Prophet Margins Week 8: Daniel

**Opening Prayer**

**Overview**

After Babylon's first defeat of Jerusalem in 605 BC, the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar II, took some of the nobility as tribute. Among these were Daniel, along with his three friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Each of these four Jewish men was renamed once in Babylon. The names are as follows: Daniel was renamed Belteshazzar, Hananiah was renamed Shadrach, Mishael was renamed Meshach, and Azariah was renamed Abednego. Of these four, Daniel goes by his Jewish name for most of the book of Daniel, while his friends go by their Babylonian names of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; most don’t even know that the latter don’t go by their original names.

Daniel got on good terms with Nebuchadnezzar after he interpreted a dream the king had. The good terms of Daniel also led to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego getting a promotion, so that the four friends were in a favorable position within the court of the king. As can happen, this led to some being jealous of Daniel and his friends, which led to two cases of first, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and then Daniel being thrown into something. These two cases will both test the faith of the men and show the faithfulness of God to those who throw them in.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's time of being thrown into something happened after Nebuchadnezzar made a golden statue of himself. This statue was 90 feet tall and towered over all who stood before it. The king has the people told that they are to bow before his statue in reverence. However, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refuse to do so. Our first section is about what happened next.

**Read Daniel 3:13-30**

**Questions:** What is Nebuchadnezzar’s mood at the beginning, and what does he ask the 3 friends? How do they respond? What does Nebuchadnezzar do to them? What happens? What does Nebuchadnezzar proclaim in light of what went on?

(When Nebuchadnezzar finds out that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego didn’t bow before his statue, he gets very angry and summons them to ask them why they decided to do so. They tell him that they serve and bow only before God, and that God will save them from any punishment he does to them. This makes Nebuchadnezzar even angrier, leading him to throw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into a fiery furnace that was heated up seven times its normal temperature. The heat coming off the furnace is so hot that the men who led Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to it died doing their duty. As Nebuchadnezzar was watching the flames, he noticed that four men were walking unharmed in the furnace instead of only Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He is amazed by what is happening, so he tells them to come out of the fire. As they did so, everyone noticed that not only were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego unharmed but that their clothes were intact, and that they didn’t even smell like smoke. Nebuchadnezzar then commends the young men for staying faithful to God, noting that it was their faith in God that protected them from the fire. The king also gave a decree that no one in the Babylonian Empire was to speak against God, or they would be killed, and their houses would be destroyed. Finally, Nebuchadnezzar promotes Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. A last note is that the fourth person looked like a ‘son of God’, and many scholars believe this was Jesus or an angel whom God sent to protect them from the fire.)

**Read Daniel 6:10-24**

**Questions:** What are we told Daniel does? Who takes note of this, and who do they tell? What does this person have to do in response? What happens to Daniel? What comes next?

(By this point, the Persians have overthrown the Babylonians, and a new king, Darius, rules over this new empire. Darius had previously made a decree that no one could pray to any god or make a petition to any person for 30 days, with the punishment for such being that the person or persons would be thrown into a lion's den. The king had done so because a group that was against Daniel wanted to catch him praying due to their jealousy of his high status in the king's eyes. Daniel continued his thrice-daily prayers with the windows open toward Jerusalem, showing that he wasn’t going to hide his devotion to God. Daniel’s rivals caught him doing so and told King Darius about what the prophet was doing. After much back and forth about the injunction and punishment for such, along with how it couldn’t be receded, the king follows through and throws Daniel into a lion’s den. Darius hopes that God will deliver Daniel from the lions and says as much before the den is sealed shut for the night with a stone. The king didn’t sleep at all that night out of concern for Daniel, and at least went to the lion’s den at dawn the next morning. Darius then learns that God sent angels to shut the mouths of the lions, as Daniel tells the king, and shows how he remains unharmed. Daniel also speaks of how he is blameless not only in the eyes of God but also in the eyes of the king, showing that the punishment didn’t fit the crime at all. The prophet is then taken out of the lion’s den, and his rivals receive the punishment they tried to have done to Daniel. King Darius then makes a statement that no one in the Persian empire is to speak ill of God.)

**Prayer Requests**



****