

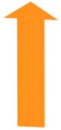
SEVEN ARROWS



What does this passage say?



What did this passage mean to its original audience?



What does this passage tell us about God?



What does this passage tell us about man?



What does this passage demand of me?



How does this passage change the way I relate to people?



What does this passage prompt me to pray to God?

DANIEL 1



The prophets Daniel and Ezekiel addressed God's people during their time in exile. It's amazing that God even spoke to His people when they should have been receiving the silent treatment. They'd had plenty of warnings by this point and were experiencing the result of their rebellion. But God continued to sustain them, even in exile, and provided them with gracious words of hope for the future. The later portion of the book of Daniel speaks of the end of times, when God will defeat Satan, sin and death forever. The early chapters of the book show God's faithfulness to men like Daniel while in exile. The Babylonian king made every effort to dismantle the faith of the Israelite exiles, even changing their names to represent the worship of false gods. Daniel stood strong refusing to give in to the onslaught of forces trying to turn his heart away from God. The nation of Israel was never able to resist the worship of false gods-at least not for long-but Daniel showed that a deep faith in God's promises was sufficient to fight the world's sinfulness and remain obedient to God.

DANIEL 6



A lion's den was an appropriate picture for the challenge faced by the nation of Israel. Kicked out of the promised land, they lived in a hostile environment. Daniel was incapable of withstanding the lions alone, but the presence of God was with him in the den. The picture was clear-God had not abandoned His people, even when they were in exile in a foreign land. He was standing by their side to guard, protect and preserve them, and they would never be permanently destroyed. Those who trust God as Daniel did will find that the steadfast love of God is never removed from His people. Even in judgment, God demonstrates His care and faithfulness to His promises. This provides hope for all who experience the consequences of sin. God does not turn His back on us in our sin, but He turns His face to us in love. He is with us, an ever-present help in times of trouble.

EZEKIEL 36:22-38



Ezekiel, writing during the exile, pictured a future day when the fortunes of God's people would be changed. You might think this means they will regain the promised land, have a new king, or achieve victory over their enemies. The problem with any of these outcomes is that we already know what happens when they do-over and over God's people rebel and face judgment. The problem is far bigger than exile-it's sin! One way to understand God's plan in the Bible is to notice who actually causes the things that happen. In this short passage from the prophets, we read the word "I" over and over again. God does the work in this passage, and He will get glory for His name by working on behalf of His people to cleanse them from their sin. He will do this by removing their heart of stone-one that consistently rebels from God-and replacing it with a heart of flesh that longs to worship God. These future promises are the only hope for people who can't stop sinning.

EZEKIEL 37:1-14



God often helped His prophets to understand His plan through visions. The valley of dry bones clearly portrayed the way God promised to bring Israel back from exile, making it one of the most well-known visions in the Bible. As in creation, God brought life by speaking His Word. Though it appeared that the nation of Israel was dead, God would bring them back to life. This vision provides hope, not just for the nation of Israel but for all who are dead in trespasses and sins. There is no way for a dead man to do anything to bring himself back to life—that person must be brought to life by someone more powerful than death. This is exactly what happens when someone comes to faith in Jesus. Jesus, who proved through His resurrection to be more powerful than death, brings people back to life. Dry bones and dead sinners come to life by the power of God.

JOHN 11:38-44



Both Jesus' humanity and divinity are pictured in the story of Lazarus. Jesus had friends He deeply loved. In fact, He loved them so much that when Lazarus died, Jesus wept when He saw the pain of Lazarus' sisters. Jesus is also God- the One with power over death, and with a word He can give new life to the dead. It's clear that the main point of the story wasn't really about Lazarus. After all, since Lazarus brought back to life, he would one day die again. Jesus wanted His followers to see that He was God. In fact, when Jesus could have healed Lazarus, Jesus intentionally waited until Lazarus died so that the great glory of God could be shown. Imagine the story Lazarus had to tell for the rest of his life. He was dead and Jesus brought Him to life. If you are a Christian today, that's your story as well. You were once dead in your sin, and Jesus put His glory on display by bringing you to life.