

## HELPFUL THOUGHTS

In our culture, there's a very common mantra of 'good for you but not for me.' When we turn to the Scriptures, we find that it's really nothing new. For example: the fiery furnace. This furnace was so hot that the soldiers who tossed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego into it were killed. Yet these guys walked around in there and emerged unharmed. Not even singed. Nebuchadnezzar's response? Man, their God must be pretty good. *Their God. Not The God.*

Why is Nebuchadnezzar so hesitant to acknowledge that such a miraculous event, which was never matched by any other god, could only point out that there is, in fact, only one God? Why did he persist in the 'good for you but not for me' attitude?

The answer is pretty simple. If Nebuchadnezzar were to acknowledge that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego's God (the Living God) were the *only* God, it would mean that Nebuchadnezzar would have to bow to that God or openly admit that he stood against God. The 'good for you but not for me' attitude offers an easy way out - the lukewarm middle ground where you can still disobey God but not openly defy him because, hey, your god is different. It's familiar territory for us all, that lukewarm middle ground.

Of course, the best place to combat this attitude is not in someone else's heart, but in your own first. So before you go addressing the speck in your neighbor's eye, ponder the plank in your eye. Are there any ways in which you look at God's teaching and think that your particular case is different and those rules don't apply? Is some of Scripture good for others but not for you?

## ABOUT THE COVER IMAGE

**God of Heaven by [www.words-fail.com](http://www.words-fail.com)**

*But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases. Ps 115:3; Dan2:28,37, Isa 34:4, Ps 19:1-3*

As we read through the exile books of Nehemiah and Ezra the phrase the God of Heaven appeared over and over, and not just in the mouths of the Israelites, but in gentile kings and leaders. In Daniel we see this again as both Daniel proclaims it is the God of Heaven who is the revealer of mysteries and as Nebuchadnezzar is humbled by the Most High God and acknowledges Him as the King of Heaven. Not identified as a national deity or cult figure, the God of Heaven, with a domain that has no boundaries, is thus also the God of all the Earth. And while it is impossible for us to look past the heavens, anymore than we can know our own hearts, we are assured that God will one day roll up the Heavens like a scroll and will reveal all things that are now hidden.

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## DAILY BIBLE READING AND DEVOTIONAL



# BC +

FROM CREATION TO THE CROSS

November 30 - December 6, 2009

## SCRIPTURAL PRAYER

I lift up my eyes to the hills – where does my help come from? My help comes from you, O Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. God, please watch over my life. Amen.  
from Psalm 121

## DAILY SCRIPTURE READING AND PRAYER

**Monday Daniel 2:24-30; Psalm 119:145-176; Proverbs 28:23-24**  
**Daniel 2:29-30**

As Daniel prepares to tell Nebuchadnezzar his dream and its meaning, he utters: 'This mystery has been revealed to me, not because I have greater wisdom than other living men, but so that you, O king, may know the interpretation...' Daniel's wisdom, a gift from the Lord (Daniel 2:23), was not given so that Daniel could be great but so that the king could receive the light of knowledge God wanted him to receive. As Christians, we have been given the great light of wisdom in Jesus as Messiah, Light of the world; wisdom for finding true peace in a tumultuous world through Christ-won peace with God. Learning from Daniel, we can find that our good word of wisdom, our gospel, is not first and foremost for us, but given to us so that we may share it with others who desperately need it as they face a nightmarish world infected with sin and selfishness. This Advent season, dwell on the notion that you act most wisely when you share the wisdom and light of Christ with others.

**Tuesday Daniel 4:1-5:12; Psalm 120; Proverbs 28:25-26**  
**Daniel 4:28-37**

Truth be told, we all have been, like Nebuchadnezzar, totally consumed with ourselves, convinced that we have made ourselves something great. Fortunately, as God's children we also receive his his loving correction so that we may not end up dead in our pride (Hebrews 12:7-13). Our disciplining may not involve going completely out of our minds and howling at the moon in anguish for a season of long nights, yet if we are truly God's children, he has corrected us. Nebuchadnezzar, strangely enough, ends this story with the best example of responding to God's discipline we can find: he repented and praised God for the discipline and for his restoration. Waiting for Christ to return and make you completely sinless, remember that the Lord disciplines you as a Father does the children he loves – and respond to the Lord with repentance and praise.

**Wednesday Daniel 5:13-6:28; Psalm 121; Proverbs 28:27-28**  
**Daniel 5:17**

Our lesson as Daniel prepares to interpret the writing on the wall, is so simple. Serving the Lord has enough reward in itself. Often, we serve the Lord, both inside and outside the church, in order to gain recognition from others or some other reward. Whatever we might gain as we serve God (because we certainly could gain recognition, status and admiration), as Paul said in Philippians 3:7-8, our attitude should be to count those gains as loss compared to the joy of knowing Jesus more. Today, examine your heart – do you wish to know Jesus more or do you wish to be more known – and resolve to test and prove that it is truly best to simply love Jesus and serve Him.

**Thursday Daniel 7; Psalm 122; Proverbs 29:1**  
**Daniel 44:9; 7:15-18**

Daniel's visions that fill the rest of this book are truly terrifying, illuminating the reality that the powers of this earth are like great beasts tearing at each

other. We must realize that these beasts represent nations, which are full of people, like you and me, who suffer and die as these beasts tear each other to pieces. It is good to experience the fearsomeness of these visions because it's into that fear that the Lord God speaks words of comfort: 'the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and possess it forever.' This Advent season, we celebrate the fact that Jesus Christ was born into this massive battle in order to win total, final victory, and we wait for Him to return and finally end the days of suffering and death, of power struggles and upheaval. Come Lord Jesus!

**Friday Daniel 8; Psalm 123; Proverbs 29:2-4**  
**Daniel 8:27**

Daniel being overwhelmed at how far beyond his comprehension his second vision stretched speaks volumes of comfort to us. The Bible can be beyond us and that's ok. There's great mystery in this book, and that's a wonderful thing because it reminds us that our God, the author of these Scriptures, is beyond us. He firmly grasps the things we don't understand, giving us great freedom: freedom from fear and anxiety and freedom from the dreadful paradox of trying to understand and control everything in order to find peace. Today, remember that peace is in the pierced hands and feet of Christ, and that we need simply seek it there and we will find peace that surpasses all understanding.

**Saturday Daniel 9-10; Psalm 124; Proverbs 29:5-8**  
**Daniel 10:12-14**

The Christian faith fundamentally proclaims a spiritual reality that we can't see or touch, but that has drastic consequences for our lives. The Scriptures can be our window into this spiritual reality, i.e. in Daniel 10, where we catch a glimpse of the great spiritual war between good and evil as the angel of God tells of having to fight past the prince of the Persian kingdom in order to come to Daniel. It is good to have our 'eyes' wide open to the reality of this great good/evil battle, even if, in our age of intellectualism and empirical proof, it's highly unfashionable to believe in angels and demons. Jesus Christ came to win this spiritual war, and to deny this war guts our own faith and blinds us to all the forces deployed against us and against God's Kingdom. Today, I urge you to trust in God's word, to resist the lies that you're unsophisticated, superstitious, or ignorant, and believe in the whole spiritual realm described by God in the Scriptures so that you may be armed to fight in this spiritual war.

**Sunday Daniel 11-12; Psalm 125; Proverbs 29:9-11**  
**Daniel 12:10**

In light of the visions Daniel had, it would have been perfectly reasonable for him to despair. But there's this word of promise to finish the book – in the midst of all of this upheaval, many will be purified, made spotless and refined. This is deeply resonant with the truth we find in Christ – that there is salvation, and even spiritual growth, in the midst of trial. That is the light we celebrate with Advent, that because of Jesus there is hope instead of despair even though everything around us may say otherwise. Rejoice in that final and present hope today.

## BENEDICTION

Oh, come. Come Messiah!

