

DANIEL 1

After Solomon's rule over Israel, the kingdom was divided into two parts. Namely, ten tribes, referred to as Israel, and ruled over by Solomon's servant, Jeroboam; and the two remaining tribes, referred to as Judah, and ruled over by Rehoboam, Solomon's son.

Jeroboam destroyed the religious unity of the ten tribes, Israel, by making calves of gold for the people to worship. He was followed by more evil kings for the next approximately 235 years, with not one of them following God. Therefore, God allowed them to be taken captive by the king of Assyria (II Kings 17).

Rehoboam was a wicked king also as he reigned over Judah. However, some of the kings who followed Rehoboam were ones who loved God and caused the people to obey Him. For this reason, God allowed Judah to remain an independent nation for approximately 375 years. As time went on, more and more of Judah's kings refused to obey God and the nation became very wicked. Therefore, God allowed Judah to be taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, in 606 B.C.

It is at this time in Judah's history that the Book of Daniel begins. Daniel was probably about fifteen or sixteen years of age when Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem and carried captive the most talented and promising young men to Babylon. Daniel and his three friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were included in this captivity. This was a fulfillment of the prophecy given in Isaiah 39:6, 7 over one hundred years before. See also II Kings 20:16-18.

Daniel was contemporary with Jeremiah and Ezekiel. His prophecies take us from the captivity of Judah to the setting up of Jesus' kingdom at the beginning of the millennium. He is the prophet of the "times of the Gentiles" spoken of in Luke 21:24. There have been many critics down through the years that have attempted to disprove the authenticity of the book of Daniel. The reason for this is because so many of the prophecies of his book have already been specifically fulfilled in such a manner that only divine inspiration could have allowed. Satan has attempted to cause people to disbelieve God's Word ever since he deceived Eve., and the book of Daniel is another example of his attempts. However, Jesus, Himself, made reference to Daniel as a prophet in Matthew 24:15, thus giving credence to his prophecies.

C. Ernest Tatham, in his book "Daniel Speaks Today," refers to Daniel as a man of purpose, prayer, and power. This is certainly true, and makes us to know that there are many wonderful personal lessons to be learned from a study of this book, as well as understanding the beautiful prophetic truths therein. The book may be divided into two distinct divisions: the first six chapters have to do with history, and shows man's view of the nations of the world. The last six chapters have to do with prophecy, showing God's view of the nations.

Daniel 1:1 tells of the captivity of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. However, we see in verse two that it was the Lord Who allowed Nebuchadnezzar to accomplish this. God rules over the nations and causes His will to be done! Shinar is another name for Babylon. Read Jeremiah 25:1-11 and marvel at the working of the Lord in revealing to his prophet the reason for the captivity, as well as the exact number of years it would last. The king's palace, in verse 4, is speaking of the palace school where the young men were taught the language and literature of the Chaldeans. This was a special class of people from South Babylonia. This training was to last three years, during which time the students were also provided the best food and wine available, thus causing them to be in the best of health.

The prince of the eunuchs, or the attendant in charge of their welfare, changed the names of Daniel and his friends, which was a token of subjection to the new country of which they were now captive. The name Daniel means, "God is Judge." Hananiah means, "Jehovah is gracious," Mishael, "Who is what God is?" and the meaning of Azariah is "Jehovah has helped." These names all honored the God of Israel, but now they are given names to honor the Babylonian gods. Beltshazzar, one of the chief Babylonian gods, means "The Lord's leader;" Shadrach, "field, soft and tender," after the moon-god, Aku; Meshach, "That draws with force;" and Abed-nego, "Servant of Nego," after the god, Nebo.

But Daniel was a man (or youth!) of purpose! Are you a man or woman of purpose for God? Have you settled it in your heart that you will not defile yourself with the attractions and ways of the world? If you have not purposed this in your heart, Satan will see to it that you will fall, but you don't need to! Proverbs 23:1-8 is an excellent commentary on the results of partaking of the dainties of the world. See also Psalms 141:4. It is possible that the king's food included items that God had pronounced unclean to the Israelites, or perhaps they were eating meat that had been offered to their idols and this would be something God had prohibited His people to do. Whatever the reason, Daniel did not have faith to partake of this food, so he did something about it by requesting of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

We see God's loving, protective care of His own in verse 9. This reminds us of another captive who was true to God and to whom the Lord showed mercy and love, Joseph (Gen. 39:21). The prince of the eunuchs granted Daniel's request that he and his three friends be served pulse (vegetables) to eat and water to drink. Because the prince was fearful that they would not be as healthy as those around them who were eating and drinking the king's food and wine, Daniel asked that they be allowed to have the vegetables and water for ten days to prove whether or not it would affect their health. The prince agreed to this request. At the end of the ten days, Daniel and his three friends appeared healthier than all the other captives who were enjoying the food of the king.

This was a step of faith for Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, and God honored their faith by giving them exceptional knowledge and wisdom. God also gave Daniel discernment of visions and dreams. Oh, the spiritual blessings that comes to those who will deny themselves and obey the Lord in all things! Notice verses 19, 20. The king, upon examining these four boys, found them to be ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in his entire realm! It wasn't food that caused this—it was obedience to their God!

Verse 21 is not a contradiction of chapter 10:1, where it speaks of Daniel being in Babylon in the third year of King Cyrus. The first year of Cyrus was when Babylon ended its rule, so verse 21 is telling us that Daniel was in Babylon all through the remainder of its rule. He actually continued there into the rule of Media-Persia.