
THE BOOK OF

DANIEL

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DANIEL 1:1-7

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Daniel 1:1-7 (NIV)

1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. 2 And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god. 3 Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring in some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility- 4 young men without any physical defect,

handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians. 5 The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service. 6 Among these were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. 7 The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray for those traveling that they will be able to see past the difficult circumstances that have been placed before them, and that they will instead see God's vision for where they are today.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand..."

MESSAGE

As we begin the study of Daniel there are some interesting facts hidden in the book. Some have to be read carefully, others discovered through other historical writings and information. Let's look at a little historical perspective. The king of Babylon, THE nation of the day, in fact, the Empire of the day, has just besieged Judah. It is first noted by Daniel, the author and a prisoner of war, that it was his God that "delivered" his king to the enemy king. From the beginning, Daniel understood who was in charge of what...God was in charge of everything, even if it did not seem like the best circumstances. Daniel had the perspective of God's control of this universe. We come to see Daniel at the beginning of his travels, travels that are forced on him, not what he had planned for in life.

Captured in his home country; a part of the nobility of Judah; on the fast track to a great life; now a prisoner, well fed and cared for, no doubt, but a servant in the hands of the enemy king; a new name; and no way out. On top of all this, Daniel was a young teenager when all this happens! Where does your perspective come from? For Daniel it came from God alone, never influenced by the circumstances of the day or those who believe they are in control. This week review your thoughts and actions, and view them in the eternal perspective: God's perspective!

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DANIEL 1:8-16

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Daniel 1:8-16 (NIV)

8 But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way. 9 Now God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel, 10 but the official told Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you." 11 Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had

appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, 12 "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. 13 Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see." 14 So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days. 15 At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. 16 So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"...Daniel resolved not to defile himself..."

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray for those traveling that they will look to God Almighty and His Word for direction and decisions. Pray that the individual circumstances will not cloud the will of God in their lives. Pray for those at home that they will have comfort knowing that God alone is in charge of all circumstances and events, and will be with them as they await their returning family.

MESSAGE

It does not take long for Daniel to show his true self. We are told that he and his friends had been shown favor by the chief official, and Daniel immediately takes advantage of this relationship. (By the way, the text states, "...now God had caused the official to show favor...") Issue number one is the food from the king's table. Most likely, the method of killing the animals and preparation of the meat was not done according to Jewish law. Even as a teenager Daniel was committed to what he knew to be right: the Law of the Lord, and refused to eat anything that was not considered clean. At the same time he did not act in a rude or demeaning manner, but worked with the chief official as to not allow trouble to befall him.

The results of the "Daniel Diet" were determined in only ten short days. Daniel and his friends looked healthier and better nourished than any of the other captives. Something to think about... it was a diet of vegetables and water! Daniel (as a teenage boy) determines not to look at what is before him, at the instant pleasure of the day, but at the truth of God's word. He had been raised in God's law, and he intends to keep God's law, no matter what the circumstances. This week as you consider the circumstances you encounter, are you going to react with what you know God has taught you, or with what is easy; with the power of YOU, or the power of HIM?

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DANIEL 1:17-21

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Daniel 1:17-21 (NIV)

17 To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds. 18 At the end of the time set by the king to bring them in, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar.

19 The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. 20 In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom. 21 And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"...he found them ten times better..."

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray that those at home will find comfort in the sovereign will of God Almighty. Pray that through the time without their loved one they will draw close to God and seek His will and wisdom.

MESSAGE

As we close the introduction to Daniel, we are shown what life can be like when it is turned over to the wisdom and will of God alone. Daniel and his friends are now on the "all vegetable" diet. You can be assured that if their physical diet was given over to God, so was their daily spiritual diet. The proof is in verse 17, "To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds." The King even noticed the difference, finding Daniel and his friends to be ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in the whole kingdom. God blessed these men with wisdom, I believe, because of their commitment to live for Him and Him alone. Every detail in their lives was a commitment to God.

How do we stack up to Daniel and his three friends? Have we given over every inch of our lives to God? Or just the easy stuff? It is through a constant release of our will to God's and our wisdom to His that we can mature in life. God has given all of us the opportunity to be a part of His will and to enjoy and learn from His wisdom; those who make the choice receive the benefits.

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DANIEL 2:1-13

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Daniel 2:1-13 (NIV)

1 In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his mind was troubled and he could not sleep. 2 So the king summoned the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers to tell him what he had dreamed. When they came in and stood before the king, 3 he said to them, "I have had a dream that troubles me and I want to know what it means." 4 Then the astrologers answered the king in Aramaic, "O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will interpret it." 5 The king replied to the astrologers, "This is what I have firmly decided: If you do not tell me what my dream was and interpret it, I will have you cut into pieces and your houses turned into piles of rubble. 6 But if you tell me the dream and explain it, you will receive from me gifts and rewards

and great honor. So tell me the dream and interpret it for me." 7 Once more they replied, "Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will interpret it." 8 Then the king answered, "I am certain that you are trying to gain time, because you realize that this is what I have firmly decided: 9 If you do not tell me the dream, there is just one penalty for you. You have conspired to tell me misleading and wicked things, hoping the situation will change. So then, tell me the dream, and I will know that you can interpret it for me." 10 The astrologers answered the king, "There is not a man on earth who can do what the king asks! No king, however great and mighty, has ever asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or astrologer. 11 What the king asks is too difficult. No one can reveal it to the king except the gods, and they do not live among men." 12 This made the king so angry and furious that he ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon. 13 So the decree was issued to put the wise men to death, and men were sent to look for Daniel and his friends to put them to death.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"What the king asks is too difficult."

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray for those on the road that they will be able to seek out God's will and wisdom rather than that of the world. Ask God to give a special blessing this week to each person traveling and away from their family.

MESSAGE

Imagine your boss walking over and saying, "We have a problem with one of our customers, and I need you to fix it." "No problem," you answer, "Who is the client and what is the problem?" "I cannot tell you that. Just get it fixed and have the report on my desk in the morning." This is exactly the case with King Nebuchadnezzar. Why has he become so irrational in his thought process? I believe it is a simple combination of two things we see every day in our

workplace and world. First, King Nebuchadnezzar is living life without the benefit of God's wisdom and instruction. This is a sure-fire way to NOT succeed. Depending on the Creator to solve a problem with creation seems to be the best place to go. Second is that he has come to distrust his advisors because he has seen through their schemes and lies of the past. At all levels of a company or political regime, but especially at the top, greed and power begin to

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CONTINUED

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MESSAGE

corrupt many individuals. The king has seen this, and his irrational request is his way of finding the truth. Nebuchadnezzar's solution was to kill all those without the answer and then hope for the best. I often wonder what he would have done if none of his wise men had come up with the answer and he then killed them all. Who then would he use for support and wisdom?

What about us? When we are unable to find the answer to our difficult questions, and those around us have no answers, where do we go? Daniel when to THE source for all his decision making ...The Creator of the Universe, God Himself. Sounds like a great plan for us.

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DANIEL 2:14-19

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Daniel 2:14-19 (NIV)

14 When Arioch, the commander of the king's guard, had gone out to put to death the wise men of Babylon, Daniel spoke to him with wisdom and tact. 15 He asked the king's officer, "Why did the king issue such a harsh decree?" Arioch then explained the matter to Daniel. 16 At this, Daniel went in to the king and asked for time, so that he might interpret the dream for him. 17 Then Daniel returned to his house and explained the matter to his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. 18 He urged them to plead for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that he and his friends might not be executed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. 19 During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven...

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray for those that are traveling that they will seek wisdom from God alone and seek the advice of godly men and women who exhibit the wisdom of God.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"...Daniel spoke to him with wisdom and tact."

MESSAGE

King Nebuchadnezzar actually sets his crazy plan into motion and orders the execution of all the wise men in the country. Talk about a tough annual review process, one wrong answer and you are executed! Once again we are able to learn some leadership lessons from Daniel. When Daniel hears of the command, he first goes to the commander of the guards to be sure he knows what the real issue at hand is, using "wisdom and tact". Next, he goes directly to the king to ask for permission to solve the problem, requesting time to find the answer. Daniel never avoids the issue or conflict, but takes it all head on. He also continues to go to the SAME place for answers. His first task is to enlist the help of his three friends, whom he asks to "...plead for mercy from the God of heaven..." Daniel was aware that the answer from God could be one of judgment or mercy, or an answer that was not what he wanted.

Nonetheless, he "pleads" with God for God's answer. Daniel's leadership lessons:

- 1) Confront the issues and find out the facts, using wisdom and tact;
- 2) Enlist the help of wise men
- 3) Seek the answer from God alone.

These are three good principles for us to follow each and every day.

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DANIEL 2:20-23

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Daniel 2:20-23 (NIV)

(See text below.)

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"...wisdom and power are His..."

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray for those that are traveling that they will give God alone the praise and glory for what is done in their lives. Ask God to make His light shine through those who love and worship Him.

MESSAGE

When God reveals the answer Daniel was seeking, Daniel's response needs no additional commentary so I am simply quoting verses 20 to 23 (emphasis mine): "Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are His. He changes times and seasons; He sets up kings and deposes them. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning.

He reveals deep and hidden things; He knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him. I thank and praise you, O God of my fathers: You have given me wisdom and power, You have made known to me what we asked of you, You have made known to us the dream of the king."

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DANIEL 2:24-30

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Daniel 2:24-30 (NIV)

24 Then Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to execute the wise men of Babylon, and said to him, "Do not execute the wise men of Babylon. Take me to the king, and I will interpret his dream for him." 25 Arioch took Daniel to the king at once and said, "I have found a man among the exiles from Judah who can tell the king what his dream means." 26 The king asked Daniel (also called Belteshazzar), "Are you able to tell me what I saw in my dream and interpret it?" 27 Daniel replied, "No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about,

28 but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come. Your dream and the visions that passed through your mind as you lay on your bed are these: 29 "As you were lying there, O king, your mind turned to things to come, and the revealer of mysteries showed you what is going to happen. 30 As for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because I have greater wisdom than other living men, but so that you, O king, may know the interpretation and that you may understand what went through your mind.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"...there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries."

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray for those that are traveling that they will give God alone the praise and glory for the answers they are giving out to others. Ask God to make His light be seen by your statements and actions each day.

MESSAGE

This week and next we will explore the same six verses to see the "who, what, and why" of the dream. We will also look at Daniel's involvement. This will set the stage for looking at the dream itself and the king's reaction to Daniel, to God, and to the dream as we continue in the book. One of the great things we see here is Daniel's immediate focus on God. In fact, prior to giving the answer, Daniel's focus is on giving God, and God alone, the glory. What a risk Daniel took after the king directly asked him, "Can you interpret the dream?" Daniel knew that the king had just threatened to kill everyone who could not do it, and yet his first words were not "Yes," but "NO, no one can." That is exactly what the king had heard previously, and he was not in the mood to hear it again.

Daniel, with the confidence of God's wisdom and power, was very capable of making the statement, because he knew he had the right answer, AND because he knew it was VERY important to give the credit clearly to God, since he knew God was the one giving the answer not Daniel. What about us? Are we focused on making sure we are getting our answers from God? Or is that secondary to the issue at hand? Let God be the "who, what, and why" in all the answers you have to give this week.

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DANIEL 2:24-30

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Daniel 2:24-30 (NIV)

24 Then Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to execute the wise men of Babylon, and said to him, "Do not execute the wise men of Babylon. Take me to the king, and I will interpret his dream for him." 25 Arioch took Daniel to the king at once and said, "I have found a man among the exiles from Judah who can tell the king what his dream means." 26 The king asked Daniel (also called Belteshazzar), "Are you able to tell me what I saw in my dream and interpret it?" 27 Daniel replied, "No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about,

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"...so that you, O king, may know the interpretation ..."

28 but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come. Your dream and the visions that passed through your mind as you lay on your bed are these: 29 "As you were lying there, O king, your mind turned to things to come, and the revealer of mysteries showed you what is going to happen. 30 As for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because I have greater wisdom than other living men, but so that you, O king, may know the interpretation and that you may understand what went through your mind.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray that God will reveal His will and His thoughts to you and each of those traveling. Pray that we will all be humbled in our abilities and see the real power of God in our lives.

MESSAGE

This may be a tough one for many of us. Why did God allow Daniel to interpret the dream? Was it because he was smarter than others? Was it because he was more spiritual than others? Not according to Daniel himself. Daniel says, "As for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because I have greater wisdom than other living men, but so that you, O king, may know the interpretation and that you may understand what went through your mind." It was NOT about Daniel; it was about what God wanted the king to know about God! This is where we all need to be every moment of every day. It is not about us. It is about God and His will.

And exactly what did God want to reveal to the king? The future! Now that is pretty cool stuff, to have the God of the universe reveal the future! I hope that this king knows what to do with this knowledge! (But that is for a future devotion...) Today we need to remember that no matter how mightily God uses us, or how unique the skills He has given us, it is NOT about ME! It is all about God and God alone.

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DANIEL 2:29-35

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Daniel 2:29-35 (NIV)

29 "As you were lying there, O king, your mind turned to things to come, and the revealer of mysteries showed you what is going to happen. 30 As for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because I have greater wisdom than other living men, but so that you, O king, may know the interpretation and that you may understand what went through your mind. 31 "You looked, O king, and there before you stood a large statue—an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. 32 The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze,

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"...the revealer of mysteries showed you what is going to happen..."

33 its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. 34 While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. 35 Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week ask the Revealer of mysteries to draw closer to you. Pray that, in His time, you may see the future God has planned for you and your family, and that you will seek His wisdom as you see it unfold.

MESSAGE

What is the one thing we all want to know? The future! Everyone dreams of knowing what is going to happen in their life. Who will I marry? What will I become? How will I die? Well, some things we may not want to know! Nebuchadnezzar has a unique experience here. While the dream itself is certainly an important issue, as we will see in detail later, what is important to consider is that God was giving the king the rare privilege of seeing the future. God has given all mankind the ability to know the "final" future. We have been told that the future is one of fellowship with God or not. The ultimate future is one that God is very clear about. What is a very limited occurrence is when details of the future here on earth are given to an individual.

This is the privilege that the king is allowed. Daniel tells him that the revealer of mysteries is about to show him what will happen. Maybe no baseball scores or stock prices, but some other important items, like what kingdoms will come after his on this earth. I believe one of the best reasons for God NOT to reveal the future to us individually, is that we truly do NOT have the capacity to deal with it. As we shall see later, this is true of Nebuchadnezzar. Without detailed knowledge it also does one more thing for us: it forces us to rely on God to be our future, and for us to allow the future to be planned by God and then lived by us. Not such a bad arrangement!

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DANIEL 2:36-45

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Daniel 2:36-45 (NIV)

36 "This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king. 37 You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; 38 in your hands he has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold. 39 "After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours. Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth. 40 Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron—for iron breaks and smashes everything—and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. 41 Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"The God of heaven has given you dominion and power ..."

. 42 As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. 43 And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay. 44 "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. 45 This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. "The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy."

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray for those who are traveling that they may see the authority of God in all they encounter. Ask God to give a special comfort to those remaining at home and who are hurting without their family.

MESSAGE

For those who are hoping and waiting to see an expository analysis of the prophetic writings in Daniel, don't hold your breath. I intend to leave that to others! What I do want to look at carefully here is the blatant fact that God has given some very important powers and authorities to someone who is NOT yet a believer in Himself. This is one of several passages in Scripture that show two competing facts that God has placed the earth under. First, as we have seen and will continue to see, God is in full control of ALL events at ALL times. Second, God says directly to Daniel that He has given Nebuchadnezzar (a man who worships other gods)

"...dominion and power and might and glory; in [his] hands he has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air." Talk about delegation and empowerment! The Master is a master at it! This is a difficult concept for us to fully comprehend, but what is most important to understand, is that God has set all authority in place on earth and in heaven. Ultimately that authority will come back to Him, so how it is used has great consequences.

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DANIEL 2:46-49

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Daniel 2:46-49 (NIV)

46 Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell prostrate before Daniel and paid him honor and ordered that an offering and incense be presented to him. 47 The king said to Daniel, "Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery." 48 Then the king placed Daniel in a high position and lavished many gifts on him. He made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon and placed him in charge of all its wise men. 49 Moreover, at Daniel's request the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego administrators over the province of Babylon, while Daniel himself remained at the royal court.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week focus on God and His power in your life. Ask Him to give you insight into what HE has accomplished in you. Pray for those on the road that God will give them the ability to see His strength and power as they live each day on the road.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"Surely your God is the God of gods ..."

MESSAGE

Slowly but surely the message is coming through to King Nebuchadnezzar. He is blown away that Daniel is able to not only tell him what his dream is, but is also able to give an interpretation of it. King Nebuchadnezzar immediately acknowledges the power of God ("revealer of mysteries") and the position of God ("God of gods"). He is so thrilled that he gives Daniel one giant promotion: head of all the wise men! In addition, he agrees to Daniel's request to give his three friends some big new jobs as well. Unfortunately, the true message of Daniel has still to hit the heart of the king. At this point it is very apparent that God is still Daniel's God, NOT Nebuchadnezzar's. To Nebuchadnezzar, God is just one of many gods, and NOT his own God. This is seen not only in the quote above from verse 47, but also in the fact that Nebuchadnezzar never bows to God or truly acknowledges God's power or work in this event, ONLY Daniel's. He is anxious to give Daniel all he can to endear Daniel to himself.

Daniel went to great lengths to show the king that it was not about Daniel, but about God. Nebuchadnezzar still sees things as all about Nebuchadnezzar, and Daniel is a means to help that. How about us? Are we focused on ME and those around me? Or are we focused on The Lord God of All, Creator of the Universe, and what He desires to accomplish?

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DANIEL 3:1-7

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Daniel 3:1-7 (NIV)

1 King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, ninety feet high and nine feet wide, and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon. 2 He then summoned the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials to come to the dedication of the image he had set up. 3 So the satraps, prefects, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates and all the other provincial officials assembled for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up, and they stood before it.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold ..."

4 Then the herald loudly proclaimed, "This is what you are commanded to do, O peoples, nations and men of every language: 5 As soon as you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. 6 Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace." 7 Therefore, as soon as they heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations and men of every language fell down and worshiped the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week focus on your response to God and His power. Ask Him to give you insight into what you should do with what He has given you. Pray for those on the road that God will give them the ability to see His direction in their life.

MESSAGE

First, King Nebuchadnezzar finds some young men of the captured nation who perform at a rate 10 times better than all the other wise men in their graduating class. Then Daniel (with his friends' prayer support) not only interprets a dream, but tells about the dream in great detail without the king telling him the details beforehand. Through all of this, Daniel and his friends tell the king and others that there is only ONE God and all other gods are of no worth. In fact the king believes that their God is the "head honcho" when it comes to gods, but still the king's response to all this is a little strange. Given all this information and knowledge, what should he do? How about erect a 90 foot statue of a god (or maybe it was really of himself) and tell everyone to bow down to it when the music starts.

Seems rational... NOT! King Nebuchadnezzar has not really heard what Daniel has said about God, i.e., God is first, all, and only. Instead the king has continued to worship other gods and kept the real focus on himself and what others think about him. Not only poor leadership, but just plain poor "being", in God's eyes. Next week we will see the results of this focus on self, not God. What is your focus this week, God's will or your own?

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DANIEL 3:8-23

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Daniel 3:8-23 (NIV)

8 At this time some astrologers came forward and denounced the Jews. 9 They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! 10 You have issued a decree, O king, that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music must fall down and worship the image of gold, 11 and that whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown into a blazing furnace. 12 But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who pay no attention to you, O king. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up." 13 Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, 14 and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? 15 Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?"

be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?" 16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up." 19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual 20 and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. 21 So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. 22 The king's command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, 23 and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week focus on your worship of God. Get to know Him just as He wants to know you... personally. Ask Him to give you insight into what you should do with the life He has given you. Pray for those on the road that they will know God personally.

MESSAGE

We now see the results of King Nebuchadnezzar's focus on himself. He has become furious that Daniel's three friends have not bowed down to the golden image. A deeper look at this passage reveals that this whole trial of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego is really just jealousy from other wise men and leaders. They are jealous of what the three of them and Daniel have received from the king.

Their anger and jealousy is really over the Jews (including Daniel and his three friends) who were captives of the nation of Babylon. So we have a plot by some leaders to kill off some people they don't like, who just happen to be on the list of important and well-cared-for by the king. What do we think will win, the king's ego or a sense of rational understanding of what Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach

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MESSAGE

and Abednego have told AND SHOWN to the king about the one true God? The king's response was, "...if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace." A furnace that was so hot, the soldiers throwing them in are killed by the intense heat. Nebuchadnezzar still does not know God. He has seen and heard about God.

He has acknowledged that God is a god of gods. But, in fact, he has no relationship with God and does not really have any idea of what it means to worship God. Next week we see how a true worshiper of God views life. Do you KNOW God, or just know who He is?

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DANIEL 3:8-23

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Daniel 3:8-23 (NIV)

8 At this time some astrologers came forward and denounced the Jews. 9 They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! 10 You have issued a decree, O king, that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music must fall down and worship the image of gold, 11 and that whoever does not fall down and worship will be thrown into a blazing furnace. 12 But there are some Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—who pay no attention to you, O king. They neither serve your gods nor worship the image of gold you have set up." 13 Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, 14 and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? 15 Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will

be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?" 16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up." 19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual 20 and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. 21 So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. 22 The king's command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, 23 and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"...we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter."

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week focus on your response to God and His power. Ask Him to give you insight into what you should do with what He has given you today and the eternal rewards He has promised. Pray for those on the road that God will give them the ability to see His direction in their lives.

MESSAGE

Same verses as last week, but let's look at the three men who KNOW and fear and worship God alone. What do our three friends say to the king when faced with death or bowing to a false god? '16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter.

17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up." ' Now that is TRUST. The faith and trust these men showed in God and His power in their life is

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MESSAGE

AMAZING! They had no worries, because they **KNEW** God and worshiped God. Not any old god, but the One and only **GOD**. They knew the earthly outcome could be death, but they were 100% convinced that the eternal outcome outweighed the earthly, and they knew exactly what that eternal outcome was. The foundations they had built in their relationship with the God of the Universe were what brought them to this point.

They knew that even death was better than putting anything before the one true God. How is your trust and faith in God this week? Are you strong enough to face the furnace **NOT** knowing the earthly outcome, only the eternal?

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DANIEL 3:19-30

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Daniel 3:19-30 (NIV)

19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual 20 and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace. 21 So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. 22 The king's command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, 23 and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace. 24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, "Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?" They replied, "Certainly, O king." 25 He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods."

26 Nebuchadnezzar then approached the opening of the blazing furnace and shouted, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!" So Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego came out of the fire, 27 and the satraps, prefects, governors and royal advisers crowded around them. They saw that the fire had not harmed their bodies, nor was a hair of their heads singed; their robes were not scorched, and there was no smell of fire on them. 28 Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has sent his angel and rescued his servants! They trusted in him and defied the king's command and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. 29 Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way." 30 Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"...and were willing to give up their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God..."

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week focus on your relationship with the ETERNAL God. Pray that God will continue to grow in your heart as you focus your thoughts on Him alone. Pray that those traveling will see the POWER of God and His joy in their life, not the rewards of this world.

MESSAGE

Well, King Nebuchadnezzar is getting closer, but still not quite there in his relationship with God Almighty. (Maybe another dream or two will help!) He becomes furious with these three men and their defiance of his ego, so he is going to insure that they suffer and die. He orders seven times the normal heat for these undeserving men. Again he is wrong. Their God does have power and abilities!

Nebuchadnezzar's response to God's rescue seems very generous and proper, but a closer look reveals it has NOT changed his own relationship to God. He does refer to God as, "Most High God," in verse 26 when he calls them to come out to the fire, and he does command the entire nation to not talk bad about the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and then gave the young men a promotion.

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MESSAGE

However, poor Nebuchadnezzar is still focused on the earthly things and on rewarding egos, not on serving God. God Almighty is not a mere god who we should not talk bad about. He is the one and only God who expects nothing less than 100% allegiance to Him alone. Nebuchadnezzar still does not understand why these three men were willing to risk their lives. He is simply impressed that they have been rescued.

He **STILL** has **NO** personal relationship with the only God who desires a relationship with him. The only God who desires (or even can!) is The Most High God, and the **ONLY** God. Where is your heart this week? Trapped in your earthly ego and responsibilities, or focused on worshiping the one true God?

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DANIEL 4:1-9

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Daniel 4:1-9 (NIV)

1 King Nebuchadnezzar, To the peoples, nations and men of every language, who live in all the world: May you prosper greatly! 2 It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me. 3 How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation. 4 I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at home in my palace, contented and prosperous. 5 I had a dream that made me afraid. As I was lying in my bed, the images and visions that passed through my mind terrified me.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"His kingdom is an eternal kingdom..."

6 So I commanded that all the wise men of Babylon be brought before me to interpret the dream for me. 7 When the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners came, I told them the dream, but they could not interpret it for me. 8 Finally, Daniel came into my presence and I told him the dream. (He is called Belteshazzar, after the name of my god, and the spirit of the holy gods is in him.) 9 I said, "Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in you, and no mystery is too difficult for you. Here is my dream; interpret it for me."

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray for those traveling that they will see God's power and majesty in the everyday events of life. Ask God to show His wisdom to each of us as we fulfill His will by obedience to Him.

MESSAGE

At last we see the transformed Nebuchadnezzar. We will have to go through a couple of chapters with him to see the outcome, but we now have an acknowledgement (and MORE) from Nebuchadnezzar that God alone is in charge. Chapter 4 begins with King Nebuchadnezzar telling a story about himself, AFTER it has happened, so we will see later that this telling in chapter 4 is a minimum of seven years after the episode with Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah in the fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar does finally acknowledge God Almighty as the King of Kings, in verses 2 and 3, though this is AFTER the story he is about to tell. What is interesting is what he says about himself as he tells the story. First he describes himself as contented and prosperous. I would think so! He is king of the modern world at that time and has all the wealth one could imagine. From a human standpoint, how much more prosperous or contented could you get?

From a spiritual view, he still sees many people and many gods as the way to wisdom. He has yet another dream, and instead of going to Daniel or one of his three friends, who have been saved from the furnace by God Almighty, Nebuchadnezzar goes to all the "regular" wise men and asks them to tell him what his dream means. Guess what? Just like before, they cannot figure it out, and this time he actually tells them the dream. As he tells the story he continues to call Daniel, "Belteshazzar," the name of his god, rather than Daniel, his given name. He continues by telling Daniel, "I know the spirit of the holy gods is in you..." still not able to fully appreciate and understand what Daniel and his friends have shown him about the ONE true God. Soon he will learn, and it will be a VERY difficult lesson. God gives us all life lessons designed to show us His power and majesty. Are we listening? Or do we need additional lessons like Nebuchadnezzar is about to experience?

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DANIEL 4:10-18

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Daniel 4:10-18 (NIV)

10 These are the visions I saw while lying in my bed: I looked, and there before me stood a tree in the middle of the land. Its height was enormous. 11 The tree grew large and strong and its top touched the sky; it was visible to the ends of the earth. 12 Its leaves were beautiful, its fruit abundant, and on it was food for all. Under it the beasts of the field found shelter, and the birds of the air lived in its branches; from it every creature was fed. 13 "In the visions I saw while lying in my bed, I looked, and there before me was a messenger, a holy one, coming down from heaven. 14 He called in a loud voice: 'Cut down the tree and trim off its branches; strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the animals flee from under it and the birds from its branches.

15 But let the stump and its roots, bound with iron and bronze, remain in the ground, in the grass of the field. " 'Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him live with the animals among the plants of the earth. 16 Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let him be given the mind of an animal, till seven times pass by for him. 17 " 'The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men.' 18 "This is the dream that I, King Nebuchadnezzar, had. Now, Belteshazzar, tell me what it means, for none of the wise men in my kingdom can interpret it for me. But you can, because the spirit of the holy gods is in you."

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"...so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign..."

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray that God will show you His power and His will. Pray that God will make you to see His sovereign will and rule over your life.

MESSAGE

What a dream. A tree grows to the ends of the earth and soon all the earth is feeding and living under this one tree. The next line is important: Nebuchadnezzar says, "...An angelic watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven," is about to deliver a message (see NASB). Seems like he feels it would be important to listen to this messenger. What is the message? The tree is about to get cut down! And what does this messenger say is the reason for the decision to cut down the tree? Very simply we see in verse 17 that the reason is: " 'The decision is announced by messengers, the holy ones declare the verdict, so that the living may know that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of men.' "

Nebuchadnezzar does not understand the meaning, and he calls Daniel to the task of interpretation. It appears that Nebuchadnezzar has the wisdom to know it is important because the messenger has said this was all done so that the living, including the king, would know who is in charge. It appears that King Nebuchadnezzar still is under the belief that he is in charge of not only his own life but all the people he rules over as king. God Almighty, the Most High has a slightly different view of things. What do you think? Who is in charge of your life and the events that surround it?

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DANIEL 4:19-27

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Daniel 4:19-27 (NIV)

19 Then Daniel (also called Belteshazzar) was greatly perplexed for a time, and his thoughts terrified him. So the king said, "Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its meaning alarm you." Belteshazzar answered, "My lord, if only the dream applied to your enemies and its meaning to your adversaries! 20 The tree you saw, which grew large and strong, with its top touching the sky, visible to the whole earth, 21 with beautiful leaves and abundant fruit, providing food for all, giving shelter to the beasts of the field, and having nesting places in its branches for the birds of the air- 22 you, O king, are that tree! You have become great and strong; your greatness has grown until it reaches the sky, and your dominion extends to distant parts of the earth. 23 "You, O king, saw a messenger, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, 'Cut down the tree and destroy it, but leave the stump, bound with iron and bronze, in the grass of

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"...the tree you saw... you, O king, are that tree!"

the field, while its roots remain in the ground. Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven; let him live like the wild animals, until seven times pass by for him.' 24 "This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree the Most High has issued against my lord the king: the wild animals, until seven times pass by for him.' 25 You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes. 26 The command to leave the stump of the tree with its roots means that your kingdom will be restored to you when you acknowledge that Heaven rules. 27 Therefore, O king, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue."

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week ask God to show you His plan for your life. Pray that those on the road are comforted in their travels, knowing that God alone is in charge of all circumstances in their life and in their immediate situations.

MESSAGE

Well, here we have the interpretation of the dream. Daniel is actually taken back when he hears the dream, and Nebuchadnezzar has to push him to tell the interpretation. The tree is the king, and the message from Daniel is that the king needs to turn from his sin and have mercy on the poor and maybe God will spare him the punishment. And what is the punishment? Seven years of living like an animal in the wilderness apart from all men. I believe we all would consider this a severe punishment. I also believe, if you think about it, it is even more severe to someone who has literally had the rule of the

world and all its pleasures. Nothing has been withheld from this king, yet he continues to be unwilling to accept who God is and who is really in control. What will it take for you to understand who is really in control? Are you living life as if God was in control? God has a plan for each of us. We merely have to ask what it is, and He loves to tell and show what great blessings He has in store for each of us! WE just need to LISTEN. If you are like me you may have a habit of talking to God much more than listening to God. Try reversing that trend, the quiet solitude of hearing can have a dramatic impact on your relationship with God, and your daily living.

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DANIEL 4:28-33

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Daniel 4:28-33 (NIV)

28 All this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar. 29 Twelve months later, as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, 30 he said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?" 31 The words were still on his lips when a voice came from heaven, "This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you. 32 You will be driven away

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"...a voice came from heaven, saying, '... sovereignty has been removed from you...' " (NASB)

from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes." 33 Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from people and ate grass like cattle. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray for those on the road that they will listen to God in a soft voice and not have to wait for the harsh message. Pray that God will whisper His grace and salvation to those you encounter.

MESSAGE

You are the king of the earth. You have it all under control. A dream scares you to no end. A man who has ALWAYS been right in telling your dreams says you need to change or you will become as a wild animal in the wilderness. So what do you do? If you are Nebuchadnezzar you do nothing. For the next year Nebuchadnezzar makes absolutely NO change in his life. We serve a patient God, but we do not know when His patience will turn to judgment. For King Nebuchadnezzar it was one year after his big "warning dream". Verse 30 reflects the king's attitude on life and God: "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?"

It is easy to see that he gives God no credit. God's patience now turns to judgment, as we see in verse 31, "The words were still on his lips when a voice came from heaven, 'this is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you.' " (emphases mine) God has now moved to a language that is severe and harsh, but appears to be the only language Nebuchadnezzar can understand. What language does God need to use to talk to you? What will it take for you to stop talking and start listening?

TRAVELING PRAYER PARTNERS

DANIEL 4:34-37

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Daniel 4:34-37 (NIV)

34 At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. 35 All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"And those who walk in pride he is able to humble."

36 At the same time that my sanity was restored, my honor and splendor were returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and nobles sought me out, and I was restored to my throne and became even greater than before. 37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray that you can see the glory of God and His love for you. Pray that those on the road are able to see God's glory and not their own.

MESSAGE

How long does it take to get the message? For Nebuchadnezzar it was SEVEN YEARS in the wilderness eating and acting like an animal! What a terrible punishment to endure. It seems we all have to endure many tough times before we finally listen to God. While it may seem easy to just move on and accept what you have in life and the skills and wealth you have accumulated, it is imperative that we fully understand the true source. For Nebuchadnezzar it was a long and painful journey to find God. That was never God's intent; He tried over and over to show Nebuchadnezzar the true way to Himself, but the trappings of this world got in the way.

The good news is in the final results. We see them in verse 37: "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble." All his ways are just! What a statement from a man just returning from seven years eating like an animal and having no contact with other men. Has God humbled you, or are you waiting for a slightly louder voice before you humble yourself before God Almighty?

TRAVELING PRAYER PARTNERS

DANIEL 5:1-9

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Daniel 5:1-9 (NIV)

1 King Belshazzar gave a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles and drank wine with them. 2 While Belshazzar was drinking his wine, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them. 3 So they brought in the gold goblets that had been taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them. 4 As they drank the wine, they praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.

5 Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote. 6 His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his knees knocked together and his legs gave way. 7 The king called out for the enchanters, astrologers and diviners to be brought and said to these wise men of Babylon, "Whoever reads this writing and tells me what it means will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around his neck, and he will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom." 8 Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or tell the king what it meant. 9 So King Belshazzar became even more terrified and his face grew more pale. His nobles were baffled.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"Like father, like son."

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray that God continues to focus your life on growing with Him. Ask God to influence you in a way that allows those around you to grow closer to His likeness rather than yours.

MESSAGE

Last week we saw the final conversion of King Nebuchadnezzar. After numerous calls from God, he finally answered the door. (Or should I say heart?) As we move to the next part of Daniel's life story we see the next leader Daniel will work with. Belshazzar is Nebuchadnezzar's son. What we see in the first few verses of chapter 5 is a son who acts very much like his father PRIOR to the father's understanding of God's true power. It is party time and Belshazzar is having his thousand closest friends and advisors over for dinner when suddenly out of nowhere a hand appears and begins to write on the wall. Just like dad he sends for all the smart guys to figure it out, and just like dad he offers riches and power as the reward for the answer.

As we have seen over and over, the smart guys are not in tune with the message if it comes from God, and once again they cannot answer the question of what the handwriting says. What is your influence over your family and children? Are they just like you? God's intention is that they are replicas of God, with a major influence by the role you play in their life. The reality of a child's life, or even marriage for that matter, is that we gravitate to become like those we love. Have you given the best example for those that love you? Do they need some additional influence? Do you? Do they love what you love? It is never too late to change what we are influencing others to be like.

TRAVELING PRAYER PARTNERS

DANIEL 5:10-17

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Daniel 5:10-17 (NIV)

10 The queen, hearing the voices of the king and his nobles, came into the banquet hall. "O king, live forever!" she said. "Don't be alarmed! Don't look so pale! 11 There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him. In the time of your father he was found to have insight and intelligence and wisdom like that of the gods. King Nebuchadnezzar your father—your father the king, I say—appointed him chief of the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners. 12 This man Daniel, whom the king called Belteshazzar, was found to have a keen mind and knowledge and understanding, and also the ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles and solve difficult problems. Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means." 13 So Daniel was brought before the king, and the king said to him, "Are you Daniel, one of the exiles my father the king brought from Judah?"

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"You may keep your gifts for yourself..."

14 I have heard that the spirit of the gods is in you and that you have insight, intelligence and outstanding wisdom. 15 The wise men and enchanters were brought before me to read this writing and tell me what it means, but they could not explain it. 16 Now I have heard that you are able to give interpretations and to solve difficult problems. If you can read this writing and tell me what it means, you will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around your neck, and you will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom." 17 Then Daniel answered the king, "You may keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else. Nevertheless, I will read the writing for the king and tell him what it means."

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray that God will allow you to see His rewards and His will for your life. Pray for those on the road that God will give each person a sense of His will and His comfort as they are away from their family.

MESSAGE

This week I would like to focus on Daniel rather than Belshazzar. Some of the truth in this passage is about what we read, but a lot is about what is "seen" in the passage. First, let's remember that during the lifetime of Belshazzar, his father made Daniel very famous and very powerful. It strikes me as impossible that Belshazzar would not have known of Daniel and what he had done for his father. At the same time, when a thousand of the king's top advisors and friends were gathered for dinner, Daniel was not among them. Daniel is a man who sees many people come and go in power and does not worry about his own position, only about what God has for him to do

when he is told of the reward for explaining the mystery, and answers just how he did every time he has been asked to explain the unexplainable in the past. What did he say? Well, in our modern language it could be translated, "I care not for the rewards of this world, including power and wealth; I care only to do the will of God and to speak His word." Daniel did not focus on keeping the job with the most power or prestige. He did not focus on getting the best or the most rewards. Daniel focused on what God had asked him to do and he humbly went forth and did it. Daniel was a godly leader! How about you? Are you seeking and clamoring for the rewards of today, or of eternity?

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DANIEL 5:18-30

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Daniel 5:18-30 (NIV)

18 "O king, the Most High God gave your father Nebuchadnezzar sovereignty and greatness and glory and splendor. 19 Because of the high position he gave him, all the peoples and nations and men of every language dreaded and feared him. Those the king wanted to put to death, he put to death; those he wanted to spare, he spared; those he wanted to promote, he promoted; and those he wanted to humble, he humbled. 20 But when his heart became arrogant and hardened with pride, he was deposed from his royal throne and stripped of his glory. 21 He was driven away from people and given the mind of an animal; he lived with the wild donkeys and ate grass like cattle; and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he acknowledged that the Most High God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and sets over them anyone he wishes. 22 "But you his son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this. 23 Instead, you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"...the Most High God is sovereign over the kingdoms of men..."

You had the goblets from his temple brought to you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines drank wine from them. You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand. But you did not honor the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways. 24 Therefore he sent the hand that wrote the inscription. 25 "This is the inscription that was written: Mene , Mene , Tekel , Parsin 26 "This is what these words mean: Mene: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end. 27 Tekel: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting. 28 Peres: Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians." 29 Then at Belshazzar's command, Daniel was clothed in purple, a gold chain was placed around his neck, and he was proclaimed the third highest ruler in the kingdom. 30 That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain, 31 and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray for those at home that God will continue to comfort them in their time away from loved ones. Pray that those who are ignoring God's call will quickly wake up to hear His voice.

MESSAGE

Here we are again, at the same lesson Nebuchadnezzar had such a hard time learning. And the lesson is? God is in control and expects those under His control (that's everyone!) to acknowledge it. Once again Daniel is NOT intimidated by people or circumstances in revealing the mystery God has set out. He first of all rejects the need for reward as seen last week, and then just like every other time, rather than just giving a quick and easy answer, he tells the story God has sent.

The answer was an easy one: God has just told Belshazzar that his reign is over, but Daniel takes the time to explain why. Belshazzar has not listened to God's voice, even though given ample opportunity to hear the word of God, and because of that, he would soon lose his kingdom and die. The second lesson we see is one of timing. God gives us all sufficient time to acknowledge Him. Some will (including some like Nebuchadnezzar who waited a very long time and had to be reminded in many ways.) and some will

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CONTINUED

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MESSAGE

NOT. Belshazzar did NOT. This same lesson is one for all of us: are we prepared for the consequences of waiting to make

that final acknowledgment, and do we know when God is going to close the door to the decision?

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DANIEL 6:1-5

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Daniel 6:1-5 (NIV)

1 It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, 2 with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss. 3 Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. 4 At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. 5 Finally these men said, "We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God."

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

his week pray that God will show you your blind spot and allow you to confess to Him your need for His sovereignty in your life. Pray for those on the road that they will acknowledge God and His wisdom and power over them and all they encounter.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"They could find no corruption in him..."

MESSAGE

Nebuchadnezzar is gone, Belshazzar is now gone, and a new king is in charge of the Babylonian empire. Daniel has been retained at a high level post in this new administration (at least for now). The cast of characters around Daniel seems no different than under the previous kings. They appear much like people we see in modern life. Everyone is interested in how they can make life better for themselves, especially at the expense of those who happen to be in their way. Daniel is up for a promotion, and it seems this potential promotion may have had a poor effect on those not-so-perfect officials. Daniel's fellow rulers attempt to find some fault with Daniel so they can have the king get rid of him. Those who are corrupt tend to be concerned when those who are NOT so corrupt happen to rule over them.

The great thing is that whether it is God or man, the true character of Daniel is seen. That is a real reflection of God's glory. This is what God wants from each of us, for His glory to be reflected and seen in us, so that He can be glorified. That is what we have seen in Daniel's life so far, and soon we will see if it continues. What corruption can be found in you? God is there to forgive, as we acknowledge His sovereignty in our life!

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DANIEL 6:6-12

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Daniel 6:6-12 (NIV)

6 So the administrators and the satraps went as a group to the king and said: "O King Darius, live forever! 7 The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or man during the next thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the lions' den. 8 Now, O king, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered—in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed." 9 So King Darius put the decree in writing.

10 Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. 11 Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help. 12 So they went to the king and spoke to him about his royal decree: "Did you not publish a decree that during the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or man except to you, O king, would be thrown into the lions' den?" The king answered, "The decree stands—in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed."

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"...these men...found Daniel praying and asking God for help."

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray that you and those you know traveling take an extra effort to spend time in prayer. Pray that others are strengthened in their relationship with God through prayer.

MESSAGE

The trap is set, and Daniel is VERY aware of it. The king has decreed that only he is to be worshiped or prayed to for 30 days. Talk about an appeal to the ego! These men knew right where to go with King Darius, and he fell for it lock, stock, and barrel. And what is Daniel's reaction to the plan? He goes where he always goes, The Lord God Almighty. There is no problem, no situation, no concern that is beyond God, so why not go to Him first, last, and every time? This was the philosophy of Daniel. Even when it was commanded that he not do this, he still did. Does this mean every time a law is passed or rule established that we do not like we just ignore it? No, it means that we go to prayer. As we have seen from the beginning, Daniel is a man of prayer.

It is because of this time in prayer that he has developed a strong and close relationship with God, a relationship that has given him wisdom beyond his years and a position of leadership in a foreign land. Daniel knows what we need to know, a relationship with God changes lives...beginning with our own! Prayer is the fastest way to build a relationship with God. How is your prayer life this week? God is anxious to hear from you.

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DANIEL 6:13-24

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Daniel 6:13-24 (NIV)

13 Then they said to the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day." 14 When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him. 15 Then the men went as a group to the king and said to him, "Remember, O king, that according to the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or edict that the king issues can be changed." 16 So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!" 17 A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel's situation might not be changed. 18 Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!"

19 At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. 20 When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?" 21 Daniel answered, "O king, live forever! 22 My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king." 23 The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. 24 At the king's command, the men who had falsely accused Daniel were brought in and thrown into the lions' den, along with their wives and children. And before they reached the floor of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray that God is seen in a powerful and mighty way in the life of those around you. Ask God to be open and active in your life and the lives of those you love.

MESSAGE

We now see the answer to Daniel's prayer. The king quickly sees what a fool he was to listen to his leaders, but realizes he has no way out. The king must have listened to Daniel in the past because he knows he serves a God of power and a God who lives. He also knows Daniel serves this God continually. He has a belief that Daniel will be saved, yet his sorrow is great at the prospect of losing Daniel. In fact Daniel is saved, by the God whom Daniel serves. The king dishes out his vengeance to the men who have

tricked him, a brutal and swift punishment, as they are treated as they had hoped Daniel would be. We see the salvation of Daniel and the power of prayer. This lesson is a continuation of last week: prayer builds a relationship with God, and a relationship with God builds a man. Daniel was one who served God continually. I believe he was what Paul talked about in the New Testament when he admonishes us to pray without ceasing. God rescued Daniel just as he has rescued us. This week, continue to grow in your relationship with God through prayer.

TRAVELING PRAYER PARTNERS

DANIEL 6:25-28

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THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURE

Daniel 6:25-28 (NIV)

25 Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language throughout the land: "May you prosper greatly! 26 "I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel. "For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end. 27 He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions." 28 So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

This week pray that God will rescue you and your loved ones from those things keeping you from Him. Ask God to show what is keeping you from that closeness He desires to have with you.

QUOTE FOR THE WEEK

"He rescues and he saves..."

MESSAGE

WOW! From ego to submission. This king has made a change and wants the world to know. He has seen God work in Daniel's life, and he wants everyone to know about Daniel's God. While a decree from a king will not normally change the heart of man, it is a great commentary to see how this king has changed his tune. Darius has not only seen Daniel saved, he has served justice to those who attempted to destroy Daniel and his God. He has now asked for the world to change their hearts and worship the true and living God.

The words of this king are so powerful that we will end our study of Daniel by quoting him, Daniel 6:26 and 27, "For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end. He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions."