

## **NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM**

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*Lessons: Daniel 1 and 2*

Jeremiah had been bound in prison, and treated with every cruelty by the princes of his people, because he had warned them against the dangers that threatened from the King of Babylon. They would have slain him in the deep dungeon, if it had not been for the kindness of the Ethiopian servant. Yet when the city was taken, and Nebuchadnezzar burned it to the ground, slew all those wicked princes, and took King Zedekiah with him, blind and in chains, to Babylon, Jeremiah still remained with that poor remnant of his people who were left to suffer and to struggle against hunger and want. This he did although the King of Babylon set him free, and offered to give him a high place, rich garments and honors, if he would return with him freely to Babylon. He loved his people. He had been appointed by the Lord to help them. No matter how cruelly they treated him, still he loved them; he would not leave them. He gave up the life of ease and comfort, and respect, which might have been his in Babylon, to share with them all their hardships, and to continue to give them the counsel of the Lord.

But his own people were never kind to him. They asked him whether or not the Lord wanted them to flee into Egypt. The Lord sent His Word through the Prophet that they should not go, but should remain quietly in their own land, and peaceably serve the King of Babylon. This they did not want to do. And finally, after promising to obey the Lord's Word, they rose up in rebellion and fled, many of them into Egypt. And so angry were they that Jeremiah had not told them they could not do this, that they took him and carried him bound as a prisoner, down into Egypt, where he died an unwilling exile from the land he had tried so hard to save, and where, before long, they all miserably perished, as the Lord had foretold.

And still the Lord did not forsake His people, so great is His kindness and His mercy. He raised up another Prophet, to be with them in the distant land of exile to which they had been carried. And so we must leave the Land of Canaan, its cities in ruins, its people poor and hopeless, and follow the sad march of the prisoners across the desert, to spend their life in a strange land, in bondage, and slavery.

Among the prisoners taken to Babylon were four young men, named Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Nebuchadnezzar, wishing to train them in his court so that they might give him advice as to the government of their own people, ordered that they be given special teaching in the language of the

Babylonians, and in the wisdom of her great men. In order that they might no longer worship their own God, but might belong to the idols of Babylon, he changed their names to Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshak, and Abednego, all of which were names taken from the gods of Babylon. The king commanded that they be well fed, and given every comfort.

Still they remained true to the Lord. They refused to worship other gods. And because the meat they were required to eat was forbidden by their own religion, they asked that they be given grain, of pulse, instead. This the steward did not want to do, fearing that they would not grow fat and well, and that he would be blamed. But he agreed to try their own food for a time, and they grew more healthy than the others, because the Lord was with them. And the Lord also gave especially to Daniel, wisdom, and called him to be a prophet.

One night Nebuchadnezzar had a dream which troubled him greatly. And when he awoke he could not remember what he had dreamed, but he was tormented with the desire to know what it signified. In ancient times dreams were very important. Often the Lord came and spoke to men in their dreams, telling them what they ought to do. And there were wise men whose office it was to interpret these dreams, just as now we interpret the Word of the Lord.

So Nebuchadnezzar sent for all his wise men, and demanded of them not only that they interpret his dream, but tell him what it was he had dreamt. They objected saying that such a thing was impossible, and that it had never been asked of any wise man from the beginning of the world. But the king was very angry, and said that if they did not tell him his dream and its meaning within three days, he would have them all put to death.

They could not do this, and when the three days were up he sent out his soldiers to arrest them, and cast them into prison, that they might be put to death. And they came to the house of Daniel. Daniel told them if the king would give him time he would tell him his dream. For he knew that the Lord was able to reveal such secrets. And Nebuchadnezzar ordered that he be given time to consult his God, for he was most anxious to learn the dream. So Daniel went into his house, and closed the doors, and prayed to the Lord to help him. And the Lord came to him in his sleep, and showed him the dream which the king had seen.

So he came before the king and told him his dream, saying at the same time that there was only one God in Heaven and on earth who could make it known. He told him the dream, and Nebuchadnezzar remembered it, and knew that it was the truth. It was the vision of a great image whose head was of gold, his breast of silver, his belly and thighs of brass, and his legs of iron, while his feet were of iron mixed with miry clay. And there then came a great stone, and struck the image on the feet, until it fell. And Daniel told him, from the Lord, what this dream meant.

Then did Nebuchadnezzar place a gold chain about his neck, and gave him rich robes, and made him a very great man in the kingdom. And he went on bringing the Word of the Lord to his people.

So you see how the Lord took care of His people, even in exile. You see how the Lord knows all things, even what takes place when we are asleep. We cannot hide anything from Him. If we would keep His Commandments, then must we keep them not only before men, but in our hearts, where no one sees, except the Lord. For if we do what is right only before others and not before the Lord, we cannot come into heaven.