

NOTES AND QUESTION FOR INDUCTIVE STUDY OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL

PART ONE - OVERCOMING THE BARRIER

The book of Daniel is a remarkable mixture. The first half tells a series of exciting, easy to understand stories about the witness of Daniel and his 3 friends to successive kings of Babylon and Persia from 605BC to 536BC, a total of 69 years of ministry! The second half of the book records a series of visions given to Daniel at different times in his life that provide an outline of the future in the following centuries and on to the end of earth's history. Christians have been puzzling over these 6 chapters ever since Daniel's time.

Just four years before this story begins a golden age in Judah's history came to an end. Josiah had come to the throne at the age of 8 and despite a godless father and grandfather had turned out to be an outstanding man of God. After 31 great years he was tragically killed by the Egyptian Pharaoh when he intervened in a dispute among powerful neighbours. He was succeeded by, in turn, 3 sons and one grandson none of whom trusted the Lord and therefore had any answer to the Babylonian threat.(II Kgs.23-25; II Chron.36) God had warned that Judah would be overwhelmed by Babylon and taken captive in that country for 70 long years,(Jer.25:11,12; 29:10) which began in 605BC.

Throughout this period of time God's faithful mouthpiece had been the prophet Jeremiah who began during the good times of Josiah's reign but continued through the tough period of the following 4 kings and on into captivity in Egypt, where he was eventually murdered because he would not stop preaching. Jeremiah was often concerned for the spiritual condition of his people in Babylon,(Jer.29) but not allowed to visit them. Daniel and Ezekiel would play the same role that Jeremiah played in Judah among the captives in Babylon.

In 605BC Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon attacked Jerusalem for the first of three times and took away a number of young men from the leading families. His purpose was to train them to think and behave like Babylonians so that he could use them to rule their own people under his control. He would brainwash them to be his agents! Daniel and his three friends were probably teenagers at the time. Away from their families how would they cope?

QUESTIONS ON DANIEL CHAPTER ONE FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

Q.1 What circumstances in Judah had led to Nebuchadnezzar's successful attack on Jerusalem? How was this another illustration of a warning the Lord had given His people on many previous occasions? What would have been the significance of putting some of the vessels from the temple in Jerusalem into a heathen temple in Babylon?

Q.2 What are we told about the abilities and looks of Daniel and his friends? How had their own background prepared them for the role God would give them in Babylon? What was the king trying to do to them? How was he going about it? How is this like living in New Zealand in 2012? What sort of pressures are on you to change to be like the world you live in?

Q.3 How did Daniel go about resisting the pressure on him?(Rom.12:2; Col.3:2) Was he rude in the way he did it?(I Pet.3:15) Where did God fit into his decision? How did he suggest the king's agent might test to see if Daniel's way worked? What would be a similar test today?

Q.4 What was the outcome of their choice?(Matt.5:13-16) How did their 'headmaster' respond to what he saw after 10 days of their life style? What did God give them because they dared to trust Him? What would this look like in real life today? How did it work when they got their first jobs?