

Daniel – Faithfulness in a time of exile!

Background:- Daniel, along with other youths of the nobility of Jerusalem was taken into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar in the year 605 B.C. The young men were probably no older than their early teens – Daniel lived in Babylonia for at least 67 years, 605 B.C. to 538 B.C. : Daniel 1 v. 1 – 4 and 9 v. 2.

These children (13 or 14 years old?) had lost everything: their homes, parents and families, their place of worship (the temple) and even their identities, their names were changed from those of God fearing Jews to ones celebrating the Babylonian deities. They may even have lost their “manhood” and become eunuchs. See Isaiah 39, v. 5 – 8.

These youngsters began their life in captivity by resolving to remain ceremonially clean and not eating or drinking things that most likely had been ceremonially slaughtered in rites to Babylonian gods.

(Daniel 1 v. 8 – 16). They remained faithful to the Lord their God and, especially Daniel, were used by God to witness to the pagan king and people of Babylon.

The graphic stories of the book of Daniel are familiar to those of us who went to Sunday School!

The Great Image of chapter 2, the Fiery Furnace and the three young men of chapter 3, the writing of Mene, Mene, Tekel and Parsin on the wall in chapter 5, and Daniel in the Den of Lions in chapter 6. However I don’t remember any real emphasis on the deep faith and prayer life of Daniel, the faithful man of God.

Daniel’s Prayers:- Daniel was faithful in prayer, even though he was in exile. “he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open towards Jerusalem; and he got down on his knees and prayed and gave thanks to God, as he had done previously.” (Daniel 6 v. 10). There are two of his prayers in the book.

1) Read Daniel 2, v. 1 – 30. Especially verses 20 – 23.

Some thoughts! Daniel and his friends were determined not to get sucked into the pagan lifestyle around them in Babylon. No giving in to “modern culture” here! They were living their lives as people who believed in and worshipped the one true God. They were different, and seen to be different!

Because of his faith Daniel was able to send a message to the king that he would show him the interpretation, even before he, Daniel, knew it himself!

Daniel did not go it alone! He shared the problem to his friends and together they sought “the mercy of the God of heaven concerning this mystery,” (Daniel 2 v. 17 – 18).

Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night, and then we have his prayer of thanksgiving (verses 20 – 23).

Lessons learnt – a life of continued faithfulness even through hardship and opposition. A need to share our prayer request with other faithful believers. And don’t forget to say “thank you” to God our Father!

2) Read Daniel 9 v. 1-23. (don’t get caught up in the ‘interpretation’ of the vision it can get complicated!)

Lessons learnt from Daniel and his faithfulness.

He read and contemplated on ‘scripture’. It was the words of the prophet Jeremiah (chapter 25 v. 11 -12) which gave Daniel the impulse to intercede for his people.

Notice:- He was *persistent*, in 68 years of waiting he still trusted the Lord God for an answer.

He had *determination* verse 3.

He showed *humility*, he associated himself with the sins of his people. Verses 5 and following.

He made *confession*, verses 4 – 5. Notice verses 9-10 which are used in the introduction to Morning Prayer and Evensong in the Book of Common Prayer (1662 etc).

He showed *submission*, verses 14 – 15.

He then turned to *petition*, verse 16 onwards.

Because he was faithful in his life and in his praying he was “greatly beloved” of God. The answer to his prayer may have been “Yes! But not yet!” He did get an answer. Maybe lessons here for those of us on the Church Prayer Chain!