

DANIEL, ONE OF GOD'S FAITHFUL YOUNG MEN

Daniel 1:1-21; 2:1-49
LESSON 419 Senior Course

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MEMORY VERSE: "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the kings meat, nor with the wine which he drank" (Daniel 1:8).

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I Daniel's Stand at the Beginning of His Captivity

1. Daniel and three Hebrew children are taken captive to Babylon about 606 B. C., Daniel 1:1, 2; II Kings 24:1
2. Three years' training and diet are decreed by the king, and names changed, Daniel 1:3-7
3. Daniel purposes not to defile himself with meats offered to idols, Daniel 1:8; Deuteronomy 32:36-38; I Corinthians 10:20

II God's Blessing upon Daniel's Uncompromising Spirit

1. Given favor with the officer, a change of diet is approved and granted by their guard, Daniel 1:9-16
2. Knowledge and skill is bestowed upon them by God, and they are found to be ten times better than magicians and astrologers in all the realm, Daniel 1:17-20

III The King's Undisclosed Dream and Daniel's Request for Time

1. The wise men are summoned to make known his dream and the king is angry and disputes with them, Daniel 2:1-11
2. Sentence of death is pronounced upon all wise men, including Daniel and his companions, Daniel 2:12, 13
3. The king grants Daniel time to fulfill his promise, as he and his companions turn to the Lord in prayer, Daniel 2:14-18
4. The secret is revealed and Daniel praises God, Daniel 2:19-23; Deuteronomy 29:29; Psalm 25:14; Job 12:22

IV Daniel's Description of the Dream

1. Taken before the king he gives glory to God and describes the image the king saw, Daniel 2:24-33; Isaiah 42:8
2. The great Stone destroys the image, Daniel 2:34, 35; 7:13, 14, 26, 27; Psalm 118:22

V Daniel's Interpretation of the Dream

1. The head of gold is Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom, Daniel 2:36-38, 7:3,4
2. The breast and arms of silver are the Medes and Persians, Daniel 2:39; 7:5
3. The belly and thighs of brass represent the Alexandrian kingdom Daniel 2:39; 7:6; 8:4-6, 20, 21
4. The legs of iron represent the Roman kingdom, Daniel 2:40; 7:7, 23
5. The feet of iron and clay illustrate the disunited kingdoms, Daniel 2:41-43; 7:24, 25
6. The Stone that smote the image is the Kingdom of God, Daniel 2:44, 45; Isaiah 28:16, Acts 4:11
7. Daniel and his companions are promoted by the king, Daniel 2:46-49

NOTES

Daniel Among the First

Daniel was in the first group of captives taken from Jerusalem to Babylon in about 606 B. C. He and his three friends are thought to have been related to King Zedekiah (verse 3). That gave them entrance to the palace of Babylon, along with God's divine plan.

In Daniel's day, the city of Babylon not only was the premier city of the pre-Christian world, but it ruled the most powerful empire that had, up to that time, existed. Daniel was there from its zenith to its fall, in all about 72 years (verse 21). From the first of the Jews' captivity until after their return, he was God's witness in the palace of this world empire. The 70 years of Judah's captivity was the same 70 years that Babylon ruled the world. The year that Cyrus, king of Persia, conquered Babylon, 536 B. C., he authorized the return of the Jews to their own land.

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Daniel's Purpose

Daniel's record is one of the few in the Bible without recorded flaw. Daniel and his friends must have been very young. Some think them to have been about twelve when taken captive; and by reason of their purpose they stand out as boy heroes.

The purpose of Daniel was not in his head, but in his heart. We have learned by experience that to take a firm stand upon God's Word at the beginning, and to seek God's help in maintaining that purpose, is the true way to a victorious life with Christ. It was contrary to the law of his God to eat meat offered to idols Daniel feared God, and therefore determined to stand true to his convictions.

There were many circumstances in Babylon set in array against Daniel's stand. He and his companions were not guests; they were captives in Babylon, surrounded by a wicked, idolatrous people, under the rule of a tyrannical king whose word was law. These young men were selected as potential servants for the king, and were brought to the palace for the express purpose of being trained for efficient positions in his court. Their instruction and diet were prescribed by the king himself. Even their Jewish names, the significance of which pointed them to their God, were basely changed to pagan names, relating in one way or another to the gods of Chaldea. Daniel and his companions could not look with any hope to their own people, for they had fallen away and now were shamefully given over to idolatry themselves.

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Everything stood against Daniel, but he never faltered—he purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's meat. The God of his fathers, whom he loved, honored his stand, bestowed upon him skill and wisdom until he excelled all the wise men in Chaldea, won the favor of his officers, and was promoted to great honor in the kingdom. And before Daniel's career was ended God delivered him out of every danger and unfolded through him a prophetic view of the last days which we are seeing fulfilled in our time. It pays to stand true to Daniel's God.

Daniel's Prosperity

Daniel's meteoric rise to world-wide fame is indicated in Ezekiel 14:14, 20; 28:3, written only fifteen years later, while Daniel was still a very young man. What a remarkable young man! He was absolutely unswerving in his religious convictions, yet so loyal to his idolatrous king that he was trusted with the affairs of the empire. This is an example for us not to "follow a multitude to do evil, (Exodus 23:2). God has given the martyrs of more recent days the courage to stand true to the death, even though they could have had their lives spared by "pouring out a little wine" or "dropping some incense on the fire," to the honor of some ruler.

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

This was the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign as sole ruler, having been placed in charge of his father's armies six years before. He had invaded the western countries and wrested control of Palestine from Egypt three years later. It is thought that it was at this time Daniel was taken along with other Jewish captives to Babylon. Daniel had been in Babylon only three years.

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The king's thoughts upon his bed were the same entertained by all sane-thinking people: what shall come to pass hereafter? God deals with all men in regard to eternity. It is a question on every mind, young or old, rich or poor. The Bible tells us that God "lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9).

When the king's dream left him upon awaking, he realized that something solemn had been presented to him in his dream, without being able to recall it. The inability of the wise men of the realm to tell what the dream had been only served to show man's weakness in dealing with the things of God. The king threatened to destroy all the magicians and make their houses a rubble heap if they did not bring forth the dream. Threats or gifts cannot change the limitations of man. Their pleas for the king to tell the dream and they would interpret it only served to show the king their corrupt and lying words. He reasoned that if they could not tell what had already happened, how could they foretell the future?

Divine Help Needed

The wise men told the king that only the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh, could reveal this matter. In their pagan unbelief, they realized the need for divine intervention if their lives were to be spared. Contrast this heathen idea of utter severance of God from man with: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us

Daniel and his companions do not seem to have been numbered among the magicians, and so were not summoned before the king. God ordered it so, that all mere human wisdom would be shown vain before His divine power. Daniel reasoned with the king's guard that time might be granted him. He called his companions to prayer (Matthew 18:19). The same instrumentality rescued Peter from his peril when he was held in prison by Herod, and the church prayed for his release. The angel of the Lord came to his rescue and brought him out (Acts 12:5-12).

God's Answer

Upon God's answering the prayer by a revelation in a vision to Daniel, he immediately gave God the glory and thanksgiving, ascribing to Him all wisdom and power in the removal and setting up of kings. God is still the ruler of the universe.

The Babylonian captivity was more than just a passing event in the history of the Jews. It was the end of Israel's government and the beginning of the Gentile dominion. God gave Nebuchadnezzar, as a representative of the Gentiles, a panoramic view of the future, which was fittingly disclosed by this image of man, for it represented man's day, a day in which he had the opportunity to see what he could do for himself.

The head of gold represented Nebuchadnezzar of the Chaldean or Babylonian kingdom. The breast and arms of silver foretold the reign of the Medes and Persians. The belly and thighs of brass typified the ushering in of the Alexandrian rule of the Grecian kingdom. The legs of iron pointed to the iron rule of Rome. The feet of iron and clay mixed showed the **latter** times of man's rule upon earth when there would be no cohesion in the rule of the nations, which we can see today. The Stone that was cut out of the mountain, without hands, and brake in pieces the image until it became as chaff of the summer threshing floors, is none other than the Kingdom of God, which shall not be destroyed, **nor left to other people**, but shall become a great mountain and fill the whole earth.

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From the days of Daniel to the coming of Christ, the world was ruled by these four empires, exactly as Daniel predicted. But another day is coming, of which the Bible frequently speaks; it is "the Lord's day." The great Stone is about ready to fall and crush the Gentile nations, and then will be established the glorious Millennial Kingdom.

QUESTIONS

- 1 In whose reign was Daniel taken captive?
- 2 Give your reason for Daniel's success.
- 3 Give the Hebrew names of Daniel's companions.
- 4 Why was Daniel granted time when the Chaldeans were refused?
- 5 Show the two methods God used in this lesson to reveal the things to come.
- 6 How does the prophecy of Daniel differ from that of other prophets?
- 7 State the beginning and the ending of Gentile dominion.
- 8 Name its four great historical divisions.
- 9 In what sense do the world powers grow inferior to one another as portrayed by the image?