

Daniel and the Last Days



SABBATH—APRIL 7

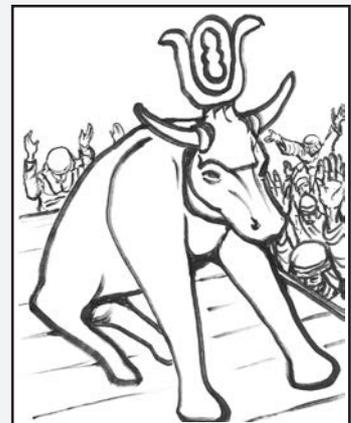
READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Luke 16:10; Daniel 1; Daniel 2; Daniel 3:1–6; Revelation 13:11–15; Daniel 3:13–18; John 3:7.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘And what about the seed that fell among the thorny weeds? That [seed] is like [the same as] the people who hear the teaching but let worries about this life and love for money stop it from growing. So it does not produce a crop in their lives’ ” (Matthew 13:22, ERV).

THE LORD HAD BIG PLANS for Israel during Old Testament times. God told Moses to tell Israel: “ ‘You will be my kingdom of priests [religious leaders]. You will be a nation that belongs to me alone’ ” (Exodus 19:6, ICB). God wanted Israel to be His witnesses. God wanted Israel to show everyone the truth that the Lord was the only God there was (read Isaiah 43:10, 12). Sadly, Israel failed to do this holy work. After some time, the Babylonians made the Israelites their slaves and took them away to Babylon.

But some of God's people stayed loyal to God. God used them as His witnesses while they were slaves in Babylon. These loyal followers were Daniel and his three friends. As slaves, they would do the work Israel failed to do as a country when it was free. Daniel and his three friends were examples of everything Israel should have been and done.

Daniel and his friends are examples to us, too. We live in the last days. God also chose us to be His witnesses to all the people on the earth. What can we learn from the stories about Daniel and his three friends to help us do the holy work God gave us to do?



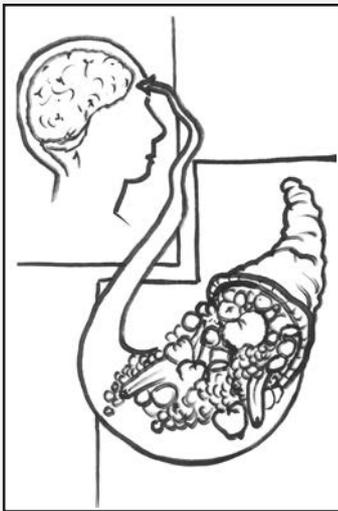
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“‘HONEST WITH LITTLE THINGS’ ” (Luke 16:10, NLV)

“ ‘Whoever is dishonest in little things will be dishonest in big things too’ ” (Luke 16:10, ERV).

It is very easy to start doing the wrong thing, little by little, to get something we want, right? That is exactly what Jesus says in Luke 16:10. The problem is that the first wrong little thing we do to get what we want leads to our doing another wrong little thing. Then that leads us to do another wrong little thing. And then we do another wrong little thing and another wrong little thing until we become “ ‘dishonest in big things too.’ ” Let us keep this warning in mind as we now look at the story in Daniel 1.

Read Daniel 1. Daniel 1 tells us how Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah put God first in their lives. How does their strong loyalty to God and their faith show us what God wanted Israel to be to all the countries and people on the earth? Read also Deuteronomy 4:6–8 and Zechariah 8:23 to help you answer the question.



Daniel and his friends answered the king wisely. Their wise answers show us that there is a clear connection between the food we eat and how wise we are.

The king of Babylon wanted to find out how smart Daniel and his friends were. The king asked Daniel and his friends many difficult questions to test them. Daniel and his friends gave very wise answers. The king learned that Daniel and his friends “knew ten times more” than all the wise men and magicians in Babylon (Daniel 1:20, NLV). The wise answers of Daniel and his friends show us that there is a clear connection between the food we eat and how wise we are. Daniel 1 also says that God gave Daniel and his friends their knowledge and wisdom. Daniel and his friends refused to eat the unclean food served to them at the king’s table. Instead, they obeyed God’s food laws. So, God gave Daniel and his three friends much wisdom because of their loyalty to Him. Daniel and his three friends obeyed God, and God blessed their obedience. Would God have done the same thing for all the people of Israel if they had obeyed God’s teachings the way that Daniel and his friends obeyed? Yes, God would have! God will bless us today, too, if we are loyal to His teachings in these last days.

God gave Seventh-day Adventists much truth. As a church, we must ask ourselves: How have we shared this truth with other people? How can we be better witnesses?

DANIEL: A HEART WITH NO PRIDE (Daniel 2)

For many hundreds and hundreds of years, Daniel 2 has helped more people than we can ever count all over the earth to believe in the God of the Bible. Daniel 2 gives powerful proof that God is real and that He knows everything before it happens. The fact that Daniel 2 shows us that God knows the future is proof that God is real.

Read Daniel 2. How does Daniel 2 give us powerful proof for believing that God is real? Daniel 2 also describes Europe today (Daniel 2:40–43). How is it even possible for a man who lived around 2,600 years ago to write about the things happening in Europe today? How are Daniel’s writings proof that God knows everything that will happen in the future before it happens?

God showed Daniel things that would happen in the future. Daniel gave God all the praise for this knowledge. Daniel could have bragged to the king. Daniel could have said that the reason he knew and understood the dream was because he, Daniel, was very wise. But Daniel did not do that. Daniel and his friends prayed to God for wisdom to know the king’s dream and understand it. Their prayers show how much they depended on God for wisdom (Daniel 2:17–23). Daniel and his friends knew that without God’s help they would have died with the rest of the king’s wise men.

Later, Daniel reminded the king that none of the king’s wise men or magicians could tell the king his dream. But Daniel knew there was a God in heaven who could tell us secret things. God can make mysteries known to us because He is the only true God.

Daniel was a powerful witness because he had a heart with no pride. He depended on God for everything. Now, if Daniel needed to show that he had a heart with no pride, how much more do we need to show that our hearts have no pride too? After all, God gave us His truth about His plan to save humans. So, Jesus’ death for us on the cross should help us not to be proud.

What does the Cross teach us about why we should not be proud? Where would we be with no Cross? Why is the Cross the only thing we can brag about? (Read Galatians 6:14.)



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THE GOLD STATUE (Daniel 3:1–6)

Many Bible students have seen the connection between the story in Daniel 3 and Revelation 13. Revelation 13 tells us about the awful things that God’s people suffered in the past. Revelation 13 also shows us the awful things that God’s people will suffer in the last days.

How is Daniel 3:1–6 the same as Revelation 13:11–15?

Both chapters deal with the topic of worship. These chapters show us how the ruling powers in control of the earth force people to worship them. These ruling powers try to steal from God the worship that belongs to God alone.

Read Daniel 3:13–18. What can we learn from this story to help us understand (1) the troubles we will meet in the last days and (2) how we need to get ready to meet them?



Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego chose to do the right thing, even if it meant they lost their lives.

In Daniel’s time, Nebuchadnezzar was the most powerful ruler on Earth. King Nebuchadnezzar laughed at Daniel’s three friends and their God. The king said, “ ‘What god will be able to save you from my power?’ ” (Daniel 3:15, NIV). The proud king was soon to find out for himself just who that God was. Later, the king said, “ ‘Praise the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Their God has sent his angel and saved his servants from the fire! These three men trusted their God and refused to obey my command. They were willing to die instead of serving or worshiping any other god’ ” (Daniel 3:28, ERV).

God saved these three young men from death. This miracle showed the king that there was something very special about the God that these three men served.

But what if God had not saved them? The young men understood that they could be burned alive (Daniel 3:18). They did not know what would happen to them when the king’s servants threw them into the big hot fire. But the three young men chose to do the right thing anyway, even if they lost their lives. Their story shows us how strong their faith was. These men were willing to die for their faith.

How can we be sure that we will be as loyal to God in these last days as Daniel and his three friends were in their own day?

WHEN PEOPLE WHO DO NOT BELIEVE TURN TO GOD (Daniel 4:30)

Daniel 3 ends with Nebuchadnezzar believing that God is the only true God and that His power is real. But is knowing about God and His power the same thing as being born again? No. Jesus said we need to be born again to be saved (John 3:7). As we can see in Daniel 4:30, King Nebuchadnezzar was far from being a changed man.

Read Daniel 4:30. What was the king’s problem? Read also John 14:5; Acts 17:28; and Daniel 5:23 for a hint.

At the end of Daniel 4, King Nebuchadnezzar finds out the hard way that all true power comes from God. The king learns that without God he is nothing at all.

“The king had been cruel and unfair in the past. But now he became a wise and kind ruler. King Nebuchadnezzar had refused to obey God and even challenged God’s power. The king had insulted the God of heaven. But now the king praised the power of God All-Powerful. The king wanted the true worship of God and respect for God’s law to grow. The king wanted his people to be happy. This big change happened because the King of all kings scolded this mighty king of the earth. Nebuchadnezzar at last learned the lesson that every ruler needs to learn: true power and glory come from being good. King Nebuchadnezzar honored God as the only true living God. The king said, ‘ “Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and honor the King of heaven. For [because] all His works are true and His ways are right. And He is able to bring down those who walk in pride” ’ [Daniel 4:37, NLV].”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets [special messengers] and Kings*, page 521, adapted.

Read Daniel 4:35. What truths about God does Nebuchadnezzar talk about in these verses?

Daniel 4 ends with a non-Jew accepting the power of the “Hebrew” God to rule in his heart and over the whole earth. Nebuchadnezzar’s story is a promise about what would happen in the future during the New Testament church. At that time, many non-Jews would learn about Jesus. Then they would share that truth with other people everywhere.

Read John 3:7. What does Jesus say is the one thing that will help His people be ready for the last days?



“Nebuchadnezzar at last learned the lesson that every ruler needs to learn: true power and glory come from being good.”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets [special messengers] and Kings*, page 521, adapted.

DANIEL’S LOYALTY TO GOD (Daniel 6:4, 5)

Read Daniel 6 and then answer the questions below:

What does Daniel 6:4, 5 tell us about Daniel? What do these verses teach us about how we should behave around other people? What does God want other people to think about us?

Read Daniel 6:4, 5 again. What connection is there between what happens in these verses and what happens in Revelation 13:4, 8, 11–17 in the last days?

Make a picture in your mind of the story in Daniel 6:4, 5. Pretend you are Daniel. What reasons could you, as Daniel, give for not praying? After all, praying would get Daniel thrown into the lions’ den. So, why could Daniel have said it was better *not* to pray?



King Darius’s words show that he knew Daniel’s God was powerful.

Why do you think Daniel continued to pray as he always prayed, even when he really did not need to do that?

What did King Darius say to Daniel in Daniel 6:16, even before Daniel was thrown to the lions? How do the king’s words show us he knew that Daniel’s God was powerful? How do the king’s words also show us that Daniel had witnessed to the king about the God he served and worshiped?

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “We are coming near to the end of this earth’s history. Now, as never before, we should give special attention to the book of Daniel. This book talks about the time that we are living in now. We should read the book of Revelation along with the book of Daniel. The teachings in the book of Revelation are connected in a special way to the messages in Daniel. Satan has led many people to believe that they cannot understand the special messages about the future in the books by Daniel and John. But that is not true. God promises us very clearly that He will bless in a special way the people who study the messages about the future in these two books. ‘ “But the wise people will understand them [the special messages in the book of Daniel]” ’ [Daniel 12:10, ERV]. Jesus also promises to help His people understand the special messages in the book of Revelation. Jesus gave these messages to His servant John to help guide His people during the many long years after Jesus went back to heaven. Jesus promised: ‘ “The man who reads this Book [Revelation] and listens to it being read and obeys what it says will be happy” ’ [Revelation 1:3, NLV].”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets [special messengers] and Kings*, pages 547, 548; adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Read Daniel’s prayer in Daniel 9:3–19. How does this prayer show us that Daniel understood the meaning of grace? Grace is God’s mercy, forgiveness, and power over sin. How does Daniel’s prayer also show us that God loves us and that He saves us because of His own mercy and not because we have done anything to be worthy of His saving us? We must understand this truth, yes. But why must we experience it too?
- ② In class, discuss the difficulties that the three Hebrews faced in Daniel 3 and that Daniel faced in Daniel 6. How did these men stand up for their religious beliefs? How are the stories in these two chapters the same? What about them is different? What can we learn from both stories about how being loyal to God will help us to be powerful witnesses?
- ③ What does it mean to be “born again”? Why would Jesus say that we “ ‘must be born again’ ” (John 3:7, NLV)?



The teachings in the book of Revelation are connected in a special way to the messages in Daniel.