

FINISH FAITHFUL—NOTES FOR EPISODE 2—BACKGROUND ON DANIEL

We will start by looking into the heart of Daniel, a man to whom God revealed much of his plan for the last days. Please turn in your Bible to Daniel chapter 9 and while you are doing that, let me remind you of some things about his life.

- He was taken captive to Babylon as a bright young man who might have potential as a servant in the court of Nebuchadnezzar. In Berlin, at the Pergamon Museum, you can see the actual gates of Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon.
- Judah was conquered by Babylon as God's punishment for their sinfulness and refusal to heed the prophets God sent, but somehow Daniel and his young friends had a heart to keep God's law and would not eat the king's meat sacrificed to idols.
- God gave Nebuchadnezzar a dream about the future and Daniel rose to prominence because God empowered him to interpret the dream.
- At the dinner with the writing on the wall, Daniel foretold the overthrow of the Babylonians by the Medes and Daniel was a high-ranking advisor in that kingdom as well.
- Just like today, government official, struggle for position and influence, so Daniel constantly had rivals working to discredit him. They got him thrown in the lion's den.
- The Persians took over the empire and Daniel retained his rank and influence under several more rulers including Cyrus.
- He was a busy man with a high-pressure job. You think you have a tough work situation? At a whim, his boss could have him imprisoned or killed.
- The Bible is brutally honest about the faults and sins of great leaders. Daniel is one of the few people about whom no fault or sin is mentioned. Daniel must have given his all to his job as a top ranking, highly competent government minister serving a succession of pagan empires among rivals who envied and hated him. What made him better was that he always put God ahead of his job. Kings completely trusted his integrity and his faithful obedience to God, and God used him to bring his messages to the most powerful rulers of his day. What could our lives be like if we do that?!
- Daniel had some of the most important prophetic visions in the Bible. On a number of occasions, the angel Gabriel would come to explain them to him. Some of the things were beyond his understanding and are still beyond our understanding. They testify that the LORD God Almighty is ultimately in control of history and His plans will come to pass

We mortal humans can acquire Bible knowledge on our own, but true understanding comes from God. In the next episode of Finish Faithful, we will look at his prayer recorded in Daniel chapter 9. If we can imitate Daniel's attitude and godly character, so that our hearts seek what his sought, God can give us greater understanding and influence.