

RUSSELL SANDERS

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DANIEL – THE MAN – LESSON 1

THE WISEST MAN

Yesterday we identified the “biggest fool on earth,” the backslidden King Solomon of Israel. Today, we begin a study of “the wisest man on earth,” the prophet Daniel. Solomon’s great wisdom turned into folly as he grew older, when he totally forsook the God who had personally appeared to him twice. Daniel was faithful to God all of his life which went at least well into his eighties.

Let us set the historical background leading up to Daniel’s time. The northern kingdom of Israel (ten tribes) had been taken captive by the fierce empire of Assyria in 722 B.C. due to their idolatry.

The southern kingdom of Israel, called Judah, was composed of the two tribes of Judah and part of Benjamin. It had several godly kings as well as some ungodly ones. By this time, ungodly kings brought judgment upon Judah also. Many people had fallen into idolatry, but a few had remained faithful to God. Due to the faithful few, the captivity of Judah was to a Babylonian empire that was much kinder than the Assyrians.

The new Babylonian Emperor/King Nebuchadnezzar made his first invasion into Judah in 605 B.C. as he set siege upon Jerusalem. He took treasures from the temple. He took captives of the educated elite Jews which included Daniel and his friends. This was the first wave of Babylonian invasions which continued until the total destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 586 B.C.

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were taken to Nebuchadnezzar’s court. They were assigned new Babylonian names of Belteshazzar (Daniel), Shadrach (Hananiah), Meshach (Mishael), and Abednego (Azariah). Daniel was about 16 years old at this time. He was in Babylon the entire 70 years of exile and beyond, likely taking his age near ninety. He remained in Babylon beyond the time Cyrus and Darius had allowed others to return to Judah.

Tomorrow we will look at the first three years of his captivity and the wisdom and devotion to God that he and his friends demonstrated.