

17-18 Bible Study #8

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The Prophet Daniel

15 Daniel 605-535 BC Exile

- Almost all we know about Daniel comes from his book
- An Exilic prophet (along with Ezekiel and Jeremiah)
- Was a small boy (approximately 14 years old) when taken into exile during the 3rd year of King Jehoiakim (605 BC)
- Was exiled along with a cross section of prominent citizens, craftsmen, and other prominent young men of Jerusalem
- His books gives a real taste of the exile
- Prophesied over a long period of time (70 years) with various visions

Daniel (Cont)

- His name means “God is my judge,” and he belonged to the tribe of *Judah*
- He was of noble or perhaps royal descent
- He prophesied during and after the exile
- Half of the Book of Daniel was written in Hebrew and the other half in Aramaic, the language of the Babylonians, which was first used while the Israelites were in the exile

Daniel (Cont)

- **Daniel 1:1-2**

- As is the pattern for the prophetic books, the first two verses give the historical context
- 2nd King 24:1 also sets the placement of Daniel
- He was among the first group of Jews taken from Jerusalem to Babylon in what was not a very big exile *

Daniel

- **Daniel 1:3-21**

- Daniel was placed under the tutelage of the King Nebuchadnezzar's eunuch (*Ashpenaz*) along with three other youths from Judah
- All were given Babylonian names

Judean

- *Daniel*
- *Hananiah*
- *Mishael*
- *Azariah*

Babylonian

- *Belteshazzar*
- *Shadrach*
- *Meshach*
- *Abednego*

Daniel (Cont)

- He was selected to become one of the king's courtiers
- He received special training and distinguished himself through his God-given ability to **interpret dreams**, similar to what Joseph had done in Egypt
- He served under *King Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar,* and *Darius the Mede* from around 600 to 653 BC

Daniel (Cont)

- He and his three friends received a pagan education in history, structures, and the superiority of Babylonian culture
- The students in the royal academy were required to be without physical handicap, to be attractive in appearance, to show aptitude for every kind of learning, to be well-informed, quick to understand and qualified to serve in the king's palace

Daniel (Cont)

- They were expected to become Babylonian princes, well-read in Babylonian language and literature, including Aramaic, the official language of the empire
- The curriculum lasted three years
- The graduates were to develop into competent and cultured statesmen able to perpetuate the political, social, judicial, and economic structures of the kingdom

Daniel (Cont)

- Daniel and his companions refused to eat the meat or drink wine from the king's table because these items had been offered to idols
- This is why they asked to be fed only vegetables
- For a Jew to eat food that had been offered in sacrifice was to participate in the sacrifice
- This issue will come up big in **Acts 15**, and in the Pauline literature concerning the early church

Daniel (Cont)

- St. Paul spoke about this problem since most meat was sold after it had been offered to the local deity
- The gentiles coming into the church were used to eating food that had been offered to idols
- Suddenly, they were being told (by their Jewish brethren) that they could no longer participate in these sacrifices
- So we can see from this section that Daniel and his companions passed this test *

Daniel (Cont)

- **Daniel 2:1-30**

- King *Nebuchadnezzar* had a troubling dream
- He refused to discuss what it was about and demanded that his wise men tell him his dream and its meaning
- They told him that this was impossible, so he commanded that they be executed
- Daniel stepped forward and told the king that the God in heavens, who knows everything, enabled him to interpret the king's dream *

Daniel

Daniel 2:31-35

Daniel understood that the king's dream was about a statue reflecting the coming empires

Statue

Gold

Silver

Bronze

Iron

Empire

Babylon

Medo-Persian

Greek

Rome

This statue will be destroyed by a small rock "uncut by human hands"

The dream also covers the time from Daniel to Christ

Daniel (Cont)

- Assyrian Empire 853-605
- Babylonian Empire 605-539
- Medo-Persian Empire 539-331
- Greek Empire 331-63
- Roman Empire 63 BC – 330 AD

Daniel

- The Fifth empire will arise from a small “stone not made by human hands” which will become the great “kingdom of God” (which is the Church)
- A “**stone**” for us today is a rock you find in your garden
- For the Jew of that day a stone was considered to be part of major building material
- They quarried stone for building purposes
- A stone “not cut by human hands” was a stone that did not come from a human quarry

Daniel

- This **stone** hit the statue on its clay and iron foot, causing it to completely collapse and eventually be blown away in the wind like chaff on the threshing floor
- There will be nothing left but this little rock, which will then grow into a massive mountain that will fill the whole earth *

Daniel (Cont)

- **Daniel 2:36-45**

- King *Nebuchadnezzar* said to Daniel, “Wow, that it pretty good, Daniel!”
- He then promised Daniel riches
- Daniel explained the dream by pointing out that it was about a succession of four kingdoms leading to the fifth and final kingdom that will be the Kingdom of God which will start from the little **stone not cut by human hands** *

Daniel (Cont)

- **Daniel 3:1-3**

- King *Nebuchadnezzar* then makes a golden image for all the people to worship
- Most likely he was trying to secure his kingdom among his people
- This massive image was made of pure gold based on what he had seen in his dream
- It meant that there would not be any division within his kingdom but also that there would not be any succession *

Daniel (Cont)

- **Daniel 3: 4-30**

- Here we find the story of Daniel's three friends who were thrown into the fiery furnace for failing to worship King Nebuchadnezzar
- While in the furnace they take up a song presented in the RSV in italics.
 - The italics indicate that this song was included in the Greek Septuagint but not in the Hebrew version of Daniel
 - When the song was completed the king looked into the furnace and saw the three Hebrews as well as a fourth who looked like a "son of the gods"

Daniel (Cont)

- This person had an angelic appearance
- So the king called the three out of the furnace and realized that the God of the Jews, the God of Israel had saved them
- It appears that for at least a short period of time the king became a worshiper of the God of Israel
- But what is most important is what will follow in Daniel 7 *

Daniel

- ***Daniel 3:1-68***

- As mentioned, this section is found only in the Greek Septuagint
- The liturgy of the hours includes *Daniel 1: 57 -68* as the canticle of morning prayer on Sunday in week 1 *