

The Story – Chapters 18

Introduction

This week, we look at Chapter 18 in *The Story*, which covers both the exile as seen through Daniel's eyes.

Once again, these stories are also found in the Bible, but in lots of different places. If you don't have *The Story* book, you can read Daniel 1-3, and 6; Jeremiah 29-31; Ezra 1-6; Haggai 1-2; and Zechariah 1 and 8.

Summary of Chapters 18 – *Daniel in Exile*

When Nebuchadnezzar's armies conquered Judah, many of Jerusalem's elite were captured and taken to Babylon. The book of Daniel recites stories of Daniel and his trio of friends included in that group taken to Babylon. Although they were taught all about the Babylonian culture, they graciously resisted anything that was inconsistent with their Jewish heritage. (For example, they asked for vegetarian meals so they could stay faithful to Jewish dietary laws. While some were worried that this diet might leave them weakened, God so blessed their endeavors that even King Nebuchadnezzar took notice.) And when the king had a dream one night, Daniel was able to interpret it. In response, Nebuchadnezzar promoted Daniel to ruler over Babylon and made his three friends high-level officials. Nebuchadnezzar even paid homage to Daniel's God.

Nebuchadnezzar later made a gold statue in his own honor and commanded everyone to worship it. Daniel's three friends refused, and were thrown into a fiery furnace. The astonished king watched as a fourth figure, looking like a god, appeared in the furnace to protect the other three. The king praised the Jewish God for delivering Daniel's three friends who refused to worship anyone else.

Nebuchadnezzar was succeeded by Belshazzar, who ignored Daniel and dishonored God. His reign was ended when the Persian army conquered Babylon. Later, Daniel's enemies deceived the Persian king into signing an irrevocable decree forbidding prayer to anyone except the king. Daniel responded by doing as he had always done; he knelt and prayed to God, and the king was forced to throw his trusted servant to the lions. However, Daniel was not harmed and the King of Persia worshipped Daniel's God.

Discussion Questions

1. Jerusalem and God's Temple were in ruins, and most of the Jews were living in exile during the time of Daniel. It is easy to see how one could lose faith. What helped them hold on to faith? What helps you hold on to faith when you experience difficulties?
2. Daniel's integrity was so consistent and above reproach that even his enemies could find no grounds to accuse him (*The Story*, pp. 257-258). Think about your own life. Do any inconsistencies exist between your public life and your private life? Between what you say you believe and how you act?

Daniel and his friends had a pretty amazing prayer life. What does your prayer life look like right now? Are there things you could learn from Daniel's witness? What might you commit to trying in the week ahead to increase your habit of prayer? Have you ever experienced at a time you joined with others to pray through a difficult situation. How did having group prayer support help?

3. Compare the story of Daniel with the story of Joseph (in Chapter 3 of *The Story*). Do you view difficulties the way they did? Why or why not? When have you grown stronger in faith during a time of trial?