

# Living in Exile

## The Book of Daniel

### Introduction

Almost everyone has some understanding of the story titled Daniel and the Lions Den. Perhaps you attended church as a child and have fond memories of singing the chorus “Dare to be a Daniel.” Maybe you faintly remember hearing about Daniel’s three friends and a walk in a fiery furnace or a giant hand that appeared during a wild party and wrote a message on the palace wall. The Book of Daniel is far more than a collection of exciting Sunday School stories. Daniel lived during a very turbulent time (not unlike the times we live in today) and the book sharing his name is full of teaching and principles that are relevant for life today.

As a young teenager, Daniel was taken as a captive from the country and culture that he knew and loved and forced to live in a pagan culture. Daniel stayed through all the years of Israel’s captivity – about seventy years, until he was in his mid-to-late-80s. Daniel rose to a position of leadership second only to the King. He was forced to make choices about what it meant to live out his faith when the rules around him had changed. He faced pressure from co-workers and bosses to give up his faith and blend in with the new culture. Daniel successfully faced all these challenges because the sovereign God of the universe was the sovereign Lord of his heart and of his life.

Modern life can be very difficult and God wants to use the stories and experience of Daniel to teach us principles we can use to better navigate the challenges we face today. The difficulties and bad news you face may come as a surprise to you and you feel overwhelmed. We can be assured that the trials and tribulations that may come into our lives are never a surprise to our Heavenly Father. Nothing happens in our life that has not been permitted by our God who reigns supreme in the affairs of men.

The Book of Daniel takes place during a period when God allowed the nation of Israel to be taken into exile in Babylon (today’s Iraq). Chapters one – six deal with history, while chapters seven – twelve deal with prophecy (future events). During the public ministry of Jesus, he often made reference to the Book of Daniel. The Book of Revelation is a continuation of secrets and prophecies first revealed in Daniel. The prominent theme of Daniel – whether stories from the past or visions of the future – remains the same. God is in control even though circumstances seem out of control. That message offers much hope for the conditions we face today!

# Day 1 – A Tough-Minded Teenage Vegan

Read Daniel 1: 1 – 8

God had warned the people of the southern kingdom of Judah that he would judge them for their sin if they did not repent. God raised up the nation of Babylon and ordained them for judgement and correction (Habakkuk 1:12). King Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem in 606 B.C. and took Daniel and many other hostages with him back to Babylon. By taking the holy things from the temple, he wanted to show the conquered people that their god wasn't sufficiently strong to save them from defeat. The best and brightest of the hostages were chosen for specific service to the king. Daniel was about 15 years of age when he and several of his friends entered a three-year program where they would be taught the language, history, and culture of the Babylonians.

The king's ultimate plan was to develop future kingdom administrators who looked Jewish in appearance but were Babylonian in thinking and lifestyle. He wanted them to renounce the important things of their former country and culture and embrace the new Babylonian gods and lifestyle. He changed Daniel's name, which means, "Yahweh is my judge," to Belteshazzar, "Bel protect his life." The king most likely knew that Daniel believed there was a definite prohibition against eating unclean food and especially against eating food that had been offered as a sacrifice to the Babylonian gods. To eat such food was to participate in the worship of a pagan king's god. Before he was taken into exile, Daniel had made a commitment to honor and serve God. Daniel's current conditions were very different from when he first made that commitment. Even though Daniel was young, in the minority, and away from his support group and knew the penalty for disobeying the king, he had the integrity to honor his commitment.

Q1: A careful reading of Isaiah, II Kings, Jeremiah and Micah reveal many prophecies of judgment and warnings given to the nation of Judah to repent before the impending invasion of Babylon. Was there ever a time in your life when you also chose to ignore warnings to repent? What reasons do some people give for disregarding God's call to repentance?

Q2: Think back to a situation in your life where you felt pressure to do wrong when you knew what was right. What did you choose? What were the results of your decision?

Q3. How do you think Daniel acquired the strength to stand the way he did? How can he be an example for you?

Final thought: "Make good choices" is an often-repeated phrase we use to parent children and even admonish ourselves. Daniel had an important choice to make – follow his commitment to God or conform to the culture of his new home. Daniel made the right choice and it opened the door for continued service to Yahweh and his people. What choices will you make today that show your commitment to your Heavenly Father?

## Day 2 – Do you have the courage to just say no?

Read: Daniel 1: 9 – 21

There are many parallels in the lives of Daniel and an earlier patriarch of the faith named Joseph. Both were young men when forcefully taken to another country. Yet they were both faithful, and God blessed them and gave them opportunities of leadership in a foreign land. In both stories, it is clear that God is sovereign over all nations, and uses circumstances that appear to be catastrophic to accomplish his own purposes.

Daniel accepts many of the changes that were forced on him without complaint – he had no choice over his name change or the kind of schedule he had to lead, or the education he would receive. However, he drew the line at his diet because it represented a non-negotiable violation of his commitment to his God. He is a model of wisdom and discernment in the variety of ways he copes.

Bottom line, God's laws are intended to guide people toward what is best for them, which at the same time glorifies God for who he is. They are reminders of our need to depend on God, to trust him, and to be identified with him. They also demonstrate to the rest of the world how God protects and provides for his people. Daniel's trust in God was evident, reflecting the spirit of God's laws.

Living in a multicultural nation means that we are surrounded by different world views and practices that pressure and challenge us to live in ways other than what we may have been raised to believe. Making the correct decisions that honor God can only occur if we constantly seek God's will and wisdom about when to compromise or when to stand firm. Remember: Our ultimate goal is to make Jesus make sense to others.

Q1: Daniel wanted to live above the level of temptation. What would this mean in your life? What would you do differently? How would it improve your relationships with God and other people?

Q2: The results of Daniel's uncompromising life were courage, convictions, courtesy, confidence, and consistency. Which of these results are most evident in your life? Which do you most desire in your life? How could you begin to build this into your life?

Q3: Daniel experienced certain rewards which can be directly traced to living an uncompromising life, such as good health and influence. Do you see any of these same rewards in your life? What "rewards" can you attribute to God in your life?

Final thought: There is a phrase in Daniel that is not repeated about anybody else in the Bible. Three times in the book, he is referred to as a "man greatly beloved." That is the power of an uncompromising life governed by integrity, discipline, and wisdom.

## Day 3 – It's just a nightmare, go back to sleep?

Read: Daniel 2: 1- 23

Our culture today doesn't put much stock in dreams. We try to get past bad dreams and nightmares by putting them out of our minds and thinking of something else. We attribute wild or odd dreams to too much late-night spicy food. If we can't remember details of last night's dreams, we don't get too concerned because we are anxious to get going with the issues of the day. This wasn't the case during the time in which Daniel lived. Dreams and visions were a big thing and not to be ignored.

Nebuchadnezzar had a large group of magicians, sorcerers, and astrologers on staff for the expressed purpose of interpreting his dreams. Unfortunately, for the contingent of Babylonian "wisemen", he throws them a curve ball and gives them the much more difficult task of coming up with the actual details of the dream.

It seems apparent from the text that Nebuchadnezzar doesn't even believe in his own system. He probably had an idea that his staff of wisemen were phonies, but it didn't bother him until it affected his own future and peace of mind. Daniel knows that God has endowed him with a special ability to understand all visions and dreams and so, in light of his faith, he approached the king. The king grants his request for more time to determine and interpret the dream. Daniel and his friends go immediately to the source of their strength and wisdom. They drop to their knees and take the issue to God.

Daniel gives us a great example to follow. As the story unfolds, we see a man who is composed during crisis, courageous before the captain charged with putting him to death, confident before God in prayer, and careful in his success to give praise to the Lord. Surely, God is just waiting to find some other folks who will fall into that same pattern so He can bless them as he blessed Daniel.

Q1: Daniel 1:17 told us that God gave Daniel the ability to understand visions and dreams. Read Daniel 2: 16 – 18. What does Daniel do instead of immediately interpreting the dream for Nebuchadnezzar? What is your usual process when presented with a difficult task?

Q2: Daniel was given the gift of interpretation. What have you identified as your specific gifts from God, and when have you been able to use them?

Q3. God gave Daniel the answer to a very difficult question and in so doing he gave us all a tremendous prophecy about the future of the world. Reflect back on your prayer life and recall one of the times you recognized God's answer to your prayer. How did you respond to his answer?

Final thought: When faced with a difficult issue or situation, prayer must be the believers' first action. Once God brings resolution, prayer is the final action to wrap things up. In the middle, just keep praying.

# Day 4 – What’s in Store for World Governments

Read Daniel 2: 24 – 49

Daniel provides the details of an image revealed to Nebuchadnezzar in his dream and God provides the interpretation. The image is a statue of a man made up of different metals that will one day be crushed by a stone that comes crashing down from a mountain. Starting at the head and working down to the legs and feet, the metals decrease in value but increase in strength – gold – silver – bronze – iron. Daniel told the king that the metals and parts of the statue represent kingdoms (governments) that would come upon the earth and rule the people.

History has given scholars the perspective to study the vision and provide deeper insight to those of us who study this passage today. Daniel told the king that the kingdom of Babylon (606 B.C. to 536 B.C.) was represented by the golden head but one day a new kingdom would come along and supplant Babylon as the ruling world government. The chest and arms of silver represent the divided Medo-Persian Empire, which endured for more than 200 years, from 538 – 331 B.C. The belly and thighs of bronze represent the kingdom of Greece under Philip of Macedon and Alexander the Great. Bronze is an inferior metal to gold and silver and it symbolizes the Grecian army which increasingly used bronze for weapons and armor.

Fifty years before our Lord’s ministry began, the iron legions of Rome consolidated their control and became the predominant government in the world. The Roman empire enforced their power over the people through cruelty, intimidation and power. The Kingdom of God, represented by the stone carved without human hands, is coming and will one day crash down upon the governments of man to establish itself as a mountain to forever rule over the affairs of man.

Q1: Where do governments get their power? Why are we to obey the rulers of these “kingdoms”?

Hint: Read Romans 13: 1 – 7.

Q2: Does this prophetic passage from Daniel 2 encourage you or frighten you? Why? Why does God include prophecy in scripture?

Q3: From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible consistently points to the understanding that wisdom is found through a relationship with God, not through the discoveries or philosophies of humankind apart from God. How can we grow in true wisdom? Hint: Read Colossians 2: 1 – 10.

Final thought: Our world is increasingly complex and confusing. We are often told that new technology will increase our wisdom. Wisdom is a divinely given ability to have insight as to the best way to live life. Anyone can acquire knowledge but a relationship with Jesus Christ will always be a requirement for true wisdom.

## Day 5 – Alright, who threw that rock?

Read Daniel 2: 34 – 35; 44 – 45

Daniel's interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream concludes with a vision of the end times. An image, symbolizing human dynasties, is crushed by a stone, Christ. This symbol gives us hope that the smitten Rock of our Faith, Jesus the Messiah, will one day establish His coming kingdom and he will be the unquestioned monarch over all we know. This passage in Daniel 2 teaches us that only one thing is certain, and that is this: The kingdoms of the earth are passing away, and the kingdom of Christ is the only hope we have of an eternal, universal, successful kingdom.

The King saw "a stone that was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces." This is the climax of the vision. Scripture frequently refers to Christ as a stone: a smitten stone (Exodus), a stumbling stone (Isaiah, Romans), a cornerstone (Matthew, Acts, Ephesians). Just as the stone is cut "without hands", we know that the kingdom of Christ is not man-made, but is divinely originated. Man can make bricks to build a structure but only God can make a stone.

Jesus Christ is a supernatural King and He is coming back to set up a supernatural kingdom. Throughout history man's kingdoms are built gradually on the ruins of another but Christ's kingdom will come with a sudden and decisive blow (Matthew 24: 29 – 30). World empires frequently end in revolution and destruction; a new government or king comes on the scene to seize control. Christ's kingdom shall know no decay. It shall never be in danger of revolution. It shall never be destroyed.

Q1. The Bible often refers to Jesus as the "Rock" or "Cornerstone." What do the following passages say about Him: Deuteronomy 32:4, 15, 18. II Samuel 22: 1 – 3. I Corinthians 10: 1 – 5

Q2. According to Matthew 24: 29 – 30, how quickly will Jesus' kingdom be established?

Q3. What words are used in Daniel 2: 34 – 35, 44 – 45 to indicate Jesus' kingdom will be severe? How does Revelation 19 picture this same kingdom?

Final thought: Increasingly, in our culture people look to world governments to solve societal problems. God establishes governments and allows them to work on his behalf to maintain order and administer justice. If we perceive problems, we sometimes think they will be solved if we just vote in a new government. Because of the depravity of the human heart, leaders abuse this power and eventually they are crushed and removed from power by our loving Father who is and has always been sovereign over the affairs of men.

## Day 6 – The Story of Faith Under Fire

Read Daniel 3: 1 – 18

In today's reading Daniel moves off center stage of the story and his three Hebrew friends move to the forefront. The theme of the passage is still God's protection and how he provides for those who live with integrity. Every generation and every government must have men and women of integrity, folks who do not allow the circumstances of the day to dictate what they do.

Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego are men of great courage. They have determined to do what is right in God's eyes regardless of the circumstances. They know that the real Sovereign of their life does not sit before them on an earthly throne but rather He rules from heaven. They realize that doing God's will may not be pleasant but their obedience is not contingent upon God doing what is right in their eyes. Even though they knew a terrible punishment awaited them, they were not going to compromise their faith.

In an attempt to deify himself, the king constructs a grotesque image and demands that everyone in his kingdom bow down and worship when they hear the band play. The jealous Chaldean "wise men" rat on their three Jewish compatriots and tell the king of their insolent behavior in refusing to honor the king and obey his command. The king reacts angrily and sets the stage for an incredible statement of faith recorded in verses 16 – 18. Our country and our culture are in desperate need of Christ followers who will stand up in the face of countless societal pressures and demonstrate this same level of unquestioning faith. People who would respond with "My God is more than able to save me but even if he does not, I will not compromise. I will only worship the one true God and stay true to Him."

Q1: Try to think of a person you have met who lives a life of integrity. What specifically does he or she do that prompts you to identify them as a person of integrity?

Q2. Most of us will never face a situation where demonstrating our faith in God will put our lives in danger. Do you think your faith could stand a serious challenge? What can you do today to ensure your faith will be able to meet future difficulties?

Q3. In our culture today, we don't have to face idols such as the one built by Nebuchadnezzar. The Apostle Paul defined idols in a different way (read Colossians 3:5). Under Paul's definition, have you built any idols that you are worshipping today?

Final thought: Personal integrity is perhaps the only thing about you that can't be lost or taken from you. You can lose your health and the ability to do things you enjoy. Your money and other material resources can be lost in a market crash or a fire. You can even lose your good name if someone spreads a lie behind your back. But no one can take your integrity – only you can choose to give it away.

## Day 7 – Is it just me or is it getting hot in here

Read Daniel 3: 19 – 30

King Nebuchadnezzar was extremely angry. His will had been denied, his pride had been wounded, his supposed supreme authority had been disregarded by these youths and he decided to make them pay. The king was so angry that he stoked the furnace to the point that it killed even the handlers who were commanded to throw the Hebrew boys into the furnace. The king wanted them dead for their insolence but he would soon learn the lesson that their God, not his gods or even him, was truly in control.

The Hebrew boys were spared because they had absolute commitment to God. They had absolute confidence in God and knew that he could deliver them from the furnace if he chose. They had absolute courage because of God and they stood firm. Proverbs 29:25 says, “The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe.” Because of their faith, God was exalted and glorified. Their deliverance was remarkable, sudden, and miraculous. Their enemies were executed, their bonds were burned, their hearts were encouraged, their lives were ensured, and their influence was enlarged.

Idolatry can be very subtle. Even the good gifts of God, when inordinately valued, can take the place that only God should have in our lives. The opinion of others, fear of looking good, a desire for control, a fear of confrontation, busyness, or any number of things can compete with the will of God in our lives. Family, friends, work, hobbies, music are all good things that can rob God of his rightful place.

Q1: Are you facing a “fiery furnace” in your life right now? Is there conflict or worry or fear of the future that is occupying your thoughts and pushing God off the throne of your heart? How are you responding? What can you learn from the response of the three Hebrew boys that might help you?

Q2. When the Hebrew boys had a chance to take a stand for God, they never wavered and God was glorified because of their commitment. If our purpose in life is to reflect God’s glory to the world in which we live, how are you fulfilling that purpose? Where are you taking a stand that reflects glory?

Q3: We can sometimes be quick to doubt God’s presence when we face the fiery furnace or our own trial. We can be quick to say “How could this happen to me or How can I believe in a God who allows this? Difficulties and trials turn up the heat in our lives and our faith and commitment to God is tested. What does this story teach us about suffering? When you face a difficult circumstance do you doubt God or do you have the assurance, he is walking in the trial with you?

Final thought: Throughout the Old Testament, Israel was constantly exposed to the idol worship of its neighbors. Idols of wood, metal, clay, stone. Some idols were very small and actually were worn on clothing as amulets. In the New Testament the concept of idols is extended to include anything in which we place our confidence other than God.

## Day 8 — A Journey from Pride to repentance

Read Daniel 4: 1 – 37

God has been dealing with Nebuchadnezzar throughout the early part of the book but each time he acknowledges that Daniel's king is a great and mighty God, he falls back into old habits and never makes a true conversion. In a demonstration of unbounded grace, God decides to deal once again with the Babylonian king by sending him a dream and a trial. God showed his mercy by sending an angel to warn the king and give him a full year to change his ways and repent. He even promises to restore him to the throne if he is sensitive to the message of God. But as often happens, God gives man space, and he uses it to harden his heart and forget the warnings.

One year later as the king walks along the palace terrace, viewing the magnificent city, he is overwhelmed with pride and selfishness. The very next moment he was reduced to an animal with the mind of a beast. It is a fearful thing to be arrogant in the face of God. At the end of the decreed seven years of insanity, God once again shows incredible mercy and grace to Nebuchadnezzar and restored both his sanity and his throne. The restored king lifted up his eyes to heaven and blessed and praised the one true God who lives on high and reigns sovereign over all earthly kingdoms. To prove he is truly repentant, Nebuchadnezzar testifies "Those who walk in pride He is able to put down."

Q1. Chapter 4 of Daniel can be viewed as a very early version of a gospel tract. Nebuchadnezzar gives a personal testimony to confess how God dealt with him and took him from foolish pride to repentant confession. Take some time to reflect on your path to faith in Jesus as your savior. Would your story make a good gospel tract? If the gospel story still doesn't make sense to you, take some time to register your doubts and talk to a trusted Christ follower who could help Jesus make sense to you.

Q2. God uses trials in our lives to bring us to faith in Christ or perhaps to take us to a deeper, more mature faith. As you reflect on your life, how has God used trials in your life to bring you to a deeper, more mature faith? Have you reached the point where you count trials as "pure joy"?

Q3. What sin is Nebuchadnezzar's downfall? What sin is the most difficult one you deal with, and how do you overcome it?

Final thought: Pride is perhaps the most fundamental of all sins and it is the sin that God says he hates more than any other. A prideful person wants to be noticed and admired; a prideful person puts himself in the place of God. Ask God to help you replace your pride with true humility.

## Day 9 – The Handwriting on the Wall

Read Daniel 5: 1 – 9

Twenty to thirty years had elapsed between the events of the fourth and fifth chapters and Daniel must have been well past seventy years of age. After the death of Nebuchadnezzar, several men ruled Babylon until the son-in-law of Nebuchadnezzar, Nabonidus, rose to the throne. Nabonidus appointed his son, Belshazzar as co-ruler of the kingdom and they ruled simultaneously. Belshazzar was a very wicked man and secular history records that he was simply an awful ruler.

Belshazzar was arrogant and wicked and blasphemous when he decided to insult the one true God by drinking wine from the goblets brought back from the temple. Cyrus, the Persian king, was waiting outside the city gates but Belshazzar thought he was safe. Archeology tells us that the walls that protected the city were over 300 feet high and 85 feet wide. Belshazzar thought he was safe. He and his officers had stored up twenty years of provisions within the city and surely no intruder would ever be able to breach the city walls. Cyrus would soon ingeniously divert the River Euphrates that flowed through the city and his soldiers would walk into Babylon using the riverbed.

God's hand appears to pronounce judgement on Belshazzar and wipe the smirk off the face of the king. A lifetime of bad choices and debauchery passed before his eyes. His face lost its color and his knees started to knock. Nothing could save him now – not his army, not his drunken friends, and not the money in his storehouse. God had considered his life and found him wanting. That very night he would pay for his sins with his life as God gave him over to his enemies.

Q1. God uses a supernatural sign to instruct and deliver a warning to Belshazzar. Why do you think He did this? Why not simply judge him without the advance warning?

Q2. Through what methods does God instruct you today? What hinders God's ability to speak to you today? What changes could you make to enhance God's pipeline for instruction to you?

Q3. Thus far in this study of Daniel, what parallels have you seen between the government, culture, and religion of Babylon and those of modern society?

Final thought: Any nation can be judged, just as Babylon was. America is certainly not immune. Unless we wake up and turn from our own national revelries, God could judge us just as surely and just as severely as he did Babylon. Rather than just complain about conditions in our society, II Chronicles 7:14 gives instructions to God's people on what they should do if they are concerned about the sins of their country.

# Day 10 – Weighed and Found Wanting

Read Daniel 5: 10 – 31

Scales are familiar to most folks but usually not high on our list of favorite things. They tell us something that we would often rather not know. For many people they send the message that if habits and behavior are not changed, judgement and consequences for bad behavior are coming. As Belshazzar searches for someone to interpret the words on the wall, the queen mother walks in and suggests Daniel be summoned. Even though Daniel's role in the kingdom had diminished, she remembered him as a man of understanding, wisdom and discernment. She described him as "a man who has the Spirit of the Holy God within him."

Daniel walks into the banquet hall with the confidence of a man who knows he is on the right side, God's side, and does four things. First, he refused the king's gifts. Wealth and influence mean very little to a man who serves the God who owns it all. Next, Daniel reminds Belshazzar of his grandfather's foolishness and how God responded to it. Then Daniel provides a scathing review of Belshazzar's own conduct – no pulling punches and softening the message here. Finally, Daniel rebukes the king's sin - premeditated sin and profane sacrilege by blaspheming God.

God looked down that night and when he saw a drunken orgy, He sent His hand down and wrote on the wall. "Mene, mene (your number's up) tekel (you have been weighed and found wanting) peres (your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and the Persians)." God's judgement is incorruptibly accurate, and the Bible says that God weighs in His balance: "Talk no more so very proudly; let no arrogance come from your mouth, for the Lord is a God of knowledge; and by Him actions are weighed" (I Samuel 2:3).

Q1. Why should we praise God? (Psalm 16:7, Psalm 139:14, II Corinthians 1: 3 – 4). Specifically, how and how often do you offer praise to God?

Q2. Daniel was known throughout the kingdom as a wise and discerning man who had "an excellent spirit." The phrase literally means "A man of surpassing ability." How would people in your circle of influence describe you? Would they describe you as wise, joyful, compassionate, generous?

Q3. If you were to die tonight and stand before God and he were to ask you "Why should I let you into my kingdom", what would you say? Can you answer that question with confidence?

Final thought: God's judgement for sin may not be swift (in our terms) but it is always sure. Many folks see evil and sin and because there are no immediate consequences, they think there is no justice, no penalty. We can always be sure that the penalty for unconfessed sin is always death, whether in this lifetime or at the final judgement day. No one ever gets away with it.

# Day 11 – When things Get Real, Stand Firm and Keep Praying

Read Daniel 6: 1 – 13

Chapter 6 of Daniel transitions to a new period in the life of Daniel who is now in his mid-eighties. He has outlived the Babylonians and is now serving good king Darius in the Medo-Persian kingdom established in 538 B.C. Due to his honesty and integrity and wisdom, Darius has placed Daniel in a high position in the hierarchy that he has put in place to manage the kingdom. Daniel's integrity complicates the lives of the corrupt princes that serve along-side him and they devise a plan to scrutinize Daniel's public record and find an indictable offense.

When his enemies discover they can find no flaws in Daniel, they develop a plan that will get him killed. They lie to the king when they say all governmental leaders are in agreement and they falsely flatter the king to get him to accede to their plan. They decide to attack Daniel in the one area that they know he will never compromise – his devotion to God. The Medo-Persian culture believed that their king was infallible so they had no provision for rescinding or changing an order issued by the king. Daniel's enemies were counting on the fact that Daniel would be faithful to his God and remain consistent in his prayer life.

Daniel prayed on his knees three times every day, and God blessed him abundantly. Regardless of Daniel's high position, he remained humble and got down on his knees before his God. Regardless of Daniel's busy schedule, he set aside three periods each day when he would devote his time to God in prayer. Regardless of his age, Daniel stayed consistent in prayer. Regardless of the consequences, Daniel never wavered in his devotion to public prayer and praise. Daniel's commitment to prayer was a testimony to the king and fellow rulers and to those of us who read his story today.

Q1. Daniel held positions of significant political importance throughout his long life. What does Daniel 6: 4 say about his character and his performance?

Q2. Throughout Scripture we are commanded to pray. Check the following verses and record what they have to say about prayer. (Matthew 6: 5 – 13; Luke 6: 28; I Thessalonians 5: 17; James 5: 16)

Q3. Do you believe you are growing into the kind of godly consistency that Daniel modeled throughout his life? Would a ride on a roller coaster be a way to describe your Christian walk? What specific actions could you undertake to be more consistent in your walk with the Lord?

Final thought: In Acts chapter 5 we read of an incident where the Apostles are brought before the Jewish leadership and commanded not to preach the gospel. Perhaps they were thinking of the example of Daniel when they replied in Acts 5: 29 "We must obey God rather than man." It is important for us to pray every day for courage and strength and wisdom so we can "Dare to be like Daniel"

# Day 12 – They Meant it for Evil, but God Meant it for Good

Read Daniel 6: 14 – 28

King Darius had been tricked into issuing a declaration that he was god for a month and everyone in the kingdom should bow down only to him. When the king heard about Daniel disobeying the commandment and praying to his own God, the king was very displeased. Not so much with Daniel but more with himself because he had foolishly been tricked into trapping his friend. King Darius worked all day to try and find a loophole that would permit him to rescind his order but under Persian law, there was no way out. Daniel would have to go through the trial but God was going to deliver him “because he believed in God” (verse 23).

The nature of the Christian faith marks all of us for the lions. If we are openly living our faith, we are out of step with the world and we are one step away from the lion’s den or the fiery furnace. If we are happily living our life with no trials or persecution for Christ’s sake, perhaps we are hiding our testimony so well that no one knows where we stand. If Daniel had just said “What’s the harm in not praying for thirty days? I can have more impact if I just play the long game and wait this out”, we would probably never have known anything about him. We often pray that God will save us from the difficult trial but God’s plan usually involves walking with us through the difficult trial. Daniel was not kept from the lions, but he was kept in the midst of them.

If God is good and in control, why would He ever let any of His children go through the testing of a lion’s den or a fiery furnace. In this instance, God took the lion’s den and used it for His glory and purpose. Daniel also prospered greatly after he came through the trial. God uses testing in our lives to purify us and expand our faith.

Q1. After the lion’s den incident, King Darius issued a decree recorded in Daniel 6: 26 – 27. What was the likely outcome in the kingdom of this new decree?

Q2. The sinful rulers who tried to have Daniel killed were eventually killed by their own lions. The following verses offer a good study in what happens to some who try to harm God’s anointed. (Esther 3: 1 – 6; 7: 1 – 10; Psalm 7: 14 – 16; Daniel 6: 3 -5, 11 – 13, 24; Acts 12: 1 – 23). What seems to be the motivation for these people’s actions?

Q3. God hasn’t promised we will never face difficulty. What has he promised (Read Psalm 34:7; 97:10)? What difficulties have you faced in your life and how has God kept you in the midst of them?

Final thought: Believing God does not necessarily guarantee that you will not be eaten by lions. Not every Christ follower recovers from the terminal disease even though we prayed earnestly. Our perspective is usually earthly when it clearly should be heavenly. God deserves our complete faith and trust, even when the outcome isn’t what we asked for.

# Day 13 – God’s Animal Parade

Read Daniel 7: 1 – 8

In chapter 7, Daniel records a glimpse of the horror of human evil that he was given in a dream, the first of several visions that give him a sketchy image of the world’s future. Chapter two relates a dream of the future of humanity given to Nebuchadnezzar and chapter seven gives God’s viewpoint of that same time – a bunch of worldly kingdoms (depicted as ravenous beasts) devouring one another. This style of writing uses metaphors to throw light on difficult concepts but it can be a mistake to take the analogies and interpretations too far.

Perhaps it is helpful to view the sea mentioned in the dream as the great “sea of humanity.” The striving of the wind upon the sea denotes disruption brought on by political strife, wars and bloodshed. The animals coming up out of the sea represent earthly kingdoms that come upon the scene and try to control the affairs of men. Earthly nations are often symbolized by animals such as the lion for Great Britain or the eagle for the United States. God sees the parade of human governments as a chronicle of immorality, brutality, and depravity. A new kingdom comes upon the scene to devour the previous one and conditions for the people they rule get worse as they demonstrate how inept they really are.

The beasts didn’t all come up out of the sea at the same time. They follow each other, one at a time, and they devour the previous beast. The winged lion represents Babylon, the bear represents Medo-Persia, the four-headed leopard represents Greece, and the final beast with the iron teeth represents Rome. Daniel did not understand this vision when he received it but history has provided us with many interesting corollaries. For example, the four-headed leopard was used to symbolize the kingdom of Greece and ruled by Alexander the Great. Alexander died in 323 B.C. with no clear succession plan and his kingdom was divided among his four generals – Ptolemy, Seleucus, Lysimachus and Cassander.

Q1. People of ancient times regarded the sea as a wild and foreboding place that was often a source of fear (Isaiah 17:12; Jeremiah 5:22). Does it make sense that the beasts would come from the sea?

Q2. Why do you think God allows terrible kingdoms, one after another, to succeed each other? What do you think might be His purpose in that? If God knows that humanity will never be able to govern themselves without chaos, evil and depravity, why doesn’t he just come and take over now?

Q3. How will God finally answer the chaos and deal with the corrupt, evil kingdoms of man? (Hint: Read Revelation 19: 11 – 16 for the good news!)

Final thought: The Roman empire (the last kingdom symbolized in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream) was never conquered as the other kingdoms had been. Rome did not die but rather fell apart because of internal corruption and rotteness. Many scholars believe that the ten horns growing out of the head of the fourth beast (Rome), represents a new, future kingdom of nations (formerly aligned with the Roman empire) that will come upon the scene to take control in the future.

# Day 14 – The Ancient of Days and the Son of Man

Read Daniel 7: 9 – 14

Chapter 7 is the only chapter in the Bible that uses the term “Ancient of Days” for God. The term literally means “the One who never had a beginning.” Daniel is given a vision of heaven where he sees God the Father in all his holiness, eternity and glory. Intertwined with this glimpse into the majesty of God’s throne room is the earthly vision of turmoil, upheaval, chaos, beasts and evil.

Thrones represent authority and judgment. White clothing represents purity or righteousness, and white hair indicates old age and wisdom. Fire often represents judgment. Thousands of attendants mean a large kingdom. An open book suggests a court case that’s still in progress. A body destroyed and thrown into a blazing fire demonstrates complete destruction. Clouds of heaven tend to conjure God and heaven. “All nations and peoples of every language” suggests the whole world. God is clearly the victor and will reign eternally.

Daniel 7: 11 – 12 is a rapid-fire description of the slaying of the beast that has risen up as part of a future dynasty depicted as a small horn emanating from the fourth beast. This little horn with the eyes of a man and a boastful mouth is a symbol of a coming world leader named “The Antichrist.” This beast will come upon the scene and create havoc and persecution for a short period before he is defeated and permanently banished to the Lake of Fire by King Jesus who will conquer the forces of evil and establish his kingdom on earth. The future kingdom to be established by King Jesus will be uniquely different from any earthly kingdom. It will be unified, universal, unending, and unconquerable. For Christ followers, citizenship in this glorious, coming kingdom is our blessed hope and true joy. The best day we have ever had on earth doesn’t even begin to compare with any day in the life of a citizen of the new kingdom where Jesus is the perfect king and we live according to His will.

Q1. With the suggested metaphoric interpretations listed above, reread today’s passage and see if the vision makes more sense.

Q2. The Bible has several references to books maintained by God (Revelation 20:12; Malachi 3:16; Exodus 32:32). What things do you think God records in these books? What do you think is written about you in these books?

Q3. The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ will come to earth again to defeat the armies of this world and establish an eternal kingdom on this earth where he will live and reign supremely with his people. Some folks are filled with dread when they consider the thought of Jesus returning and doing away with the life they now live. How do you feel about Christ’s return? Are you excited? Fearful?

Final thought: One of the names of Jesus Christ often given in prophetic passages is “the Son of Man.” The Son of God speaks to His deity, the Son of David speaks to His royalty, and the Son of Man speaks to His humanity. Eighty-three times in the New Testament, Jesus is referred to as the Son of Man and he often uses the term to describe himself. The Pharisees were very familiar with this passage in Daniel and quickly accused Jesus of blasphemy when he referred to himself as the Son of Man.

# Day 15 – The Villain of the Story is Revealed

Read Daniel 7: 15 – 28

Many people would agree that the year 2020 has been a terrible year, full of countless problems. Pandemics, stock market crashes, global warming, civil distress, racial protests, legislatures fighting, political issues, trade wars, wildfires, international tensions – the list of problematic issues seems endless and depressing. Every election year or international summit conference offers the hope that this year it will be different – a new group of leaders can really set aside their differences and develop effective solutions. The world is ripe for a leader who will come and command respect and the ability to solve our problems. The Bible tells us that just such a dynamic and charismatic leader will one day come on the scene and appear to be the effective leader that everyone has been waiting for.

In the latter part of Chapter 7 the text refers to a leader who will arise to seize control of the final kingdom. The Antichrist will be able to capture the attention of the world. He will have great oratorical power and Daniel 7: 8 says he has “a mouth speaking pompous words.” In a world obsessed with physical beauty, he will capture the attention of the masses (Daniel 7:20 says his “appearance was greater than his fellows”). The Antichrist will be a clever politician of high intellect and wisdom skilled at building coalitions and getting people to do his will.

The Antichrist will not just stick to the political arena. Daniel 7:25 says “He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law.” He will start a new religion based on his own morality designed to take God out of the picture. Folks saved during the tribulation period will fall under the attack of the Antichrist as he attempts to obliterate them through starvation, persecution and martyrdom.

Q1. Read Luke 19:13 and Matthew 25:13. What two things are we to do while waiting for Jesus to come again? How do you personally achieve those things in your daily walk?

Q2. I John 4:3 give us something very significant about “the spirit of the Antichrist”. What specifically does it say? Do you think that spirit characterizes our society today? In what ways is that spirit on display?

Q3. Do you think that our country and our world would be susceptible and accept a leader like the Antichrist now? Why or why not?

Final thought: Some folks in our culture waste time in speculation as to who might be the Antichrist. No place in the Bible does it tell us to be looking for the Antichrist but rather we are to be looking for the return of Jesus. The Antichrist may possibly be alive today but that should not be our concern; our task should be to follow the directions of our commander and chief – to watch and wait for his return.

## Day 16 – Another Vision of Superpowers in Conflict

Read Daniel 8: 1 – 21

Daniel is not a chronological book. The vision recorded in Chapter 8 came to Daniel about two years after the vision in Chapter 7 and it took place chronologically between the fourth and fifth chapters. This vision isn't about Babylon or Rome but rather about the Persians and the Medes and the Greeks – nations that are very prominent in the history of the Jews. Under Persian rule, the Jews were allowed to return from Babylon and set up temple worship and under the Greeks the Temple and city of Jerusalem were ultimately destroyed.

A phrase used in Daniel 8:9 provides a clue to the significance of the Israelites in this prophecy when it refers to "The Glorious Land (some translations use The Beautiful Land)". The Glorious Land is Israel. Daniel didn't understand the vision but history provides us with details that show us how incredibly accurate the vision was in predicting future events. The two-horned ram represents the Medes and Persians and history records that the Medes came first and were joined by the Persians. The Persian empire did eventually grow more powerful and assimilate the Medes just as the prophecy showed. The Goat represents Greece and when the goat began to move out of the west it moved very quickly toward world domination. From history we know that in twelve brief years, the Greeks conquered the entire civilized world, never losing a battle.

The horn in the middle of the forehead of the goat represents the first king of Greece – Alexander the Great – who did indeed defeat the Persian army under King Darius III. The Greeks subdued the Medo-Persian Empire just like God said they would, two hundred years before it happened! Verse 8 tells us that "the large horn was broken off at the height of his power" and Alexander did indeed die at the age of thirty-three – a victim of drunkenness and fever. Upon his death, Alexander's kingdom was divided between his four generals just as prophesied in verse 8.

Q1. Read Daniel 8: 3 -8 and write the literal meaning of each of the symbols used in the passage. The Ram, the higher horn, the lower horn, the Goat, and the large horn.

Q2. God used the angel Gabriel to interpret the vision to Daniel. In the Old Testament, the word "gbr" means "the mighty one." One of the names for God is "el." The name for Gabriel, "gbrel" means "the mighty one of God." Why did God sometimes use angels to speak directly to men and women? Does He still do this today?

Final thought: Much of scripture takes place in the Promised Land – i.e. the land of Israel. In the Bible, Israel is called Canaan, the Holy Land, the Lord's land, Emmanuel's land, land of Israel, land of the Hebrews, land of Judah, land of Promise, land of Palestine and the Beautiful or Glorious land. The Holy Land has been the focus of history, it plays a prominent role in current events, and it will once again dominate future events in the end times when Christ the King comes to establish his kingdom.

## Day 17 – Alexander, Antiochus and the Antichrist

Read Daniel 8: 9 – 14, 22 – 27

Daniel 8 is built around three people: two people of historical significance and one prophetic. Alexander the Great, the great horn, and someone referred to as “the little horn” who history would eventually reveal as Antiochus Epiphanes are the two historical figures. The name, Antiochus Epiphanes, means “God manifest” or “Antiochus the great one of God.” This man came from the kingdom given to one of Alexander’s generals and he proved to be an especially evil conqueror who would torment and persecute the Jews. Antiochus attacked Jerusalem, killing some 50,000 Jews and taking another 40,000 prisoners. He plundered the temple and defiled the holy items used in temple worship. He decided to destroy Jewish religion and substitute Greek worship of pagan gods.

Antiochus banned the Jewish feast days and forbade the observance of the Sabbath. He not only forbade the reading of the Scriptures; he burned every copy of the Torah he could find. He desecrated the Temple when he walked into this sacred place of the Jews with a sow. He slit the animal's throat and sacrificed the pig on the altar of the Jewish people and sprayed the blood all over the inside of the Temple. This evil man ordered unspeakable atrocities against Jewish folks who tried to follow their culture and religion.

Alexander represents the power of the coming Antichrist and Antiochus Epiphanes demonstrates the cruelty of the coming Antichrist. Daniel 8:23 begins the prophetic description of the future ruler we know as the Antichrist. History has validated God’s prophecy concerning Alexander and Antiochus and just as surely, God’s prophecy concerning the coming Antichrist will come to pass. Daniel 8:23 says that the Antichrist will come “when transgressors have reached their fullness.” When evil is at its worst and Satan seems to be controlling all things, the Antichrist will walk on the scene and appear to be the leader that the world has been awaiting. The Antichrist will deceitfully make a covenant with the Jews to allow them to worship and observe their feast days. He will break that covenant and untold suffering and anguish will breakout upon the earth in a period of time called The Great Tribulation. The Antichrist will be wicked and evil beyond anything this world has ever seen but one day our King Jesus will ride out of glory and go into combat with him. The once powerful world leader will be instantly defeated and cast into hell.

Q1. Read Daniel 8:11. What do you know of Antiochus Epiphanes that goes along with this prophecy? Try a google search if you want to learn more about the atrocities committed by this evil man.

Q2. Read II Thessalonians 2: 3 – 4. How does this prophecy of the Antichrist mesh with the Daniel prophecy? Do you see any parallels with what you know about the little horn, i.e. Antiochus Epiphanes?

Final thought: Judas Maccabaeus would eventually rise up and win the victory for the Jews against Antiochus. When he went back in to cleanse the Temple, he wanted to light the lamps in a ceremony to reconsecrate the Temple which required eight days. Tradition says the one-day supply of oil lasted for the full eight days and Jews celebrate this reconsecration of the Temple in a ceremony called Hanukkah.

# Day 18 – God’s Word, God’s People and Prayer

Read Daniel 9: 1 – 19

In the midst of much prophetic teaching and dream interpreting, God gives us a lesson on prayer through the example of Daniel. Daniel didn’t have the entire scripture as we have today but he did have the prophecy of Jeremiah where God had laid out his plan in response to the sins of the nation. Daniel reads the word of God, he is motivated to pray, he discovers the will of God and prays God’s will. He prays fervently and frequently. He confesses his sin and the sin of his people because he doesn’t want that sin to get in the way of God doing what He promised.

The ultimate purpose for all praying is to worship God. The prayer that Jesus used to teach his disciples starts with worship and ends with worship. Daniel focuses his prayer on God and his character; God’s power, God’s awesome majesty, God’s mercy and faithfulness, and finally God’s holiness and righteousness. Daniel’s prayer is not self-centered but rather he is more concerned about God’s reputation. Daniel is so identified with the glory of God that he is concerned about what has happened to the reputation of God because of the sins of his people.

The purpose of prayer is not to get God to change his mind. If we believe that the will of God is perfect, we should not be praying for him to change it because we think we have a better plan. Prayer should be more about adjusting our lives to the revealed will of God. When we pray, it isn’t God who changes – it should be us. Many of us treat God as a divine concierge. We feel that God needs to be made aware of our needs so he can get to the business of supplying what we want. Our prayers are often alarmingly self-centered. Reading God’s word, meditating on God’s word, and praying over God’s word is the way we show God we are passionate about knowing his will for our life. The secret of holy living is to find out what the will of God is and to live every day in the center of that will.

Q1. When we confess sin, we verbalize our spiritual shortcomings and admit our sin. When was the last time you brought your sin before God? How often do you repent and confess?

Q2. What do you think people see of Christ in you? What behaviors does one do that damage God’s reputation? What behaviors does one do that enhance God’s reputation?

Q3. The Bible exhorts us to be fervent in prayer. Are you ever fervent in prayer? Jesus, Paul, Ezra, Elijah, and Nehemiah are just a few examples of folks who made fasting a part of prayer? Have you ever made fasting a part of your prayer? Would it be profitable to consider fasting in your prayer life?

Final thought: If it has been a long time since you sincerely confessed your sin before God, it isn’t because you haven’t sinned. It may be because you are insensitive to sin. When God is at work in our lives, repentance and confession become the norm. The deeper your love for God and the higher your standard of holiness, then the greater your sense of sinfulness.

## Day 19 – Don't Despair, the Messiah is on the Way

Read Daniel 9: 20 – 27

In response to Daniel's prayer, God sends the angel Gabriel to reveal his plan to Daniel whom God describes as "greatly beloved." The verses of today's reading cover one of the most significant prophecies recorded in all of scripture called "Daniel's Seventy Weeks" and it lays out God's plan for how he will deal with Israel. The term "week" refers to a period of seven years and the prophecy covers a total period of 490 years ( $7 \times 70 = 490$ ) which have been set aside for God to deal specifically with the Jewish people.

The prophecy can be outlined in this way: Verse twenty-four is the entire scope of the whole prophecy. It is a summary statement. In verse twenty-five we have the information about the first sixty-nine weeks of Daniel's Seventy Weeks. In verse twenty-six we understand the period we are in right now which is often referred to as "The Church Age". Verse twenty-seven deals with all the information of the Seventieth Week.

Nehemiah 2:1 records the decree that starts the prophecy. King Artaxerxes issues a decree that states the Jews will be released from their exiled captivity and they will be able to return and rebuild the city. This decree would start God's time clock and at the end of sixty-nine weeks (i.e.  $69 \times 7 = 483$  years) God would reveal the next step in his plan for his chosen people. On that date, 483 years in the future, God would officially present Messiah the Prince, i.e. his son Jesus Christ, to the sounds of "Hosanna" as he made a triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Up until that day, Jesus refused to allow His disciples to make Him known as the Messiah and would often admonish followers to "Go and tell no one." On this glorious day (we call the day Palm Sunday) when he is to be revealed, he tells His disciples "that if people don't say he is the Messiah, even the rocks will cry out." Why the change? Because this is the day Daniel had prophesied. This day had been determined by God many years before.

History tells us that Artaxerxes began his reign in 465 B.C. and Nehemiah tells us that the command to rebuild the walls came in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes' reign – 445 B.C. He actually says it was the first day of Nisan which on our calendar would be March 14. If you add the exact number of days Daniel refers to, keeping in mind leap years and the fact that Jewish calendar was 360 days (not 365 like our calendar) you would stop counting on April 6, in the year 32 A.D. Many scholars, using biblical and historical references, agree that this was the date Jesus Christ rode into the city for His Triumphal Entry.

Final thought: Many Jews don't accept Jesus as the true Messiah because they have a problem with perspective. They expected the Messiah to come on the scene and lead them to victory over their enemies and reestablish them in their Promised Land. The problem is analogous to looking at a mountain range from many miles away. The peaks look very close together. But when we climb to the top of the first peak, we see that actually there is a vast valley in between the two peaks. The two peaks can be thought of as the first and second comings. The second peak is much further away. That's the problem that can cause folks to miss the distance between the first and second coming of the Messiah.

# Day 20 – the Tribulation Week

Read Daniel 9: 20 – 27

We know that God's people rejected the Messiah and He turned from His plan for the Jews and inaugurated His plan for the Gentiles. God still has a plan in store for his chosen people – i.e. the seventieth week – but that plan is on hold for now as he deals with His Church. At some point in the future known only to God, He will decide that the church age is finished, and Jesus Christ will return to collect his saints at an event commonly called the rapture (1 Thes. 4:13-18). This event starts the time clock on the last seven-year period (the seventieth week) and we refer to this final period as the Tribulation Period.

This tribulation period is sometimes called “the time of Jacob's trouble” and is described in great detail in Matthew 24: 15 – 22. During the tribulation period, a new, charismatic world leader, called the Antichrist, will come upon the scene, and make a treaty with the nation of Israel to assure them peace and the opportunity to worship their God. The Antichrist will initially appear to be an effective leader who offers peace and effective problem solutions. At the end of the first 42 months, he will break the treaty with Israel and reveal himself to be an evil despicable man under the control of Satan himself. The history of the Jewish people has been a history of rebellion against God, but God is going to purge the rebellion out of them through the trials of the Tribulation. When Christ comes to establish his kingdom at the end of the seven-year period, sin and transgression and rebellion will be put behind Israel. They will be ready to accept their true king, the promised Messiah, that they have been waiting for all these many years.

At the Second Coming, which comes at the close of the seventieth week, our Lord will reconcile His chosen people to Himself. Rebellion will be gone and the reign of the King of Kings will begin. The Temple, the most holy place, will be anointed, and the beauty of the Jewish worship will be re-established for a thousand-year period called the Millennium.

Q1. As God's people sat in captivity in Babylon, they surely had to be wondering “what good can come out of this?” Have you experienced difficulties that made you wonder if God had a plan for your life?

Q2. What purpose is served in the study of prophecy? How does knowing the prophecies of Daniel affect your spiritual life? Does it serve to strengthen your faith?

Q3. What are the six things that must happen, according to Daniel 9:24, for the seventy weeks to be completed? Have these occurred? How will each be fulfilled in the end?

Final thought: Every Christmas we recite the prophetic verse Isaiah 9:6 which says, “Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.” We know this happened when Christ was born in Bethlehem! But the verse goes on to say “And the Government will be on His shoulders ...” The prophecy of the verse won't be completely fulfilled until Jesus comes a second time to subdue enemies and establish his kingdom.

# Day 21 – Spiritual Warfare and Prayer

Read Daniel 10: 1 – 21

At the start of Daniel 10 we see that Daniel has a heavy burden because not all the Jews had decided to return to Jerusalem and this revealed a deep spiritual apathy on the part of his people. He was also worried because the rebuilding of Jerusalem project was going slowly due to harassment from renegade Jews and poor leadership from those in charge of the project. Daniel faces inner turmoil and he mourns for 21 days, fasting and praying in seclusion because of his burden for his people. Daniel was burdened because it appeared that his people had learned nothing from their captivity so he went to God for an answer in prayer.

While Daniel's internal conflict was raging, there was a spiritual battle occurring concurrently. An angel reveals that Satan had actually intercepted God's answer to Daniel's prayer. After a 21-day battle and with the help of Michael the archangel, God's emissary was able to defeat Satan's forces and get the answer to Daniel. Ephesians 2:2 reminds us that Satan is indeed "the prince and power of the air" and Ephesians 6:12 says "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." Evil in this world has Satan as a commander and works daily against God's good plan.

Most of us don't bother to pray like Daniel did. God doesn't need us to pray to get His work done, but prayer lets us take part in the spiritual battle. Most of us seldom pray with the reality that there is a spiritual battle going on. How would this reality change the way we pray for our children/grandchildren, our church and spiritual leaders, our governmental leaders and schools?

Q1. Why was Daniel mourning in Chapter 10? What did he do when he was troubled? What do you generally do when you are troubled?

Q2. Read Ephesians 6: 10 – 20. What are the pieces of spiritual armor? Which pieces are offensive and which are defensive weapons? What role does prayer play in equipping us for spiritual battle?

Q3. Have you ever sensed you were in a spiritual battle? How should we train for spiritual warfare? When Satan attacks us or a member of our family or church, what will determine the battle outcome?

Final thought: We should feel an obligation to speak out against evil and injustice. We are encouraged to protest oppression or march with others in support of a just cause. Voting is certainly good but often the greatest change is brought about through prayer. Fervent prayer can make a difference in our lives and those of others.

## Day 22 – the Message that the Demon Wanted to Squelch

Read Daniel 11: 1 – 9

In Chapter 11 God unfolds to Daniel detailed revelations concerning the nation of Israel covering the next 300 years. Skeptics reject the book because the prophecies are so detailed that they reason Daniel must have been written after the events actually occurred. They refuse to believe that the Bible is supernatural in nature and deny that it could provide specific details about events that have yet to take place. If we believe that our God is omniscient about the future, we have no problem believing God can give us details from the future to encourage our faith and demonstrate that the Bible is God's Holy Word. In Daniel 11 we find a variety of predictions outlined historically around a series of kings whose names all start with the letter "A". Daniel faithfully recorded God's prophecy and historical records give us the details to see how incredibly accurate they were.

In Daniel 11:2 a prophecy is recorded concerning the Persian government. A fourth king would "stir up all against the realm of Greece." We know from history that Cyrus was succeeded by three sons and was then followed to the throne by a king named Ahasuerus – the fourth king. King Ahasuerus (sometimes called Xerxes) is also mentioned in the Book of Esther and he commanded one of the largest armies in ancient history. He would indeed go to war with Greece but was soundly defeated. Alexander is the second king and he comes on the scene 150 years later. Alexander the Great conquered the known world but upon his death, his brother and two sons were all murdered within a matter of months, his kingdom was divided between his four generals as prophesied in verses 3 and 4. General Ptolemy took Egypt which is to the south of Palestine and General Seleucus became king of Syria which is to the north of Palestine. God told Daniel that Israel would experience great difficulty for 200 years because of the fighting of the armies to the North and South.

Read verses 6 – 8 in light of the facts we know from history. A daughter from the southern kingdom would go north for an arranged marriage but she and her attendants would be poisoned by the northern king's first wife. We also know that a southern son would become king, come north to defeat the armies of the north and carry their valuables back to Egypt.

Q1. Look up the word "prophecy" in a dictionary. What is the definition?

Q2. Do you believe God can know and reveal future events?

Q3. What purpose is served by revealing and fulfilling prophecy? Why does God reveal future events?

Final thought: Many scholars concur that the book of Daniel was completed in 530 B.C. Skeptics argue that long-range predictive prophecy is impossible and therefore Daniel had to be written much later, after all the described events had actually happened. Literary style evidence from the dead sea scrolls (parts of Daniel were written in Aramaic and parts in Hebrew) along with other objective evidence provides strong proof that Daniel was indeed written hundreds of years before the prophesied events.

## Day 23 – the Message that the Demon wanted to Squelch (Part II)

Read Daniel 11: 10 – 35

The next section of the prophecy concerns the third “A” king and his name is Antiochus the Great. He would attack Egypt with 75,000 soldiers, suffer defeat, regroup and attack again. Antiochus plundered Palestine but was unable to defeat Egypt. He finally settled on a plan for an alliance with the South by sending a daughter for an arranged marriage. You are probably familiar with this daughter. Her name was Cleopatra. The alliance fails because Cleopatra falls in love and turns against her father. Antiochus the Great turns his anger against his own land and attacks the temple of Jupiter in hopes of stealing its treasures. His own people rise up and murder him and his body was never found. The actual events mesh perfectly with the prophecy given in 11: 18 – 19.

Next on the scene is Antiochus Epiphanes who would come on the scene and use bribes and gifts to gain control (Daniel 11:24). Verse 27 says “Both these kings ... shall speak lies at the same table.” History records that Antiochus Epiphanes and the king of the south sat for a peace treaty, then both broke the treaty! Angry after losing another battle against the south, Antiochus turned his anger toward Israel. He slaughtered every baby he could find; every woman was raped and tortured, the temple was defiled and he force-fed pork to the priests. The temple was desolate; no one could go there to sacrifice and worship.

Daniel 11:32 prophesied that “the people who know their God shall be strong” and the book of Maccabees tells the story of the Jews who battled Antiochus and brought his reign to an end. The revolt against Antiochus started with a priest named Matthias who rose up and killed an emissary of Antiochus who was forcing Jews to bow down and worship a Greek God. Mattathias was old but he passed the torch on to his third son, Judas Maccabaeus, who would lead the Jews to victory over Antiochus Epiphanes and bring an end to his despicable, evil rule.

Q1. History tells us that the Romans would soon come on the scene to conquer and establish rule in Palestine? What purpose is served when the Roman’s take control of the Jews?

Q2. How does Roman rule factor into the ministry of Jesus? Why is Roman rule a critical part of the transmission of the gospel?

Hint: For guidance on the answers to these historical questions you can visit:

**<https://www.gotquestions.org/Roman-empire.html>**

Final thought: Some people chose not to believe the prophecies of Daniel, because they believe it is just too incredible to be true. Choosing not to believe Daniel is their prerogative but it does not make the message untrue. Daniel is true whether we believe it or not. The whole purpose of prophecy is to teach us that God and His Word are right. If God can make a world from nothing, he can easily tell us future events that will take place in the world he created.

## Day 24 – Armageddon – maybe you’ve heard of it

Read Daniel 11: 36 – 12:1

In today’s verses, the antichrist is once again in view and God reveals some details of a final battle that will take place between evil forces and the forces of heaven. The Bible teaches that after the Church is raptured out of this world, the Tribulation period (the seventieth week) will immediately be inaugurated here on earth. That sets the stage for the great conflict between the Satanic opposition and Israel. The term “Armageddon” is a reference to an extended plain in northern Palestine reaching from the mountain of Megiddo to the Mediterranean. The war is not a singular battle but rather a war involving many different battles and skirmishes taking place throughout Palestine.

A covenant will first be made between Antichrist and Israel which will bring peace for three and one-half years. Israel will grow to trust this new leader of the revived Roman Empire. Ezekiel 38 tells us that the armies of the North (many scholars think this refers to Russia and her allies) will invade Israel and do battle with “unwalled cities” – cities who have let their guard down because they trusted the Antichrist. Next, Daniel 11:40 describes a battle between northern kingdoms and armies from the south on the plain of Armageddon. Just as things are about to explode, God will intervene with fire and hail and brimstone to show the world He is still in charge, (Ezekiel 38:23).

With the armies of the north and south now decimated, Daniel 11:41 tells us the Antichrist will move his armies into the “Beautiful Land” (i.e. Palestine). At this point, the armies of the east (Asian nations) will begin to march toward Palestine. The stage is now set for this final, incredible battle. The remaining armies of the north and the south that survived are in the area, the European confederation under the leadership of the Antichrist are waiting, and suddenly the Asian troops march in. All these forces congregated in one place to do battle with tiny Israel. At this point, Jesus Christ appears and will show everyone who is really the boss! Revelations 19:11 tells us Christ the King appears on a white horse and in righteousness he judges and makes war. When the nations that are gathered together against Jerusalem see the Lord’s armies coming, they forget about each other and band together to fight against the Lord. Revelation 19:21 speaks to the fate of those who decide to go up against the Lord (it’s not good).

Christ subdues all his enemies and the Antichrist is thrown into the lake of fire for eternal punishment. Zechariah 14:9 gives us some good news about the outcome of this final battle “The Lord will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one Lord, and his name the only name.”

Q1. What do the following verses say about the end times? Rev. 14:20, 16:15–21, Joel 3:2; Isaiah 34:8-10

Final thought: Some folks confuse the coming of Christ to gather the saints (i.e. the rapture) with the second coming of Christ. At the rapture, Jesus will come in the clouds but will not set foot on the earth. At the second coming, which will be at the end of the Tribulation period, Christ will return on a white horse to do battle with his enemies. His foot will set down on the Mount of Olives and he will march into Jerusalem through the eastern gate to establish his throne and rule the earth as King of Kings.

## Day 25 – How Should this Prophetic Knowledge Affect the way I Live

Read Daniel 12: 1 – 13

The prominent theme throughout the entire book of Daniel is that God is in control and he will continue ruling in a sovereign way until the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of God. Daniel confesses twice in today's passage that he doesn't understand everything he has written. As we read his words in the times in which we live, we have all the words of the prophets and we have John's Revelation to provide additional clarity but we still don't know everything – and we don't need to know everything.

In Daniel 12:5-7, Daniel sees a vision of angels on the banks of the river, and Jesus hovering above. The angels ask the Lord exactly what Daniel wanted to know: "How long will all this go on?" Christ's answer - Three and one-half years, just as He said in chapter 7. During that time, the power of the Jews will be shattered, two-thirds will die, and the nation of Israel will embrace Jesus Christ. In verses 8 and 9, Daniel presses for more details; When will this happen? God replies, "Just go your way and leave it alone." God has supplied all the details he will give and the prophecy is sealed.

In verse 11 the text speaks of the daily sacrifices being taken away, referring to the middle of the Tribulation period. The Antichrist is going to establish idol worship in the Jewish Temple and it will be such an abomination the Temple will be desecrated to the Jews. Two numbers are referenced, 1290 days and 1335 days, referring to this period of time and the reason for the two numbers is obscure and open to speculation. Sometimes, it is important to remember why prophecy is given and not get bogged down in minutia. Daniel is an old man at the end of the book and the last verse is one of instruction and reward. God tells him to "Go your own way to the end" – i.e. take care of your responsibilities and serve me with gladness until the end. Daniel has spent all his days in a foreign culture but God promises him that he is going to be part of the redistribution of the land. Daniel's inheritance is safe and secure, reserved in heaven forever.

Q1. Daniel lived as a captive in a foreign land almost his entire life. How did he respond? To what can you attribute his trust in God?

Q2. Have you ever gone through a period in your life where you wondered if there was a God who loves you, let alone one who has a plan for your life? When you need spiritual strength, where do you turn?

Final thought: Some Christians throughout the years have been preoccupied with date-setting for the rapture and have brought embarrassment to the message of the gospel. Despite consistent teaching that the prophecy is sealed and the date is known only to the Father, folks still try to put an exact date on it. We are told to live as if each day could be the day. Our message should always be "Maybe today"