

## Today's Quick Word Daniel 1:1-2

*By Bruce Christian*

**DANIEL 1:1-2** *In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure-house of his god.*

As 'citizens of the world', as a nation, as a Church, as families, and as individuals, we are often perplexed by God's strange, enigmatic Providence. The old conundrum, 'If God is all-powerful and all-loving, why does this or that happen?', constantly exercises our minds and challenges our faith. But the important truth we must hang onto in all this is that HE is God and we are NOT.

When the Apostle Paul was grappling, in Romans 9-11, with the theological problem of the future of the nation Israel in the light of all God's promises to them and their rejection of his Promised Messiah, he rounded off the baring of his heart with these important words: "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgements, and his paths beyond tracing out! 'Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor?' 'Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?' For from him and through

him and to him are all things. To him be the glory for ever! Amen." (Romans 11:33-36).

I need to learn to identify fully with Paul's sentiments there! I need to reflect on what it meant to be a Jew like Daniel when wicked King Nebuchadnezzar decisively conquered God's Chosen People and destroyed the magnificent Temple that was the very symbol of God's presence and power among the People he loved and promised to care for and protect. I need to learn to 'let God BE God'!

There are many things I cannot even start to understand about his Providence in the affairs of this broken world, occupied by sinners like me, but history throughout the Bible, and beyond in the life of his Church, make it very clear that God IS all-powerful, that he IS in full control of the world he has made, that he DOES have a Plan to bring everything under the Headship of Christ (Ephesians 1:19b-23), that even the disasters in Daniel's day were an integral part of the outworking of that Plan, and that I indeed must TRUST him, even - and especially - with the things I cannot fathom using human logic! I need to keep on reminding myself: "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all - how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:32).

## Today's Quick Word Psalm 108:25-27

*By Bruce Christian*

**PSALM 108:25-27** *I am an object of scorn to my accusers; when they see me, they shake their heads. Help me, O LORD my God; save me in accordance with your love. Let them know that it is your hand, that you, O LORD, have done it.*

When we go through times of hardship and difficulty, when we feel that everything is working against us and the forces of evil are so strong, powerful and invasive that we can never muster the strength or resources to withstand against them, we are in the same situation in which King David often found himself to be.

Thankfully, we have access to songs he wrote to reveal the secret that enabled him to cope, and gain the upper hand. Psalm 108 is one of them.

Three things in today's verses encourage me to learn from this godly man. Firstly, such experiences are an important part of our spiritual journey because they show us very clearly how helpless we are on our own, and therefore how dependent we are on the LORD for help. This is the sort of thing that Paul refers to

when he says, "But [God] said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.'" (2 Corinthians 12:9), and what George Matheson meant when wrote, "I sink in life's alarms when by myself I stand; imprison me within thine arms, and strong shall be my hand. ... My will is not my own till thou hast made it thine; if it would reach the monarch's throne it must its crown resign: it only stands unbent, amid the clashing strife, when on thy bosom it has leant, and found in thee its life."

Secondly, I can depend completely on the Covenant-keeping 'LORD' to protect and care for me because that would be 'in accordance with [his] love (cheséd)' - the 'love' by which he 'sealed' the covenant with the blood of his Only Son.

Thirdly, I learn to make every effort to ensure that others (especially my foes) KNOW that it is not my own strength or wisdom or capability that achieves God's divine purposes and victories in my life, but that "it is YOUR hand, that YOU, O LORD, have done it."

## Today's Quick Word 2 Kings 1:2

*By Bruce Christian*

**2 KINGS 1:2** *Now Ahaziah had fallen through the lattice of his upper room in Samaria and injured himself. So he sent messengers, saying to them, "Go and consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, to see if I will recover from this injury."*

What a solemn warning there is for us in the short account of Ahaziah, Ruler of the Northern Kingdom of Israel!

When the Apostle Paul was warning the young Church at Corinth against the dangers of apostasy, using Israel during their 40-year wandering in the wilderness as an example, he was really stating a principle that applies to the whole of OT history: "Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did." (1 Corinthians 10:6 - cf Hebrews 4, quoting Psalm 95).

Ahaziah's name means 'Yahweh Possesses', but, in practice, as far as he himself was concerned, he was anything but 'possessed' by the LORD! He was in every way the son of his parents, Ahab and Jezebel! So, what was there about him concerning which we need to take warning?

After his serious injury, his gut feeling was that he was going to die - so he needed some positive reassurance that this was NOT to be the case. He knew enough about the dealings his

parents had had with Elijah the Tishbite (cf verses 7-8) to know that the LORD's prophet was not likely to be the source of such assurance, and he figured that 'Baal-Zebub' (= 'Beelzebub' (cf Luke 11:15) = 'Lord of the Flies') would be a much safer and more satisfying option. Then, when the LORD himself hijacked this line of enquiry, Ahaziah tried to bully Elijah into coming before him in the hope that his 'stand over' tactics would pressure the prophet into giving a favourable report.

The advantage, of course, of man-made gods like Baal, is that you can manipulate them into whatever 'shape' you feel comfortable with - unlike the One True God who does not change (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17), and who has revealed himself in his infallible Word, in his Son, in his Creation, and in the outworking of history (HIS story).

In the light of all this, I need to ask myself, "Am I willing to let my God BE God? And am I willing to obey his Word even when it doesn't fit in with my preconceived ideas and plans? Am I truly 'possessed by the LORD', as the King of Israel should have been? Or do I 'fashion' my own idea of what God OUGHT to be like so that I am less challenged by his requirements and his rule in my daily life?"