

In our last lesson, we talked about the Babylonian captivity of Jerusalem. King Nebuchadnezzar went into Jerusalem three times. Each time the Babylonians took what they wanted. Each time they took people captive to Babylon. Then they destroyed the city of Jerusalem.

The first time King Nebuchadnezzar went into Jerusalem, a young man named Daniel was captured. Ashpenaz was the chief of the stewards of Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar told him to bring back young men who could be trained to serve in his palace. They were to choose young men who were wise and very quick to understand. The king wanted young men who could easily be taught the language. Daniel was one of those young men.

Daniel was a handsome young man with a lot of knowledge. Daniel learned very quickly. (Daniel 1:4) There were three more young men who were captured and taken to Babylon at the same time as Daniel. Their names were Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego. All four of these young men were chosen because the officers thought they would be easy to teach their language and learn to serve in the palace of the king. These young men were about the age of 12 to 15 years of age.

King Nebuchadnezzar commanded Ashpenaz to train these young Hebrew men in the knowledge and language of the Chaldeans. He was told to train them for three years. The young men were told to eat a portion of the same food the king ate. They were to drink the same wine as the king. The king believed that his special food and drink would make his servants much stronger and wiser than the other people. After three years of training, the young men would stand before the king ready to serve. (Daniel 1:5)

Daniel wanted to be faithful to God. According to Hebrew law, Daniel was not allowed to eat the food the king told them to eat. Daniel did not want to make the king angry, but he wanted to stay faithful to God and to the Hebrew law. (Dan. 1:8) He did not want to eat the king's food and drink the wine.

Daniel asked Ashpenaz for permission not to eat the king's food. Ashpenaz was afraid the king would put him to death if he did not follow his orders. Daniel went to the steward Ashpenaz had put over them. He asked the steward if they could have only vegetables and water as a test for ten days. (Dan. 1:12) The steward agreed to let them do it. After ten days, Daniel and his friends appeared to be healthier than the young men who were eating the king's food. (Dan. 1:15) So, they were allowed to continue to eat the vegetables and water.

God gave Daniel, Shadrach, Mechach, and Abed-Nego great wisdom and knowledge. Daniel was able to interpret dreams and visions. At the end of the three years, King Nebuchadnezzar talked with these four men. They had ten times more knowledge and wisdom than all of the magicians and astrologers that served Nebuchadnezzar. (Dan. 1:20)

Nebuchadnezzar had dreams that worried him. He wanted the magicians and astrologers to tell him the meaning of the dreams. (Dan. 2:1-2) No one could tell him. The king was angry because no one could tell him what he wanted to know. Nebuchadnezzar told the men he would kill them if they did not interpret his dream. (Dan. 2:5) The magicians did not know the meaning of the dream. They were not able to help the king. (Dan. 2:9) The king's men did not really have powers.

Daniel went to the king and told him he could interpret the dream if the king would give him some time. (Dan. 2:16) Daniel prayed to God about it. God helped Daniel to know about the dream and how to interpret it. (Dan. 2:19)

Daniel went to King Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel told the king what the dream was and the meaning of it. (Dan. 2:28) King Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed of a statue. The statue had a head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of clay mixed with iron. A small stone hit the image and made it shatter to dust. The small stone grew until it was a huge mountain all over the earth. (Dan. 2:28-36)

Daniel told the king the meaning of his dream. The four parts of the statue were four great kingdoms. Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold. Daniel told him that the kingdom following him would not be as strong. That would be the kingdom represented by the silver. The bronze would be another kingdom. The iron and clay would be the fourth kingdom. Daniel told the king that the kingdom of God would be established in the days of the fourth kingdom. In his dream, the little stone shattered the kingdoms and then grew to cover the earth. This would be the kingdom of God. It would be greater than all the other kingdoms. The kingdom of God would never be destroyed. (Dan. 2:37-45)

King Nebuchadnezzar was very happy that Daniel had told him the meaning of his dream. (Dan. 2:46) Nebuchadnezzar told Daniel that his God was really the God of gods and the Lord of kings. (Dan. 2:47) Nebuchadnezzar made Daniel one of the chief rulers in Babylon. (Dan. 2:48) Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego were also given important positions.