

W O R D A T W O R K

VOLUME XLI NUMBER I The Daniel Model

FRIDAY, JANUARY 1

Scripture: Matthew 18:6

For those of us who put our faith in Christ, our children are an immeasurable blessing! For those who put their faith in the world, children can be a blessing, an inconvenience or a curse. Respect for human life seems to have coalesced at one end of the political spectrum where the Bible is honored. The other side has aligned with the enemy, through its promotion of immoral sexual relations, a denial of the laws of God's Nature and of Nature's God. Many support the killing of innocent life and also support sparing evil from the sword borne by government and instead promote targeting of law enforcement. Never have so many leaders called evil good and good evil! The children of today are encouraged by their teachers and by the entertainment media to question, experiment and even reject who they are and how they were made. In some cases, parents are banished from school conferences or from doctor's visits due to an 'right to sexual privacy' that is being created by those on the left of the political spectrum. An entire generation of our younger ones have had their minds seduced by a public-school system designed to strip kids of their faith in God!

SATURDAY, JANUARY 2

Scripture: Matthew 5:13

If we've been paying attention to the trajectory that America is on, we know that we are in trouble. A land that fills with iniquity can reach a tipping point and it feels as though North America is filling rapidly to the brim. God is gracious and merciful, and if we as a nation humble ourselves, pray, and turn from our wicked ways, God will hear from heaven and will forgive us and heal our land. A number of saints have been vigilantly crying out in prayers of repentance for years. Many Christians in the younger generations are growing jaded, having heard of the wonder of past revivals, yet are clouded with pessimism and hopelessness due to daily diets of darkness through the media, peers and beyond. Our assignment is to keep praying for that move of the Spirit to happen... but also to fight for the next generation with every ounce of our strength. Many of us have spent the last forty or more years trying to fight the good fight and keep the faith, but now we are approaching that age where we have fewer days in front of us than behind us, and we wonder just what kind of world we are leaving to the next generation. What kind of church, or society will our younger ones inherit? We must do our best to ensure that they inherit a solid foundation built on the Word of God, from which they can plan and structure their lives of faith. Let God arise and His enemies be scattered!

SUNDAY, JANUARY 3

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 36:16-21

A Bible passage relevant to our times is the account told at the end of the books of 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles, the tale of a people who had given up on God. They had become God-haters and God-mockers. 2 Chronicles 36:16 gives us a partial glimpse at the many sins of Israel at the time, saying "...but they continually mocked the messengers

of God, despised His words and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, until there was no remedy.” We need greater awareness of what our kids or grandkids are seeing on YouTube and in popular culture. Let’s count the number of times in which the content or conversation/music makes us flinch. It may surprise us! The younger generations are being partially raised by media and by the public school educators where many are God-mockers and God-haters. There may not be a global Babylonian Empire intending to carry us into captivity, but there is a Communist China waiting to assert itself as the prime godless global superpower and take us captive through power and control. How many leaders and educators honor socialism/communism? How many socialists do we have teaching school under the radar? In some cases the very voting habits of Christians are alarming!

MONDAY, JANUARY 4

Scripture: Romans 1:22

While we have not been directly carried off into captivity, we have watched too silently while the United States and Europe have been transformed into a Babylon-like culture. Many scholars point out that we are now living in a ‘Post Christian’ West. That expression should cause us to pause. Let’s remember that in the early church, God transformed fishermen into ministers and probably we should expect the same. The Holy Spirit selects and prepares ordinary people to do extraordinary things, like champion religious liberty. Could we expect the Holy Spirit to take a successful businessman and transform him into the most pro-life President in History? What do we consider possible and what do we consider impossible? What was the primary reason that this continent was settled? What was the primary reason America was ultimately founded? Did the Pilgrims of the Mayflower seek refuge to practice their faith? In every election it seems that religious freedom is on the ballot, and every year brings new challenges to our freedom before the Supreme Court. Satan is relentless in his efforts to destroy the Church, and we must be relentless in our resistance. Are we preparing to resist godless government if it comes to that?

TUESDAY, JANUARY 5

Scripture: Romans 1:22, Matthew 24:4

Every election, we view two types of Christians. The kind that are invested and engaged politically, and the kind who completely separate their politics and culture from of their spiritual life. The impact of this stance breeds worldly ideas, troubling laws and a view which when germinated brings decay to generations and erodes godly living. Some offer their reasoning as to why Christians should not get involved. It’s unfortunate that many pastors talk about the spiritual but avoid talking about how the spiritual should be applying to the physical. In the November 2020 election, we had leaders, some theologians and even friends voice with a straight face that annoying, harsh tweets were a more serious affront to God than the millions of babies sacrificed to idols of convenience and profit on the altar of abortion. How upside down our world is when someone who supposedly loves God can say something like that with a straight face? Has the foundation for our spiritual/moral structure really declined to this? This spiritual polarization highlights Jesus’ greatest end-time warning from Matthew 24:4, ‘Beware lest you be deceived!’ Judgment will no doubt have to begin at the house of God.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 6

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 36:20

Many of the Israelites must have wept and grieved bitterly when the armies of Nebuchadnezzar ransacked Jerusalem and carried most of the able-bodied men, women, and children into bondage in Babylon. To them it must have seemed like the end of the world, as though God had abandoned His people. Only the prophets, and a very select group of righteous men could see a faint outline of the big picture. That picture included the knowledge of some that God uses affliction to bring His people back unto Himself. Isaiah 26 says, *“When your judgments come upon the earth, the people of the world learn righteousness.”* It is a pattern that we find over and over again in the Old Testament. The people fall away from God, fall into sin, and eventually into judgment as a result of their sin. God used and still uses judgment to turn the hearts of a rebellious people back to Him. Those whom He loves, He chastens.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 7

Scripture: Hebrews 12:6

Despite the principle of God's judgment being used as a tool to turn His children to repentance, it can be overwhelming for those righteous who find themselves living through times of hardship or judgment. The righteous and the repentant suffer right along the wicked. No one wants to think about the heartaches of living through an exile or judgment where our children are 'carried off' to serve a profane empire. We want to think that the younger generations will have the same opportunities that we did, or the same support in their faith that we did. Such is, however, not guaranteed to us. We must adapt to the circumstances, no matter how difficult. And many of us have awakened from our slumber amidst the chaos of 2020 to find that we are no longer living in a freedom-friendly and God-fearing country as we had thought. Are we entering a 'New Babylon' era, where there are those who believe they can steal anything they want for their own purposes? How does the church respond to the robbing of our national Christian destiny? If the response is 'turn the other cheek' then destiny may be lost! May the true spiritual warriors arise to embrace repentance and declare the judgment of God and a restoration of America's destiny!

FRIDAY, JANUARY 8

Scripture: Daniel 1:3-4

Church tradition estimates that Daniel was a youth in his early teens when he was carried off to Babylon. Daniel was of noble blood and it's possible he was educated and formed in his faith BEFORE he was taken into exile in Babylon. Daniel's story is not a story of a Jewish boy who found God in the midst of an evil empire, but of a Godly boy who brought God's light with him into the heart of ancient darkness. For countless centuries, the education of children was the province of the family. Some youth would be apprenticed to learn a trade, but worldview, especially, was always inculcated and developed by the family, until the public education system was established in the United States and Great Britain in the early 1900s. Only God can reverse what schools have done in corrupting and destroying our kids through lies and false history. God's Hand is clearly seen in our founding and He preserves us for a divine purpose! May we see that purpose recovered!

SATURDAY, JANUARY 9

Scripture: I Samuel 1:23-28

Simple, ordinary folk like Samuel's parents can make a huge difference in regions and nations by discerning God's voice and obeying. Hannah and Elkanah chose to obey God. God gave them a strategy for Samuel's birth and destiny. Eli's sons completely corrupted religious life making church services as pornographic encounters. As a parent, could we drop our five year old son off to live in that environment? How much faith did Hannah have? Samuel's birth was the product of a vow. Elkanah, as her husband and Samuel's father could have released her from that vow but he did not. Both parents trusted God beyond reason, logic and circumstances. To obey God in that environment was epic in the magnitude of faith required, much like Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. We can develop the faith to do all that God is prompting us to do! And we must develop the faith to walk through the fire of unrighteous persecution and still declare the Word of the Lord and the judgment of our God. Will we trust God to anoint and make a difference through our righteous seed in the same manner that Samuel confronted evil and shaped his generation? Do we have the faith of Hannah and Elkanah? It is time we pondered the religious environment and moral corruption of Israel's world at that time of Samuel's birth.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 10

Scripture: Ps. 2:8-9

God's answer to the corrupt atmosphere in of today's classroom and climate from kindergarten to college is God's prophetic anointing that He poured on Samuel manifesting on our children and grandchildren to clean up the environment as Samuel's prophetic Word cleaned up the temple. That was a life-time endeavor for Samuel. Psalm

2:8-9 says, "Ask of me and I will give you the nations for your inheritance and the ends of the earth for your possession. You shall break them with a rod of Iron, you shall dash them in pieces like a potters vessel." We pray for a mighty move of the Holy Spirit and a great harvest of souls! God is drawing people to salvation and we should expect Him to renew our hope! 2 Chronicles 7:14-15 is a great place to start knowing that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Acts 16:31 says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." What a huge encouragement and comfort these words should be! May God give us an outpouring like the early church experienced! What is the answer for how to reclaim the hearts of our younger generations from the culture of decay? There are a number of saints reading this who have invested a life-time of prayer and input in the younger generations. Be encouraged! The seed you have sown is going to produce a harvest!

MONDAY, JANUARY 11

Scripture: Daniel 1:3-4

How do we "...be in the world and not of the world?" The life of the prophet Daniel provides us with a model. Daniel, per church tradition was carried off to Babylon likely in his early teens, and was already well-educated. Daniel was taken into a foreign, pagan, culture which could not have been more different than that of the Israelites. It included polytheism, human sacrifice, worship of the ruler of state as a God-King. Daniel and three of his friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were taken to Babylon to serve King Nebuchadnezzar. The Babylonians wanted the best and the brightest from each conquered society, both to inculcate those children in the ways of Babylon, and also to serve as hostages to discourage any survivors in the conquered provinces from rising up against them in rebellion. Daniel and his friends were to be educated in a faith and tradition which was not their own. Having already had a firm foundation laid for them, presumably by their parents and relatives and rabbis, each one of them would hold firm in the faith. Our obligation is to sow the foundation, power and anointing of the Holy Spirit in younger years, to help instruct them that God is bigger than government and culture.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 12

Scripture: Isaiah 59:19

Many of us have children or loved ones that have been swayed by the enemy, whether it be in lifestyle choices, relationships or even political views. Though we may not see evidence they are sculpting their world view with the Bible as their anchor, let us be encouraged and not lose heart! Isaiah 59:19 says, "When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against Him!" The voice of the Spirit will show us the Father's strategy for deliverance. The Spirit will guide through times of peril and fire when that is the path ahead. 'Lord, lift up Your Standard of the Spirit against lies, falsehoods, and every counterfeit work of the enemy until we have a harvest of souls! Let our younger ones be turned toward Your heart and ways and be preserved and protected. May each become a trumpet for righteousness. Let God arise and His enemies be scattered!' The simplest truths are often the most powerful! Pray in the Spirit and follow God's leadership.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 13

Scripture: Proverbs 22:6

Once we have a firm foundation, it cannot be easily shaken and it is one of the reasons that we are told, "Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it." This isn't to discount free will, and it isn't to guarantee that Godly love and parenting and Bible lessons will result in our children choosing to wholeheartedly follow Christ. But it is far more likely that our kids will be able to resist the onslaughts of the world if they have a firm foundation on which to stand. This brings us back to Daniel and his friends. Doubtless, there would have been some other Hebrews who had been taken into service in Babylon, but the Bible does not record their stories. The Talmud describes that in Babylon the exiles eventually developed a number of somewhat vibrant Jewish communities, but these Babylonian Jews were still a small minority in a very pagan land.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 14

Scripture: Daniel 1:5

So how did Daniel and his friends manage to flourish in the midst of captivity and exile. How did they come to a place where they would be able to resist mandates and even willing to face death in defying a crowd of thousands for their faith? The answer is in part in Daniel 1. Daniel 1:5 says, *“And the king appointed for them a daily provision of the king's delicacies and of the wine which he drank, and three years of training for them, so that at the end of that time they might serve before the king.”* This was the ancient equivalent of being accepted into Harvard or Yale with a full-ride scholarship. Eating from the King's table was a high honor in any ancient culture, and Babylon was no exception. Daniel and his companions were in effect being asked by ‘President’ Nebuchadnezzar to be fledgling members of his cabinet!

FRIDAY, JANUARY 15

Scripture: Daniel 1:8

The intent with the delicacies of food and drink written of in Daniel 1:5 was to ensure that the men who would go on to be Nebuchadnezzar's advisors would be as healthy in body and mind as possible and that their wisdom might be of benefit to the king. Daniel and his friends sought to obey the Jewish food laws for conscience sake. God honored their plan by proving God's ways are higher than man's. Daniel 1:8 says, *“But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.* Daniel didn't want to partake in the pleasures that the culture had to offer, knowing that it would defile him. There is a parallel here that the church is missing. When we are called to be **in** the world, we are also warned to avoid being **of** the world. If Daniel's story were to be written in modern terms, Daniel would not merely be rejecting an overabundance of food and drink, or items sacrificed to idols, he would be rejecting the latest videogames, the most popular TV shows and movies, and would refuse to listen to most modern music. Our eyes and ears, after all, are the gateway to our spirit. What we ‘nourish’ ourselves on is of immeasurable importance. The world's tasty delicacies may look appealing but are they full of decay!

SATURDAY, JANUARY 16

Scripture: Daniel 1:9

Daniel's desire to avoid defiling himself landed him in hot water with the chief of the eunuchs who rightly feared that if Daniel and his friends came before Nebuchadnezzar looking malnourished or mistreated, that overseer would forfeit his life. The chief eunuch replied in Daniel 1:10, *“And the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, “I fear my lord the king, who has appointed your food and drink. For why should he see your faces looking worse than the young men who are your age? Then you would endanger my head before the king.”* Daniel's solution was to request the chief eunuch give him a trial run at abstention for ten days. Anyone who has eaten a vegetarian diet knows it is extremely difficult to get all the nutrients your body needs through vegetables alone. There was no protein supplement available so only God could make up the difference and He did! God instructed and they obeyed!

SUNDAY, JANUARY 17

Scripture: Daniel 1:17-19

Daniel and his friends came out of their 10-day trial period looking superior, and went on to complete their three year training. But why did they refuse the portion from the King's table in the first place? Was it specifically anti-Levitical? Were pork and shellfish staples in Babylon? Or was the meat prepared for the King's table offered up to idols? A possibility is that accepting food from the King's table implied a loyalty to the King, similar to the unspoken covenants created by ‘breaking bread’ with someone. If this possibility were the case, it is unlikely that Daniel and his friends would have accepted the training to join the royal court, either. More likely, Daniel knew without any doubt that accepting food from the king's table. More likely is that Daniel and his friends wished to serve their people and

their God at the highest levels possible, and recognized the opportunity that being high advisors to Nebuchadnezzar provided. They accepted the training they would need to perform their jobs, but separated themselves as much as they could from the culture they were in! Rejecting cultural norms may result in personal rejection and isolation but that was a small price for acceptance from God.

MONDAY, JANUARY 18

Scripture: Daniel 1:20

As much as possible, we need to separate ourselves from the culture of moral decline, lying and corruption that is around us, especially as that culture gets more and more actively opposed to the light of the Gospel. That's not to say that we choose seclusion and isolation. Should a strong Christian refuse to take a position in a potential evil administration, or in the government headed by a political tyrant? Not at all. Oscar Schindler was put in a position where he was able to save people precisely because he decided to work within an evil system. Daniel, Mishael, Hananiah, and Azariah were able to affect the Babylonian Empire's policies towards Jews precisely because they accepted their assignments to be salt and light in the midst of an evil system! Mordacai and Nehemiah each had an assignment that was key in carrying God's message and eternal purposes forward, as did Esther and Ezra! Are we viewing our relationship with God as our top priority and are we preparing to do our part?

TUESDAY, JANUARY 19

Scripture: Romans 12:2

How do we hold onto our faith when we are in the midst of Babylon, or even being trained by Babylon? The pressure to conform can be one of the most powerful forces on the planet. When everyone around us is pushing us in one direction, can we easily hold on to core beliefs that forcefully push in a countervailing direction? There are former celebrity pastors who now call themselves atheists. The desire to conform to popular beliefs in the world can lead to a loss of faith. Daniel and his friends must have faced immense pressure to worship Anu or Marduk and join the hordes of Babylonian wise men whom they counted as co-workers, but they never faltered in their faith! Psalm 2 is a word for the harvest of a generation of young people, *"Ask of Me and I will give you the nations for your inheritance, the ends of the earth for your possession."*

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 20

Scripture: Daniel 3:1-7

The two most well-known Sunday School stories involving Daniel and his friends illustrate perfectly just how strong these youth grew up to be in their faith. We all know how God saved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego from the fiery furnace, but sometimes the details of what led them into the furnace get lost in the magnificence of the saving. King Nebuchadnezzar was famously narcissistic, not unlike some of the politicians and celebrities we have today. He set up a massive statue made of pure gold in the midst of a plain near the city of Babylon. While the Bible does not explicitly say that the statue was of Nebuchadnezzar, the fact that God had to take his sanity for a number of years in order to humble him, we can assume that it could very well have been. After Nebuchadnezzar set up the statue, he assembled his administrators, magistrates and wise men and commanded them to bow down and worship it. Among all those assembled, only Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego refused. The lone three standing when all others were prostrating before the idol was a powerful symbol of resistance and one that has been used throughout the centuries to strengthen the resolve of believers in times of persecution or trial.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 21

Scripture: Daniel 3:8-18

Accusation is inevitable when we stand for righteousness! Idolatry is wrong. Murder is wrong! Killing a baby on the day it is born because we don't want it is unquestionably wrong. This is the national policy of a political party

that owns our media, controls our educational system and now steals elections. Can a Bible-believer stay silent? Judgment needs to perhaps start in the church on the head of every minister who thinks mercy is God's response to blatant wickedness. There comes a point when every individual has to declare which side they are on! Did Daniel's three friends know for a fact that God was going to save them? After all, courage is far easier to maintain when one is certain of deliverance. We read in Daniel 3:16-18, "*Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.'*" Daniel's friends admitted that while they knew God COULD save them from the fiery furnace, they did not EXPECT Him to. In addition to being bold in standing up for God, they also accepted full well the responsibility for their actions and the harsh consequences. Their love for God was such that they were willing to lay down their lives rather than bow before an idol, or make an idol out of the king!

FRIDAY, JANUARY 22

Scripture: Revelation 6:9-11

God DID deliver Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego from the fiery furnace, and in the process, began to turn the heart of the most powerful earthly ruler of the age. But does God always deliver people so spectacularly? The testimony of the martyrs in Revelation gives us a big hint that God does not always deliver. The suffering and death experienced by Christians in speaking the truth of their faith was seed for the Gospel, as the early church father Tertullian wrote in his Apologeticus. When we face struggles like the pain of a prodigal son or daughter, a hostile homeowners association, or even people in church who are judgmental toward suffering and perhaps blind to the truth, we must remember that God's grace for us will not necessarily involve a direct intervention, but instead may be the strength or the patience to endure the hardship or the consequences that come from taking a stand for our faith. That faith-stand may be in the face of angry protestors or perhaps in the face of people we know well and love! An important application of our faith in the end-times is to faithfully and consistently use our faith on our flesh to obey God.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 23

Scripture: Daniel 6

Daniel himself was a man who refused to bend to the whims of Babylon's secular society. When the Babylonians demanded that he eat from the King's table, he refused to defile himself, and was prepared to take the consequences. When worship and prayer to gods other than the Babylonian ones was mandated, Daniel and his companions refused to participate, and continued praying daily to the God of their fathers. No matter what was going on in the culture, Daniel lived his life faithful according to the laws of Moses, and he refused to do anything that he SHOULD NOT be doing just because those in authority demanded it! Just like his friends, Daniel was willing to pay the ultimate price in refusing to obey unjust laws! What kind of honor, radiance and spirit must have radiated from Daniel's life that the Babylonian king himself was hoping Daniel survived the night in the lion's den?

SUNDAY, JANUARY 24

Scripture: Romans 8:28

Regardless of who holds the highest office in the United States, we can be certain that things will get darker rather than brighter before Christ returns. Opportunities to compromise our faith will abound. Each day, we will wake up in a 'Babylon' surrounded by a culture all too friendly with decadence, and immorality. And how will we walk out the day-to-day tasks and encourage our loved ones to keep moving forward? Throughout the nation we observe varying degrees of compromise and darkness. Some are moving their families from states steeped in darkness and others will stand and be a plumbline in just such a place! Just as the Jews in exile did each and every day of their lives, first we must get up each day and declare that Christ is the Lord and King over our lives! The key for victory is in our relationship

with God. In the safety of the secret place of the Most High we learn to connect with the Holy Spirit, to listen, to surrender and to obey. During each day, our love and knowledge of the Word provides the needed wisdom to navigate victoriously.

MONDAY, JANUARY 25

Scripture: Esther 2:7

Esther woke up each day for most of her life in a similar situation to Daniel. She was in exile, a Jew living amongst Gentiles, foreigners who, unlike many Gentiles today, had no respect for the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Esther did not know it until she was older, but God had arranged her birth and upbringing in the land of the Medes and Persians as a vehicle for the deliverance of her people at a critical moment. She had been raised by her cousin Mordecai. Mordecai was a man for whom the Bible offers little personal history. We know only that he raised Esther in the absence of her parents and that he was a righteous man. Those without children of their own ought to reframe their parental status. In the last days perhaps they are in a unique position to speak into the lives of others without the same kind of worry, fear, concern and emotions that parents carry. It is the duty of a parent to care for, direct and protect his/her children, and hopefully shield them in hard times. When planning for an end-time ministry, the fate of one's children will always be part of the equation and indeed part of the deepest issues of the heart. Those without their own children can share more boldly in and amongst the world than those who have children. Their voice into the hearts of teens and young adults can carry weight, inspiration and value. When teens are individuating and looking for independence from parents, another significant adult can draw alongside with counsel and friendship that can make a world of difference. It is important to add that those without natural children can expect God to give them spiritual children! No matter our marital status or size of family, we should all expect to make life-contributions and spread our wings of nurturance over those who God has planted in our lives.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 26

Scripture: Esther 2:5-6; Esther 4:14

Mordecai was faithful in his childlessness to raise up the next generation in caring for and nurturing his niece Esther. It was Mordecai's great-grandfather Kish who had been captured with Jeconiah, king of Judah and made captive by Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon. Mordecai's family had been in a similar spot to Daniel's. We can see from Mordecai's actions in mourning with sackcloth and ashes that he had followed the traditions of his people, even being three generations removed from Jerusalem. Living this long in exile had not dulled his sense of duty, nor his love or loyalty to the Lord his God and to his Hebrew people and heritage. He did not hesitate to point to Esther and challenge her to risk her life in coming before the king. Mordecai sensed that God had placed them in that situation for just such a time. He was a godly man who recognized the importance of divine favor and God's alignment of destiny moments. May we be faithful in executing our duties over those whom God has placed in our charge, whether we have children or God has placed certain of His children in our heart! May God help us identify those in our spheres whose lives we are assigned to minister, and give us the words to speak and prayers to pray to open their hearts to what He has for them!

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27

Scripture: Nehemiah 1:4-11; 2 Chronicles 7:14

In studying the book of Nehemiah, we discover he was a patriot who wept over the sins of the Jewish people against their God, and who begged for the kind of forgiveness that we in America need. Many of the true church have lived in this posture for a long time. This depth of prayer involves deep repentance of which God speaks in 2 Chronicles 7:14, when He says, *"If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."* Nehemiah's prayer in Nehemiah 1 seems to come from a place of great grief, where he knows full well the grievous sins committed by the Jews in their idolatry and wickedness at the end of the reign of kings. He knows that God's judgment on Israel and Judah was just, so he begs for forgiveness. Similar prayers may be heard these days if one goes to a March for Life,

joins in a protest outside a Planned Parenthood or has participated in a prayer walk in Washington DC. Nehemiah was no great advisor to a ruler. He was a humble cupbearer. But even in that role, God positioned him to influence King Artaxerxes for the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Wherever God has currently positioned us, let us have the heart of a patriot for the kingdom of heaven, and be ready to repent for both personal and national sin and continue to join the true church in participating in repentance. Let God use us to move mountains and hearts!

THURSDAY, JANUARY 28

Scripture: Daniel 6:10-11

Just as Daniel did, we must take the time each day to take our worries and our needs before God in prayer, and worship Him with those same prayers. It was said of Daniel that it was his custom to pray to God and give thanks every day, and in this way the wise men of Babylon were able to craft their law specifically to entrap Daniel. When we are living in Babylon, we should thank God every day for what He has given us, and ask for sufficient strength to face the challenges which spring naturally from living in such a spiritual climate. Just like Nehemiah, let us be anointed volunteers in the day of the Lord's power even if means using a hammer in one hand and our warring gear in the other.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 29

Scripture: Matthew 7:3-5

The next thing we must do is to follow the example of Daniel, Mishiael, Hananiah, and Azariah in rejecting those things that the world has to offer which are not beneficial for us in body, mind, or spirit. We have to separate ourselves from the world and not partake of things that would corrupt. If we are indulging in the immorality of the world, we have no power to speak against those things in which we are partaking. If we frequently get drunk, we have no power to pray deliverance for someone fighting alcoholism. If we are in bondage to sexual sin, we have no power to pray against the pornography industry or sexual lies pushed by some in a corrupt educational system. How could Daniel, or any of his friends, properly counsel Nebuchadnezzar in the ways of righteousness if they themselves did not seek to be exemplars of righteousness? Never has the world been more attuned to the quick detection of hypocrisy. If we aren't living what we preach, we will quickly find our authority melting away in the face of worldly ridicule.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 30

Scripture: Proverbs 21:3; Acts 4:19; Acts 5:29

The next thing that we must do in order to live our lives for God in the midst of Babylon is to refuse to obey unjust laws. Civil disobedience has an honorable tradition in American history. Martin Luther King Jr. said in his letter from Birmingham jail that *"One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws."* The world would bog us down in debates over what decides whether a law is just or unjust. The universal Natural Law that God has imprinted upon the hearts of mankind does not need to debate whether a law is just or unjust. We are all formed with a conscience to know intrinsically whether something is right or wrong. The day will come when we may be asked to obey an unjust law. For many of us, that day has already arrived in the form of COVID restrictions limiting our freedom of assembly to worship the Lord, or limiting what we are able to do if we are allowed to meet. Giving within the church is less when services are not in-person, and the government knows this. Is there a chance that some churches which have been forced to shutter during the pandemic will never reopen? Will some smaller ministries be forced to cease operation? Large ministries, which might not be as faithful to the Word, will be able to weather the storm. Other organizations have refused to participate in calling evil good in support of homosexual marriage or transgenderism, and have seen their businesses seriously impacted. Are we willing to risk the wrath of the state to do what we know is right? Will we be faithful to God's commands?

SUNDAY, JANUARY 31

Scripture: Psalm 143:9-11

The last point to make about living faithfully in Babylon is to accept the consequences when such consequences come. Note that this does NOT mean that we take a massive fine for violating COVID restrictions lying down. God has blessed those of us in America with a Constitution that purports to protect our right to the free exercise of our religion. So if we are punished unjustly for exercising our faith, we have not only the right, but the moral obligation to challenge those unjust laws in court if that is at all possible. The main point here to be aware of is that when we are living in the middle of Babylon, and choosing to follow God doing so may come with consequences. And those consequences might not necessarily even be legal ones. We may be ostracized from friends or family for adhering to our faith. We may lose business, or be ridiculed on social media. What's important is that we choose to follow God, to do what is right even knowing what the cost will be. If we make a purposeful choice to do so, we can move in a boldness that the enemy cannot overcome!

*There is a kingdom deep within
That none can take away.
There is a Ruler on that Throne
That's seated there to stay!*

*Though struggles come, conflicts galore
To steal, kill and destroy,
God's set His unseen forces there
To match each evil ploy!*

*Captivity can't hold me down.
My heart it cannot own.
The Lord Most High Omnipotent,
Forever I'm His Own!*

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