

The unabridged writings of Fred Morris, Manna Publications

People of the Bible

DANIEL AND THE KING'S DREAM

To the reader: Keep your Bible beside you. Always read your Bible first, then read these notes. Check the references and read them also. Invite a friend to study with you. You will be blessed.

A CAPTIVE IN BABYLON

Have you heard about Daniel? Daniel lived in Bible times. He was a Jewish boy, born in Jerusalem, into the royal family of King David.

When Daniel was a just a lad, great armies came against Israel and captured the city of Jerusalem. Daniel and many of his friends were taken prisoner to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel loved God and worshipped Him only. He would not bow down and worship the idols of Babylon. For this he was thrown to the lions. But God shut the lions' mouths and Daniel was not harmed.

In all things, Daniel trusted in the Living God. He was a slave, but God made him strong and brave. We all want to be strong and brave like Daniel.

Many have asked, "Can God save men from lions? Did all these things really happen? What does the story of Daniel mean to us today?"

The Bible is God's message to men in every age. In the Bible we can read what God has said to us. Every part of the Bible is true and important.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Daniel said he wrote this Book and we have no reason to doubt his word. He was a young man of 16 or 17, living in Jerusalem, when Nebuchadnezzar and the Assyrian army attacked the city, burned the temple of God and took its treasures.

The soldiers took the best of the people away to Babylon. Only the old and poor were left in Judah to till the land.

The Assyrian soldiers were ordered to look for the royal sons. So they took the best looking and best educated young men of Judah. Daniel and his three friends were among them those taken captive to Babylon (Dan 1:3-4).

In Babylon, they kept Daniel and his friends in a special house. They would learn the customs and language of Babylon. Then the very best men would serve King Nebuchadnezzar as civil servants and advisors.

Later Daniel became a great man and a governor of Persia. He loved God and spoke for God to kings and people. He prophesied great things that would come to pass.

Daniel told of things that would happen to God's people in the future. Only God could show men what He was going to do hundreds of years later.

TALK ABOUT

1. Who was Daniel?
2. What happened to him while he was still a teenager?
3. Why did God's people turn away from Him (Hosea 1:6; Amos 2:13-16; Is 6:11,12)?
4. Did God warn them of coming judgment (Jer 25:1-3)?
5. What happened to Daniel and his friends (Jer 52:12-15)?

THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL

The little country of Israel was divided into two parts, Judah to the south and Israel to the north. Jehoiakim was king of Judah. The whole country was pressed between two great nations, Egypt and Babylon. Egypt was a very old nation which occupied the rich Nile river valley in Africa. Babylonia lay between two great rivers to the northeast, now called Iraq, in the Middle East. The two great rivers were the Tigris and the Euphrates (Gen 2:14). The people living in that area were called Chaldeans.

Assyria came against Israel first, then Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came against Judah (2 Kings 24). The Babylonians were also called Chaldeans (Gen 11:28).

A CAPTIVE IN BABYLON

Daniel had faith in Yahweh, the living God. He kept himself pure according to God's law (Lev 19:2). In many ways Daniel was like Joseph, the young Hebrew man who was sold to be a slave in Egypt. Later, God raised him to a high place in Pharaoh's court. Joseph was second only in power to the King of Egypt (Gen 41:55).

Daniel believed there was hope for the exiles. They were far away from their own land. But Daniel knew they were still God's people and they could have His blessing if they turned back to Him. They could have peace in their hearts, even in a heathen land, if they turned away from idols to worship the living God.

It is very important for us to understand this. When we have God's peace in our hearts, no one can take it away from us. As we stand firm in our faith and obey God, He is right there with us in our trials. Joseph proved this! And you can prove it, too!

GREAT NATIONS RULED THE NEAR EAST

Egypt, Assyria and Babylon all tried to rule over Israel. Daniel saw that great nations like Egypt and Babylon would rise and fall. He knew his people would suffer and die, but there would be an end to all their troubles.

All world empires fit into God's plan for the ages. They all serve His purposes and survive only because He allows it. God's plan is to set up His own everlasting Kingdom in the hearts of men and women. He accomplishes this as they believe in His Son, Jesus Christ (Eph 1:22). The Kingdom of God is here now. It has come into the hearts of men and women who worship Him (Rom 14:17). We do not yet see God's Kingdom in its full glory and power, but it is here in the Christian Church. It is moving and growing as God calls men and women to follow Him and fills them with His power. His Kingdom is made up of people who have fellowship with the heavenly King. You can do that right now, just where you are.

John wrote, "Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). God seeks this love relationship with each person.

In their spirits, Daniel and his three brave Jewish friends overcame the evil in the world around them and they lived to honor God. They did this because God gave them all the grace and strength they needed (2 Peter 1:3).

There is victory in Jesus Christ for all Christians! Jesus said, "I have overcome the world...for you" (John 16:33). Paul said, "Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 15:57).

TALK ABOUT

1. God wants men and women to have fellowship with Him. Are you doing this?
2. What does God give us (1 Cor 15:57)?

THE THEME OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Jesus said, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom..." (Matt 24:7). The nation that conquered Israel would soon be defeated by another nation. Amidst all the wars on earth, God would set up His everlasting Kingdom. This is a theme in the book of Daniel. Christ's Kingdom would not be like any kingdom on earth. It would be marked by God's peace and grace reigning in men's hearts. This great truth was shown to Daniel in symbol and picture, just as The Revelation of Jesus Christ was revealed to the apostle John on the Island of Patmos (Rev 1:1-2).

Another theme of this Book is 'God wins' (Dan 5:21). God always wins the victory over evil. If you are on God's side, you win, too. He is Sovereign. He does whatever He wishes (Psalm 135:6). God's power is seen in every part of the Book of Daniel.

In this Book, Babylon stands for man striving to be great without God. Man tries to save himself. He does great works without regard for other men and women. Man worships himself.

John the Apostle said that God would judge men who acted like Babylon. When Christ comes again, He will judge all who have left God out of their lives. They will be destroyed just as the great city of Babylon was destroyed (Jeremiah 51:54-64).

Now men dig in the sand among the ruins of Babylon. And some of the things they have found are in the great museums of the world. You can go to these museums and see them. This proves that the Christians' faith is based on history.

Read: Daniel 1:1-6 (Jeremiah 19:14-15)

DANIEL LEARNS THE CULTURE OF BABYLON

When Egypt gained power over Judah, Jehoiakim became king. Jehoiakim paid tribute money to Egypt. At that time Assyria ruled in the north. Nebuchadnezzar's armies came from Babylon and defeated the Assyrians in 612 BC. Then in 605 BC they defeated the Egyptians at Carchemish (Jeremiah 46:2).

Soon after this, the same armies marched south and attacked the city of Jerusalem. They were very cruel. Nations and men of every language feared King Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 5:19).

King Jehoiakim cared nothing for God. Because of this, the prophet Jeremiah told him of the judgments of God that would fall on Judah. Jeremiah wrote these on a scroll, but Jehoiakim burned them in the fire (Jeremiah 36:23).

Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah (2 Kings 24:1). The King was killed and his young son, Jehoiachin was made king (2 Kings 24:8).

The enemy surrounded the city for one and a half years. The king Jehoiachin tried to escape. At night, he and some of his men fled through a gate in the wall, but the Babylonians caught him.

Then the walls of the city were broken down and the invaders rushed in. They took all that the treasures from God's temple (2 Kings 25:4-7).

In 586 BC, Jerusalem was burned to the ground. The Lord's anger against Israel's sin was complete (2 Kings 24:19).

TALK ABOUT

1. What do you know about Daniel?
2. What is the chief message of this book?
3. How did Daniel get to Babylon?
4. Why did God allow the people of Judah to be taken captive?
5. Did anyone know this terrible thing would happen to Judah?
6. Who was the king of Babylon?

Read: Daniel 1:7-13

DANIEL'S RESOLVE

The King ordered his officer Ashpenaz to take the young men of Judah and test them. He found Daniel and his friends to be:

- a) Strong in mind and body (without defect).
- b) Good-looking.
- c) Filled with knowledge.
- d) Careful to have good manners (1:4).

Daniel and his three friends were chosen from among the other youths and given new names! Daniel's parents raised him to love the living God. They taught him God's law. And they gave their son a name that showed what they hoped he would be when he grew up. Daniel means 'God is my Judge' (Isaiah 46:1).

Now Daniel was a captive in the great city of Babylon, far away from his homeland. His captors wanted to take every thought of God out of his heart. With heathen names Daniel and his friends might not stand firm in their faith. That is what the world tries to do. It changes names to deceive us.

Daniel and his friends faced many tests of faith. The king offered them all the rich foods and wines from his own table and all the attractions of the king's court. Sex temptations and idol worship were all around them.

The four men from Judah could have lived easily and well, but Daniel said "No!" Right then he made a choice. He resolved not to defile himself with food and wine from the king's table. He knew the king's food and drink had been offered to idols (1 Cor 8:1,4,10; 10:19,28). And the food was rich with pork which the people of Israel were told not to eat. Daniel was not proud, but he asked that the four Jews be allowed to eat plain food (1:12). He took a great risk of making the king's officer angry. He risked losing his own head and putting his friends in danger, but he prayed and trusted God. He stood firm in his faith and God answered his prayers.

The king's official was kind toward Daniel and his friends and granted them their wish to eat bread and drink only water. This was all they ate and drank for three years!

TALK ABOUT

1. Do you fear when tests come in your life?
2. What did Daniel and his three friends eat and drink for three years?
3. What do we mean when we say, "God is Sovereign"?

Read: Daniel 1:14-21

PLAIN FOOD FOR TEN DAYS

The king's official agreed to let the young men from Judah have plain food for ten days as a test (Dan 1:11-14). God honored their faith and the test went well for them. At the end of the ten days they looked much better than the other young men at the king's court. They had studied hard, too! And God gave greater wisdom to Daniel, a special ability (gift) to understand visions and dreams of all kinds (Dan 1:17). Daniel did not get this 'gift' by studying!

On a special day, Daniel and his three friends went before king Nebuchadnezzar. The king talked to the four young Hebrew men and they proved themselves very wise. He found them ten times better than all the wise men in his kingdom (1:20). So he chose Daniel and his three friends to serve him at his court. They became the king's personal advisors.

Daniel began a new life in the king's court. It was a life of self-denial, like Moses had lived in Pharaoh's court in Egypt (Heb 11:25). In everything, Daniel waited on God. He chose not to live like the people around him. When he was very old, he was still in the king's court (Cyrus' third year, 1:21). This would mean Daniel was about 85 years old when he left the king's service.

God moves nations and He moves 'mountains' of difficulty for us when we ask Him (Matt 17:20). We make the choices that lets Him do the miracles! He shows us the way, but He leaves us free to keep in step with His plans (Gal 5:25).

TALK ABOUT

1. How were Daniel and his friends tested?
2. Why were their names changed?
3. How long did they train for the king's service?
4. After the training, what would they do?
5. Why did Daniel resolve not to eat the king's food?
6. What other temptations did Daniel face in Babylon?
7. Why did Daniel need to learn the language of Babylon?

Read: Daniel 2:1-16

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM

Daniel wrote this part of his record in Chaldee, the language of Babylon. The Book of Daniel is the only book in the Bible written in two different languages. Chaldee was the language of the king's court and Daniel learned it well. The histories of the nations were recorded in Chaldee.

Daniel used the Hebrew language, spoken in Israel, for special parts of the Book. These are the parts that speak about God's people and their future. They were captives, cut off from their own culture and history, but God was at work in Babylon. He is not limited to any time or place. He is in control of all the events of history. History is HIS-story!

Nebuchadnezzar was enjoying the second year of his reign. He reigned from 605 BC to 562 BC. All seemed at peace in his kingdom until the king had a dream. He was very upset by the dream and could not sleep! (Daniel 2:1-3).

God was speaking to proud Nebuchadnezzar. And God was using this wicked king to show the world what was to come. The image was a prophecy of the future.

The king sent for his wise men: magicians (Exodus 7:22) and enchanters who were like sorcerers or witchdoctors (Exodus 7:11). Sorcerers used magic skills (Isaiah 47:9).

Astrologers studied the stars (Jeremiah 10:2). Diviners worked with evil spirits (1 Sam 6:2). All these men studied the things of Satan.

Many play with Satan's power today. The Bible tells us to keep away from the things of Satan and evil spirits (Numbers 22:7; Leviticus 19:26).

WHO COULD TELL THE DREAM?

Had the king forgotten the dream? Or was he testing these wise men? We do not know for sure. When they could not tell the king his dream, he told his soldiers to kill all his wise men. The king meant every word of his order (Dan 5:19). Soon Arioch came to get Daniel. Daniel asked him, "Why did the king issue such a harsh order?" Arioch told Daniel about the king's dream and how angry the king was with his wise men because they could not tell him the dream or its meaning.

Daniel went to the king and asked for time. He needed:

- a) Time to wait on God in prayer.
- b) Time to speak with his three friends.
- c) Time for the king's anger to go away.

Daniel and his friends prayed all night "and made petition to the Lord." To petition means to ask God very earnestly (Psalm 70:1-2). Daniel knew in his heart that God would answer his prayers, but he did not know when or how.

While the men were on their knees, in the middle of the night, God showed Daniel the 'mystery' of the king's dream.

Some think God gave Daniel the same dream or vision that had come to the king. Whatever, Daniel gave praise and thanks to God “for His mercies endure forever” (1 Chron 16:34).

DANIEL REVEALS THE MEANING

Daniel was taken to the king to tell him the meaning of his dream. The image the king saw in his dream was a large statue like a man. Each part of the image represented a different kingdom that would rise to power in the earth. The value of the materials with which the image was built got less and less from the head down. Man’s kingdoms do not get better as time passes. Jesus said, “As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man” (Matt 24:37). He was speaking of what the world would be like when He comes again together His people to heaven.

The head of gold was Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar had built a great empire. And he was a proud and ruthless monarch. But the Babylonian Empire lasted only a short time.

The breast and arms were of silver. In the mountains of Persia there was a rising new power. This was the Medes and Persians. The semi-nomadic Medes joined the Persians and invaded the great valley of Mesopotamia.

After them came the Greek Empire under Alexander the Great, the belly and thighs of brass. In 336 BC Alexander, one of the most dramatic figures in history came to power in Greece. He was only twenty when he inherited his father’s kingdom. He defeated the Persians and spread the Greek Empire to the north, south, east and west.

The last in value was the iron mixed with clay. The legs and feet represented the Roman Empire. It grew out of a small Republic and became powerful in the first and second centuries AD (after Christ). The Romans ruled Judah at the time Jesus was born in Bethlehem (Luke 2:4-14).

Read: Daniel 2:44-49

THE GREAT STONE

The next part of the king’s dream showed all these kingdoms of man broken by a great stone that came crashing down out of the mountain onto the image.

At last the Romans took control of all these lands. But they failed to make one kingdom out of the wild tribes of England and Europe. The clay and iron would not stick together. The Roman Empire continued for a time, then broke into many pieces. Some see this as the ten toes of the image.

What did this mean? All these kingdoms had a role to play in God’s plan. The four kingdoms were of one spirit, they persecuted the children of God. God used these wicked powers to bring judgment on those who rejected Him (Jer 25:8-14; 27:5-7)

At that time, the kingdom of Christ was set up in the world. It came by the preaching of the everlasting gospel. The gospel-church is a kingdom “not of this world” (John 18:36) and yet it was set up in this world and will remain until Jesus comes again.

Christ’s kingdom is often called “the kingdom of heaven,” because it came from heaven, the mount Zion where God dwells (Matt 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; Psalm 132:13).

The stone was “cut out of the mountain without hands.” It came from God. It came only once and it came at the time of the Roman Empire. It struck the image on its feet.

The image was not only broken by the stone but beaten to pieces the size of chaff, which blew away in the wind. Jesus may have been thinking of this when He told the chief priests and Pharisees, “He who falls on this stone (which was Christ) will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed” (Matt 21:44)

The stone itself became a great mountain (or kingdom) which filled the whole earth. The Messiah’s kingdom will break to pieces and consume every other kingdom. As Daniel said, “It will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another...”

Christ will reign for ever and ever; not only till the end of time, but when time shall be no more, through all eternity.

THE DREAM CAME FROM GOD

Daniel told king Nebuchadnezzar, "The great God has shown the king what will take place in the future. The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy" (Dan 2:45). The king believed the words of Daniel. He fell on his face and worshipped the young Hebrew man. But Daniel must have turned his eyes toward heaven, for the king spoke of the God of gods and the Lord of kings, who revealed to Daniel this mystery (Dan 2:47).

IN GOD'S HANDS

Your future and mine is in God's hands. He alone knows the future. You can trust Him to show you the way you must go in this world. And, after this life is over, to take you safely to heaven.
Trust Him. Believe His words and be saved (John 5:24).

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