

Daniel

Hope in a Hostile World

Daniel Chapter 1

1. The first two verses position the rest of the chapter in time and place. This chapter occurs at the beginning of the Exile, around 605 BC. What do you know about the Babylonian empire?
2. I Peter 1:1 tells us that Christians live as exiles in the world. What do we learn in verses 1-2 that is important for us to remember living in a godless world?
3. The Babylonian king instigated a program of assimilation of the exiled Jews into Babylonian culture. What did this entail? (v3-7)
4. What pressures to conform do you face in our culture today? Where do the pressures to assimilate come from?
5. What did Daniel say 'yes' to in this program? What did he say 'no' to? (v8-16)
6. Practically, what does living distinctively and showing our allegiance to God look like in terms of what we say 'yes' and 'no' to today? How can you seek the peace and prosperity of your suburb/city (Jer 29:7) while living in a world hostile to Christians?
7. Daniel made the decision not to take the King's food and wine. What can we learn from his manner and approach as he took action on his decision?
8. Scan the chapter again. What are the signals that God has been in control? (v2, 9, 17)
9. Living distinctively, showing our allegiance to God, can be costly in terms of the consequences we face. What can we expect from God?

What's Babylonian Culture

- Many truths (relativism)
- Many ways to live (moral relativism)
- Many gods (polytheism)

What's in a name?

- Daniel (God is judge) becomes Belteshazzar (O lady, wife of the God Bel, protect the king)
- Hananiah (Yahweh is gracious) becomes Shadrach (command of Aku, the moon god)
- Mishael (who is what God is) becomes Meshach (who is like Aku)
- Azariah (Yahweh is helper) becomes Abednego (servant of the shining one – Nebo)

What's on your plate?

- Deut 14: 1-21; Lev 11; Lev 17:10-12 – God outlined clean foods to be eaten and unclean to be avoided.
- Wine is permitted.

Pray Together

Going Deeper

Guide to Daniel - <https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-daniel/>

Living for God - <https://www.burningheart.org/daniel>

-

Daniel

Hope in a Hostile World

Daniel Chapter 2

1. Read through the entire chapter. What is the key message for believers? What is the message for unbelievers?
2. In our culture today where do people look for answers to life's big questions?
3. What does this chapter tell us about human power and wisdom (v1-13)?
4. What do we learn about God from Daniel's prayer (v20-23)?
5. How has God revealed himself and his truth to us (Jn 1:14; Col 1: 15; 2 Tim 3:16)?
6. What is the meaning of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (v31-35: 36-45)? [Note: the dream can be taken as having both immediate and general application.]
7. In the dream God reveals that he will build an everlasting kingdom. From our vantage point in history, to what extent has this promise been fulfilled (Mk 1: 14-15; Rev 11:15)?
8. In this chapter we see Nebuchadnezzar at the beginning of his faith journey. What can we learn from Daniel's manner and prayer life to help and encourage us in living as Christians before our non-Christian family and friends and sharing our faith?

Pray Together

Going Deeper

Podcast - <https://bibleproject.com/podcast/faithfulness-exile-daniel-part-1-dreams-and-idols/>

Language

1:1 – 2:3 Hebrew

2:4 – 7:28 Aramaic
(written for unbelievers
& believers)

8:1 – 12:13 Hebrew

Kingdoms

Babylonian kingdom
(625 – 539 BC)

Medo-Persian kingdom
(539 – 331 BC)

Greek kingdom
(331 – 63 BC)

Roman kingdom
(63 BC – AD 476)

Daniel

Hope in a Hostile World

Daniel Chapter 3

1. What does oppression or challenges to our faith as Christians look like in Australia today? What challenges have you experienced?
2. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego faced a direct challenge to their faith. What is it and what lies behind it? (v1-12)
3. How did Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego respond to the challenge? What does their response show us about their confidence in God? (v13-18)
4. What experiences and spiritual disciplines over a lifetime had prepared them for this challenge? (Review chapters 1 & 2. Note: it has been at least 20 years since the incident depicted in ch2.)
5. What does God expect from us when we experience challenges as Christians? How can we prepare for the big challenges as we live out our faith day-to-day?
6. What sustained Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego through their ordeal? (v19-27)
7. Taking a bold stand against a direct challenge can have costly consequences for us too. What can we expect from God? (See also Matt 10:16-20; 28:20b)
8. How was God glorified through the challenge in Daniel 3? (v28-30)

Pray Together

Pray for courage and conviction in the challenges you face. Pray for Christians around the world facing persecution.

Going Deeper

Podcast - <https://bibleproject.com/podcast/faithfulness-exile-daniel-part-2-national-idol/>

Daniel

Hope in a Hostile World

Daniel Chapter 4

In this chapter Nebuchadnezzar writes about his journey to faith, his conversion that takes place over a period of about 8 years.

1. Review God's dealings with Nebuchadnezzar in the previous chapters. How does God work in his life in this chapter?
2. Can you trace God's work in your life, his unrelenting grace, bringing you to faith?
3. What do we learn about human power and pride (v28-30)?
4. If pride is about seeking glory for ourselves, what does God intend for us (v34, 37)?
5. What do we learn about God's sovereignty in salvation?
6. God humbled Nebuchadnezzar but did not destroy him. What do we learn of God's character and intentions for us? (See also 2 Pet 3: 9; James 4:4-10)
7. How does Nebuchadnezzar describe his repentance and faith and what does he testify about God (v 1-3, 34-37)?
8. What is the basis of our salvation and confidence in God's forgiveness in our lives? (See Phil 2: 6-11)

Pray Together

Praise God together for his work of grace in your life. Ask him for grace to seek his glory and not your own.

Daniel

Hope in a Hostile World

Daniel Chapter 5

1. How often do you read the Bible? What is your preferred means of reading/hearing the Bible (e.g. book, ebook, on phone, audio version)? What are some reasons Christians today find it hard to read the Bible regularly?
2. How had God been communicated to Belshazzar in the past and what did he expect of him (Dan 5:18 – 22)
3. As this story unfolds the Persian army were camped outside the city walls. What or who did Belshazzar get his confidence from (Dan 5: 1-4)?
4. What was Belshazzar's problem? Why was God judging him (Dan 5: 5-6, 22-28)
5. In our world today, how do people set themselves up against God (Dan 5:23)?
6. This passage is full of symbolism. What does the list of gods suggest for Babylonian history (Dan 5:4, 30-31; see also Dan 2: 31-45)?
7. What is the value in reading the Bible, God's written message to us? (Rom 15:4; 2 Tim 3:16; Ps 19:8-11)
8. What help does God give us in understanding the truth in the Bible (Jn 16: 13-15)? What other tools have you used to learn how to read the Bible?

Pray Together

You might like to pray this prayer from the Prayer Book:

Blessed Lord,
you have caused all holy Scriptures to be written
for our learning:
grant that we may so hear them,
read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them,
that, by patience and the comfort of your holy word,
we may embrace and ever hold fast
the blessed hope of everlasting life,
which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Babylonian Kings

Nebuchadnezzar 605-562 BC

Nabonidus (married Nebuchadnezzar's daughter) 556 – 539 BC

Belshazzar (son of Nabonidus) 552 – 539 BC

מנא מנא תקל ופרסין

Mene – numbered days

Tekel – set of scales (implying judgement)

Parsin – shared or divided

Daniel

Hope in a Hostile World

Daniel Chapter 6

1. Read Daniel 6. In light of God's sovereignty, he expects us to live consistent lives of integrity and faith so that we might be ready for tough times. From a first reading of the chapter, how are we encouraged and inspired to do that?
2. Daniel was about 80 years old by this time. What do we learn about Daniel and the way he lived (Dan 6:1-5)? Can the same be said about us in our character and way we conduct ourselves?
3. What direct and hostile challenge to his faith did Daniel face (Dan 6: 6-9)? What challenges to your faith do you face?
4. How did Daniel act in the situation and what does this reveal about him (Dan 6: 10-16)? How did God act in response (Dan 6:17-23)?
5. How can we develop consistency in the habits or disciplines that build faith? What are some of those disciplines that strengthen faith?
6. How did Darius respond (Dan 6: 24-28)? What should be our basis for living a life of integrity and faith (Dan 6:26)?
7. Consider the quote in the side bar (not from Scripture). What do you think is helpful in building consistency in our faith practices? What don't you agree with?

'Sow a thought and you reap an action;

Sow an act and you reap a habit;

Sow a habit and you reap a character;

Sow a character and you reap a destiny'

(Ralph Waldo Emerson)

Pray Together

You might like to pray for each other in the difficulties you face trying to establish habits that develop your faith.