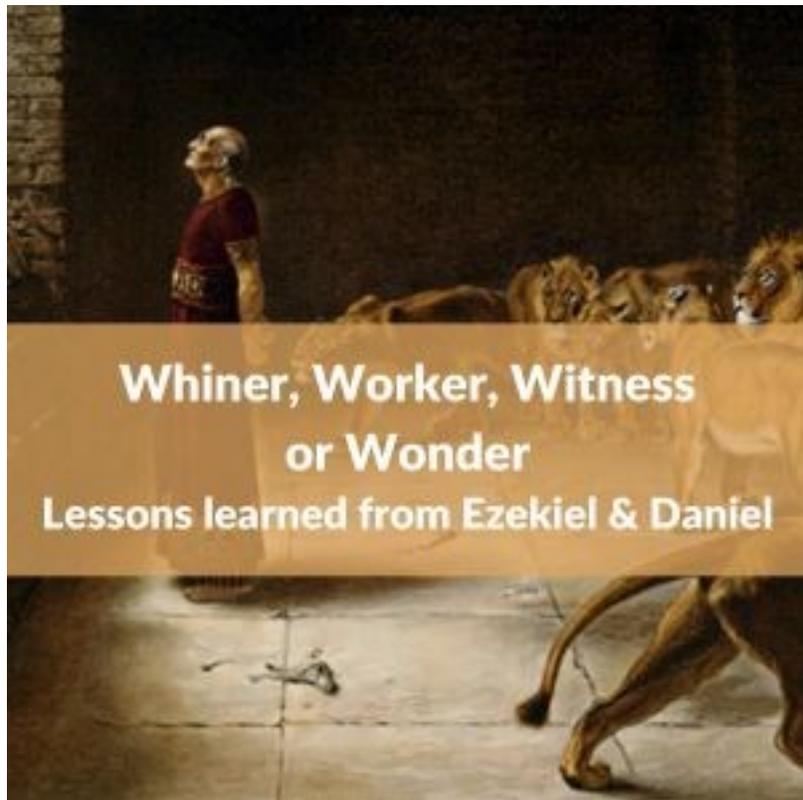


# Handouts

## Notes & Questions



### **When times are hard, how should we respond?**

- Should we whine about injustice?
- Should we quit working until it gets better?
- Obviously, or it should be, for a disciple of Jesus, the answer is “NO” to whining and quitting.
- In today’s lesson, we’ll take an in-depth look at the alternatives in our lesson entitled.....

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## **Your Notes**

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## **Whiner, Worker, Witness or Wonder**

### **Lessons learned from Ezekiel and Daniel**

Teacher: Yvon Prehn

#### **The setting—time has run out**

- After hundreds of years of warning and challenges, **it’s over for Judah.**
- Daniel and Ezekiel are in Babylon taken there in an early deportation before the end came in Jerusalem.
- What seemed horrible was a great blessing in disguise— they were kept from the horrors of the siege, the total destruction of Jerusalem, and final deportation.
- Daniel and his 3 friends were taken to the palace.
- Ezekiel was relocated with the captive people, near the river.
- This lesson is on both—I’ve alluded to some of the details in their stories previously—this lesson will fill in the details.

#### **In the midst of unimaginable challenges, we’ll see how.....**

- Daniel and Ezekiel didn’t **whine.**
- They faithfully **worked.**
- Their lives became a **witness.**
- And then the **wonder** of God was revealed to and through them.
- Our lesson today will show you how this happened in their lives and give us inspiration for the challenges we face.

#### **Setting overall for both men in Babylon**

- The Policy of Babylon—was somewhat different than other conquerors who primarily killed and resettled, e.g. Assyria and Samaria.
- Instead, Babylon intentionally took as captives the leaders and young potential leaders of a nation.
- Removed them to the Babylonian empire, trained them, and gave them positions of trust and honor.
- This removed the chance of rebellion from talented potential leaders and increased the strength of the Babylonian empire.
- The policy turned the captives into skilled civil servants instead of rebellious slaves.
- **Application—if you are the “winner” in any situation, always be gracious, welcoming, inclusive.**

#### **The system worked well**

- The common people were settled in places where they had their own homes, gardens, and as we can see in later years they prospered and did well financially.
- So much so that when the chance to return to their homeland came, many preferred to stay (at least for a time).
- Many so wealthy they were able to give generously to the rebuilding of the temple.
- **Application—you never know How God will work at the start of a seeming disaster—which is what this lesson will go on to illustrate.**

### **A focus on two of them—Daniel and Ezekiel**

- System sounds interesting, but how did it work out for real people?
- We are going to look at 4 ways of responding for Daniel and Ezekiel—how they might have responded and then what they did, and of course what we can learn from them:
- Options:
- Whiner, Worker, Witness, Wonder

### **#1 Whining**

- A natural response....why me?
- False assumptions when bad things happen include:
- God hates me, is punishing me, this is a disaster.
- ALL of these are most likely wrong because even if we are being disciplined for a sin (as the entire nation was) God always has our best in mind and He is in control.
- AND He often not only makes a situation tolerable, God can make it better than we can imagine.

### **A current example**

- At the Global Leadership Summit, we heard from Jamie Kern Lima, a woman who started out as a waitress at Denny's, worked hard, went to college, got her dream job as local news anchor and then developed Rosacea, a skin condition that would cause her face to break out in big red blotches.
- Lost her job as a news anchor, believed God wanted her to start a cosmetics line for people like her—after many years, 100 hr. weeks, huge challenges and when down to \$1,000 in the bank (total personally and as a business) after years of rejections, she was finally able to go on QVC.
- She had 10 minutes to sell 6,000 items.
- She went on with a bare face, Rosacea and all and showed them how the makeup worked.
- The 6,000 items sold.
- She went on to develop a company that sold for 1.2 Billion to L'Oréal—she is now a philanthropist and author.

### **What she said at the Global Leadership Summit**

***Rejection is God's protection.***

***You weren't rejected.***

***God says I hid your value from that person because they weren't assigned to your destiny.***

- So much wisdom there—
- For us.
- For Ezekiel and Daniel and many of God's people.

### **Instead of WHINING**

- How did Ezekiel and Daniel respond?
- They submitted to their situation—we don't ever see them whining.
- Or refusing to do what God asked them to do or complaining.
- By their actions they showed they believed in the sovereignty of God and they lived out this verse:
- ***Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, "children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation." Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky Phil. 2:14-15***

## #2—With hope and trust in God—They could then WORK

- There is always something to do—something positive, something God-ordained, no matter what is going on, always work to be done.
- No matter what the situation.
- An eternal perspective gives meaning to all work—
- ***If you read history, you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this.*** C. S. Lewis

### Work ethic of

#### Daniel and his friends

- Became civil servants, ***and they became best at their jobs.***
- It began early in their captivity when they were first in training, they asked to not eat the king's food which was part of their training.
- How did they respond?
- Didn't act offended or acting insulted.
- Story of Daniel asking politely and for a test
- Daniel 1:13-20:<sup>12</sup> *"Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. <sup>13</sup> Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food and treat your servants in accordance with what you see."* <sup>14</sup> *So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.*

#### The result

- <sup>15</sup> *At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. <sup>16</sup> So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.*
- <sup>17</sup> *To these four young men **God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning.** And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.*
- <sup>18</sup> *At the end of the time set by the king to bring them into his service, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. <sup>19</sup> The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. <sup>20</sup> **In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.***
- **Application: their talents were God-given, but they had to apply what they'd been given—and they had to be faithful in it—more in a minute, but now back to Ezekiel.**

#### Ezekiel taken to Babylon, but his work was very different

- Daniel at the palace, Ezekiel among the people.
- Of a priestly family, when taken to Babylon, he had a ***change in location, but not in work, not in calling***—not comfortable, not taken care of, as he would have been serving in the Temple—but still called to be a priest and even more in exile....
- Called to special prophetic ministry at 30, when he has an extraordinary vision of the glory of God (some images later),
- Ezekiel 2:3-7 *He said: "Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have been in revolt against me to this very day. <sup>4</sup> The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn. Say to them, 'This is*

*what the Sovereign Lord says.’<sup>5</sup> And whether they listen or fail to listen—for they are a rebellious people—they will know that a prophet has been among them.*

- Both now have their work to do and next as part of it....

### **#3 As result of no whining and working well at their jobs, each became a WITNESS—**

- People came to them.
- If you are faithful –situations will come up—***people will know that you know God.***
- Be open to questions and people asking you about God.
- You don’t have to lay out every fact of your faith in one conversation.
- Pray for opportunities, think about possible topics of conversation, invite people to faith-based events.
- Church, Bible study, church social events, Christian movies.

#### **First, to Daniel and his friends**

- They start out honored—best at their work....but things don’t go as well as they might have hoped.
- In Daniel c.2 King Nebuchadnezzar has a dream that terrifies him. He calls in his astrologers, to tell him the meaning of it, but he wants to make sure they aren’t just making something up, so he tells them they must first tell him the dream itself.
- They protest saying that is impossible and the king orders all of them killed.
- Daniel once again, very politely responds.....*Daniel went in to see the king. “Give me a little time,” he said, “and I will tell you the dream and what it means.”*
- *<sup>17</sup> Then he went home and told Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions. <sup>18</sup> They asked the God of heaven to show them his mercy by telling them the secret, so they would not die with the others. <sup>19</sup> And that night in a vision God told Daniel what the king had dreamed.*
- Daniel has the opportunity to tell the king not only the content, but the meaning of his dream of four future kingdoms – in near future history and also culminating with the eternal reign of the coming Messiah—and the same message will be delivered in c.7.....and yes, so much more we could say about it, but we must move on.

#### **Then it’s his friends turn to be a witness**

- After praising God for this great revelation, power goes to Nebuchadnezzar's head, and he wants to be worshipped.
- He builds a huge statue and requires ALL to bow down to him or face instant death in the fire furnace.
- Daniel’s friends—they don’t bow down, here is what they say:
- *Daniel 3:17-18 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty’s hand. But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”*
- ***“Even if He does not” that is the statement of faith & trust.***

#### **God did rescue them, but He also did one more extraordinary thing**

- They were not alone in the fire
- He (Nebuchadnezzar) said, ***“Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.”*** Daniel 3:25
- This was what is known as a “theophany.”

- A pre-incarnate appearance of the second person of the Trinity—Jesus. (see lesson on **The Trinity in the Old Testament**, for more).
- Remember Jesus promises to be with us ALWAYS—that means in the midst of trials, HE is THERE.
- Most of the time, He isn't visible to us, but He is always there.

**Continuing in Daniel—Interesting little story in Dan. 4—Nebuchadnezzar gives his testimony**

- “First gospel tract”
- The backstory to his testimony was—a dream, still exhibited great pride, God strikes him down, and he lives like an animal. He is restored to sanity when humbled himself before God.
- Daniel 4:1-3 *King Nebuchadnezzar, To the nations and peoples of every language, who live in all the earth: May you prosper greatly!*
- <sup>2</sup> *It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me.*
- <sup>3</sup> *How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation.*

**Daniel continues to be faithful, keeps doing the work he was called to do....**

- Nebuchadnezzar's successor, Belshazzar does not follow him in serving God.
- He holds a drunken party, drinking from the vessels taken from the temple; a hand appears and writes on the wall; he panics.
- Daniel is called in, who interprets the writing—
- **Daniel 5:25-28** *“This is the inscription that was written: mene, mene, tekel, parsin”* <sup>26</sup> *“Here is what these words mean: Mene: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end. Tekel: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting. Peres: Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.”*
- That night Babylon falls.

**Now another huge political upheaval**

- The Jews are allowed to return to the land (more on that in coming lesson) Daniel continues to serve.
- Life goes on, the new king comes in and Daniel is once again part of the government.
- **Daniel 6** *It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss. Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. Finally these men said, “We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God.”*
- They come up with a way to trap Daniel, by saying no one could pray to any God other than the king—of course Daniel does.....the result is Daniel in the Lion's Den.

- **Application challenge: He was an old man then—one would think he'd been through enough—but no retirement for God's people, no excuses for old age.**

#### **In the Lion's Den**

- *Daniel 6 At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. <sup>20</sup> When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?"*
- *<sup>21</sup> Daniel answered, "May the king live forever! <sup>22</sup> My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, Your Majesty."*
- *<sup>23</sup> The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.*
- The book now shifts from the witness to his life to the wonder of revelations, but first, let's go back what was happening with Ezekiel.

#### **Ezekiel as a witness**

- He was called to be a watchman (passage repeated twice c. 3 & 33)
- *Ezekiel 33:7 "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the people of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. <sup>8</sup> When I say to the wicked, 'You wicked person, you will surely die,' and you do not speak out to dissuade them from their ways, that wicked person will die for their sin, and I will hold you accountable for their blood. <sup>9</sup> But if you do warn the wicked person to turn from their ways and they do not do so, they will die for their sin, though you yourself will be saved.*
- The job of the watchman incredibly important—then and now.

#### **And what a watchman he was!**

- The situation: the people in Babylon were in captivity because of their sin.
- But they didn't accept it—they keep asking for deliverance from their situation and that Jerusalem be spared.
- Ezekiel is called to remind them of the sins that brought them where they are (some messages in rather graphic gross details).
- He did this in a variety of ways—he was an extremely creative communicator.
- Many living sermon illustrations: acted out the siege, ate famine food, didn't speak, preached, counseled, answered questions—all calmly and confidently.
- His life was a message also as when his wife died and could not mourn as a picture of how the joy of the people, the Temple would be destroyed, and they couldn't do a thing about it.

#### **God used his life to teach his lessons and God continues to do that**

- *<sup>2</sup> Cor 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup> who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. <sup>5</sup> For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. <sup>6</sup> If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. <sup>7</sup> And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.*

- Don't judge others for what they are going through—pray they will accomplish God's purposes in whatever their situation is.
- Don't worry about being weird or people judging you—people will think you are strange and YES you are—you don't fit into the world's mold.

#### **#4 Finally the Wonder**

- Based on their life of faithful witness, both were given glorious visions.
- They would not have come if he had not been faithful in not whining, in working, in witnessing and now they are given visions from God
- Daniels have been already mentioned of the succeeding kingdoms of the earth and the ultimate kingdom of the Messiah.
- Ezekiel— ones throughout the book, sees some fantastic visions...
- The content, meaning of his visions, what they actually looked like have been the theme of art through the ages, here are a few copyright free ones.....(see the video)

#### **He finally sees the vision, the wonder of the renewed, eternal temple, and the water flowing from it**

- Are the descriptions of the Temple (or any of the other visions) literal or allegorical?—no definite answer—
- An earthly analogy—no description prepares you for what the Grand Canyon actually looks like when you are THERE.
- I imagine much of heaven and final events on planet earth will be like that—we think we know, but the reality will be so much more than we can imagine now.
- Regardless of our understanding or not, he prophesied a glorious future and the book ends with:
- Ezekiel 48:35 ***“And the name of the city from that time on will be: the Lord is there.”***
- **Being with Jesus is the most wonderful thing.**

#### **What our focus is to be about now**

- ***Matt.24:36, But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. . . .<sup>45</sup> “Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? <sup>46</sup> It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns.***
- ***Acts 1:6-8, MSG When they were together for the last time they asked, “Master, are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel now? Is this the time?”***
- ***He told them, “You don't get to know the time. Timing is the Father's business. What you'll get is the Holy Spirit. And when the Holy Spirit comes on you, you will be able to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, all over Judea and Samaria, even to the ends of the world.”***
- Our focus is not to be about date-setting or trying to figure out what is impossible to know—we are to be about faithfully doing the work He has given us to do, caring for those He's given us to care for, sharing the Good News however we can.

#### **Finally back to Daniel**

- He lived through the entire story of captivity and return.
- Saw all that had been prophesied come true, from deportation to return.
- His prophecies are about the near future of his people and some are easy to understand, e.g. of Alexander and the 4 general who will follow him.

- To his future prophecies of the coming of Jesus and then into the far future—not so easy to understand, many interpretations.
- ***But message over all—God is in control, now and forever***

**A final word to us**

- ***Daniel 12:3 Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.***
- ***Wise*** is the Hebrew word, “saka!” a word comprising those who know God’s Word and live according to it and what makes them wise is that they....
- ***Lead many to righteousness***—not whining, but being a worker and witness wherever you are, seeing and reflecting the wonder of serving God—fulfilling Jesus’ final command in Acts 1:8.
- Be encouraged by His promise to many of you who are wise, who study His Word, work to live by it, and through your lives and prayers work to lead many to righteousness, keep in mind the promise—
- ***You will shine like the stars forever and ever!***

## ***DISCUSSION QUESTIONS***

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### **Prophetic Books, little understood, incredibly important**

1. What was the situation Ezekiel and Daniel found themselves in? How were their situations similar and how were they different?
2. What can we learn from how they didn't whine in their situations? What excuses do we use to complain and how can we change them?
3. What kind of work did each of them do in captivity? How can we work in whatever job we are called to in a way that pleases God?
4. How were each of them a witness to their world? How can we be a witness even when things are difficult to those around us?
5. What are the wonders that God showed them? What are your thoughts about the eternal future God has for each of us?
6. APPLICATION—What do you want to remember and apply from the examples of the lives of Ezekiel and Daniel particularly when you are going through a difficult time in your life?