

October 27

Scriptures: Read Daniel 1 & 2

Key Verse: “But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself...”
(Daniel 1:8)

Overview

Daniel was among the first group of exiles deported to Babylon during the reign of Josiah’s eldest son Jehoiakim (2 Chron. 36:5-7). The second group of exiles (including Ezekiel) were deported during the reign of Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24:8-16), and the third group, the largest one, was taken after Babylon had destroyed Jerusalem (Jer. 25:1-14). From the onset of the book of Daniel, we are made aware that it is the Lord Himself who directs the affairs of history (1:2).

It was Nebuchadnezzar’s policy to bring into his court the most intelligent and well bred young men from all his vassal countries. He would train them to serve as advisors in his government, and thus he would surround himself with the wisest and most knowledgeable of men. This contributed to the growth, strength, and greatness of Babylon, the most powerful and beautiful nation that ever existed. The Lord providentially had Daniel and his three companions, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, to be among the selective group of young men deported to Babylon. They were from either royal or noble families. As boys they would have been schooled during the time of Josiah’s spiritual reformation, which no doubt gave them the foundational basis for their strong faith. Although all of the four young men were given Babylonian names related to the various Babylonian deities (e.g. 4:8), it did not change their consecration to the only true God of heaven. Their Hebrew names have significant meanings: Daniel means “God is my judge”; Shadrach’s Hebrew name, “Hananiah”, means “Mercy of Yahweh”; Meshach’s Hebrew name, “Mishael”, means “Who is like God?”; Abed-Nego’s Hebrew name, “Azariah”, means “Yahweh helps”.

Even in the far heathen land, with many temptations all around them, they did not forget God. They remained pure and true to their convictions, and thus they brought honour to God (cf. Prov. 22:6). Daniel and his friends made a strong resolve not to defile themselves by eating the king’s food, which had likely been dedicated to the Babylonian gods (cf. Acts 15:20) and had not been prepared in the ways specified in the law of God (Lev. 11). During their training, they also wisely abstained from wine (Prov. 23:31-32). Because of their sanctified life, God was pleased to use them. He honoured them, gave them favour with those over them (1:9,19-20; cf. Prov. 21:1), endowed them with special wisdom, and gave them not only spiritual strength but also physical strength, which was evident when it came time to be tested. They looked healthier and more robust than the other young men who had eaten the king’s rich food (1:15). It is no wonder they were outstanding among all the young men and were chosen by Nebuchadnezzar to be elevated in position (1:17-21).

It was in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign as the sole ruler over Babylon that he had his disturbing dream. Nebuchadnezzar demanded his wise men to tell him what he had dreamed, so he would be sure of the right interpretation. Since God had given Nebuchadnezzar the dream, the interpretation would also come only from Him; therefore, to the pagan wise men, the dream

and the interpretation remained a secret that they could in no way discover. Daniel, however, knew the Source personally and had the confidence that He would reveal it to him. He also knew how to go to the Source, as did his three trusted friends in whom Daniel confided and with whom he prayed. In his prayer of thanksgiving after receiving the interpretation, Daniel humbly acknowledged that all wisdom, power, and knowledge are the Lord's, who is sovereign over the earth and the affairs of men. With full confidence, Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar his dream, and its interpretation. Daniel made it clear that the gold head represented King Nebuchadnezzar and his empire which God had given him (2:37-38). The silver, an inferior metal, signified that an inferior kingdom, that of the Medo-Persian Empire, would succeed him (5:31). This actually happened in about 538 B.C., about sixty-five years later. The third section of the image, made of Bronze, represented a kingdom that would reign over the whole earth. This was historically fulfilled by Alexander the Great of Greece, who conquered the Persians while sweeping through Asia Minor, beginning in 334 B.C. The fourth kingdom, the Roman Empire, is represented by the iron legs, which indicated that it would be the strongest. In its final stage, represented by the feet of iron mixed with clay, this kingdom would become disunified, weakened, and easily shattered. The Messianic Kingdom of the stone, however, would bring the destruction of all the previous kingdoms. Its supernatural origin is represented by the stone that was "cut out of the mountain [Zion] without hands" (2:45). In Christ's first advent, this physical overthrow of the earthly kingdoms did not happen (cf. Matt. 19:28; Acts 1:6-7), nor has it happened thus far in the Church age (2 Thess. 2). But Scripture tells us it will be fulfilled at His second advent, when Jesus Christ comes in power, destroys the earthly kingdoms, and establishes His Kingdom of which there will be no end (cf. Isa. 9:7; Matt. 13:37-43; Rev. 19:15, 21; 20:4-6).

Prayer

Lord Jesus, You are the King of kings and Lord of lords. We look to the day when You will return with power to establish Your everlasting Kingdom.