

DANIEL

WEEK ONE CHOICES TO MAKE

DAY 1

Not Just a Tale
of Two Kings

DAY 2

Ties Between Past
and Present

DAY 3

The Power of Training

DAY 4

Renaming and Resisting

DAY 5

Resolve

Greetings, Dear One! I'm thrilled to meet you on this page! Since you're reading this, you must be seriously considering participating in the daily homework assignments. If you do, your journey with God will be greatly enhanced. I love taking part in a corporate outpouring of God's Spirit, but nothing replaces time spent One-on-one with Him. He will speak to you alone in ways you rarely experience in a group.

Now, let's make sure we start the journey on the right foot. I hope you've read the formal introduction to the study on page 6. In it I shared the uniqueness of our approach in this particular series. Understanding that our study is session driven rather than homework driven will be critical to the learning process we have ahead. Our five homework assignments each week will widen the lens and help us grasp a broader understanding of the chapter we considered in the session. Most of the information in the daily assignments will be new, but we will also underscore some concepts and facts mentioned in the sessions.

The weekly homework assignments assume you have viewed the session. At many points in week 1 of your homework, we will reference session 1 with familiarity. If you missed it, you can still do most of your homework, but you will have to navigate some information gaps. If you miss a video session, make it up as quickly as you can so you won't be confused when I reference it. We have many wonderful discoveries to make, and I don't want you to miss a single one. I'm praying for you, Beloved! I'm so honored you're along for the ride. Give particular attention to the following questions this week.

THIS WEEK'S PRINCIPAL QUESTIONS

DAY 1 What are some parallels between ancient Babylon and the western culture that seek to hold us captive?

DAY 2 What specific prophecy of Isaiah did Daniel witness in fulfillment?

DAY 3 What kinds of Israelites did the king order Ashpenaz to bring to Babylon?

DAY 4 Which four young men are singled out in Daniel 1:6-7?

DAY 5 What was the chief of Nebuchadnezzar's court instructed to teach the Hebrew youths?

DAY ONE NOT JUST A TALE OF TWO KINGS

Today's Treasure: *In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. Daniel 1:1*

Drive within the suburbs of modern Baghdad and you'll find the scattered ruins of one of antiquity's most famous cities. Her name is Babylon. Through the paintbrush of Scripture, we'll see her rise from the dust, robe herself in riches, and paint her face like a woman of the night. Make no mistake: she aims to seduce. Posing as the

beautiful life, she morphs into the current image of what every worldly man and woman wants to be—deserves to be. She is popular. She is desirable. She is intoxicating. And did I say she is religious? Ah, yes. She believes in so much of everything that one would be hard-pressed to tell if she believes in anything. To worship self is to worship her. To worship her is to worship her king. She is dressed for success, but underneath her gaud, she is a lifeless mannequin. A fake. A poser. Her prop is the devil himself.

At one time her outer garment was 56 miles of impenetrable walls framing “some two-hundred square miles”¹ of state of the art dwellings, teeming entertainment centers, thriving businesses, at least three palaces, and extravagant temples to numerous gods. Towering above the wall was a 650-foot glimmering enamel ziggurat eerily reminiscent of the tower of Babel. It was “crowned with a shrine containing a massive table of solid gold, and an ornate bed on which, each night, some woman slept to await the pleasure of the god.”² Over time Babylon’s fortress walls finally crumbled, but they could no longer contain her anyway. Somewhere along the way, she ceased to be only a place. She became a mentality. A deadly one.

Few could resist Babylon’s charms. Few had a firm enough hold on reality not to fall for her pretense. Daniel holds his place in Scripture because he was one of the few. Our primary goal during part 1 of our series is to join him as individuals who can live in an extravagant, excessive culture without being poisoned by it. We’re going to develop alarms for Babylon’s charms.

Welcome to the study of the Book of Daniel, Beloved. I’m so glad you’ve joined me for day 1 of our journey. With a fair amount of confidence I think I can assure you it will be exhilarating. The wind of the Holy Spirit blows so hard through some of these Scriptures, you may have to re-fix your hair. The material we have ahead will prove thrilling and, at times, very challenging. When you turn the last page, however, I believe God will grant you an exceeding sense of accomplishment in Him because you were willing to do the work. Since our series is session driven, hopefully you participated in session 1 before beginning your homework.

If so, at the conclusion of the session what commitment did you and I make?

We committed to be willing to learn new information, even when it teeters more toward the historical than the personal. Growing in the knowledge of God’s Word differs from growing in the knowledge of other academics. You see, we’re not seeking human wisdom but “words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words” (1 Cor. 2:13). Since something much deeper than the attainment of knowledge is at stake here, prayer will be a vital part of the process. Please begin your time today and every day of the study with prayer, asking God deliberately and thoughtfully to grant you depth of *wisdom* and *understanding* (see Dan. 1:20). When you’ve completed this vital assignment of prayer, initial here: _____

Let’s get off the starting block of our journey through the Book of Daniel by becoming adept at finding it. The major and minor prophets can be challenging to navigate. Hopefully, our Bible study groups are not only serving seasoned students

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DANIEL

of God's Word. Let's make sure we're also reaching out to seekers and babes in Christ who may not know the first thing about finding an Old Testament book of the Bible. Let's start right where they are, or perhaps right where *you* are. The Book of Psalms is regarded by many as a center point in our Bibles. Its position and length make it hard to miss. Therefore, I'd like you to turn to the Psalms and start flipping forward from book to book until you get to Daniel.

In the space below, please write down the names of all nine books starting with the Psalms and ending with Daniel.

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. 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.

I encourage you to start memorizing these in order this week.

Now, read Daniel 1:1-2. Name the two characters introduced in these opening statements and identify who they are.

_____:

_____:

DANIEL 1:1-2

Look at your map on the inside back cover. It diagrams the locations and reaches of the world powers mentioned prophetically in the Book of Daniel. For now, concentrate on the Babylonian empire and the area we often term the Holy Land. Please note the locations of Jerusalem (between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea) and Babylon (starred by the Euphrates River). The space between the two lands constituted nine hundred miles.³ Imagine the terror of being ripped from your home as a teenager and being taken mile after mile from the only place you've called home. Imagine being Daniel, craning your neck, trying to hold onto one last glimpse of Jerusalem, the city on the hill, and wondering if you'll ever see it again. *He didn't.*


What do you think were some of the first thoughts he might have had as the caravan of captives pulled away from the city?

A Hebrew could hardly have imagined anything worse. As you continue studying your map, concentrate for a moment on the land God had given to the Israelites. It blanketed both sides of the Jordan River and stretched far north and somewhat south of Jerusalem. Your map shows the reach of the Babylonian Empire in the color green.

No greater tragedy could have befallen the people of God than to lose possession of their God-given land. He had warned them numerous times that if they turned to the idols of the surrounding peoples, He would allow them—even appoint them (see 1:2!)—to be taken captive. God is faithful to keep His Word even when it's a warning. The twelve tribes of Israel tore north from south following King Solomon's death in 922 B.C. The Northern Kingdom retained the name *Israel* while the Southern Kingdom, made up mostly of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin (and later, apparently Simeon), took on the name *Judah*. Daniel was born during the closing days of the Kingdom of Judah.

The Book of Daniel opens in the summer of 605 B.C. at the height of Babylon's fame and fortune. In session 1 we adopted an approach to enhance the personal applications we'll make along our way through the chapters of Daniel. We discovered that the literal city of Babylon in Daniel's account offers almost endless parallels to a figurative Babylon surrounding us; therefore, we determined to relate to Daniel at times by applying Babylon symbolically rather than literally. In the weeks ahead, Babylon will represent certain cultural influences and mentalities that permeate the prosperous West. Please don't misunderstand. I have no intention of tagging our nation a "Babylon." Anyone who travels internationally as much as I do realizes the spiritual blessings and opportunities we have on American soil. As dismal as the political climate may seem at times, we still have many God-seeking leaders in areas of government. Keep in mind we are not attacking our nation. We want to address our excessive, self-centered culture.

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A WARNING.**

 List some of the parallels we discussed between Babylon and the western culture that seek to hold us captive. You may review your listening guide, but you'll probably need little more than a glance at Daniel 1:3-4.

In session 1 we learned what we would call the "Babylon Motto" based on Isaiah 47. Turn there in your Bible. If your translation includes chapter headings, you'll quickly notice that this one concerns Babylon. Both verses 8 and 10 include the statement we're identifying as the Babylon Motto.

Read verses 8 and 10 of Isaiah 47 and fill in the blank according to verse 10.

"You have trusted in your wickedness and have said, 'No one sees me.' Your wisdom and knowledge mislead you when you say to yourself,

' _____ '."

There you have it. Memorize the verse and you'll know in a nutshell what Babylon represents.

DANIEL



Share one of the most outrageous examples of the Babylon Motto mentality you've personally encountered.

**NOTHING
IS MORE
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CAPTIVITY.**

The illustrious head of the Babylon “self” was none other than Nebuchadnezzar, her most famous king. “Nebuchadnezzar was the greatest ruler of the Neo-Babylonian period and one of the most competent monarchs of ancient times. He brought Babylon to the zenith of its economic affluence and political power.”⁴ Picture the city where he was enthroned: “Through the center of the town ran the palm-fringed Euphrates, busy with commerce and spanned by a handsome bridge. Practically all the better buildings were of brick, for stone was rare in Mesopotamia; but the bricks were often faced with enameled tiles of brilliant blue, yellow or white, adorned with animal and other figures in glazed relief, which remain to this day supreme in their kind. Nearly all the bricks so far recovered from the site of Babylon bear the proud inscription; ‘I am Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon.’”⁵ (Many mentions of Nebuchadnezzar in extra-biblical literature ended his name with “rezzar” instead of “nezzar.”)

Handsome young Daniel encountered Babylon when the cup of her inviting intoxication was foaming and overflowing. She didn't just offer him a sip. In time, she offered him the world. As we emphasized in session 1, nothing is more dangerous than friendly captivity. Over and over we'll discover that Daniel resisted her poisonous charms on purpose. So must we.

DAY TWO TIES BETWEEN PAST AND PRESENT

Today's Treasure: *The Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. Daniel 1:2*

The Book of Daniel is unique in a number of ways that we will highlight as we explore it. One of its distinctive qualities is its original penmanship in both Hebrew and Aramaic.⁶ The beginning and the ending portions are in Hebrew (Daniel 1:1–2:4 and 8:1–12:13) while a central portion constituting a little over half of the book is in Aramaic (2:4–7:28). The most logical explanation is that “the employment of the two languages was a deliberate device on Daniel's part.”⁷

Fill in the following two-word blank according to 2 Timothy 3:16.

All Scripture is _____ - _____...