

DANIEL

7 LESSONS FROM BABYLON



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INTRODUCTION

Mesu Andrews, award winning and best-selling author, joins Bible teacher, Shawna Duvall, to explore the years of Daniel's exile and discover new insights about Who Yahweh is and the crimson thread that connects Daniel to the Cross of Jesus Christ. Cultivate deeper intimacy through a humbled heart while exploring His sufficiency, faithfulness, mercy, sovereignty, truth, and His constant presence.

DAY ONE: GOD IS THE ONE,
TRUE GOD



*A*ncient Babylon was characterized by many things... wealth, power, strength, sensuality, self-indulgence.... Predominant over all of these was her devotion to idol worship. Temples. Festivals. Sacrifices. Prayers. Oaths. Idolatry heavily flavored almost every historical remnant of Babylonian culture.

WHEN DANIEL and his three friends were taken captive from Jerusalem to Babylon, they were stripped of everything Hebrew and immersed in all the *best* Babylon could offer. How did these adolescent boys remain *convinced* YAHWEH was the one, true God?

WHO IS YAHWEH

Read Genesis 1:1-2. Was there any other god present at creation?

THE BABYLONIAN STORY OF CREATION, the *Enuma Elish*, is the oldest on historical record and would have been well known to the ancients of Chaldea.

READ GENESIS 15:7. Since Abram lived in Ur of the Chaldeas until he was seventy, he likely would have known the Enuma Elish creation story, but Yahweh revealed the Truth of creation to Abram who then passed it down to his descendants through Isaac, Jacob (renamed Israel), and his twelve sons.

JACOB/ISRAEL'S twelve sons became twelve tribes during their slavery in Egypt. **Read Exodus 14:30-31.** Why was it so important that the Israelites knew Yahweh was the one, true God *before* they left Egypt?

AS NOBILITY, Daniel and his friends would have studied Israel's history—including their deliverance from Egypt—and were so convinced that they were willing to stake their lives on it.

READ DANIEL 3

OUR HEBREW HEROES arrived at the image celebration already officials in Babylon. Had they relied on their positions of power, they would have bowed and kept their jobs but lost their souls. Because they relied wholly on Yahweh, they were promoted on earth and exalted in the heavenlies!

FROM DANIEL TO THE CROSS

Since few cultures worship idols of wood or stone, today's idols can be anything we rely on more than God. Like relying on a fake treasure map only to find the "treasure" is a rotten pile of bones, idols promise bigger, better, and stronger but leave us disappointed, poorer, and chained.

JESUS CAME to this earth to become both our Map and our Treasure—fully Man and fully God. Read the following verses and ponder Jesus—the one, true God.

- **John 1:1-4**
- **Philippians 2:5-10**

BREAKING BABYLON'S CHAINS:

- In what areas of my life do I rely on something (or someone) other than God *first*?

DAY TWO: GOD IN A BOX



*H*ave you ever felt alone or abandoned? Has there been a time when you experienced God's presence? When Daniel was taken captive from Jerusalem in 605 B.C., God's people believed Yahweh dwelt atop a golden box—the Ark of the Covenant—placed in the innermost chamber of Solomon's temple. The high priest entered the Holy of Holies only once a year to offer sacrifices for the nation's sins.

WHO IS YAHWEH

In the beginning, God walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden, needing no barriers or filters to protect them from His perfect holiness. After they sinned, however, Yahweh's presence would have destroyed them. He spoke through individuals but waited for centuries before "dwelling" with people again.

- **Exodus 6:2-8**
- **Exodus 13:20-22**
- **Exodus 19:16-20**
- **Exodus 25:21-22; 40:16-21 & 34-38**
- **1 Kings 5:1-5; 8:6-13**

CONSIDER how Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage was a turning point for ALL humanity. In what ways did Yahweh reveal Himself to Israel? How did "normal" people know God was with them?

READ DANIEL 1:5-20.

HOW DID Daniel know God's presence had followed him to Babylon? When reading the other miracles in the Book of Daniel (Daniel 2-6), consider how each one encouraged the Judean sojourners while in Babylon's foreign culture.

AFTER CAPTIVITY, the Jews returned to Jerusalem and built a new temple, but there was no cloud, no fire, and no manifestation of the Lord's presence. There were, however, the lingering prophecies of a coming Messiah...

READ ISAIAH 7:14.

FROM DANIEL TO THE CROSS

Read John 1:14, and fill in the blank:

The _____ became _____ and _____ among us.

THE GREEK VERB used for *dwell* literally meant “to tabernacle.” Jesus came as the new and better Tabernacle and Temple. Because Jesus came as the only sinless human, He provided the perfect sacrifice so that *anyone* who believed could *dwell* in God’s presence NOW and forever.

READ THE FOLLOWING PASSAGES:

- **John 14:16, 25-26**
- **Acts 1:8**
- **Acts 2:1-4**

REMEMBER other times God showed His presence through fire? Let that wonder penetrate your heart. When God poured out His Spirit, He changed His address—from the Garden, to the Tabernacle, to the Temple, to Jesus...and now to all believers!

TAKE some time to meditate on the Spirit’s residence in you:

- **Romans 8:9-11, 14-16**
- **1 Corinthians 6:19-20**

- **Ephesians 2:18-22**
- **1 John 4:13-16**

BREAKING BABYLON'S CHAINS

- What most reassures you of God's constant presence?

DAY THREE: I AM, AND THERE IS NO
ONE BESIDES ME



Today, we'll use some details of King Nebuchadnezzar's life as a mirror to examine our own. **Read Daniel 3:1-23**, and write down a few words to describe Babylon's powerful ruler.

HOW MANY TIMES does the author (Daniel) stress *Nebuchadnezzar* "made the image" or "set up the image?"

READ DANIEL 3:19 AGAIN. How do we respond when something we've planned, prepared, created doesn't go the way we'd like?

NOW LET'S **read Daniel 4:4-8, 19-33**. What was King Neb asked to do in order to avoid the consequences of this dream (4:27)? What great sin of the heart is revealed in his words (4:30)?

WHO IS YAHWEH

How does Yahweh feel about pride? Out of dozens of Scriptures, I've chosen three proverbs:

- **Proverbs 8:13**
- **Proverbs 16:5**
- **Proverbs 16:18**

C.S. LEWIS SAID in *Mere Christianity*, “*It was through Pride that the devil became the devil: Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind...*” Read the following passages and consider why Yahweh so despises pride:

READ GENESIS 3:1-5, and describe how the serpent planted the seed of pride in Eve’s heart, watered it, and watched it grow into disobedience.

READ GENESIS 11, and ponder how pride was at the root of a building process that was restored in Babylon as a ziggurat temple (*Etemenanki*) during Daniel’s captivity.

ESSENTIALLY, pride is when the heart says, “I don’t need God.” It’s self-motivation, self-exaltation, self-absorption, self-promotion, and self-worship, and God hates it because it separates us from Him.

FROM DANIEL TO THE CROSS

If Nebuchadnezzar is the personification of pride, then Jesus Christ is that of humility. And if the pride of one man, Adam, was the downfall of humanity, then the humility of one man, Jesus, was our salvation and restoration.

READ PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11. What mindset/attitude did Jesus have in heaven and on earth? How are we to respond to this knowledge of Christ's mindset (v. 5)?

AS YOU READ the following passages, consider ways to implement this renewed mindset:

- **1 Corinthians 1:26-31**
- **Ephesians 4:17-23**
- **Colossians 3:1-3**
- **1 Peter 4:1-2**

BREAKING BABYLON'S CHAINS:

- What one thing might the Holy Spirit be prompting you to change? Maybe an attitude? A relationship? Taking pride seriously? The posture of your heart in prayer, submitting to His will and ways?

DAY FOUR: HOW LONG, LORD?



Waiting on seemingly unanswered prayer can stir up doubt and questions, often uncovering illusions of control. That's when we're forced to dig deep and ask, "Do I really believe God is trustworthy?"

DANIEL HAD plenty of time and occasions to wait on answers during his exile in Babylon. Perhaps you've had some extended "exiles" of your own, waiting on God to move, to act, to give some *sign* that He'll do what He promised in His Word! Let's take a look at how we can know that Yahweh is worthy of our trust.

WHO IS YAHWEH

As you read the following passages, what common threads about God's faithfulness stand out to you?

- **Deuteronomy 7:9**
- **Exodus 6:8**

- **Joshua 21:43-45**
- **Nehemiah 9:8**
- **Hebrews 6:13-18**

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS to His children depends on His righteousness, not on ours; and the fulfillment of His promises will come according to His plan, not ours. Many times in Scripture, those who received the promise watch its fulfillment from the heavenlies. I noticed another truth: God cultivates relationships while moving toward the fulfillment of His promises. In our waiting, He doesn't busy Himself with other divine tasks until it's time to change our lives. He remains near. Constant. Rooted in steadfast, covenantal love.

FROM DANIEL TO THE CROSS

Read 2 Corinthians 1:19-20, and think about this radical declaration about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

WHEN THE FATHER sent His Son to earth, He was shouting, "Yes!" to every promise in the Old Testament (Torah). Read the following passages and hear God's YES!

- In **Genesis 3:15**, when He promised Eve's seed would crush the serpent's head.
- In **Genesis 12**, when He promised that through Abraham all nations would be blessed.
- In **2 Samuel 7:11-14**, when He would raise up one of David's descendant to rule forever.

READ JEREMIAH 31:31-34 and Hebrews 10:11-16. How did Jesus become the “YES!” to the promise in Jeremiah?

WHEN JESUS CAME TO EARTH, He not only fulfilled promises, He made even more! Read the following verses to embrace what we, as Christ followers, can KNOW:

- **Hebrews 9:15**
- **1 Peter 1:3, 13**
- **Revelation 22:12-14**

WAITING IS HARD, but waiting with God makes it bearable. **Read Hebrews 10:19-25** and learn how to *wait well*.

BREAKING BABYLON’S CHAINS:

- How can you remind yourself that Yahweh hears you and is very near in the waiting?

DAY FIVE: EVIDENCE OF MERCY



Think of the worst atrocity in history (sorry so morbid)—committed by a single person. What sort of *justice* would compensate for his/her crime? Think about your solution, and compare it to God's *perfect* justice and knowledge. He knows *ALL* his/her sins and could punish him/her for *everything* he/she ever did.

GETTING A LITTLE SQUEAMISH? I hope so. Because if God were only perfectly just, we would be in big trouble. His perfect mercy balances perfect justice.

WHO IS YAHWEH

How would you define *justice*? Maybe a court judge rendering equitable decisions in a reasonable, proper, and lawful way, condemning an individual to punishment that fits the crime. How do these Scriptures define God's justice:

- Deuteronomy 32:3-4

- **Romans 2:6-11**
- **Acts 10:34**
- **Hebrews 6:10**
- **2 Thessalonians 1:6**

READ LEVITICUS 26:14-45. Count the times God says “if you do not” or “if you still don’t.” He KNOWS their rebellious hearts and His coming punishment, yet **Leviticus 26:44** reveals God’s relentless mercy.

READ DANIEL 9. Daniel had lived nearly seventy years in Babylonian exile, and still there is no accusation or bitterness in this prayer. How did Daniel describe himself and his people? How does he describe God?

HESED IS the Hebrew word often translated *mercy*, but it means more. It’s an act of a bone-deep lovingkindness, when one who has everything gives to someone with nothing—motivated only by loyalty and selfless love. *Hesed* motivated God to offer His Son for a sin-sick world’s ransom.

FROM DANIEL TO THE CROSS

Animal sacrifices were God’s merciful provision—an innocent animal unjustly died to pay the just price for mercifully saving sinful people.

READ Exodus 25:22 and Leviticus 16:11-16, 30, and describe

how both justice and mercy met on top of the Ark of the Covenant—the *mercy seat*.

EXPLAIN how **Ephesians 2:1-6** shows Jesus' unjust death displayed both God's justice and mercy?

READ **ROMANS 12:1-2 and Titus 3:4-8**. How should these verses shape the life of a believer who has received God's mercy through Jesus Christ?

READ **MATTHEW 7**. In what ways can you show mercy to others today? As you live out a merciful life, watch for ways our God shows you His *hesed*.

BREAKING BABYLON'S CHAINS:

- Are you prone to accusing God of injustice or overlooking His *hesed*? Spend time in praise and worship today, concentrating on both His justice and His mercy.

DAY SIX: WALKING IN THE LIGHT



Every little kid I know is afraid of the dark. So why is it that by the time we're adults, we hide so much in the shadows? We learn what to say and not say, what emotions to hide, how not to act when certain people are around. All the hiding leads to lives shackled in fear, riddled with shame, and bound by lies that keep us from walking in the freedom of Yahweh's light.

WHO IS YAHWEH

What emotions do you associate with light? What emotions are associated with darkness?

WHAT DOES the Bible say about God and light?

- **Genesis 1:1-4**
- **Psalm 18:28**
- **Psalm 27:1**

- **Psalm 119:105**
- **Isaiah 60:19-20**
- **1 Timothy 6:15-16**
- **1 John 1:5**
- **Revelation 22:5**

WHAT DO Isaiah's prophecies tell us about the coming Messiah?

- **Isaiah 9:2**
- **Isaiah 49:6**

ANCIENT BABYLON WAS KNOWN FAR and wide for understanding and reading the stars—lights that pierced dark skies. Daniel would have been trained in astronomy as part of his duties while serving as King Nebuchadnezzar's chief official. **Read Matthew 2:1-2.** Write down your insights about Jesus' birth being announced by a star seen by Magi from the east (Babylon)?

FROM DANIEL TO THE CROSS

Why is a haunted house more frightening in the dark? Perhaps we're stumbling, lost, disoriented, fearful, helpless—swayed by deception. What happens to our emotions, our footing, our confidence, if someone brings a flashlight to lead us? What do the following verses say about Jesus, the Light of the world, who came to lead us out of darkness?

- **John 3:20-21**
- **John 12:35-36**
- **2 Corinthians 4:6**
- **1 Thessalonians 5:4-5**
- **1 John 2:8-11**

SCRIPTURE ALSO DIFFERENTIATES God's Kingdom from the world's using light and darkness. After reading the following verses, consider how we've been rescued from darkness and how to remain in the light.

- **Colossians 1:12-13**
- **1 Thessalonians 5:4-5**
- **Ephesians 5:6-8**

SOMETIMES COMING into the light can be a bit scary. Do you have dark secrets, specific lies, areas of sin you want no one to see? Why keep them locked inside when Jesus knows them anyway? But WE must take the first step out of darkness toward His beckoning light.

READ 1 John 1:9 and Galatians 5:1.

HOW CAN you embrace your new freedom and walk in the Light? **Read Ephesians 5:6-21** for insight.

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BREAKING BABYLON'S CHAINS:

- What one thing will you do today to step out of darkness?

DAY SEVEN: COURAGE IN THE FACE
OF FIRE



As we close our study of Daniel, we'll focus on his three friends—though all four rank in my Courage Hall of Fame. General MacArthur said this about courage to West Point cadets:

“Duty, Honor, Country...They are your rallying points: to build courage when courage seems to fail; to regain faith when there seems to be little cause for faith; to create hope when hope becomes forlorn.”

On this we agree: *The things we believe in become a rallying point for courage in the face of danger.* When crisis and chaos threaten your life, home, family, where do you draw strength for the battle? Write down what beliefs, convictions, non-negotiables help you stand firm.

WHO IS YAHWEH

Let's focus on Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's rallying points:

1. What truths in **Deuteronomy 7:6-10** would they have learned as boys in Jerusalem that proved God was undeniably for them.
2. **Read Daniel 3:17**, and fill in the blank:

“...THE God we serve _____ to deliver us from it.”

1. **Read Daniel 3:17 with v. 18**, and fill in the blanks:

“...the God we serve is able to deliver us _____, and he will deliver us from _____’s _____. But _____ he does not...we will not serve your gods...”

BY SAYING, “Even if he does not,” did they think God *couldn’t* save? I believe they trusted in God’s *character* when they didn’t know God’s plan. **Read Exodus 15:2 and Psalm 37:40.**

DANIEL TO THE CROSS

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego’s rallying points are even more powerful when seen from the foot of the cross:

1. God is for us – **Read Romans 8:15-16, 31-39** to discover why and how He is for us.
2. God is able – Read any miracles in the Gospels with **Acts 2:23-24, Colossians 2:13-15** to remind ourselves that He is able.
3. God has delivered and delivers – Though Jesus

defeated sin and death on the cross, we soldier on until he returns to take us home. **Read John 14:3, Romans 8:18-25, Revelation 21:1-5** to remember the deliverance that's coming.

FINALLY, **read Ephesians 3:14-21** and consider how its insights help us carry out the commands in **Ephesians 6:10-20**? Take these verses and turn them into a prayer for yourself or someone else.

BREAKING BABYLON'S CHAINS:

- What truths about God hold you steady when crisis or chaos shakes your foundation?

