 

Jan.8-14

2018

A WORD for the Journey

These are short daily Bible readings that have been chosen to reinforce a particular teaching that is important to help us live successfully as disciples of Jesus. They can be used individually, with your spouse, friend or used as family readings. Each week’s readings correspond to the previous Sunday’s sermon preached at Beaches Baptist Church. You can download the sermon from <https://beachesbaptist.com/>

LIVING WITH LIONS

Life doesn’t always go as we planned- it definitely didn’t for Daniel and his friends. Join with me as we take a look at the book of Daniel and see how God’s people can flourish when the world as they knew it has come to an end.

Monday

Daniel 1:1-7 (NLT)

During the third year of King Jehoiakim’s reign in Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. **2**The Lord gave him victory over King Jehoiakim of Judah and permitted him to take some of the sacred objects from the Temple of God. So Nebuchadnezzar took them back to the land of Babylonia and placed them in the treasure-house of his god.

**3**Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, his chief of staff, to bring to the palace some of the young men of Judah’s royal family and other noble families, who had been brought to Babylon as captives. **4**“Select only strong, healthy, and good-looking young men,” he said. “Make sure they are well versed in every branch of learning, are gifted with knowledge and good judgment, and are suited to serve in the royal palace. Train these young men in the language and literature of Babylon.” **5**The king assigned them a daily ration of food and wine from his own kitchens. They were to be trained for three years, and then they would enter the royal service.

**6**Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were four of the young men chosen, all from the tribe of Judah. **7**The chief of staff renamed them with these Babylonian names:

Daniel was called Belteshazzar.
Hananiah was called Shadrach.
Mishael was called Meshach.
Azariah was called Abednego.

**Reflect:** When things go wrong it is so easy to only see the small picture. The Bible teaches us that God works everything for good for those who are called according to His purpose. What is the ‘good’ that God most desires for us?- that we become like Jesus. No diamond was ever formed without pressure.

Tuesday

Daniel 1:8-21 (MSG)

**8-10**But Daniel determined that he would not defile himself by eating the king’s food or drinking his wine, so he asked the head of the palace staff to exempt him from the royal diet. The head of the palace staff, by God’s grace, liked Daniel, but he warned him, “I’m afraid of what my master the king will do. He is the one who assigned this diet and if he sees that you are not as healthy as the rest, he’ll have my head!”

**11-13**But Daniel appealed to a steward who had been assigned by the head of the palace staff to be in charge of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: “Try us out for ten days on a simple diet of vegetables and water. Then compare us with the young men who eat from the royal menu. Make your decision on the basis of what you see.”

**14-16**The steward agreed to do it and fed them vegetables and water for ten days. At the end of the ten days they looked better and more robust than all the others who had been eating from the royal menu. So the steward continued to exempt them from the royal menu of food and drink and served them only vegetables.

**17-19**God gave these four young men knowledge and skill in both books and life. In addition, Daniel was gifted in understanding all sorts of visions and dreams. At the end of the time set by the king for their training, the head of the royal staff brought them in to Nebuchadnezzar. When the king interviewed them, he found them far superior to all the other young men. None were a match for Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

**19-20**And so they took their place in the king’s service. Whenever the king consulted them on anything, on books or on life, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his kingdom put together.

**21**Daniel continued in the king’s service until the first year in the reign of King Cyrus.

**Reflect:** Ask the Lord for the kind of boldness which characterised Daniel and his friends. Boldness to make a stand for God may not win you a popularity contest, but it will glorify God and gain you lasting influence for good.

Wednesday

Daniel 2:1-16 (MSG)

**1-3**In the second year of his reign, King Nebuchadnezzar started having dreams that disturbed him deeply. He couldn’t sleep. He called in all the Babylonian magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and fortunetellers to interpret his dreams for him. When they came and lined up before the king, he said to them, “I had a dream that I can’t get out of my mind. I can’t sleep until I know what it means.”

**4**The fortunetellers, speaking in the Aramaic language, said, “Long live the king! Tell us the dream and we will interpret it.”

**5-6**The king answered the fortunetellers, “This is my decree: If you can’t tell me both the dream itself and its interpretation, I’ll have you ripped to pieces, limb from limb, and your homes torn down. But if you tell me both the dream and its interpretation, I’ll lavish you with gifts and honors. So go to it: Tell me the dream and its interpretation.”

**7**They answered, “If it please your majesty, tell us the dream. We’ll give the interpretation.”

**8-9**But the king said, “I know what you’re up to—you’re just playing for time. You know you’re up a tree. You know that if you can’t tell me my dream, you’re doomed. I see right through you—you’re going to cook up some fancy stories and confuse the issue until I change my mind. Nothing doing! First tell me the dream, then I’ll know that you’re on the up and up with the interpretation and not just blowing smoke in my eyes.”

**10-11**The fortunetellers said, “Nobody anywhere can do what you ask. And no king, great or small, has ever demanded anything like this from any magician, enchanter, or fortuneteller. What you’re asking is impossible unless some god or goddess should reveal it—and they don’t hang around with people like us.”

**12-13**That set the king off. He lost his temper and ordered the whole company of Babylonian wise men killed. When the death warrant was issued, Daniel and his companions were included. They also were marked for execution.

**14-15**When Arioch, chief of the royal guards, was making arrangements for the execution, Daniel wisely took him aside and quietly asked what was going on: “Why this all of a sudden?”

**15-16**After Arioch filled in the background, Daniel went to the king and asked for a little time so that he could interpret the dream.

**Reflect:** The limitations of those who sought answers through occultic practices are here set in contrast to Daniel who places his hope in the LORD. Daniel’s hope in God is shown in the calmness and wisdom in dealing with a potentially fatal situation. How’s your confidence in the Lord?

Thursday

Daniel 2:17-23 (TLB)

**17**Then he went home and told Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions. **18**They asked the God of heaven to show them his mercy by telling them the secret, so they would not die with the others. **19**And that night in a vision God told Daniel what the king had dreamed.

Then Daniel praised the God of heaven, **20**saying, “Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for he alone has all wisdom and all power. **21**World events are under his control. He removes kings and sets others on their thrones. He gives wise men their wisdom and scholars their intelligence. **22**He reveals profound mysteries beyond man’s understanding. He knows all hidden things, for he is light, and darkness is no obstacle to him. **23**I thank and praise you, O God of my fathers, for you have given me wisdom and glowing health, and now even this vision of the king’s dream and the understanding of what it means.”

**Reflect:** There’s an old Sunday School song called ‘Daniel was a man of prayer’ – Daniel and his friends show themselves to be totally dependent on God in their attitude to prayer. Could the same be said of us?

Friday

Daniel 2:24-30 (ESV)

Therefore Daniel went in to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon. He went and said thus to him: “Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon; bring me in before the king, and I will show the king the interpretation.”

**25**Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste and said thus to him: “I have found among the exiles from Judah a man who will make known to the king the interpretation.” **26**The king declared to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, “Are you able to make known to me the dream that I have seen and its interpretation?” **27**Daniel answered the king and said, “No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked, **28**but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream and the visions of your head as you lay in bed are these: **29**To you, O king, as you lay in bed came thoughts of what would be after this, and he who reveals mysteries made known to you what is to be. **30**But as for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because of any wisdom that I have more than all the living, but in order that the interpretation may be made known to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your mind.

**Reflect:** Daniel uses every opportunity to point this pagan king towards the Almighty, even when he could have taken the glory for himself. How are you able to bring glory to God in your workplace?

Saturday

Daniel 2:31-45 (NKJV)

“You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendour *was* excellent, stood before you; and its form *was* awesome. **32**This image’s head *was* of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, **33**its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. **34**You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. **35**Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

**36**“This *is* the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. **37**You, O king, *are* a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; **38**and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given *them* into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all—you *are* this head of gold. **39**But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. **40**And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, *that kingdom* will break in pieces and crush all the others. **41**Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. **42**And *as* the toes of the feet *were* partly of iron and partly of clay, *so* the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. **43**As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay. **44**And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. **45**Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold—the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure.”

**Reflect:** The kingdoms seen in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream Bible scholars throughout history have recognised as Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. There is however a final kingdom which shall never be destroyed of which Jesus will reign- “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.”

Sunday

Daniel 2:46-49 (NLT)

Then King Nebuchadnezzar threw himself down before Daniel and worshiped him, and he commanded his people to offer sacrifices and burn sweet incense before him. **47**The king said to Daniel, “Truly, your God is the greatest of gods, the Lord over kings, a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this secret.”

**48**Then the king appointed Daniel to a high position and gave him many valuable gifts. He made Daniel ruler over the whole province of Babylon, as well as chief over all his wise men. **49**At Daniel’s request, the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to be in charge of all the affairs of the province of Babylon, while Daniel remained in the king’s court.

**Reflect:** Pray for those in political positions (1 Tim.2:1-4)- especially for our believing leaders that they may be salt and light amongst their compatriots. The decisions they make influence our freedom to share the gospel.