

Biblical Missionaries

Exiles as Missionaries

Lesson #5 for August 1, 2015

Scriptures: Daniel 1-12; Isaiah 39:5-7; Daniel 2:44; Matthew 24:14-15; Genesis 41.

1. This lesson focuses primarily on the experiences of Daniel and his friends in the royal courts of Babylon. Could Daniel qualify as an “ambassador”? A “missionary”?
2. When you think about the book of Daniel, do you think first of the stories of the bravery of Daniel and the “worthies” and the miracles of their deliverances? Or, of the prophecies? Do you think Daniel and his friends would have had the opportunities to witness that they had if they had not lived the lives dedicated to God which they lived?
3. The book of Daniel served as a formative part of the 1844 movement. It was William Miller’s understanding of Daniel 8 and 9 that was really the beginning of what became the Seventh-day Adventist Church. But, many people in our day think that not even God can predict the future because they believe that would eliminate human freedom. Or, does God just manipulate us to control the future? Why does God predict the future? He tells us so that when things do happen that God has predicted, we can know that He knew in advance. (John 13:19)
4. There are several major prophecies in Daniel: Chapters 2,7,8,9, and 10-12. What seems to be the focal point of these separate prophecies? Don’t they all point to the time of the end or the end of this world? Or, the final events of this world’s history? It is hard for us to imagine that we might be in a situation like the situation of Daniel and his three friends. We live in a very different world. But, is it possible that the time could come when we would have to witness to the world either by being on trial or being questioned by the news media about our faith? What would it take to bring about that kind of situation?
5. Read Isaiah 39:5-7 and Daniel 1:1-2. Hezekiah’s mistake of showing off the riches of Jerusalem planted the seeds in the minds of the Babylonians that came to fruition in the days of Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar and the Neo-Babylonian Empire came and conquered Judah just as Isaiah had prophesied.
6. The conquering armies were instructed to pick out a few of the very best young men from Judah to be taken to Babylon to be trained in the Babylonian language and ways, probably to be representatives of Judah in the Babylonian royal court. They were to be handsome, intelligent, well-trained, quick to learn, and free from physical defects. (See Daniel 1:4, *GNB*.) As we know, Daniel and his friends were supposed to have been given food from the king’s table which had been offered to the Babylonian “gods.” If they ate it, their success would have been attributed to the Babylonian gods. The vegetables were also a healthier diet. Read Daniel 1:8-13. What was the result of that trial? (Daniel 1:14-21)
7. The book of Daniel only gives us a few isolated snapshots of Daniel’s experiences. We do not know of the long periods of time between these chapters. In fact, some of the chapters are out of chronological order. But, we know that Daniel stood out because of his faith in God whether it was a matter of: 1) Diet; 2) Facing Nebuchadnezzar with an unpopular message; 3) Reading the writing on the wall in the days of Belshazzar; or 4) Being in the courts of the kingdom of Medo-Persia, choosing to worship God in the usual way instead of hiding.
8. Read Daniel’s prayer in Daniel 9:2-19 (especially v. 15-19). Notice especially his wording at the end of that prayer. Daniel was appealing to God to do everything possible to clear **God’s reputation** in the eyes of the nations. Have you ever prayed for God’s reputation?

What kind of reputation does God have in your community because of your behavior?

9. Recent demographic studies in the United States show that the number of young people identifying themselves as Christians has dropped dramatically. Why do you think that is?
10. Ellen White had some very stark words for the Adventist Church.

Every institution that bears the name of Seventh-day Adventist is to be to the world as was Joseph in Egypt, and as were Daniel and his fellows in Babylon. In the providence of God these men were taken captive, that they might carry to heathen nations the knowledge of the true God. They were to be representatives of God in our world. [Missionaries?] They were to make no compromise with the idolatrous nations with which they were brought in contact, but were to stand loyal to their faith, bearing as a special honor the name of worshipers of the God who created the heavens and the earth.—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 153.1. [Content in brackets is added.]

11. What kind of spiritual life did Daniel and his friends maintain which gave them such a close relationship with God? Think how easy it would have been for Daniel and his friends simply to compromise or, perhaps, just practice their religion in private. Where would you place yourself on a scale from being like Daniel to privately practicing your religion today?
12. Read Daniel 2. There are several important details to notice in the story. First of all, Daniel and his three friends were still students at the “University of Babylon.” While they were still students, the fact that the fortunetellers, magicians, sorcerers, and wizards failed to reveal Nebuchadnezzar’s dream to him meant that all of them were to be killed. What does that tell you about Nebuchadnezzar’s arbitrariness? What would you think about bringing an unpopular message to such a king?
13. What was the end result of the experience in Daniel 2? Read Daniel 2:47.

The king said, “Your God is the greatest of all gods, the Lord over kings, and the one who reveals mysteries. I know this because you have been able to explain this mystery.”—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation* (2nd ed., Daniel 2:47). New York: American Bible Society.

Was the king converted? What did the other “wise men” have to say after that?

14. The story recorded in Daniel 3 of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego at the plain of Dura is a well-known one. Do you think they knew in advance what was going to be expected of them? Were there other Jews in that crowd? Despite Nebuchadnezzar’s previous experience as recorded in Daniel 2, he was still determined to make his kingdom the greatest for all time and ignore the witness of the God of heaven. But, after the experience of the burning fiery furnace, what do we learn? How did Nebuchadnezzar know what the Son of God looked like? The actual Aramaic says, “A son of the gods.”

How did that heathen king know what the Son of God was like? The Hebrew captives filling positions of trust in Babylon had in life and character represented before him the truth. When asked for a reason of their faith, they had given it without hesitation. Plainly and simply they had presented the principles of righteousness, thus teaching those around them of the God whom they worshiped. They had told of Christ, the Redeemer to come; and in the form of the fourth in the midst of the fire the king recognized the Son of God.—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings* 509.2; compare *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, May 3, 1892, par. 10.

15. How much did these worthies, including Daniel, know about the Messiah? Were their anticipations for the Messiah as distorted as were those of the Jews in the time of Jesus? Where did they learn about Christ? Did they each receive visions from God?
16. Despite the experiences recorded in Daniel 2 and 3, Nebuchadnezzar was still very proud and was not ready to fully recognize the God of heaven. As recorded in Daniel 4, he experienced a disastrous change in his status, spending seven years roaming around outdoors like a wild animal. It is interesting to note that this seven year period is not specifically mentioned in any known ancient document outside of the Bible. After that seven year period, why do you think Nebuchadnezzar's officials and noblemen welcomed him back and reinstated his royal power with even greater honor than before? (See Daniel 4:36.) Shouldn't they have been at least a little bit frightened about a recurrence of his insanity?
17. Read Daniel 4:37, *GNB*: "And now, I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, honor, and glorify the King of Heaven. Everything he does is right and just, and he can humble anyone who acts proudly." Surely, Nebuchadnezzar was speaking from personal experience! Do you expect to see Nebuchadnezzar in heaven?
18. Review the story in Daniel 5. Belshazzar was celebrating his kingship on some unknown holiday, thinking that he was completely safe from the forces of Medo-Persia which were surrounding his city outside his gates. Apparently, he had no idea that they were about to successfully divert the Euphrates River and then march under the iron gates hanging down into the water and straight into his palace to capture him and kill him. Belshazzar had had opportunities to know the truth. The queen mother clearly knew about Daniel. (See Daniel 5:10-17.) As we know, a very elderly Daniel was called to interpret the handwriting on the wall. He did so just in time to predict the futures of those in the banquet hall. Nearly all of them were killed in the next few hours. Apparently, news of Daniel's faithful service had reached even the Medo-Persians because he was spared and soon rose to a very high position in that second kingdom. (For more details about the handwriting on the wall and what it actually said in what language, see the teacher's guide on the book of Daniel at our website, www.theox.org.)
19. Review the story recorded in Daniel 6. Try to imagine how it could be that a foreign ruler, having captured Daniel, the Jewish exile from Babylon, would allow that exile to rise to the very heights in his own kingdom. Daniel must have exhibited some extraordinary characteristics for that to happen. What do you think those characteristics were? Did God intervene in some miraculous ways to raise Daniel to that position?
20. Of course, Daniel's competitors were upset and angry. They had to devise some means to get back at Daniel or preferably to eliminate him! Their answer was to get the king to sign an irreversible law of the Medes and Persians that anyone who worshiped any god other than the king at any time in the next 30 days would be thrown into the den of lions. Of course, they had no idea what the result would be! Daniel survived, and they and their families all perished. Is that what God wanted?
21. Read Daniel 6:25-27. What do you suppose it would take for a heathen king to make such a statement about Daniel and his God?
22. Isn't it clear that everyone in the higher levels of government knew about Daniel's God and his regular prayers. Darius did everything he could think of to save Daniel from the lion's den. He knew that Daniel served his God loyally. He spent a sleepless night without food or entertainment, worrying about his friend Daniel. Early in the morning when the king found that Daniel's life had been preserved, he made that incredible decree recorded in

Daniel 6:25-27 which shows that he recognized the superiority of Daniel's God.

23. In the last half of the book of Daniel starting with Daniel 7, Daniel received a number of visions focusing on the future of God's people, the future of the world, and the final resolution when God will come to establish His kingdom here on planet earth.
24. Read Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14. What is the significance of saying that someone who looked like a human being would approach the Ancient of Days at the time of judgment? Does the passage go on to suggest that when the gospel is preached, that Person, Jesus Himself, will return to rule the world? Compare Matthew 24:14-16.
25. So, how much does the timing of the second coming depend on our witnessing? (See 2 Peter 3:10-12.) What does this passage suggest to you?
26. Read Daniel 9:27; 11:31; and 12:11. Compare Matthew 24:14-15. Notice particularly that Jesus spoke about verse 15 of Daniel's prophecy still being future in His day. This flies directly in the face of those who do not believe that even God can predict the future. Doesn't it imply that Jesus Himself believed in the prophecies of Daniel?
27. Read Daniel 8:17-19. Why did Daniel fall unconscious to the ground? Are there other occasions when famous biblical characters came in contact with angels and "fell on their faces" to the ground? (See Genesis 17:3, 17; Joshua 5:14; and Ezekiel 1:28; 3:23. Contrast Numbers 16:4.)
28. What are we supposed to understand when the Bible says that God's anger will come at "the time of the end"?
29. Daniel was a Jew in involuntary banishment from his home. Can you name some other famous characters in the Bible who were in similar circumstances? What about Joseph? Moses? Nehemiah? And Esther? How many of them were passive witnesses for God? How many of them were active witnesses?
30. Witnessing while in exile included both passive presence and active proclamation. Consider the similarities and the differences between Esther and Daniel.

Esther	Daniel
1. Did not identify as a Hebrew until called to reveal it.	1. Identified as a Hebrew.
2. Kept her religion to herself until called to reveal it.	2. Made known his religious convictions.
3. God protected her and her family.	3. God protected him and his friends.
4. Witnessed in high places to save her life along with her people's.	4. Witnessed in high places to save his life along with other people's.
5. Helped establish religious freedom and the right to self-defense of a religious minority.	5. Indirectly influenced King Cyrus to allow exiled Hebrews to rebuild the Jerusalem temple.

Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide for Thursday, July 30

31. Read the story of Joseph as recorded in Genesis 41. In what ways was Joseph's story like the stories of Daniel and his friends?
32. Our lesson series for this three months focuses on issues around witnessing for God. Does God really expect us to witness as these ancient worthies did?

God's purpose for the children growing up beside our hearths is wider, deeper, higher, than our restricted vision has comprehended. From the humblest lot those whom He has seen faithful have in time past been called to witness for Him in the world's highest places. And many a lad of today, growing up as did Daniel in his Judean home, studying God's word and His works, and learning the lessons of faithful service, will yet stand in legislative assemblies, in halls of justice, or in royal courts, as a witness for the King of kings. Multitudes will be called to a wider ministry. The whole world is opening to the gospel. Ethiopia is stretching out her hands unto God. From Japan and China and India, from the still-darkened lands of our own continent, from every quarter of this world of ours, comes the cry of sin-stricken hearts for a knowledge [263] of the God of love. Millions upon millions have never so much as heard of God or of His love revealed in Christ. It is their right to receive this knowledge. They have an equal claim with us in the Savior's mercy. And it rests with us who have received the knowledge, with our children to whom we may impart it, to answer their cry. To every household and every school, to every parent, teacher, and child upon whom has shone the light of the gospel, comes at this crisis the question put to Esther the queen at that momentous crisis in Israel's history, "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Esther 4:14.—Ellen G. White, *Education* 262.2. [Bold type is added.]

33. Few biblical scholars today are prepared to accept the fact that Daniel wrote the book named after him and that the prophecies included in the book of Daniel point all the way to the end of this world's history. How do you understand the prophecies of Daniel 2, 7, and 8? How did Daniel know to name Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece as three of the four future world-dominating nations? These prophecies have, of course, been used by Seventh-day Adventists many times in evangelistic series. Do you find that these prophecies hold the same powerful punches they used to with audiences in your area? Review some of the arguments against the book of Daniel as noted in our handout: www.theox.org. Go to Teacher's Guides, then Major Prophets, then Daniel.
34. When Daniel and his three friends were taken to the courts of Babylon, what happened to them? There is considerable evidence to suggest that they were made eunuchs. Were they also expected to dress, speak, and behave as if they were Babylonians? Were they ever required to participate in worship services to the Babylonian gods? If so, how do you think they responded?
35. What things set Seventh-day Adventists apart in our day? Do we stand out because of our Sabbath observance? Or, avoidance of alcohol and tobacco? Or, even our healthy lifestyles? Why are many Adventists slowly slipping back into the health-destroying habits of the world?
36. What do you think Daniel expected to see happen when he asked for a 10-day diet trial? (Daniel 1:12-15) Have you ever put God on the spot in any similar way? Did God tell Daniel to suggest that test?
37. If you were put on trial for being a Seventh-day Adventist Christian—as we believe many will be in the future—would there be enough evidence to convict you?
38. Read John 17:15-18. What is implied by Jesus's suggestion that just as the Father had sent Him, He is sending us?
39. What is the boundary between feeling comfortable in our environment and being witnesses

for God? Does God ever expect us to move out of our comfort zone? Where was Daniel when his friends were on the plain of Dura? Did God honor Daniel and his friends primarily because they had been placed in such difficult circumstances? Or, did God allow them to be placed in those difficult circumstances because He knew they would shine as witnesses for Him? Do you think others through the years have had similar opportunities and may have succeeded or even failed, but we do not know about them? Do you ever feel, even today, like a Seventh-day Adventist Christian in exile?

40. Read Jeremiah 29:7. How does God expect us to act even if we live in an environment that knows little or nothing about Adventism? Do you have habits of regular Bible study and prayer that parallel those of Daniel?

41. There was a famous Christian theologian by the name of Tertullian who was converted from paganism in early Christian times. When plague and sickness appeared in the city, the pagan priests would flee while the Christians remained to help the sick and suffering. Tertullian commented:

“It is our care of the helpless, our practice of loving kindness that brands us in the eyes of many of our opponents. “Only look,” they say, “look how they love one another!” ’ ”

The Emperor Julian wrote, “ ‘The impious Galileans support not only their poor, but ours as well; everyone can see that our people lack aid from us.’ ” Quoted in Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1996)—*Adult Teacher’s Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, p 69.

Do you know of anyone who has felt that his job or his education has been threatened because s/he practiced her/his Adventist religion? Might all of us have to stand up for our beliefs in the near future? Are we ready?

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