

Today:
May 18, 2014

Scripture Focus: Daniel 1-12

It was the third year of King Jehoiakim's reign in Judah when King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon declared war on Jerusalem and besieged the city. The Master handed King Jehoiakim of Judah over to him, along with some of the furnishings from the Temple of God. Nebuchadnezzar took king and furnishings to the country of Babylon, the ancient Shinar. He put the furnishings in the sacred treasury. The king told Ashpenaz, head of the palace staff, to get some Israelites from the royal family and nobility—young men who were healthy and handsome, intelligent and well-educated, good prospects for leadership positions in the government, perfect specimens!—and indoctrinate them in the Babylonian language and the lore of magic and fortunetelling. The king then ordered that they be served from the same menu as the royal table—the best food, the finest wine. After three years of training they would be given positions in the king's court. Four young men from Judah—Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah—were among those selected. The head of the palace staff gave them Babylonian names: Daniel was named Belteshazzar, Hananiah was named Shadrach, Mishael was named Meshach, Azariah was named Abednego.

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. 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. Daniel continued in the king's service until the first year in the reign of King Cyrus.

(Daniel 1:1-7, 17-21, Message)

Notes from Worship:

(What caught your attention? What do you want to reflect on more this week?)

Notes from Formation Station:

(Discussion, Bible Study, Praying the Scriptures)

Discussion Questions:

- Which part of Daniel's story is most intriguing to you? Why?
- In what ways are you called to live faithfully like Daniel and his friends?
- What did Daniel's visions mean in biblical times? What might they mean for us today?

This Week: **May 19-24**

Scripture Readings:

Monday 5/19	Tuesday 5/20	Wednesday 5/21	Thursday 5/22	Friday 5/23	Saturday 5/24
2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1-3	Ezra 4-6	Haggai 1-2	Zechariah 1-7	Zechariah 8-14	Esther 1-5

Questions for Reflection:

These questions are meant to help get you thinking about the readings for each day. Feel free to also use this space to jot down other questions and insights gleaned from your reading.

Monday

- How important was it for God's people to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple?

Tuesday

- Why was it significant for the exiles to celebrate the Passover (Ezra 6:19-22)?

Wednesday

- How is the book of Haggai similar and different than the book of Ezra?

Thursday

- Which image in these chapters of Zechariah is most striking to you? Why?

Friday

- What connections do you notice in these chapters with the life and ministry of Jesus?

Saturday

- Mordecai called Esther to act courageously by saying, "And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14). Have you ever had a time in your life when you felt called by God to act especially courageously?

Scripture Memory:

As we celebrate with the exiles who returned home to the Promised Land, our key memory verse is still ***Micah 6:6-8***. In only a few verses, this passage summarizes the heart of what many of the prophets taught to God's people throughout the time of the kings/exile. That being said, there are many other powerful passages throughout the prophetic literature. Consider choosing other passages in addition to the one from Micah 6 that you could memorize.

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Next Sunday: May 25

Theme: Prophetic Vision: *Return from Exile* (Covenant Renewed)

Scripture Focus: *Ezra, Nehemiah* (Nehemiah 8-10)