

OUR GOD REIGNS – p. 1
“The Purposes of God”
Daniel 1

Dates and Daniel

Let's begin by putting Daniel in its historical context –

- 922 BC – King Solomon dies and his foolish son Rehoboam becomes king –
- 722 BC – The Northern kingdom never has a good king – they are evil in the eyes of the LORD.
- 605 BC – Some of the kings are good and some are bad – After a string of bad kings and the disobedience of His people, God disciplines them by raising up the Babylonians to take them into exile.
 - This is where the story of Daniel begins.
 - The Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, is going to subdue the Egyptians and along the way he besieges Jerusalem and takes back the young men as captives we read about in chapter 1.
- 597 BC and 587 BC – Two more times Nebuchadnezzar lays siege to Jerusalem, the second time he tears it apart and leaves it in ruins.

Read Daniel 1

Pray

The Message

In spite of our present circumstances, God rules and He will not abandon His people.

1 – Present Circumstances

- The people get conquered – that's not good!
 - v. 1 – *“In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.”*
 - v. 2 – *“And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the vessels of the house of God.”*
 - There's a history to this – Isaiah 39...
- This great king Nebuchadnezzar has ambitious plans to spread his empire across the world –
 - Before we see the plan, it is important to keep something in mind –
 - In the ancient world, the conquering of another people showed the superiority of your culture and way of life over the ones you conquer.
 - So, with Nebuchadnezzar, his empire building is bringing a better life to the world!
- Let's look at his plan – (read verses 3-7)
 - He takes the best and the brightest of Judah's young men –
 - And the strategy is to thoroughly indoctrinate them into the ways of the Babylonians – to, in effect, make them Babylonian!
 - The greatest change of all is the giving of new Babylonian names.
 - Then, he would send them back to be lords and governors of the people back in Judah – and all the people would be led to change into Babylonians.
- What these young men were facing and what the people of Judah were experiencing is not unlike what you and I face and experience today.
 - There is the constant pressure to surrender to the philosophies, the values, the desires, even the gods, of this present modern age.
 - This pressure is felt in entertainment, social media, the academy, big business, and ~~almost~~ all of pop culture.
 - The goal is for you and me to lose our identity as followers of Jesus Christ.

- To lose our confidence in the Word of God as the source of truth.
- To be ashamed of being distinctively His so that we either abandon the faith or try to compromise it into something that it's not...
- It can be so powerful that it feels hopeless –
 - Just like in this first chapter it feels like Nebuchadnezzar is the guy!
 - He's on the move – He's conquering – He rules –
 - But that's not true!
 - Here's the good news – God rules!

2 – God Rules

- God is over this! He is greater than Babylon and her king!
- First, this is seen in the very text –
 - v. 2 – *“And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand...”*
 - v. 9 – *“God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs...”*
 - v. 17 – *“As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.”*
- And then, what is even more subtle is the way the chapter ends –
 - v. 21 – *“And Daniel was there until the first year of King Cyrus.”*
 - Kings come and go – Nations rise and fall – But God's people remain!
 - And His plans are not thwarted – they're fulfilled!
- Another way God's rule is seen is that everything that is happening here in Daniel is what God had already said, years before, would happen.
 - In giving up Judah to Babylon, God was being faithful to His spoken word –
 - Both generally and specifically
 - Generally speaking, according to Leviticus 26 – The LORD promised that if He was met by the continued disobedience of His people that He would scatter them among the nations.
 - Specifically in Isaiah 39:5-8, the prophecy was given –
- So, what at first looks hopelessly out of control, God is over and working to accomplish His purposes.
 - This leads us to something very important for us to see – God is not only over all things, He is actively involved – and He is specifically involved in the life of His people.
 - He isn't just a powerful God – He is a close God!

3 – God will not abandon His people

- This is where we take a close up look at Daniel and his friends...
- v. 8 – *“But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank.”*
- There is an interesting play on words –
 - v. 7a – *“And the chief of the eunuchs **gave** them names...”*
 - v. 7b – *“...Daniel he **called** Belteshazzar...”*
 - v. 8 – *“But Daniel **resolved** that he would not defile himself with the king's food...”*
 - The world can try to set its ways on you...the world can try to set its values on you...the world can try to fix your life according to its ways – but you don't have to go along with it.
 - 1 John 4:4 – *“Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”*
- v. 20 – *“And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom.”*