

Sent: Wednesday, 24 February 2016 1448
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Daniel 1

Last nite we began our MOB study on the book of Daniel. The opening chapter introduces the theme, and sets the tone, for the entire book by declaring that "God gave Jehoiakim, king of Judah, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar..." and, later, that "God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the (Babylonian) officials..." and, later, that "God gave the four youths" (Daniel and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) "knowledge and intelligence in every branch of literature and wisdom..." As Wiersbe writes, it is God who "rules and overrules" in the affairs of both nations and individuals! The Psalmist said it best: "The Lord has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all!" (Psa. 103:19) Great to know, and trust in Him--and, particularly, given the chaotic world in which we live today!

God had warned the rulers of Israel (and Judah) over and over again through the decades of time that their idolatry, immorality, and injustice would lead to the nation's ruin! In fact, a century before the fall of Jerusalem, Isaiah, the prophet, said this: "Hear the word of the Lord of hosts! Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house and all that your fathers have laid up in store to this day will be carried to Babylon; nothing will be left, says the Lord. And some of your sons who will issue from you, whom you will beget, will be taken away, and they will become officials in the palace of the king of Babylon! (Isa. 39:5-7) Wow!

But God would still keep His covenant, and fulfill His promises, with Israel! In fact, both Isaiah and Jeremiah specifically prophesied that the same God who raised up the Babylonians to defeat Judah would later raise up the Medes and Persians to conquer Babylon--and to allow the Jews to return to their land and rebuild the temple! (Isa.13:17-17 and Jeremiah 25:12)

David Jeremiah, in his new book "Agents of Babylon," notes that the Bible actually might be viewed as a kind of "tale of two cities"--Jerusalem and Babylon. Babylon began as Babel, a city established by Nimrod in his attempt to organize the first worldwide government in opposition to God (Gen. 11:1-9). Jerusalem, on the other hand, is the historic capital city of God's chosen nation, Israel--and, according to him, the future capital of His eternal Kingdom. While Babylon was eventually destroyed by the Medes and Persians, after having conquered Jerusalem and taking the exiled Jews captive, Jeremiah notes that "the spirit of Babylon" continues to live on in our world!

Well, it's in this context that Daniel and the "three Hebrew children"--the "best and the brightest"--were carried off to Babylon, in the year 605 BC, to be trained as officers in Nebuchadnezzar's palace! Unbeknown to him was the fact that God had placed them there to accomplish His purpose! Daniel himself would spend the next 70 years in the "Babylonian captivity" as an exile in the midst of a pagan culture, rising through adversity and trials to great position and prominence in the courts of Nebuchadnezzar, Balshazzar, and Cyrus/Darius. Despite efforts of Nebuchadnezzar and others to "brainwash" him to think and live like a Babylonian, he maintained his trust and faithfulness to God! We saw already exhibited, in his first test, where he "purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself" by indulging in food and drinks devoted to idols. And he did this in a way that eventually found acceptance by those in authority over him--providing a great example for all believers in finding ways not to compromise with evil while "submitting," giving honor, and gaining favor and influence over those placed (by God!) in authority over us (1 Peter 2:13-15).

There's so much more to come as we study the life of Daniel, and see the sovereignty of God at work in these historical times--and come to realize again, the importance and implications of the prophecies yet to be fulfilled in the "last days"!

Daniel provides for us a shining example of how to trust God--as Wiersbe writes--in times of both adversity and prosperity! Is it possible, he asks, "to be steady, stable, and resolute" during both times of our lives? The answer is "yes," he says--and it's so impressively demonstrated by the life of Daniel!

We sang a song last nite--not all that well, musically speaking, perhaps--to kick off our study! The chorus goes like this! And I hope the words, and melody, will stick with you, as it has for me--and inspire and challenge all of us as we plunge forward into this intriguing and timely study:

"Dare to be a Daniel!
Dare to stand alone!
Dare to have a purpose firm,
And dare to make it known!"

Have a great week, men!

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