



**DANIEL & NAHUM
DEVOTIONAL**

By Pastor Phil Emerson

NAME: _____

OUR DISCIPLESHIP FLOW

At Emmanuel Church, we are passionate about living out the call to be disciples of Jesus Christ, and make it our goal to see His Kingdom come in our lives and the world in which we live. We recognise that in Biblical times, a disciple was someone who followed a teacher or rabbi, not simply to gain head knowledge to pass an examination, but to be fully immersed in the life of the rabbi, and *learn his ways*, so that they in turn could replicate this to the world around them. As Christians, we are now those who have been invited to ‘follow’ Jesus and all of His ways, and we therefore call ourselves His disciples.

“This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.” 1 John 2:5,6

We therefore want to take seriously the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20 to make disciples and also commit to an ongoing journey of teaching and discipleship together.

We all have differing personalities and learning styles. At Emmanuel, we recognise this diversity within the church body and therefore desire to support and journey together as we relate with God and each other in some of the following environments:

- **Public (20+)**

In the Bible, we see Jesus seeking to make disciples as He engaged with larger numbers of people, e.g., His interaction with the crowds (Matthew 4:25; Luke 14:25), and the 72 (Luke 10:1-24).

At Emmanuel, we want to use each of our **larger gathered environments** as an opportunity to make disciples, e.g., **Sunday services, Friday Youth/Kids’** environments, **men’s/women’s** gatherings.

- **Social (10-15)**

Jesus demonstrated the necessity for **smaller accountable relationships** as an essential part of the life of a disciple. He did this by teaching and doing life with his twelve disciples (e.g., Matthew 10).

At Emmanuel, small accountable relationships are offered through:

Lifegroup 12s

These are **gatherings of 10-15 people** who meet bi-weekly in homes or around specific interests, e.g., crafts, football.

- **Personal (2-5)**

As well as having smaller accountable relationships amongst His twelve friends, Jesus also seemed to go to even deeper levels of trust with three in particular – Peter, James and John (Matthew 17; Mark 9). At Emmanuel, we seek to do this through:

Lifegroup 3s

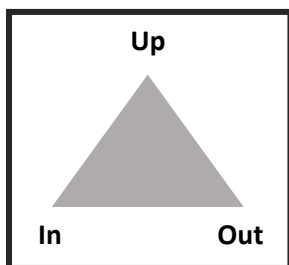
These are smaller **gatherings of 2-5 people** who are committed to transparent and accountable relationships in order to grow together in following Jesus. The aim for these groups is that after 1-2 years, each person in the group would be able to lead a smaller number of people themselves and replicate the process... **disciples making disciples!**

- **Intimate (1-1)**

Jesus regularly withdrew to spend time alone with the Father. This is the ultimate goal of discipleship, that each member of our church family would increasingly spend time alone with the Father and grow in devotion and desire to see the Kingdom come.

A TOOL TO USE

As stated previously, 1 John 2:6 makes it clear that for those of us who call ourselves disciples of Jesus, our goal should be to daily walk in the ways of Jesus, our Rabbi. As we examine the New Testament we see that Jesus lived His life based on three relationships: **Up** – with His Father; **In** – with His chosen followers; **Out** – with the hurting world around Him. This is illustrated in the following triangle:



Jesus taught and modelled out to His disciples how to live into each of these areas in life.

Up

Jesus frequently left the disciples to spend personal time with the Father (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16). He taught them the significance of prayer, and how to pray and communicate with the Father (Luke 11:1-13). When comparisons with one another or insecurities presented themselves, He spoke into it in love and challenged them into a greater depth of living (Mark 9:33-37; Matthew 18:1-5).

In

Jesus had significant relationships with others in which He intentionally invested (12s and 3s). When He went to engage with the Father He brought the three with Him (Matthew 17:1). He taught them and modelled out the significance of Sabbath and rhythms of rest (Mark 6:31). He demonstrated with His life the significance of generosity and sacrificial love for others (John 13:1-17).

Out

Jesus personally lived a life that engaged with the crowds and the broken world around Him. He healed the sick (Matthew 8:1-4), fed the poor (Mark 6:30-44), and cast out demons (Matthew 8:28-34). But with the people who were closest to Him, He challenged them to do the same (Mark 6:37), and when they took risks themselves He critiqued and gave honest feedback to call out more for them (Luke 10:17-20).

As we spend time alone or together in this devotional, we want to help and encourage you to engage in each of these ways – UP, IN, and OUT.

HOW TO USE THE BOOK

First

If you haven't already done so, please take a second to fill in your name on the inside of the front cover. There'll be a lot of identical books floating around, and we don't want yours to get lost.

Prepare

Get ready for each session by spending some time to invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you. The Bible is a written word (logos), which becomes a living word (rhema) as the Holy Spirit breathes upon it and speaks directly to our lives through it.

Commit

Commit to the journey. Discipleship is not a commitment to a moment, but to a lifetime journey. As you personally commit to journeying with God daily, commit to others by sharing what you are learning (possibly in Lifegroup 12s or 3s), and in this way encouraging one another in what God is saying.

Reflect & Respond

Each day, as you spend personal time with God, we encourage you to ask the following two questions:

- 1) What is God saying to me?
- 2) What am I going to do about it?

This is how we become doers and not just hearers of what God is saying.

INTRODUCTION TO DANIEL

The book of Daniel was written, obviously, by Daniel as a personal testimony to both history and prophecy. It spans his life from a teenager to old age.

Daniel was led into exile as a young lad in 605 BC. There he lived until the third year of Cyrus in 536 BC. But how did Daniel, a Jewish boy, find himself exiled in Babylon you ask? Well, that is a good question, and for those interested in a little bit of history, that would be a great study.

Daniel's life is one of complete abandonment and devotion to the God of Israel. The book itself is well known for its extraordinary prophecies that outline the future Gentile world powers and the end of this age. It's deep, it's dangerous, and it's life transforming. But then, it *is* the living Word of God after all, so we should expect nothing less.

So, harness up, Bible and journals at the ready. If you're a journaler, I can assure you, you might just fill one. Get a nice cuppa and let's go on the adventure with Daniel.

Love and prayers,

Phil

Live

Here we have the chosen people of Yahweh stranded in Babylon, an evil city. They are in captivity because of their pride and worldliness! *Babylon* means *confusion* and stands as a type of this present world. It is very interesting to see the method used to make good little Babylonians of the exiled Israelites. First, they were taught to speak the language, then they had to read all the Babylonian literature, and finally they even had their names changed. Everything was done to separate these people from their Jewish roots by brainwashing and indoctrination! Babylon didn't want them remembering their real home. The idea was to make the Israelites so taken up by the things of Babylon that no time was taken to think of their own home and their own God. I am sure you can see a familiar pattern here because the enemy's plan is no different for Christians today!

We are introduced to four important Jewish youths: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. You may know Daniel's friends better by their Babylonian names: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Their Hebrew names spoke of the true God and were changed to speak of the Babylonian gods. The bottom line for our lives is clear. Don't let the world change your name or your character. So much of Daniel's outward life was changed but they couldn't change his heart. I love the inner resolve that comes from God.

Verse 8 is a key verse for anyone facing pressure from the ways of Babylon. Daniel resolved, or as the KJV says, "*purposed in his heart*" not to defile himself. He was not swayed by the lure of Babylon even though he lived right in the middle of it. The Christians who really know God seem to be blessed with what I call a 'divine simplicity'; they know the character of God and this makes all the difference. Daniel and his friends may be stranded in Babylon, but though in the world, they are not of the world. May we be the same.

Pray

Father, though we live in this world, help me to not become contaminated by it. Keep me pure and unadulterated from all that goes on, and help me to fix my eyes on You. May I be like young Daniel who resolved in himself that he would follow You and no other. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Today we see Daniel, through no fault of his own, in a seemingly impossible situation. In fact, everyone in this chapter will find themselves under some pretty intense pressure. And that's what we are going to look at – faith under pressure and the God of the impossible.

Have you ever had a dream so vivid that you wake up sweating and with a pounding heart? Well, King Nebuchadnezzar had one of those and he was completely freaked out. He summons his wise men, a bunch of mediums and clairvoyants who think that they can be clever and get away with making up some vague answer. However, the king isn't ready to play the wise men's little games. Seems like he definitely got out of the wrong side of bed this morning. He says that if the wise men can't tell him the dream itself and the interpretation, they will be cut into pieces and their houses will be turned into piles of rubble. King Nebuchadnezzar has asked the impossible, which the magicians and astrologers openly acknowledge. Only the 'gods' can provide an answer for this and *“they do not live among men”*.

There is nothing like a good old trial to get the prayer life firing. Daniel swings into action and organises his three friends to begin praying to *“plead for mercy”*. The Lord granted the answer to the mystery *“during the night”*. We do not know whether Daniel kept praying until he received an answer or whether he was able to rest and sleep before getting the answer. Either way, Daniel showed great faith in a faithful God. He is certainly a good example to us today. In our age, the pressure is on, but God knows what lies in the darkness. May we be like Daniel and commit all things unto the One who holds our lives in His hand. He is still the God of the impossible. He reveals deep and hidden things and He gives wisdom and power to those in need.

Pray

Father, may this be the day I make time to enter into a new level with You. Fill me with wisdom and understanding and help me to see You in absolutely everything, even where I wouldn't expect to find You, for You are in ALL THINGS. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Read

Daniel 3

Live

When we left our friends at the end of chapter two, everything was going along very nicely. Daniel and his three friends were exalted to a position of privilege and power in Babylon. Unfortunately, things have a habit of changing in this life. King Nebuchadnezzar decided to set up a golden image that was ninety-foot-high and nine-foot-wide, and everyone was commanded to bow down and worship it. Think about this ... you've been led into captivity to a foreign country and suddenly the king commands that you fall down and worship a golden oversized monstrosity. You know that to do so will break the first two commandments about other gods and carved images.

What amazing faith these three young men had. Having committed themselves to the God of Israel, God now commits Himself to them and supplies the boldness to defy the king. At this point in the story we are reminded that God's ways are not our ways! Often a large chunk of our prayer life is telling God what we think He should do, but in this situation in Daniel 3, God didn't take the fire away. He can, and sometimes does, but in my experience, He usually has a purpose in letting people go through the fire.

What an outcome to this trial; the flames didn't even touch them! In fact, the only thing burnt was the ropes used to bind them. Now that is God for you. He can use even a nasty trial to free us from the things that would bind us. Notice why it was that they were able to come through this (quite literal) fiery trial intact – because one like “*a son of the gods*” was with them. That was Jesus, who is with His people through their trials. Nebuchadnezzar was obviously, and rightfully, blown away. He probably couldn't believe his eyes, but one thing he knew for sure – the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego was unlike any other 'god' he had come across before.

Pray

Father, stories like the one today inspire me to be bolder and more true to You than I've ever been. I am reminded how Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 10:32 “*Whoever acknowledges Me before others, I will also acknowledge before My Father*”. May I be more confident in confessing You to all I know. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Some people have to face a major trial before they seek God's face. Some hold off right to the end of their life. And some, sadly, hold off and are lost for all eternity. God knows what buttons to push to give people the right opportunity to acknowledge Him, and that is what He is about to do with this king. God gave Nebuchadnezzar a vision of a large tree cut down with the stump left in the ground and a band of iron and bronze around it. Bronze in the Bible speaks of judgment, and so it would be for this king. Daniel told him that God was going to judge him for seven periods of time. The only advice Daniel gives is for Nebuchadnezzar to renounce his sins and act righteously. When pride is firmly established in the heart of a man, it is only a matter of time before we will see the consequences.

It took twelve months for Daniel's interpretation of the vision to be fulfilled. Soon after the vision, the king was back to his life of ease and pride. Then, one day, as he walked around the roof of his palace surveying all that he could see, he couldn't contain himself any longer. He just had to give glory and honour and praise to the one who had performed such marvellous things. And guess what, he gives it all to himself. What a fool! As the king is busy praising himself, the decree is given from on high that his authority has been taken from him and he will eat grass like an animal until he acknowledges that it is the Most High who is sovereign.

Revelation often comes through brokenness and there is no hole so deep that God can't lift you out of it. Don't judge old Nebuchadnezzar too quickly before taking a peep in the mirror. He learned this lesson the hard way, only the things of God last forever. M. Lloyd Jones once said that all of mankind's history could be expressed thus, "*Man formed, man deformed, man informed, man transformed.*" I like that. It certainly holds true for this chapter and the life of King Nebuchadnezzar.

Pray

Father, may this be said of me today, that I, like Nebuchadnezzar, "*raised my eyes toward heaven ... Then I praised the Most High; I honoured and glorified Him who lives forever*". In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

The spirit of Babylon was such that said, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. Live for pleasure, live for today. Worship the gods of silver and gold while mocking the true God.' It is interesting that people could see that the writing was on the wall, and that made them fearful, but they didn't know what it all meant or what to do about it. It seems that we are in that position today. There is fear and anxiety over the collapsing financial markets, fear over job security and global warming. What is needed is a people raised up as Daniels who can not only see the writing on the wall, but also interpret the signs for the people.

As Daniel confronts King Belshazzar, he begins by reminding him how he should have humbled himself before God after seeing what had happened to his grandfather Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel is saying, 'You were given great revelation and light from God and you rejected it! You mocked the true God and made created things into a god.' The inscription that was written on the wall was, "*MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN,*" meaning, 'numbered, numbered, weighed, and divided'. As Daniel gives the interpretation of the writing on the wall, you can imagine the fear rising within the king. The message is – your life and kingdom are over. You have been found wanting.

Numbered, numbered, weighed, and divided. Important words for us all, for God not only numbers our days, but He weighs our lives. And He not only weighs our lives, but He records and judges our deeds. The fact is that all of us will have to hop on the heavenly scales one day. The Bible says, "*It is appointed unto all men to die once and then face judgment.*" (Hebrews 9:27). For the believer, this will not be a judgment of their sins, for that took place 2,000 years ago as Jesus was nailed to the cross, but there is a judgment of our lives, and all that was based on Jesus will remain and be rewarded.

Pray

Father, let me be not like King Belshazzar who knew it all but did nothing, but like Daniel who set himself apart for You to use. Oftentimes I admit there can be a disconnection between what I know and how it affects my daily life. May I live my life before Your constant glare. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

In the previous chapter, we saw the end of the Babylonian empire. In a single day, the Medes and Persians took the city and killed the Babylonian king, Belshazzar. History records the date of this event as 13 October 539 BC. Darius the Mede was appointed by King Cyrus over Babylon. Daniel is now an old man in his early eighties but, as we shall see, age has not deterred or mellowed him. Daniel is still an extraordinary man, a fact that raises the envy and jealousy levels amongst his peers. Imagine, in his eighties and still provoking his peers with his enthusiasm and integrity! One version states he had an *“extraordinary spirit”*. Daniel was different and the evidence of God's presence in his life was clear for all to see. I love the fact that try as they might, Daniel's opponents had nothing on him; he was full of God and empty of the world. Their only option was to change the laws of the land to be in opposition to God's Law.

Upon hearing of the new decree, Daniel immediately goes home and purposefully disobeys it! Not because he's a rebel ... far from it, but because God came first in his life and there was nothing that he would let come before his relationship with the Lord. D.L. Moody said, “Character is what you are in the dark.” The king was really concerned for Daniel, and, as someone once said, he fasted for the night hoping the lions would do likewise!

Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian. We, like Daniel, need to remain strong in our faith in the midst of our difficulties. Something usually missing from the Sunday school versions of this story is the judgment carried out upon the men, and their families, who had falsely accused Daniel. They got to spend a little bit of time with the lions themselves, but this time the lions weren't as sociable.

Pray

Father, thank You that You are a living God, a God who endures forever. You are a God who rescues and saves, and You perform wonders on my behalf. I will walk in victory today because my Father can shut the mouth of any lion in my life that seeks to devour me. I dare to be a Daniel and will spend some time on my knees today. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

The book of Daniel consists of both history and prophecy. Chapters 1–6 are largely historical, while chapters 7–12 are prophetic. I will outline today's prophecy and you can study it as deep as you would like. It is incredible stuff.

We are presented with an amazing God-given vision of all the kingdoms that dominate planet earth. Every major player is revealed right up until the time when the mystery of God is finally revealed and Jesus' Kingdom is set up. We get to see what man is doing on earth and what God is doing in heaven. I will outline the earthly scene and then double back to the heavenly scene. Fasten your seatbelt...

Daniel was given a dream that consisted of four beasts rising out of the sea, representing four kingdoms that would arise from, and dominate, the Gentile nations. We read that this last kingdom will be different from the others and will devour the whole earth. Out of this kingdom will come ten kings, and finally, a last king will arise that will overpower the saints of God. The passage shows that the Antichrist will arise at the time of the fourth beast.

Now let's double back and see what's going on in heaven. Thousands upon thousands attend the One on the throne and await His judgment. As you read this, remember that this is the heavenly scene while the Antichrist is wreaking havoc upon the earth. Innumerable angels stand at God's side waiting to execute the sentence that God announces. As the court sits, the books are opened. Nothing escapes His attention and it looks like something big is about to happen. Daniel sees *"one like a son of man"* coming before the Ancient of Days; all power and authority over all nations and peoples is given into His hands. That's my Jesus! Now look at who is also given sovereignty, power, and the greatness of the kingdoms at this time ... it is *"handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High"*. What a privilege that is!

Pray

Father, You could rend the heavens and appear today. Forgive me for not being watchful, after all, we are told, *"In such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man comes."* Exciting or what!!! In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Daniel is in the third year of King Belshazzar's reign. It is around 551 BC and Babylon is still the ruling world power but is on the decline. Once again, God gives Daniel a vision and he sees himself in Susa viewing a strange kind of battle. He sees a two-horned ram that no animal could stand against; it went where it pleased and was totally dominant. Totally dominant, that is, until it came across a goat with a prominent horn. The goat smashed the ram and trampled all over it. This goat then became number one, but at the height of its power, its prominent horn was broken off and four lesser horns grew up.

Gabriel tells Daniel that the two-horned ram stands for the kingdom of the Medes and Persians. We know from history and from the book of Daniel that this was the kingdom that captured Babylon and became the next world empire. No one could defeat the Medes and Persians until the prominent king of Greece, Alexander the Great, came upon the stage. At the height of its power, the prominent horn of the goat was broken and four other horns took its place. At the age of 32, Alexander the Great died, and his kingdom was divided between his four generals: Ptolemy, Seleucus, Lysimachus, and Cassander. Gabriel's description of the coming king depicts an incredibly clever and deceptive man whose power is not of natural means.

After this vision, Daniel was exhausted and lay ill for several days, astonished and upset by what he saw. In these verses, as in many others, God has revealed the end from the beginning. God has not only revealed the destruction of the Antichrist but also the victory of His Son, and because of this we have hope. We can turn and read the end of the book and be completely assured of the wonderful plan that God has to bring about the return and reign of the King of kings.

Pray

Father, thank You today that You allow me to glimpse into passages like this and see the end from the beginning. Thank You that I am on Your side. You ultimately win. I can read the end of the book and walk in fulfillment today of the victory Christ has won for me, for I have been redeemed by His blood. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Daniel is in his eighties but still has a fire in his belly for God and is still looking to see what he can learn from God's Word. There are a couple of things that stand out to me in his prayer: he is brutally honest about their current condition, and he speaks a lot about sin. The nation of Israel was meant to be a light to other nations. They were to show the way to the true God through their words and deeds. Daniel correctly identifies that they had become an object of scorn to all those around them. Instead of attracting people, the Israelites were doing the opposite. Makes me pose a question to myself today ... Does my life draw or repel people from coming and knowing the Lord?

I love the fact that while Daniel is still praying, an answer arrives in the form of none other than the herald angel Gabriel. You get the impression that God is thinking about much higher and greater things than what was in Daniel's mind. Gabriel outlines six things that will be fulfilled by the end of the 490 years. This remarkable prophecy gives us an exact date when the nation of Israel could expect their Messiah. Imagine if you were Daniel, imagine the excitement mixed with sadness that would come through hearing this prophecy. Daniel himself would not live to see that day; the coming was 483 years away. Verse 26 speaks of three things that will occur leading up to the final seven years, known as Daniel's 70th week. He is told, *"The Anointed One will be killed, appearing to have accomplished nothing"*. The Messiah would die ... but He wouldn't die for Himself; He would die for others. In the last verse of Daniel 9, it thrusts into the future.

What amazing prophecy Daniel chapter 9 gives us! I'm not a theologian and haven't done this passage the justice it deserves, but volumes of books have been written on it.

Pray

Father, You are always faithful and loving to Your people. How sad that the nation of Israel had become a reproach to You. May my life always tell Your story and may I live for You today. I love how You planned the end from the beginning. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

This is a reminder of the spiritual battle that goes on around us, one we are in whether we like it or not. Passages like this both fascinate me and alert me to the beauty and power of the heavenly realm. Daniel had been fasting and praying for three weeks when this prophecy was given to him. We are not told why he was weeping but he had been doing a partial fast when the vision and message came. Theologians debate whether this was a vision of the pre-incarnate Jesus or if it was an angel; I like to think it was the latter. Any time in Scripture when a person encounters the majesty of God there is an overwhelming sense of their own inadequacy in the light of an almighty God.

I love the insight into the angelic realm that we are given in this passage! This angel was restricted from getting to Daniel for 21 days. I can't imagine what Daniel must have been feeling at this moment, but by reading the passage, he was completely overcome by what he had seen. So much so that he fainted and lay with his face on the ground struggling to breathe and trembling like mad. It's a tough message to get for a guy in his eighties. In this chapter, we are given a glimpse of the influence that the angelic realm has into the affairs of men; it isn't just Persia that has demonic and angelic beings assigned to it.

Our chapter today does not give us all the answers about the unseen angelic realm, much remains a mystery, but it does give us a glimpse and it reminds us that we are all in a spiritual battle. The angels are sent by God to render service to those who are His. A lot of this service, like the angels themselves, is unseen to the human eye. Imagine all of heaven at your disposal today. I am reminded of the line in a song we sing, *'When I call on You, You will answer.'* Go on, call out today.

Pray

Father, I am so thankful that all of heaven's armies fight for us. I love the fact that when Daniel prayed, You responded. It is chapters like this that fill me with wonder and amazement at Your love for mankind. Today I receive Your love afresh. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Read

Daniel 11

Live

I totally understand that chapters like this can baffle one a little, so take this at your own speed. Again, I remind you, I am not a theologian, but will try to point to some areas that may help you study this deeper. I lifted this wee bit of info from the Bible Knowledge Commentary: *'In the early part of this revelation, the angel outlines the future history for the Medo-Persian Empire and the Grecian Empire with particular focus on the fourth ruler in Persia (Xerxes I) and the mighty king from Greece, Alexander the Great. At the peak of his power, Alexander died at the not so ripe old age of 32. His two sons were then murdered and his kingdom was divided between his four generals.'*

These verses introduce the person who is the biggest type there is in Scripture of the coming Antichrist. We see that he rose to the throne through *"intrigue"*, taking it through a mixture of force and deception. Most Bible scholars agree that verses 21–35 can be proven historically. Scholars would also agree that verses 36–45 have not occurred yet. Both Christian and Jewish teachers have been convinced that there is a gap of time between verses 35 and 36, and that the king spoken of from verse 36 is someone (or some system) yet to arise on planet earth.

The first thing we see about the coming Antichrist is that *"he will do as he pleases"*. He will be an absolute dictator. The Antichrist's rise to power is not without conflict. Not everyone is initially willing to fall into line with a new world ruler (system) and we read of both the king of the north and the south engaging in warfare against him. Our last verse today reminds us he will come to an end. I love this. I'm just glad to have Jesus in my heart when I study these chapters. There is an old chorus which says, *'You ask me how I know He lives; He lives within my heart!'* Live today with a fresh knowledge that the sovereign Creator of the universe dwells in you.

Pray

Father, we thank You that You reign and You are our sovereign Ruler. We place You in the highest place. You are our great High Priest. You rule over all and You reside in my heart. Wow. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Daniel is told that the coming tribulation and rise of the Antichrist will lead to a time of distress unequalled since the foundation of the world. He is then instructed to seal the words of the scroll. I believe this means that the words of this prophecy were to be protected until the time of the end when these words will become invaluable to those who are seeing their fulfilment. Daniel again sees *“the man clothed in linen”*, likely to have been the pre-incarnate Jesus. Daniel doesn't fully understand what he is being told, but it doesn't matter. These prophecies are for the time of the end, and those who are wise and live at that time will understand.

All of the Bible writers, when thinking of the last days always bring it back to how it should influence your life today. John said it like this in 1 John 3:2, *“Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure.”* Peter, when thinking of the end of the age said, *“Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God.”* (2 Peter 3:11,12). In 1 Corinthians 15, the Apostle Paul spent a whole chapter talking about the resurrection to come, but closed with these words, *“Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.”*

Here is the truth as we close out Daniel today: if we believe that we live this life for the reality that is to come, then our lives should reflect that. None of it is wasted to God for He sees and records all. May we be like Daniel who could look back over a faithful life and die content, knowing that the best was yet to come.

Pray

Father, I love how You taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit. Grant that by the gift of the same Spirit, I may always be truly wise and ever rejoice in Your amazing love. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

INTRODUCTION TO NAHUM

While Jeremiah and Zephaniah were pronouncing judgment against Judah, Nahum was directing his attention to one of her enemies, Nineveh. Nahum's name means 'consolation' which in a sense is symbolic of the message of the book; it was intended to comfort the oppressed and afflicted people of Judah.

Some theologians have described the book of Nahum as having three parts: Nineveh's doom declared, described, and deserved. This, I think, is pretty much on the money.

As you read this little book, think about what gets you righteously angry today. What injustice do you need to be more proactive against? Start now, and be silent no more.

So, let's go! Grab your coffee, Bible, pen, and journal.

Love you all,

Phil

Live

Nahum was a prophet who ministered around the same time as Jeremiah. His prophesied judgments were against Nineveh, a name you may recognise from the story of Jonah. As you may recall, Nineveh had repented in the times of Jonah, but then they returned to their old ways and idols.

Nineveh, founded by the first world dictator, Nimrod, was the capital of the Assyrian Empire. I am reminded today in this little book that God not only deals with individuals, He also deals with nations. Nations will be held to account by God.

I love Spurgeon's notes on verses 2–8 in this chapter. Allow me to quote him, *'God is not like an unjust judge who simply lets the guilty go out of a false sense of compassion. We can't just figure that God will say, "Let's let bygones be bygones" when we get to heaven. Sin must be accounted for, because He will not acquit the wicked. Every sin will be paid for – either in hell or at the cross – but God will not acquit the wicked. Never once has He pardoned an unpunished sin; not in all the years of the Most High, not in all the days of His right hand, has He once blotted out sin without punishment.'*

There are times when it's good to get fed up and be angry with a holy rage. Looking into the eyes of helpless victims and hearing the sneer of agents of evil is such a time. As we read this first chapter of Nahum, we are reminded of the psalmist's impassioned cry from Psalm 10:12, *"Arise, Lord! Lift up Your hand, O God. Do not forget the helpless."* It's inconceivable that there are 40 million image-bearers of God living in bondage to fellow image-bearers. Even little girls are sold for all kinds of filth and perversion. Our prayer should be that of Psalm 10:15, *"Break the arm of the wicked man; call the evildoer to account for his wickedness that would not otherwise be found out"*.

Pray

Father, I have a longing for justice to flow like a river through the streets of our broken towns, for Your righteousness to be the never-failing stream cutting its way throughout the earth, ridding it of all darkness. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

REFLECT

What is God saying to me?

RESPOND

What am I going to do about it?

Live

Two words could sum up today's reading: impending disaster! It's a bit like our world today as the news is full of it. Scientists warn us about global warming, coming earthquakes, acid rain, and other dangers to the natural order. Politicians depress us more by the day with warnings of sinister movements and culture wars. We need to be careful not to read the spiritual climate by the evening news but rather read and study the unfolding narrative of God's Word.

Nahum writes of a disaster soon to befall Nineveh. In the first chapter, we saw the coming together of the evils as Babylonian troops descend on the city. As we read of God's judgment on Nineveh today, let's be drawn to some things we need to slaughter in our own lives. Some things try to be the 'boss of us'. It could be bitterness, pettiness, or cowardice. It could be the shaming power of darkness. It could be overbearing or aggravating people. It could be our greed to have a little more. It could be religion or our hatred of religion. It could be old regrets or new fantasies.

There's simply no such thing as a heart that's unaffected by the systems of this world in some shape or form. But, in glad obedience, right now, let's choose God's peace as the ruler of our heart, as the 'boss of us', as the centring hope and the dominant power in our day. Who knows peace better than Him, the Prince of Peace? No one has more peace and can give more than Him. On the cross, Jesus secured God's peace with us and our peace with Him. The enmity and hostility between us have been obliterated and eradicated. Peace with God is now a legal right of ours, a done deal, a settled issue. How can we not overflow with gratitude as this day begins and as it continues? Because He has forgiven us, we choose to forgive others today. What crisis or challenge is on the outskirts of your life at present? How might God be working within this situation?

Pray

Father, because Jesus humbled Himself on the cross, I will choose humility over pride in all of my relationships. Because He is at peace with me, I will do everything in my power to live at peace with others. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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This is like being transported into the middle of a fight zone. The crack of whips urging on horses and the rattling of wheels of war chariots are heard. Horses are seen galloping and chariots jolting. There are flashing swords and glittering spears with casualties and piles of dead bodies! What vivid language in this chapter! After tragedy strikes, shock sets in as the disorientated victims attempt to cope. This is such a brutal chapter of judgment. One wonders, could it have been avoided through repentance?

The charge against Nineveh was spiritual and moral prostitution. The nation was likened to a beautiful prostitute who seduced the nations with her illicit enticements. Their worship was of a sensual nature; physical whoredom was part of it. They practiced sorcery and witchcraft as well. Nineveh would be publicly exposed resulting in shame and humiliation.

I'm so thankful that stories of relational messiness weren't edited out of the Bible for they give us hope. They show us that we all need grace to love well. Stressed relationships abound, making us long for the day of no more sin and brokenness. They are sticky and messy, and we hate being caught in the middle. Our default mode is to not get involved, or hope the whole thing will go away, but usually that's not going to happen. The good news for us is that Jesus came to destroy hostilities, tear down walls of division, make peace and be our peace. He alone can reconcile enemies to God and to one another. We can trust Him to be at work in these tense and complicated situations.

In this chapter, we catch a glimpse of the sad aftermath of God's judgment. As we close this little book, it would be good to recall the greatest crisis in your life over the last few years. How did you feel when it had passed? How was your faith affected? Weakened? Strengthened?

Pray

Father, help me stay present in the chaos without giving in to the pulls – like the pull to take sides. No one is better at sticky-situation-loving than You, so I abandon myself to You with all my fears, my confusion, and my very real hope of You showing up. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

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