefully you will learn some new things today! These stories during DANIEL WEEK provide comfort for God’s people who find themselves in situations that seem beyond their control.

Daniel has not changed location; he is still in the city of Babylon. However, a new empire is in charge as Persia has replaced Babylon. Belshazzar is dead, and Darius the Mede is in control.

Daniel is the wisest man of all the leaders, and Darius plans to put him over the whole kingdom! The administrators and satraps are jealous and conspire to get rid of Daniel. Because Daniel is such a godly man and so trustworthy, it’s hard for them to come up with a way to get Daniel in trouble!

BEFORE THE KING. They lie and say that ALL the leaders (obviously not Daniel) agree, and they convince the king to make a new law that anyone who prays to any god or man OTHER THAN THE KING during the next 30 days should be thrown into the lion’s den! That is like making King Darius a god for a month! He thought that would be great to have everyone pray to him, so he put the decree in writing. However, the laws of the Medes and Persians CANNOT be changed!

Daniel’s home. Daniel learns of this new law. Nevertheless, he goes upstairs and prays with the windows open toward Jerusalem (WSW) **just like he always does.** Three times a day he prays to God, not to Darius. He does not question, doubt, or worry; he simply obeys God and prays to Him as is his habit. (There is nothing magical about three times a day, but maybe passages like Psalm 55:17 suggest this.) He’s not trying to be openly defiant of the king’s order, but he is not trying to hide either. **He gives thanks to God; he asks God for help.** He values his special time with God, and he is not afraid of the king. He would rather be eaten by lions than stop praying to God!

BEFORE THE KING. The evil leaders go back to the king after seeing that Daniel prays just as he did before. They ask the king if he had signed the law making it illegal to pray to anyone other than the king. The king replies that the law stands, and it cannot be changed! They gleefully report that Daniel, one of the aliens/exiles from Judah, pays no attention to the new law, but continues to pray to his God.

King Darius is greatly disturbed! Daniel was his most trusted leader. He loves Daniel who was around 80. He did not want to kill him! He keeps working the rest of the day to try to figure out a way to avoid throwing Daniel to the lions. However, the law cannot be repealed or change. He had no choice. The time finally comes when the king tells Daniel, “May your God, *whom you serve continually*, rescue you!” Men throw Daniel into the lions’ den, and a stone was placed over the opening.

It was a l o n g night. The king was so upset that he couldn't eat or fall asleep. I wonder if the administrators and satraps were up late celebrating Daniel's death! Do you think Daniel was sleeping with all those dangerous lions around him?

At the first light of dawn, before the sun appeared, the king runs to the lions' den and calls out, "Daniel, has your God, *whom you serve continually*, been able to rescue you from the lions?" Do you think he expects to hear a response from Daniel? Daniel's strong voice reports that he is alive and well! AMAZING! An angel of God closes the mouths of the lions. Daniel has no bite marks, not even a scratch from those cats! What a God-sighting!!! The king is overjoyed! It seems that Darius had at least a glimmer of hope that Daniel would survive the night.

Maybe the lions didn't eat Daniel because they had just been fed and they weren't hungry. Well, we find out that was not true because when the evil men are thrown into the lions' den, the lions overpower them BEFORE they reached the floor of the den!

King Darius is so impressed with Daniel's God that he issues a new decree that everyone in his kingdom must worship the God of Daniel!!!! "He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions!"

Observations:

- Daniel had established the habit of meeting with God throughout his day long before Darius came to power. Daniel was spiritually prepared and strengthened BEFORE these pressure situations arose for him. This is a call to be in the Word and near to Jesus during the slow and uneventful times, not only to know Him better, but to be prepared for the trials, doubts, and uncertainty, so that we can rest on God's truths and promises. (Pastor Jon Nielson)
- Twice Daniel's God was referred to as the God "**whom you serve continually.**" Would people say that you serve God continually?
- When Daniel was thrown into the lions' den and the stone was placed over the mouth of the den, I couldn't help but think of the stone being rolled in front of Jesus' tomb. The lions' den could have been Daniel's tomb except for God's angel. However, they had to move that stone the next morning to let Daniel out! For Jesus' tomb, they didn't have to roll the stone away to let Him out; he was already gone. They rolled Jesus' stone away so that the witnesses could get in to declare they he was no longer in the tomb. He was alive!
- God sent His angel to shut the mouths of the lions. The angel plays the same role as the "fourth man" in the blazing furnace in Daniel 3. Furthermore, just as the 3 friends do not even have the smell of smoke on their clothes as they are brought out of the furnace, so Daniel doesn't have a scratch on his body when he is lifted out of the den, even though he spent the night with lions! (Tremper Longman III) I wonder if he used any of the lions as a pillow for his head!
- One final review of our **Daniel Week**. Despite present appearances and what we face in COVID-19, God is indeed in control! In spite of the fact that the Medes-Persian law condemned Daniel to death, God preserves his life. Even though the lions are hungry, Daniel doesn't even get a scratch! GOD IS IN CONTROL!



Activity:

Daniel would not miss his prayer times with God. Given the first observation above, what can you do TODAY to establish the habit of praying with God daily to prepare you for hard times ahead? Write down your goal or the time(s) when you want to pray with God today and tomorrow. Put that paper or Post-it Note on your bathroom mirror or somewhere where it will remind you of your meeting with God.



Prayer:

Heavenly Father, I want to spend more time with you! You are the God of the Universe and you control all things. Help me to spend more time praying with you. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

FURTHER STUDY

You could do a study comparing and contrasting Daniel and Jesus. Both were praying in a private location. Both men were falsely accused and condemned to death. Daniel is placed in a "tomb" but escapes death without a scratch; Jesus dies and is placed in a tomb. Although Daniel foreshadows Jesus in some ways, Jesus shows His superiority by rising from the dead!