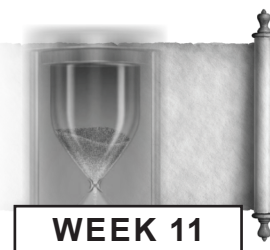


RUN THROUGH THE BIBLE



ATHLETE STUDY

WEEK 11

MAKE THE BEST OF IT

Legendary basketball coach, John Wooden, once said, *"Things turn out best for the people who make the best of the way things turn out."* Sports require teams to both act and react. You want to impose your will on the other team, but you must maintain an awareness and respond to their actions as well. You can't always control the circumstances but you can make the best of it.

This Week we're stepping into the book of *Daniel*, named for a righteous man living through circumstances he did not create. As we *Run Through the Bible*, our goal is to share about the second most consequential event in Old Testament after the Exodus, that is, the Babylonian Exile. However, as we examine the Lord's sovereignty over nations and history, let us not miss the Lord's faithful who, through their obedience, have become examples to us all. If you ever wonder what obedience looks like in a world so far from God, Daniel is one of those guys.

RHYME REVIEW

1	CREATIONS GLORY NOW UNDONE
2	FLOOD OUT THE WORLD, START FRESH WITH YOU
3	NEW LANGUAGE BRINGS DISUNITY
4	THE SOD, THE SEED, AND BLESS SOME MORE
5	WALK THROUGH RED SEA AND STAY ALIVE
6	POSSESS THE LAND, BUT DO NOT MIX
7	IN SIN, ENSLAVED, THEN LOOK TO HEAVEN
8	WE WANT A KING AND WILL NOT WAIT
9	OBEYING GOD AND DOIN' FINE
10	THE KINGDOM SPLIT, TWO AND TEN
11	FRACTURE, CAPTURE, 10 X 7

DANIEL 1:1-6

¹ In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ² And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the vessels of the house of God. And he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his god. ³ Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility, ⁴ youths without blemish, of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to stand in the king's palace, and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans. ⁵ The king assigned them a daily portion of the food that the king ate, and of the wine that he drank. They were to be educated for three years, and at the end of that time they were to stand before the king. ⁶ Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah. ⁷ And the chief of the eunuchs gave them names: Daniel he called Belteshazzar, Hananiah he called Shadrach, Mishael he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Oxford professor John Lennox wrote a book on Daniel called *Against the Flow*. In this book, he used the story of Daniel and his friends to encourage believers today to stand strong in the face of overwhelming persuasion to conform. From the heights of academia to the breadth of traveling the world to proclaim Jesus, hardly anybody as lived "against the flow" like Dr. Lennox. Scan the QR-code to hear his story.



DISCUSSION

What differences can you describe between the best leaders you've had and the worst?

1. What happened to Jerusalem, and who allowed it? (1-2)

2. Who did the Babylonians take and what was special about them? (3-4a)

3. What were the requirements for the king's program, and what did it involve? (4b-5)

4. Babylon didn't torture these teenagers—it fed them the best food, gave them the best education, and handed them new names. Why is that kind of pressure sometimes harder to resist than open persecution?

5. In what ways do you face pressure to conform to the world's standards? What motivates you to run against the flow?

God was sovereign in the greatest defeat Israel ever faced. No matter your circumstances, God won't waste your hardships. If you need help, talk to your coach today!

ICEBREAKER

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION



RUN THROUGH THE BIBLE

ATHLETE STUDY

STUDY NOTES DUST ON THE SCALES

In the ancient world, victory in battle wasn't credited to leadership, strategy, or technology (as important as those things were). In the ancient world, warfare was decided by the gods. Nations won or lost based first and foremost on who had the biggest and baddest gods. So, **in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it**, the victorious nation had the more powerful god.

Yet, Isaiah had prophesied many years before, *"Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales"* (Isaiah 40:15). In other words, they are as nothing to God.

Last Week, we saw the nation of Israel divided into two kingdoms—the 10-tribes of Israel in the north, and the 2 tribes of Judah and Benjamin in the south. Due to having all evil kings, the Northern Kingdom of Israel had already suffered God's promised consequences, as Assyria conquered them in 722 BC. Meanwhile, because they had a few good kings, God allowed the Southern Kingdom of Judah to last significantly longer. However, as we open this week, that time is over.

Babylon had swept the ancient world. They became the world's dominate superpower defeating the combined forces of Assyria and Egypt at the famed battle of Carchemish (605 BC). That battle was also the first at-bat for Nebuchadnezzar as the leader of the Babylonian army—soon to become king after the death of his father.

God used these events (and so much more) like pieces on a chess board to fulfill what was spoken by the prophets to bring judgement on his disobedient people. And, although Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians were fully pursuing their own evil desires, it was **the Lord** that **gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand**.

GOD'S POWER CAN EXPRESS HIS POSSIBILITIES

This period is known as the "Babylonian Exile" because the Babylonians took so much from Israel, not just **some of the vessels of the house of God**, but also **some of the people of Israel**. These people lived as exiles in the land of Babylon during this period.

These people weren't taken randomly, this move was strategic. The people taken were **both of the royal family and of the nobility, youths without blemish, of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to stand in the king's palace**. In other words, anybody who might stand

up to lead a revolt were removed and Babylonian nobles were left in their place. Additionally, Babylon conscripted the best and brightest for themselves to enhance their own empire.

Now imagine, you have survived a siege—cut off from fresh food and water—then force marched for a month to Babylon. As you enter the city you see literal wonders of the ancient world, architectural achievements larger than anything you've ever seen. You're exhausted, on the verge of starvation, and when you arrive the Babylonians don't send you to a torture camp, they send you to school **to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans**. Not only that, **the king assigned them a daily portion of the food that the king ate, and of the wine that he drank**. But wait, there's more, after this **three year** education, they would **stand before the king** as potential future nobles in the greatest empire on earth.

Again, this wasn't kindness. This was strategy. After all, Israel's god had been defeated, right? You don't need your books, you read *ours*. You eat *our* food sacrificed to *our* gods. You speak *our* language and receive names elevating *our* gods. Everything strategically designed to remove *your* God from your heart and mind.

#11, FRACTURE, CAPTURE, 10X7

It's hard to overstate how indestructable Babylon seemed at that moment. And yet, four men would not bow to the immense pressure of their ungodly surroundings—**Daniel** given the Babylonian name **Beltshazzar, Hananiah called Shadrach, Mishaël called Meshach, and Azariah called Abednego**.

Daniel 1 ends remarking that *Daniel* remained **there until the first year of King Cyrus**. With that, our collective jaws should drop. You see, God had told Israel that exile was coming, but that it would only last 70 years (10 x 7). Cyrus isn't Babylonian, he's Persian—he's also the man God would use to return Israel from exile. The world's most powerful empire was but a plaything in God's hands. Babylon seemed insurmountable. But, because of his faithfulness, Daniel outlived Babylon.

Sometimes I think we're left scratching our head wondering if obedience to God matters in a world so fractured, so degenerate, so...lost. I would submit to you that in a world like that, our world, that's when obedience matters the most. You think God's not in charge when nations rage, conduct warfare, or when politicians on the wrong side gain power? The truth is, God's perspective on world events exceeds our own and he's trustworthy in it.

He's called us to steward that which he's entrusted to us. In obedience, we control what we can and trust him with the rest.

