

Praying Daniel 1 in March 2020

Spend some time individually, as a family, or as a group praying through the passage for this week. The themes of Daniel 1 are strikingly timely for this strange window of time we are in.

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1:1 - *In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.*

For those living in Jerusalem, this was the end of the world. All their plans for the future came to a screeching halt. All hope was devastated.

Maybe this is similar to how you felt at times this last week. It certainly is how many in our country feel right now.

PRAY - express to God the state of your heart. Tell him how you are doing. Then pray for those who may be feeling like the world is ending.

1:2 *And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand...*

This is the shock of the passage, and points to the message of the whole book of Daniel. While the Babylonians were boasting in victory; while the Israelites were lamenting in sorrow; the author of Daniel tells us what really happened - God gave them into Nebuchadnezzar's hand. This judgement which undoubtedly felt like the end of the world, was only possible because God gave them over into Exile. Despite all appearances, he was still sovereign.

PRAY - give glory to God for his sovereignty over the crisis. Hallow his name, declare his rule and reign, confess the parts of your heart that may struggle to believe this. And then reaffirm his sovereignty in prayer.

PRAY - ask God to protect vulnerable populations. Ask God to provide for the poor and those who will be most effected by this crisis economically. Pray for the world, and for the global church to respond during this crisis in ways that glorify God.

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Consider that Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem and the subsequent Babylonian exile resulted from Israel's failure to heed the warnings of the prophets. This was God's judgement for their sin.

While plagues and pandemics may not be the direct judgment of our personal sin; it is true that all disease and all viruses are part of the world we live in as a result of the Fall in Genesis 3. They can serve as a reminder of our brokenness and our besetting sins.

PRAY - Spend some time in repentance. Confess your sins, but also confess human sinfulness. Declare the brokenness of the world.

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While Israel in the time of Daniel was being judged for their sin - we live on this side of the cross. We can depend and confess in hope, knowing that Jesus took our judgment for us, he was besieged, carried off, and killed outside the city for us. He died so that we may live.

PRAY - Rejoice in the hope and salvation we have in Jesus. Thank God that we need not fear the judgment of exile nor the final judgment because Jesus has paid for our sins.

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1:4 - ...to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans...

The four Israelites in our passage (who will become the protagonists of the book), are taken into exile, but then educated, inculturated, and indoctrinated - essentially made into Babylonians.

We are similarly pressured today. Even our responses to the virus are often shaped by the voices around us (or online) to whom we listen. As Kevin mentioned, two mistaken responses could be separatism or syncretism.

PRAY - Confess the ways you feel pressure to be pressed into the mold of our culture. Tell God how you tend to respond to this pressure. Ask God for strength to be a radical and bold Christian presence in your world and daily life, and for insight in to how to best do that.

PRAY - Specifically, ask God to help us as believers respond as salt and light to this present crisis, to offer non-anxious presence, to be sober and clear minded in our caution, but not fearful because of who we trust. Pray for courage to help those in need and eyes to see our neighbors during this time.

Consider ending by praying the Lord's prayer together.

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
 on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts,
 as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil.
For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever.
Amen.

If you would like some songs to sing or listen to during this time, consider these which declare both a confidence in God's sovereignty and a longing for increased hope.

[Be Still My Soul](#) (kinda cool arrangement, I prefer the original lyrics. Best non-Mormon version I could find).

[He will Hold Me Fast](#) (Gotta love the Getty's... or [Shane and Shane](#) if you prefer, but no lyrics).

[Christ is Mine Forevermore](#) (All about life as exiles, and future hope. Personal favorite lately).

[Yet Not I, But Through Christ in Me](#) (Another CityAlight goodie)