

26 Daniel the Prophet

This lesson looks at a famous prophet in the Old Testament part of the Bible. His name was Daniel.

Daniel was born in the land of Judah about 630 BC. Judah was part of the land of Israel. Daniel may have been part of the royal family of Judah.

The capture of the Jews

The people of Judah had disobeyed God, and God decided that His people (the Jews) should be thrown out of the land and move to a foreign land for 70 years.

In 605 BC, the King of Babylon, called Nebuchadnezzar, came to Judah and attacked it. Many Jews were killed, but the King of Babylon decided to take some young men from the royal family back to his city, Babylon. These young men would learn about Babylon: its language, its literature and its culture. Daniel 1:3-4.

So Daniel and three of his friends came to Babylon. It must have been hard to move from Judah to Babylon. But the King was kind to the four young men, and after their training, the King was very pleased with how clever and wise Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah were. Read what the King said about them in Daniel 1:19-20.

King Nebuchadnezzar's dream

In those times, God spoke to people in dreams. People thought that dreams were important: if you had a bad dream, then it meant that something bad would happen. King Nebuchadnezzar had a strange dream. In his dream, the King saw a great statue. It was made of several metals. While the King watched, a small stone came flying at the statue and hit it on its feet. The stone broke up the statue. All the metals became a fine powder that was blown away by the wind. The stone began to grow until it filled everything.

The King called together all the wise men and the thinkers in his kingdom to ask them about the dream. We are not certain why, but the King did not tell these men what the dream was. Perhaps he had forgotten the dream. Perhaps he wanted to see if his wise men were really "wise". Daniel 2:5-6

The wise men were really worried. They could not believe what they had heard! No one had ever asked them something like this! Not only did they have to tell the King what the dream meant, but also they had to read his mind to find out what the dream was! They did not know what to do. Daniel 2:10-11.

The King was very angry. He ordered that all the wise men of Babylon should be killed. Daniel and his three friends were also to be killed. Daniel went to the King and asked for some more time to answer. Daniel trusted that God would give him the answer (Daniel 2:17-19). That day, Daniel and his friends prayed to God. While Daniel was asleep that night, God told the dream and its meaning to Daniel.

The dream was about the future of the world. It showed the kingdoms that would rule over the world from that time. Each of the metals in the statue pointed to a world power. The stone at the end that destroys the statue is Jesus Christ. This will be when Jesus returns from heaven to set up the Kingdom of God.

This is one of the most important prophecies in the Bible. Click here to read more about this prophecy.

Life as the King's advisor

After this, Daniel became the King's most trusted advisor (Daniel 2:48). In fact, Daniel was the advisor to several kings.

Many years later, Daniel was the chief advisor to King Darius. Darius ruled over the peoples called the Medes and the Persians. Daniel always prayed to his God three times every day (Daniel 6:10). The men who worked with him were jealous that Daniel was so good. They tried to find something he did wrong so that they could tell the King. But they

found nothing (Daniel 6:4-5). Daniel was trustworthy and honest in all the things he did. The only thing they could find was that he prayed three times a day to his God.

The lion's den

These evil men went to the King and made him sign a new law. This law said that a person was not permitted to pray to any god or any man for the next 30 days except to the King himself. If anyone broke the law, that person would be thrown into a den of lions. What a strange law! But King Darius thought it was a good idea. He signed the law without thinking. Straightaway, the men told the King about Daniel. Daniel had broken the law by praying to God instead of the King.

King Darius was very upset at what he had done to his good friend Daniel (Daniel 6:14).

But there was nothing that could be done. Daniel would have to be thrown to the lions. So Daniel was thrown in, but the King knew about Daniel's God, and hoped that his God would save his good friend (Daniel 6:16).

King Darius could not sleep that night. Early the next morning, he came to the den to see if Daniel was alive. Daniel was alive! God had sent a messenger to close the mouths of the lions, so that they did not touch Daniel. (Daniel 6: 21-23).

Conclusion

If you have time, you may like to read about some of the other things that happened to Daniel and his friends:

Chapter 3: The Golden Image and the Blazing Furnace

Chapter 4: King Nebuchanezzar's Second Dream

Chapter 5: The Writing on the Wall

The Book of Daniel has some great events. The last part of the Book has many prophecies about the future.

What can we say about Daniel the prophet? He was taken from his home and taken to live in a strange land. Yet he remembered who he was, and that he had to follow the God of his fathers. This strange land had all kinds of statues and idols to worship. But Daniel remained true to his God. Also, we find that Daniel was honest and true in everything he did. This is what God wants us to be.



Then Daniel said to the king,... "My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me" Daniel 6:21-22
