

The Story Adult Study Guide

For the Week of February 9, 2020

Chapter 18: “Daniel in Exile”

THE STORY



Key Events: the ministries of the prophet Daniel and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego while exiled in Babylon

Key Characters: Daniel, Cyrus (see page 491 for descriptions)

Bible Reference for this Chapter: Daniel 1-3, 6; Jeremiah 29-31

Note on pages 249-250: The prophet Daniel served God as an exile in Babylon from 605 B.C. (under King Nebuchadnezzar) to 539 (when King Cyrus of Persia conquered the Babylonians). Daniel lived on to see the first exiles return to Judah in 538.

1. Daniel refused to partake in the Babylonian’s royal food and drink (page 250). How would he defile himself with the royal diet? What does his refusal say about Daniel?
2. The italicized summary of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream on page 253 does not include a 5th kingdom stated in Daniel 2:44: *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.* Describe this kingdom.
3. Facing Nebuchadnezzar’s ultimatum on page 255, were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in a lose-lose or a win-win situation? Explain. What situations do we face today that compare?
4. Throughout the chapter, Daniel and the other three men distinguished themselves by their exceptional qualities. What were these qualities and how did the qualities impact their witness for the Lord?
5. Chapter 18 includes the famous story of “Daniel in the Lion’s Den” on pages 257-260. What lessons can we learn from this episode about a) people around us, b) ourselves, and c) our God?
6. The prophet Jeremiah’s prediction about Judah’s return from exile was fulfilled about 70 years after the first deportations of 605 B.C. Read the final paragraph (regular print) on

page 261 (Jeremiah 29:10-14). How should we view past events in our lives? How should we view future events?

7. Other thoughts and comments? Please share messages of personal comfort, hope, and encouragement you received from chapter 18.

Prayer Suggestions

- Thank God for orchestrating my life to serve my spiritual good and his purpose.
- Pray for God's courage and wisdom to deal with worldly people and situations.

Study Guide Helps

1. The royal food and drink involved defilement for Israelites: 1) the meat was contaminated because the first portion was sacrificed to idols, and a portion of the drink was poured on a pagan altar; 2) animals were used that were declared by God to be unclean; 3) clean animals were used but were not prepared according to the regulations of the law. Daniel demonstrated love and faithfulness to God, commitment to a God-pleasing lifestyle, wisdom to deal with foreign leaders and people (out of respect to the king, Daniel used good judgment by offering an alternative instead of outright rebellion), and courage to be a witness for the Lord.
2. The first four kingdoms referred to earthly, political empires: Babylonians, Medo-Persians, Greeks and Romans. The 5th kingdom of Daniel 2:44 referred to the spiritual kingdom of God. This kingdom was based on the coming Messiah with the God/man Jesus Christ the King. The 5th kingdom was a stark contrast to the first four kingdoms – Christ's rule over believers will last forever, and will encompass all people and races over the entire earth. God controlled earthly kingdoms to carry out his plans for Christ's kingdom.
3. A worldly perspective would view their situation as lose-lose: surrender your beliefs/convictions and worship the image to live (lose), or die in the furnace (lose). From God's view, they were in a win-win situation: stand up for God, worship him only, die in faith and go to heaven (win); stand up for God, worship him only and be saved from death (win). Participants can share experiences that compare. We face tough choices in life – do we stand with God and his Word, or do we go the easier route of compromising to suit our earthly/temporal existence? Such decisions may appear lose-lose, but are win-win with God on our side. We may consider some situations to be win-lose in that we stand up for God (win), but suffer earthly consequences that impact occupation, status, material gain, relationships, etc. (lose). When we consider and apply God's priorities, he guides and comforts us in these decisions.
4. Chapter 18 describes these qualities: (the king's officials looked for men) *showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand and qualified to serve*; (other descriptions) *God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. . . the king found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters . . . they could find no corruption in him (Daniel), because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent*. These men were talented and trustworthy in their roles and were morally and ethically above reproach. The unbelieving world respects these qualities, although people may become resentful and jealous of those who possess them. People tend to listen to us if they respect and trust us and if they think our lives reflect the beliefs/faith we profess. Good character will position us for witnessing Christ's love.
5. a) People will persecute us for our faith and commitment to the Lord. By the Spirit's power, we need to be on guard and shrewd with people. b) Our trust in God will be tested by people and situations. These are opportunities to turn to God in Bible study and prayer. Remain resolute in the Lord, relying on his direction and comfort. c) God and his promises are true, and he will carry us through persecution and dire circumstances. God uses these situations to build us up and lead others to Christ.
6. This is God's incredible promise: Every situation in life will in some way be used by God for the good of his people. Everything that has happened and will happen is used by him for our spiritual and eternal welfare, and/or the spiritual and eternal welfare of others (*to give you hope and a future*). Perhaps we won't see how right away, and perhaps there will be situations we won't understand this side of heaven, but it's God's promise. We should view past events, even the ones caused by our sin and/or the sin of others, as serving our good (even though God did not will the sin). Our future is in God's hands to serve our good as well. God uses events and circumstances to draw us closer to him in faith (*seek me . . . I will be found by you*) and bring us to heaven. See Romans 8:28.
7. Answers will vary. Consider/discuss elements of chapter 18 that relate to our daily walk of faith.