

- Recap of last week: Jehochin, son of Jehoakim, became King of Judah after Jehoakim's death. He was also called Jeconiah or Coniah. He was an evil king. (2 Kings 24:8-9) (2 Chronicles 26:8-9) (Jeremiah 52:1-2) King Nebuchadnezzar's army lays siege to Jerusalem. This time they destroy Solomon's temple and everything in it. They take Jehochin and his family away to Babylon and make his uncle Mattaniah king in his place and changed his name to Zedekiah. (2 Kings 24:10-17) (2 Chronicles 36:9-10) Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king and reigned for 11 years. Then he rebelled against Babylon (2 Kings 24:18-20) (2 Chronicles 36:11-16) (Jeremiah 52:3) This time King Nebuchadnezzar comes again and lays siege to Jerusalem. King Zedekiah is taken to Babylon where his sons are executed in front of him and then his eyes are put out. (2 Kings 25:1-7) (2 Chronicles 36:17-21) (Jeremiah 52:4-11) They take most everyone into exile, leaving only the poorest of the land. (2 Kings 25:8-19) (Jeremiah 52:12-30) The Babylonians make a man from among the poor named Gedaliah the governor. (2 Kings 25:20-30) (Jeremiah 52:31-34) Jeremiah prophesies that many nations (not just Judah to fall to the Babylonians) and then eventually the Babylonians will fall (Jeremiah 47-51)
- Daniel was among a group of people who were taken away into captivity by the Babylonians during Jehoakim's reign. Remember that the Babylonians came several times, each time taking a few more people and setting up a new King, until they finally decided this wasn't working under Hezekiah's reign. (Daniel 1:1-2)
- The King ordered that the best of the teenagers among the elite would learn the Babylonian language, eat the King's food, and be trained for three years then serve the King. (Daniel 1:3-5)
- Among those chosen were Daniel and three friends named Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. He had them rename Daniel "Beltshazzar" and his friends "Shadrach", "Meshach", and "Abednego". (Daniel 1:6-7)
- Daniel and his friends refuse to drink wine or eat meat. The guard charged with watching them was only concerned that they might get weak so he agreed to let them try it for ten days. They actually looked even better than their peers so it became a permanent situation. (Daniel 1:8-16)
- This is not an endorsement of vegetarianism by the way. Most commentators speculate that the meat was probably in some way dedicated to their god as was common in those days. We know that even the meats which were considered unclean by the Jewish people became considered okay to eat under the New Covenant. In fact, God uses that very metaphor to explain how the Kingdom of Heaven is to be expanded beyond the nation of Israel. (Acts 10:10-16)
- God ended up giving these four young men knowledge and wisdom in such a great way that it was obvious to the King, even beyond his own advisors. He took them into his court and they ended up serving until the first year of reign of the next King, Cyrus. (Daniel 1:17-21).
- King Nebuchadnezzar has a very vivid dream. So he summons his best dream interpreters and tells them "tell me what the dream was and then interpret it, or I will have you killed." They say "well it doesn't work like that, you tell us the dream and then we'll interpret it for you." (Daniel 2:1-7).

- The King gets mad and accuses them of trying to stall for time. They tell him that no one on earth could ever do what he is asking. So he orders all the wise men of Babylon executed. Daniel finds out about this and before the executioner can carry out his duty he goes to King and asks for one more night. (Daniel 2:12-16).
- Daniel goes to see his friends and explains the situation. That night everything is revealed to Daniel and he immediately praises God. (Daniel 2:17-23)
- Notice that Daniel goes to seek out his Godly friends first, then praises God immediately when he is enlightened. Friendships are important to having a keen spirit. (Proverbs 27:17)
- Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar that there is a God in heaven that had revealed the dream and interpretation of it to him. (Daniel 2:24-29)
- The dream was that of a large statue—an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay. Then a rock was cut out, but not by human hands and struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. Then the various parts of the statue are blown away. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth. (Daniel 2:31-35).
- Daniel says each part of the statue represent a Kingdom with the gold head representing Babylon, and the stone that smashes it represents a Kingdom that God will create that will encompass the whole earth and never die. (Daniel 2:36-45)
- It is widely held that the other three parts of the statue are in order – the Medes/Persian empire, the Greek empire, and the Roman empire. There are specific things about each part of the statue that show these kingdoms hundreds of years before they came about – it is telling the future in great detail. It is in the Roman empire that Christ, the chief cornerstone, was to establish God’s kingdom which will live forever. (Ephesians 2:19-22)
- Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges that God is the true God and appoints Daniel the person in command in Babylon. Daniel gets Nebuchadnezzar to appoint his friends to help him. (Daniel 2:46-49)
- King Nebuchadnezzar made a huge statue of gold (about 90 feet high and 9 feet wide) and commanded people to worship it or be thrown into a fire. (Daniel 3:1-7)
- Daniel apparently was not there, but his three friends (now called Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) were and they refused to bow down. In fact, they tell Nebuchadnezzar that their God will save them in the fire but even if He won’t, they will not bow down. (Daniel 3:8-18)
- Sometimes we may face serious consequences for doing the right thing. But that is not a reason not to have the courage to do the right thing, especially when it comes to others with whom we may not agree. As much as possible, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were there with the others gathered on the plain in front of the statue. They were making every effort to live at peace with their captors, but they knew when to draw the line. (Romans 12:17-18)
- So Nebuchadnezzar commanded the furnace where the fire was to be seven times hotter than usual. It was so hot, in fact, that it burned up the strong army men who threw them in. (Daniel 3:19-23)

- Nebuchadnezzar observes four men in the furnace and confirms that they only threw in three. He says the fourth person looks to him like the Son of God (or some translations say that he said the man looked like a son of the gods). (Daniel 3:24-25)
- Nebuchadnezzar calls Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to come out of the fire so they do and they are not even singed a little bit. Nebuchadnezzar then declares the he will kill anyone who defames their God and promotes Daniel's friends again. (Daniel 3:26-30)
- Nebuchadnezzar tells everyone in no uncertain terms that God has shown himself through many signs and wonders and that His Kingdom is forever. I think he sounds a lot like David in Psalms or even Paul in his letters with the language he uses. (Daniel 4:1-3)

Questions:

1. Who was Daniel and when is he exiled to Babylon?
2. Why were Daniel and his friends chosen to serve the King?
3. What role does diet play in Daniel and his friends training?
4. What is it okay for us to eat now?
5. Why were Daniel and his friends chosen to serve in the court of the King?
6. What do Nebuchadnezzar's dream interpreters do when he tells them to tell him the dream and then interpret it?
7. Where does Daniel go when he finds out about Nebuchadnezzar's command regarding the dream?
8. What did Daniel say Nebuchadnezzar's dream was and what was the interpretation?
9. Why was Nebuchadnezzar's dream and Daniel's interpretation so significant?
10. Why didn't Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego bow down the idol?
11. What happened to the men who threw Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego into the fiery furnace?
12. Who was the fourth person in the fiery furnace with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego?
13. What happens when Nebuchadnezzar calls Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego out of the furnace?
14. What does Nebuchadnezzar say about God?