

LIVING IN TIMES OF TROUBLE

How much do you remember about Daniel—you know—the one thrown into the lion's den?

Did you know:

Daniel was born to a family of nobility and grew up in the Israeli capital of Jerusalem.

When Daniel was in his mid-teens, Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king took him and several of his companions as captives to Babylon where they were enslaved in the king's palace.

In faithful obedience to the Law of Moses, Daniel and his friends refused to eat the meat from the king's table.

Daniel became well known because he trusted in God's power to give him wisdom. He became one of the king's wise men and interpreted several dreams for him.

He also became a trusted advisor to several Media/Persian emperors who conquered the Babylonian Empire.

Daniel must have been 70 or 80 years old when he was thrown into the lion's den.

Daniel lived in one of the worst periods of Israel's history. These times of trouble were times of severe testing for anyone of faith. In the Daily Bible Reader newsletters we have been following the history

of the faithful ones of scripture. In this history of faith there is also the history of God working through his people to bring about his plan and purpose. He gave promises to Abraham about 2,000 years before Jesus was born. These promises included blessings to all nations through Abraham and the promise of an eternal inheritance of the land that God showed him. About 1,500 years before Jesus' time, through Moses, God called his people Israel out of Egypt and brought them to the land promised to Abraham and his children. Moses warned Israel that if they did not obey God, they would not be able to stay in the Land. If they rebelled, God would punish them by their being taken away and dispersed among the nations.

About 1,000 years before Jesus, David was king over all Israel. God also gave King David promises that one of his descendants would rule over his kingdom forever. His throne would be established through all generations. This descendant would also be God's own son. Another 400 years passed before the time of Daniel. A direct descendant of David ruled on David's throne at this time but he was not the promised son. In fact, over hundreds of years since the time of David most of Israel's kings had rebelled against their

loving God. They had led God's people into all forms of idolatry. Although God sent many messengers and prophets to them, they did not listen. As Moses had warned Israel, the time of judgment had come. About 100 years before Daniel's time the northern part of the kingdom had been conquered and taken captive by the Assyrians. Then the Babylonians who had conquered the Assyrians threatened the southern part of the kingdom which included Jerusalem where Daniel lived.

God sent prophets to them to warn them that unless they repented and changed, the Babylonians would destroy Jerusalem and the Temple and would take them into exile. From 609 BC until 586 BC there was a struggle between Babylon and Jerusalem. Babylon invaded and took captives from Judah and Jerusalem in 607 BC and 597 BC. Among those taken captive was Daniel. Finally, in 586 BC after surrounding and sieging Jerusalem for almost two years, they completely destroyed it and the Temple. All the residents were either taken as exiles to Babylon or expelled from the land.

"Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. He did evil in the eyes

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PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING!

The Friday morning study class is being discontinued. The Thursday evening class which is studying the course Introduction to Bible Basics will continue at the same time and place: 7:00 PM at the Hampton Inn and Suites, Jefferson Ave., Newport News

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Ps 119:105 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. KJV

Living in Times of Trouble

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of the LORD his God and did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke the word of the LORD... Furthermore, all the leaders of the priests and the people became more and more unfaithful, following all the detestable practices of the nations and defiling the temple of the LORD, which he had consecrated in Jerusalem.

The LORD, the God of their ancestors, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed

at his prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against his people and there was no remedy.

He brought up against them the king of the Babylonians, who killed their young men with the sword in the sanctuary, and did not spare young men or young women, the elderly or the infirm. God gave them all into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. He carried to Babylon all the articles from the temple of God, both large and small, and the treasures of the LORD's temple and the treasures of the king and his officials. They set fire to God's temple and broke down the wall of Jerusalem; they burned all the palaces and destroyed

everything of value there. He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his successors until the kingdom of Persia came to power." 2 Chronicles 36:11-20

The judgment of God had come. There was no remedy for this people. Daniel, although faithful himself, suffered being exiled and enslaved. Would Daniel be angry that he suffered through no fault of his own? Would he question whether all of God's promises had come to naught? Had the kingdom come to an end forever?

* * *

FAITH AND OBEDIENCE IN TIMES OF TESTING

In these troubled times Daniel was a young man. In the first invasion in 609 BC the Babylonians took as captives many of the royal family and noblemen of Jerusalem. Daniel and his three friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah (also known as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) were among the nobility and were taken to the palace of King Nebuchadnezzar to serve him there.

Even though the Jewish king at this time was completely faithless and rebellious, these four young men were faithful to their God in the midst of exile and enslavement. From the very beginning they took a stand as to whom they were obedient. In the King's palace they refused to eat the king's meat and wine because to do so would mean defilement according to the law given through Moses. This did not make them popular with the Babylonian officials, but the record tells us that God blessed these young Jewish men because of their faithfulness.

"In the third year of the reign

of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god...

Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring into the king's service some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility--The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service...

Among those who were chosen were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to de-

file himself this way. Now God had caused the official to show favor and compassion to Daniel, but the official told Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you." Daniel 1:1-3, 5-6, 8-10

Although the Babylonian official's life was in danger if he complied with Daniel's request, he listened to his suggestion to put the diet to a test. At the end of the 10-day test, Daniel and his friends were in much better health than the other young men.

"Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you

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Faith and Obedience in Times of Testing

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see."

"At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead. Daniel 1:12-16

It appears that there were other Jewish captives who had not refused the king's meat and when the 10-day test was completed, they were not looking so good. Daniel's one act of faithful obedience brought about God's

blessings in this terribly difficult situation.

"To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds. At the end of the time set by the king to bring them into his service, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. 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." Daniel 1:17-21

The last verse of Daniel chapter one notes that he remained in the service to the kings until King Cyrus. This was the Persian king, Cyrus the Great, who ruled from 539 to 530 BC. Daniel was taken captive as a young man in 609 BC and remained a captive until 539 BC, a period of 70 years.

* * *

WARNINGS FROM GOD

King Nebuchadnezzar seemed to have no problem executing people if they did not comply with his wishes. In the second year of his reign he had a dream and insisted that his astrologers and wise men tell him his dream and its interpretation. None of them were able to do this so he ordered their execution. When the executioner came to Daniel, Daniel asked why this was happening. When told, he went to the King, asked for some time, and came back to his friends and urged them to plead for mercy from the God of Heaven.

Notice he did not plead to the King but turned to his God. He asked that the dream and its interpretation be given to him so that he could go back to the King. This would have been not too long after Daniel had been brought to the Babylonian palace since this is only the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. He would still have been quite young and yet he courageously approached the King and faithfully asked God for help.

The dream that Nebuchadnezzar had was of a huge image. The head was of gold, its chest and arms were of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, and its legs of iron. Its feet were partly of iron and partly of clay which did not mix together. In the dream a rock was cut out of a mountain and hit the image in its feet. The image was smashed and the broken pieces were swept away without leaving a trace. The rock that struck the image grew in size and filled the whole earth.

This was a very impressive but also a very strange and troubling dream. The interpretation is also impressive. Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold. God had given this Babylonian king all the dominion and power that he had. After him would come another power represented by the silver, then another kingdom represented by the bronze, and finally a fourth kingdom strong as iron. The feet and toes were partly of iron and

partly of clay and represented a time when there would be strong and weak kingdoms trying to rule. It is at this time that the whole power structure would be destroyed:

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

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. 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. 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

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Warnings from God

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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 its interpretation is trustworthy." Daniel 2:36-45

World history verifies the truth of the interpretation of this dream. The Babylonian Empire was conquered by the Medo-Persian Empire (Cyrus the Great) in 539 BC. This Empire was conquered by

Alexander the Great. Finally, the Roman Empire conquered this whole region. The final conclusion, though, has still to come to pass. We're still waiting for the "rock cut out of the mountain" to hit this power structure and destroy it. God has given warning to the "powerful" rulers of the world. There will come a time when the kingdoms and powers of human beings like Nebuchadnezzar will be destroyed.

Through Daniel's faithful re-

sponse and his declaration that his God is the one who revealed the dream and its interpretation, the power of the God of Israel was revealed to this pagan king.

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." Daniel 2:47

WAITING FOR THE PROMISES OF GOD

The interpretation of the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream is the first of several prophecies given to us through Daniel concerning the history of nations and God's plan and purpose working through that history. In many ways it is the "Rosetta Stone" of prophecy. It gives us keys for understanding many of the prophecies not only in Daniel but also in Ezekiel and Revelation. Daniel chapters 7 and 8 include prophecies of different "beasts" that also represent the empires that were represented in the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream:

"And I heard a man's voice from the Ulai calling, 'Gabriel, tell this man the meaning of the vision.' As he came near the place where I was standing, I was terrified and fell prostrate. 'Son of man,' he said to me, 'understand that the vision concerns the time of the end.' While he was speaking to me, I was in a deep sleep, with my face to the ground. Then he touched me and raised me to my feet. He said: 'I am going to tell you what will happen later in the time of wrath, because the vision concerns the appointed time of the end.

The two-horned ram that you saw represents the kings of Media and Persia. The shaggy goat is the king of Greece, and the large horn between its eyes is the first king. The four horns that replaced the one that was broken off represent four kingdoms that will emerge from his nation but will not have the same power.'" Daniel 8:16-22

There are several prophecies in Daniel that concern the sequence of events and the power struggles in the kingdoms of men before the time of the end. Jesus referred to these prophecies in his prophecy on the Mount of Olives:

"So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel--let the reader understand... ' Matthew 24:15

Jesus is referring to prophecies in Daniel 9, 11 and 12:

"Know and understand this: From the time the word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and

sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be put to death and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. Daniel 9:25-27

He replied, "Go your way, Daniel, because the words are rolled up and sealed until the time of the end. ... From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days..." Dan 12:9, 11-12

Daniel chapter 9 also includes a beautiful prayer of supplication and repentance for the people. Daniel realized that the 70 years of Jeremiah's prophecy for the return of Judah and the rebuilding of Jerusalem had been completed. Immediately after his prayer, God sent him a messenger and a response:

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Waiting for the Promises of God

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"While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and making my request to the LORD my God for his holy hill --while I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice. He instructed me and said to me, 'Daniel, I have now come to give you insight and under-

standing. As soon as you began to pray, a word went out, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed. Therefore, consider the word and understand the vision..." Daniel 9:20-23

Daniel is "highly esteemed" by his God. He joins Noah who was the only righteous one in the world in his day, Abraham who was God's friend, and David who was a man after God's own heart. Daniel was also assured, that although the time

had not yet come, when the time did come he would rise from the dead to receive his inheritance. He died waiting for the fulfillment of God's promises to him.

He replied, "Go your way, Daniel, because the words are rolled up and sealed until the time of the end...As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance." Daniel 12:9, 13

"THE LORD IS NOT SLOW IN KEEPING HIS PROMISE"

These are words that Peter the Apostle wrote to the believers in the early church. There were those who had become scoffers and questioned God's promises:

They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." 2 Peter 3:4

Throughout history God has made promises to his people of faith. These promises are for eternity. They are an inheritance for God's children.

ABRAHAM: God promised that all nations would be blessed through Abraham's descendant. He also promised that Abraham and his offspring would inherit forever the land that God showed him. (Genesis 12, 13, 15, 17, 22. Romans 4. Galatians 3)

DAVID: David was promised that one of his descendants would rule over his kingdom forever and that this descendant would be God's own son. (2 Samuel 7, 1 Chronicles 17, Psalm 2, Psalm 110, Luke 2, Acts 13)

DANIEL: God gave prophecies to Daniel that promised that all the kingdoms of the world would be destroyed by the king that God would send to rule on earth and that after Daniel rested in the grave he would rise to see this. (Daniel 2, 9, 12)

In Jesus we see the fulfillment of these promises and prophecies. It is through Jesus, a descendant of Abraham, that all nations are blessed. It is through Jesus that forgiveness comes for all the sins and rebelliousness of those who repent. It is Jesus who is the son of David and also the Son of God. It is Jesus who is that rock cut out of the mountain without human hands prophesied through Daniel. Jesus will destroy the powers of mankind and set up a kingdom that will fill the earth and never be destroyed.

Just after Jesus ascended to heaven to be at the right hand of his Father, two angels promised the apostles that Jesus will return to earth just as they saw him go. It is when he returns that all these promises will be fulfilled. Those of faith remain patient because the Lord is not slow in keeping his promises.

But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief... You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming - 2 Peter 3:8-12

Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth." - Revelation 5:8-10



Daily Bible Readings for April, May and June

Day	APRIL		MAY		JUNE	
	Old Test	New Test/Psa	Old Test	New Test/Psa	Old Test	New Test/Psa
1	Deut 13,14	Mark 6	Judges 3,4	1 Corinth 11	Job 38,39	Psalm 59
2	Deut 15,16	Psalm 33,34	Judges 5,6	1 Corinth 12	Job 40-42	Luke 17
3	Deut 17,18	Mark 7	Judges 7,8	1 Corinth 13	I Sam 1. 2	Luke 18
4	Deut 19,20	Mark 8	Judges 9,10	Psalm 48	I Sam 3. 4	Psalm 60. 61
5	Deut 21,22	Mark 9	Judges 11,12	I Corinth 14	I Sam 5. 6	Luke 19
6	Deut 23,24	Psalm 35	Judges 13,14	I Carinth 15	I Sam 7. 8	Luke 20
7	Deut 25,26	Mark 10	Judges 15,16	Psalm 49	I Sam 9.10	Luke 21
8	Deut 27,28	Mark 11	Judges 17,18	I Corinth 16	I Sam 11. 12	Psalm 62. 63
9	Deut 29,30	Psalm 36,37	Judges 19,20	Psalm 50	I Sam 13. 14	Luke 22
10	Deut 31,32	Psalm 38,39	Judge 21 Ruth 1	Psalm 51. 52	I Sam 15. 16	Luke 23
11	Deut 33,34	Mark 12	Ruth 2-4	Luke 1	I Sam 17. 18	Luke 24
12	Provb 17,18	Mark 13	Provb 29,30	Luke 2	I Sam 19. 20	Psalm 64. 65
13	Provb 19,20	Mark 14	Provb 31	Luke 3	I Sam 21. 22	Psalm 66. 67
14	Provb 21,22	Mark 15	Job 1-3	Psalm 53	I Sam 23. 24	II Corinth 1
15	Joshua 1,2	Mark 16	Job 4,5	Luke 4	I Sam 25. 26	II Corinth 2
16	Joshua 3,4	Psalm 40,41	Job 6,7	Luke 5	I Sam 27. 28	II Corinth 3
17	Joshua 5,6	1 Corinth 1	Job 8,9	Luke 6	i Sam 29-31	Psalm 68
18	Joshua 7. 8	1 Corinth 2	Job 10,11	Psalm 54,55	Eccles 1. 2	Psalm 69
19	Joshua 9,10	1 Corinth 3	Job 12,13	Luke 7	Eccles 3. 4	II Corinth 4
20	Joshua 11,12	Psalm 42,43	Job 14,15	Luke 8	Eccles 5. 6	II Corinth 5
21	Joshua 13,14	1 Corinth 4	Job 16,17	Psalm 56	Eccles 7. 8	II Corinth 6
22	Joshua 15,16	1 Corinth 5	Job 18,19	Luke 9	Eccles 9.10	Psalm 70. 71
23	Joshua 17,18	Psalm 44	Job 20,21	Luke 10	Eccles 11. 12	II Corinth 7
24	Joshua 19,20	1 Corinth 6	Job 22,23	Luke 11	II Sam 1. 2	II Corinth 8
25	Joshua 21,22	1 Corinth 7	Job 24,25	Psalm 57	II Sam 3. 4	II Corinth 9
26	Joshua 23,24	1 Corinth 8	Job 26,27	Luke 12	II Sam 5. 6	II Corinth 10
27	Provb 23,24	Psalm 45	Job 28,29	Luke 13	II Sam 7. 8	Psalm 72
28	Provb 25,26	1 Corinth 9	Job 30,31	Psalm 58	II Sam 9. 10	Psalm 73
29	Provb 27,28	1 Corinth 10	Job 32,33	Luke 14	II Sam 11.12	II Corinth 11
30	Judges 1,2	Psalm 46. 47	Job 34,35	Luke 15	II Sam 13.14	II Corinth 12
31			Job 36,37	Luke 16		

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