

Daniel's Message

Judah was now in captivity. Their sins had finally led them to this point. At the beginning of the captivity, around 605 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem and took some young men who were to be trained to serve in the Babylonian king's court (Dan. 1) Among these youths were Daniel and three others. The king had choice food that he wanted these youths to eat, "but Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself" (1:8).

God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the eyes of the commander, and Daniel convinced him to let them eat vegetables and drink water for ten days. At the end of that time, they were in better shape than those who ate the king's food. Daniel, with his friends (Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah) showed more wisdom than all others, and they entered the king's personal service.

What really set Daniel apart, in addition to his unwavering faithfulness, was his God-given ability to interpret dreams. Nebuchadnezzar had a troublesome dream that his own wise men could not interpret, so Daniel was called in. Daniel 2 records Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a large statue made of different elements.



Daniel was able to interpret the dream and show that the different parts of the statue stood for differing kingdoms. Then, in the dream, the stone that struck and destroyed the statue stood for God's

kingdom:

"In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever" (Dan. 2:44).

Daniel was promoted, and he played a prominent role in the court. His friends also made a tremendous impact on the king because of their faithfulness (ch. 3). What all of this pointed to was God's power and rule. Chapter 4 describes more visions of Nebuchadnezzar that were interpreted by Daniel. These visions meant that Nebuchadnezzar would fall from pride and power. He would return, but he would finally recognize "that it is Heaven that rules" (4:26).

The dreams were fulfilled, and when Nebuchadnezzar came to his senses, he recognized God's authority. This leads to a primary theme of Daniel: God rules in the kingdoms of men. Nebuchadnezzar saw this and said:

"blessed the Most High and praised and

honored Him who lives forever;
 For His dominion is an everlasting
 dominion,
 And His kingdom endures from generation
 to generation.
 All the inhabitants of the earth are
 accounted as nothing,
 But He does according to His will in the
 host of heaven
 And among the inhabitants of earth;
 And no one can ward off His hand
 Or say to Him, "What have You done?"
 (4:34-35)

"Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and
 honor the King of heaven, for all His works
 are true and His ways just, and He is able
 to humble those who walk in pride" (vs.
 37).

This theme stretches across the book of
 Daniel. Daniel himself was the living
 testimony of the truth that God was in
 control. This is seen in the changing over
 of kingdoms (ch. 5), Daniel's survival in the
 lion's den (ch. 6), and the subsequent
 visions that demonstrate God's sovereign
 power over the nations.

From chapters 7 to the end, Daniel
 contains a great deal of symbolism, and it
 was very alarming to Daniel. Among these,
 Daniel saw the vision of the Son of Man
 figure:

"And He came up to the Ancient of Days
 And was presented before Him.
 And to Him was given dominion,
 Glory and a kingdom,
 That all the peoples, nations and men of
 every language
 Might serve Him.
 His dominion is an everlasting dominion
 Which will not pass away;

And His kingdom is one
 Which will not be destroyed." (7:13-14)

The messianic implications are clear.
 Jesus, the Son of Man and Son of God,
 would rule over His kingdom. The various
 visions that included beasts, rams, and
 goats would represent various nations and
 rulers of the earth, including those among
 the Persians, Greeks, and Romans. The
 unfolding of what would happen through
 the nations is remarkably detailed and
 accurate.

Daniel also prays for the nation.
 Recognizing the sins of the people that
 brought them into captivity, Daniel prayed
 for forgiveness and healing. "O Lord, hear!
 O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take
 action! For Your own sake, O my God, do
 not delay, because Your city and Your
 people are called by Your name" (9:19).
 Daniel's prayer is answered by the angel
 Gabriel.

At the end, a great statement of
 resurrection is found: "Many of those who
 sleep in the dust of the ground will awake,
 these to everlasting life, but the others to
 disgrace and everlasting contempt" (12:2;
 cf. John 5:28-29). There is far more in the
 book of Daniel than can be easily
 summarized, but let's remember for now
 that all of it supports the point that God
 rules in the kingdoms of men, and His
 kingdom established through the Messiah
 would crush all others.

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