



DANIEL

FAITHFULNESS IN A FOREIGN LAND

**LIFE GROUPS
FALL 2022**

Session Overview

Week 1: September 14	Daniel 1	Life in Exile
Week 2: September 21	Daniel 3	The Fiery Furnace
Week 3: September 28	Daniel 4	The Interpretation of a Dream
Week 4: October 5	Daniel 5	The Writing on the Wall
Week 5: October 12	Daniel 6	The Lions' Den
Week 6: October 19	Daniel 7	The Vision of the Son of Man
Week 7: October 26	Daniel 12	The Vision of the End

Wednesdays

6:00pm Dinner
6:40pm Teaching
7:00pm Group Time
8:00pm Dismissal

Access this guide, Sunday sermons, and mid-week teachings at www.christchurchkc.org/lifegroup.

Introduction

What does it look like to influence culture without being consumed by it? How can we affirm and celebrate God's activity in the world while speaking the truth in love? Is it possible to live with integrity and hope in an environment that is sometimes hostile or indifferent to faith?

The church has always found itself grappling with such questions. These days, as the effects of the pandemic, social and political upheaval, and swirling ethical debates dominate the news cycle, it is tempting to allow fear and anxiety to push us into a defensive or combative posture within our culture. But what if there is a different way? What if faith during periods of exile can not only be maintained, but refined and renewed? What if our influence in the culture doesn't come from seeking power but by exhibiting a winsome and beautiful faithfulness?

For a young Jewish noble named Daniel, exile was a harsh reality. In 587 BCE, the Babylonian Empire besieged Jerusalem. The Temple was destroyed, and many Jews were carried off to live under the rule of the Babylonians and later, the Persians. These events, which Scripture depict as consequences of the nation's unfaithfulness to God, prompted a national and religious crisis. Daniel was thrust to the center stage and forced to choose to bow before pagan idols or stay true to the Lord and trust in God's providence. When Daniel remained faithful, he was blessed with influence and his life became a witness to the power and goodness of God for generations to come.



The book of Daniel reminds us, through stories and prophetic visions, that God's redemptive purposes are not subject to the powers and principalities of this world. Rather than fighting against earthly empires or fully adopting their idols and allegiances, we are given a divine call, rooted in the promise of God's eternal purposes, to live such beautiful and faithful lives that the world ultimately discovers that "he is the living God and he endures forever." (Daniel 6:26)

WEEK 1: LIFE IN EXILE

First 10-15 Minutes

Spend some time getting to know one another and making introductions with anyone who is new in the group. On this first week, spend a moment going over group expectations (ex: respect, confidentiality, listening well, etc.).

Icebreaker question: Share a favorite food or treat you enjoyed as a child and why you loved it.

Scriptural Context

The book of Daniel opens by recounting King Nebuchadnezzar II's siege of Jerusalem in 587 BCE and the southern kingdom of Judah's fall to the control of the rich Babylonian Empire. During this time, many Jews were deported to Babylon where they faced powerful cultural pressure to maintain their national identity and faith in Yahweh (the Hebrew name for God) while living in a land devoted to foreign gods. This tragic period is often referred to as the Babylonian Exile.

Daniel 1 describes how these events transpired for a young Jewish nobleman named Daniel and his three friends. After being deported to Babylon and elevated to a privileged place in King Nebuchadnezzar's court, one of the first tests they encounter involves the temptation to compromise their Jewish dietary laws. What may seem like an inconsequential matter sets the tone for their future in Babylon. It reveals the lengths they are willing to go to express their faithfulness to God. Daniel's posture toward his predicament will pave the way for him to experience and bear witness to God's faithful presence amid Babylonian culture.



Scripture: Daniel 1

Read the selection of verses silently for a couple of minutes, and then have someone from the group read it aloud.

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.

⁷ The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego. 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 compassion to Daniel.

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.”

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. 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 into his service, 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.

Discussion Questions

- 1) What do you notice about this passage? What themes seem important? What ideas, images, or phrases stand out to you?
- 2) What are some of the ways the king attempted to make the four young Jewish men more “Babylonian”? What do you think was the king’s goal in this?
- 3) What was at stake for Daniel and his friends if they took the king’s food? What do you notice about their response to the cultural pressures to conform to Babylon?
- 4) What role does God play in Daniel’s situation? What does this tell us about God?
- 5) In what ways do you experience tension, even if in small ways, between seeking to be faithful to God and living in a relationship with the “empire” in our own cultural context? What can we learn from Jesus’ life and example?

Prayer Time

Share thanksgivings and/or burdens and pray together as a group.

WEEK 2: THE FIERY FURNACE

First 10-15 Minutes

Spend some time catching up/getting to know one another if there are any newcomers.

Icebreaker question: If you could visit any period of history, which would it be and why?

Scriptural Context

Daniel chapter 2 opens with King Nebuchadnezzar experiencing insomnia-inducing dreams. When the king could not find any Babylonian magicians, wise men, or astrologers to interpret these dreams, he is prepared in his anger to have them all murdered. But as Daniel and his friends ask for the Lord's mercy, Daniel receives a vision and interprets the king's dream. This results in increased favor for Daniel and his associates.



In Daniel 3, the king constructs a massive statue (possibly of himself, a Babylonian deity, or a symbol of national allegiance) and commands “nations and peoples of every language” to fall down and worship the image of gold. When Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refuse to bow down and worship the image, their actions provoke the rage of the king which leads to a moment of truth. The three young men must decide if they will bow before the image or refuse and face the consequences of being thrown into a furnace. As the three make their decision and the king carries out the punishment, their deliverance and faithfulness to Yahweh becomes an occasion for the Babylonian king to witness and acknowledge the power of God.

Scripture: Daniel 3

Read the selection of verses silently for a couple of minutes, and then have someone from the group read it aloud.

¹⁴...and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, ¹⁵ “... 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 him, “King 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 deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. ¹⁸ But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”

²¹ So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown 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, Your Majesty."

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."

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.

Discussion Questions

- 1) What do you notice about this passage? What themes seem important? What ideas, images, or phrases stand out to you?
- 2) Why do you think the king was filled with rage when the three men refused to worship the golden statue?
- 3) How would you describe the response of the three men to the king's threat in vv. 16-18? What does it reveal about their commitment to God and their understanding of the role of faith?
- 4) What gives idols their power? What are some of the idols we are tempted or even expected to bow down to or worship in our current cultural context?
- 5) How did the men's deliverance influence the king? Has there been a time when God delivered you or that you had to stand firm in a difficult situation? How did it influence you or those around you?

Prayer Time

Share thanksgivings and/or burdens and pray together as a group.

WEEK 3: THE INTERPRETATION OF A DREAM

First 10-15 Minutes

Icebreaker question: If you could have one superpower, what would it be and what would you use it for?

Scriptural Context

Daniel chapter 4 is primarily a monologue delivered by King Nebuchadnezzar which highlights God's sovereignty, the need for humility, and Daniel's unique role in Babylon. After giving honor to God, Nebuchadnezzar tells of a troubling dream. As in chapter 2, Daniel, who has become a symbol of divine favor and faithfulness to Yahweh, is able to provide an interpretation.



Daniel's interpretation communicates a startling prediction and warning for the king. Like the great tree in his dream that is cut down to a stump, the king himself will be cut down. He will lose his mind, living more like an animal than a man until he acknowledges God as the ultimate source of all authority. Importantly, Daniel notes that this interpretation is offered as a warning so the king might repent of his sins and rule the kingdom with righteousness.

However, Nebuchadnezzar's pride initially remains and the dehumanizing consequences Daniel described sadly come to pass. As Nebuchadnezzar is humbled, he learns that although he is the king of the powerful earthly kingdom of Babylon, he is ultimately accountable to the Most High King of heaven. Through humility, Nebuchadnezzar is restored.

Scripture: Daniel 4

Read the selection of verses silently for a couple of minutes, and then have someone from the group read it aloud.

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 bed, the images and visions that passed through my mind terrified me. ¹⁹ Then Daniel (also called Beltshazzar)...answered, "...²⁴ This is the interpretation, Your Majesty, and this is the decree the Most High has issued against my lord the king: ²⁵ You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like the ox 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 all kingdoms on earth 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, Your Majesty, 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.”

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 Even as the words were on his lips, a voice came from heaven, “This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: Your royal authority has been taken from you.

³³ Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from people and ate grass like the ox. 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. 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.

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.

Discussion Questions

- 1) What do you notice about this passage? What themes seem important? What ideas, images, or phrases stand out to you?
- 2) What was the Lord trying to communicate to Nebuchadnezzar through this dream and its interpretation? Why did Nebuchadnezzar need to hear this message?
- 3) When Nebuchadnezzar failed to heed the warning, what happened to him? What does this suggest about the consequences of pride in our lives?
- 4) Have you ever had someone try to lovingly speak the truth to you? How did you receive it?
- 5) How does Nebuchadnezzar respond after being humbled? Have you ever seen or experienced God show true mercy and restoration?

Prayer Time

Share thanksgivings and/or burdens and pray together as a group.

WEEK 4: THE WRITING ON THE WALL

First 10-15 Minutes

Icebreaker question: If you could have dinner with any person, living currently or from history, who would it be and why?

Scriptural Context

Daniel 5 offers a parallel but contrasting tale to chapter 4. Belshazzar, son of Nebuchadnezzar, is now the ruler of Babylon. As he hosts a banquet and desecrates items taken from the Temple in Jerusalem, writing appears on the wall which none of the Babylonian wise men are able to interpret.

Daniel, now an older man and well known for his wisdom, interprets the writing as a judgment against Belshazzar for his pride and arrogance. Whereas Nebuchadnezzar was humbled and eventually acknowledged God, his son Belshazzar refuses to humble himself. Daniel is given increased leadership and influence while the entire Babylonian kingdom suffers the consequences of Belshazzar's pride.



Scripture: Daniel 5

Read the selection of verses silently for a couple of minutes, and then have someone from the group read it aloud.

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 legs became weak and his knees were knocking.

⁷ The king summoned the enchanters, astrologers and diviners. Then he 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.

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. ¹⁸ "Your Majesty, the Most High God gave your father Nebuchadnezzar sovereignty and greatness and glory and splendor.

²⁰ But when his heart became arrogant and hardened with pride, he was deposed from his royal throne and stripped of his glory. ²¹ ...until he acknowledged that the Most High God is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and sets over them anyone he wishes.

²² “But you, Belshazzar, his son, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this. ²³ Instead, you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven. 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.

²⁶ “Here 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.

Discussion Questions

- 1) What do you notice about this passage? What themes seem important? What ideas, images, or phrases stand out to you?
- 2) How does Daniel respond to the king’s offer for riches and position in exchange for an interpretation of his dream? Why was it important that Daniel responded the way he did?
- 3) Have you ever experienced the temptation to compromise your integrity in exchange for something temporary? How did you respond?
- 4) Is there a place for people of faith to speak truth to power today? What about receiving a word of truth from others? How should our commitment to Jesus and his teaching shape our approach?
- 5) Are there arenas of life in which God has given you increased influence? What do you need to do to steward that influence well?

Prayer Time

Share thanksgivings and/or burdens and pray together as a group.

WEEK 5: THE LIONS' DEN

First 10-15 Minutes

Icebreaker question: What is one fear that you have? It could be silly or serious.

Scriptural Context

Chapter 6 tells the story of Daniel in the lions' den. After the Median King Darius assumes control over the empire after the death of Belshazzar, Daniel is appointed as one of three administrators over the whole kingdom. Daniel enjoys great favor due to his skill, wisdom, and character. But other leaders are jealous and conspire to remove him by trying to get him to break his vow to God.



No matter who the king is or what the law says, Daniel remains faithful. Though he is thrown into the den of lions, Daniel trusts God and is unharmed while his accusers suffer the very fate they tried to impose on him. This display of God's power causes King Darius to acknowledge the greatness of Daniel's God and even announce it to the entire kingdom.

Scripture: Daniel 6

Read the selection of verses silently for a couple of minutes, and then have someone from the group read it aloud.

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.

⁶ So these administrators and satraps went as a group to the king and said: "May 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 human being during the next thirty days, except to you, Your Majesty, shall be thrown into the lions' den.

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.

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!"

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, "May the 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, Your Majesty." 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.

²⁵ Then King Darius wrote to all the nations and peoples of every language in all the earth: "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.

Discussion Questions

- 1) What do you notice about this passage? What themes seem important? What ideas, images, or phrases stand out to you?
- 2) What do you notice about Daniel's character and reputation? What role does our character play in our witness as followers of Christ?
- 3) How does Daniel respond to the decree not to pray to anyone but the king? What does his response reveal about the role of cultivating habits of faith?
- 4) How would you describe Daniel's relationship with King Darius and the empire? What does it tell us about the relationship between earthly rulers or governments and God's sovereignty?
- 5) Have you experienced a time of testing or are you experiencing one now? What do you need from the Lord or the community of faith to help you experience deliverance?

Prayer Time

Share thanksgivings and/or burdens and pray together as a group.

WEEK 6: THE VISION OF THE SON OF MAN

First 10-15 Minutes

Icebreaker question: Do you remember a teacher that made a positive impact on you? What did he or she say or do that affected you?

Scriptural Context

Chapters 1-6 feature narratives of Daniel and his associates openly expressing their faith with both risk and reward. Chapters 7-12 use apocalyptic symbolism couched in dreams and visions to describe the plight of God's people as a faithful remnant living in the shadow of oppressive earthly rulers. These chapters are designed to reassure God's people that, in spite of their present persecution and suffering, God is sovereign over the nations of the world.



Chapter 7 records a terrifying dream Daniel had during the first year of the reign of Belshazzar. Four grotesque beasts emerge from the sea, each representing arrogant kings and empires that arise throughout history and pose a threat to God's people. As the beasts exercise temporary authority, the vision gives way to a picture of the throne room of God, the defeat of the beasts, and one who is given authority and honor over God's eternal kingdom called the son of man, a phrase used in the New Testament as a title for Jesus, the Messiah.

Scripture: Daniel 7

Read the selection of verses silently for a couple of minutes, and then have someone from the group read it aloud.

⁷ “After that, in my vision at night I looked, and there before me was a fourth beast—terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left. It was different from all the former beasts, and it had ten horns.

⁹ “As I looked, “thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. ¹⁰ A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.

¹¹ “Then I continued to watch because of the boastful words the horn was speaking. I kept looking until the beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire. ¹² (The other beasts had been stripped of their authority, but were allowed to live for a period of time.)

¹³ “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. ¹⁴ He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

¹⁶ I approached one of those standing there and asked him the meaning of all this. “So he told me and gave me the interpretation of these things: ¹⁷ ‘The four great beasts are four kings that will rise from the earth.

²³ “He gave me this explanation: ‘The fourth beast is a fourth kingdom that will appear on earth. It will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it. ²⁶ “‘But the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. ²⁷ Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the holy people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.’

Discussion Questions

- 1) What do you notice about this passage? What themes seem important? What ideas, images, or phrases stand out to you?
- 2) Why do you think Daniel envisions these earthly rulers and empires as grotesque and violent beasts?
- 3) What does the description and fate of the beasts tell us about the scope of power earthly rulers and empires have? How does this inform how we engage with the world as disciples of Jesus?
- 4) What aspects of God’s nature and power are suggested by Daniel’s description of the Ancient of Days in vv. 9-10? What does the vision tell us about God’s involvement in the world?
- 5) Drawing from Daniel 7, the New Testament refers to Jesus as the Son of Man. How is the kingship of Jesus different from the “beasts” in the vision or any other earthly ruler?
- 6) What gives you hope when you feel overwhelmed by evil or suffering?

Prayer Time

Share thanksgivings and/or burdens and pray together as a group.

WEEK 7: THE VISION OF THE END

First 10-15 Minutes

Icebreaker question: Speak an encouraging word to one another. What is something you've really appreciated about the members of this group over the past few weeks?

Scriptural Context

Daniel 12 completes the vision in chapters 10-12 and depicts how the archangel Michael joins in a final cosmic battle between good and evil. After a time of suffering, the arrogant, oppressive ruler who persecutes God's people will be defeated. This is a reference to Antiochus IV Epiphanes who ruled Palestine from 175 - 165 BC as a surrogate of the Greek empire. Antiochus outlawed the worship of Yahweh and desecrated the Temple in Jerusalem by offering the sacrifice of a pig on an altar to Zeus (known as the "Abomination of Desolation").



The primary goal of featuring this ruler is not simply to record history or provide predictive prophecy. A ruler who persecutes God's people is a recurring figure throughout Scripture. He represents all who stand opposed to God's kingdom, no matter their nationality or background. His defeat in the vision ultimately points to a hopeful future when goodness will prevail and evil will lose its power. There will be a final judgment and a promise of resurrection, ultimately fulfilled in Jesus. This apocalyptic imagery helps put language to what feels like overwhelming events and gives hope to those experiencing fear or persecution.

Scripture: Daniel 12

Read the selection of verses silently for a couple of minutes, and then have someone from the group read it aloud.

¹ "At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered. ² Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. ³ Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. ⁴ But you, Daniel, roll up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge." ⁸ I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, "My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?" ⁹ He replied, "Go your way, Daniel, because the words are rolled up and sealed until the time of the end. ¹⁰ Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand.

¹¹ “From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. ¹² Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days. ¹³ “As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance.”

Discussion Questions

- 1) What do you notice about this passage? What themes seem important? What ideas, images, or phrases stand out to you?
- 2) What is the role of judgment in this passage? What do you find hopeful about God’s judgment?
- 3) What does this passage tell us about the role of suffering and endurance?
- 4) What do you notice about the description of bodily resurrection in this passage? Why is an affirmation of resurrection important for followers of Jesus?
- 5) How would you describe the hope found in Daniel’s vision? What do you sense God saying to you about your role in God’s kingdom?

Prayer Time

Share thanksgivings and/or burdens and pray together as a group.

Art Citations (in order of appearance)

1. Reconstruction of the Ishtar Gate at the ruins of Babylon, near modern Al-Hillah, Iraq.
2. Cuneiform cylinder: inscription of Nebuchadnezzar II of the construction of Babylon's city wall, 604–562 B.C. The Met, NYC.
3. Three Men in the Fiery Furnace, 3rd c. Priscilla Catacombs, Rome.
4. Nebuchadnezzar, 1795, William Blake, Tate, London.
5. Belshazzar’s Feast, 1635, Rembrandt, National Gallery, London.
6. Daniel in the Lions Den, 1892, Briton Riviere, The British Museum, London.
7. Daniel's Vision of the Four Beasts, 1630, Stich von Matthaeus Merian.
8. The Archangel Michael Defeating Satan, 1635, Guido Reni, Rome, Italy.



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