

Introduction

This week we begin a new series of study from the book of Daniel. The historical setting for this book is essentially the same as Ezekiel, during the Babylonian conquest of Judah. Daniel was among the initial captives taken to Babylon in 605 BC, whereas Ezekiel was taken during the second wave of invasion in 597 BC. Daniel served the Babylonian and Persian governments for about 70 years during the exile. Our lesson for this week is titled “Integrity Established” as we consider the temptation to compromise their faith and integrity that four young Hebrew boys, including Daniel, faced as captives in a foreign land.

Themes

God is in Control: We’d do well to remember this Old Testament book is not about Daniel, it is about God. No matter how bad times may seem, God is still sovereign over the whole world and in control of human history. Our future is secure in Christ, who will return to replace the kingdoms of this world with His own glorious one.

The Folly of Human Pride: The pride and arrogance of foreign leaders stands in stark contrast to the faith and humility of Daniel and his friends. Ultimately God acts or will act to turn this pride into shame and disgrace, culminating when the Ancient of Days and Son of Man shall appear (Daniel 7).

Purpose in Life: Another worthy theme to note is how God selects and prepares folks to serve Him. He gave Daniel wisdom, the ability to interpret dreams, purpose and resolve; just what was needed when it was needed for His purposes. God cares for his people and deals patiently with them.

Perseverance: The early chapters in particular contain stories of Daniel and his friends standing strong for their faith even though they were far from home and facing pressure and persecution in an environment that was hostile to the things of God. Persistence in prayer helped them remain strong and uncompromising.

God’s Faithfulness: God was faithful to Daniel. Over and over, He delivered Daniel and his friends from their enemies, reinforcing for us how we can trust God in the midst of trials and know it is possible to live a life of faith and victory with God’s help.

Verses Leading Up to This Week’s Focal Passage (Daniel 1:1-7)

¹*In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it.* ²*And the Lord gave (delivered) Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god.* ³*And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king’s seed (royal family), and of the princes;* ⁴*Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skillful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge,*

and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand (serve) in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. ⁵And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king. ⁶Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: ⁷Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Beltshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego.

Daniel was among the wise and talented young men of Judah whom the Babylonians captured and brought back with them to train in preparation for service in their rapidly growing empire. They were given new names to further assimilate them into Babylonian culture. Daniel, which in Hebrew means “God is my judge” was changed to Beltshazzar, meaning “he whom Bel (the Babylonian god) favors.” This was but one attempt by the king to change the religious loyalty of these young men from Judah’s God to Babylon’s god(s).

Conclusion

The book of Daniel calls God’s people to faithfulness and obedience even during times of hardship. Daniel and his friends were inspiring examples for us of how to live godly lives in a sinful world. May God help us to be of good courage and remain faithful under the pressures of sin and temptations that surround us.

Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD.

Psalm 31:24

Please prayerfully consider meeting with us this week for 10:00 am Sunday School as we study God’s word together from Daniel 1:8-21.

Last week’s Sunday School attendance = xx (snow)

