

## MARCH OF EMPIRE - LECTURES ON THE BOOK OF DANIEL

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### CHAPTER 2 – Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah – The Name Changes

#### LESSON TEXT -- Daniel 2:1-13

*Why GOD Allowed the Children of Israel to Be Taken Into Captivity -- The Importance of Hebrew Names -- A Hard Circumstance and Daniel's Holy Purpose -- The Great Theme of This Chapter Was "The Times of the Gentiles" -- What the Prophet Jeremiah Said About King Nebuchadnezzar and His World-Wide Empire -- When "The Times of the Gentiles" Began -- What Is Meant by "The Fulness of the Gentiles" -- The King's Forgotten Dream and What It Caused -- A Strange Decree Which Endangered the Life of Daniel, and His Three Companions -- How Daniel Came to the Rescue*

In our last lesson we discovered that the Babylonian captivity was a result of Israel's sin and disobedience in the land. They had failed to keep the sabbatic years as GOD had commanded them to do, and they had also given themselves over to idolatry. Therefore GOD allowed them to be taken into Babylonian captivity for a period of seventy years. The fact, that Daniel and his fellow princes would be made eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon had been prophesied by Isaiah 39:7, and that was exactly what came to pass.

#### THEIR NAMES WERE CHANGED

Before we leave the first chapter, there is one other point of interest which I wish to mention, and that is concerning Daniel and his companions. The Hebrew names for these captives were, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. In the Hebrew language, personal names nearly always have some special meaning and these names were no exception. For instance,

- Daniel means "*GOD is my judge.*"
- Hananiah means "*Beloved of the Lord.*"
- Mishael means "*Who is as GOD,*"
- and Azariah means "*The Lord is my help.*"

These were, indeed, pleasant names which were full of profound meaning.

But when these young men came into Babylonian captivity, the Babylonians did not like their names. Therefore, they decided to change them, which they did.

- To Daniel, they gave the name Belteshazzar which means "*Bel's Prince*." Bel was the name of the Babylonian god whom Nebuchadnezzar worshipped.
- To Hananiah they gave the name of Shadrach. This name means, "*illuminated by the Sun-god*."
- Mishael was called Meshach. It is interesting to note that the letters "El" in his Hebrew name, meant "GOD," as in the word "Israel," or Isra-"el". When they changed his name they changed the "El" portion of it to the word "Shach" so, that instead of calling him "Mishael" he was called "Meshach." We are told that in all probability this was the name of a goddess like Venus. So we see that his Hebrew name means "*Who is as GOD*," Where the new name they gave to him mean "*Who is like Venus*."
- Azariah's name was changed to Abednego, which meant "*The servant of Nego*," who was another false god.

## **THEY WERE WISER THAN THE WISE MEN**

There is no question but what this change of names was an effort to cause these young men to forget their native city of Jerusalem and become separated from their people and become assimilated by the Gentiles. In spite of these things, in our last lesson we discovered how Daniel and his fellow princes determined in their hearts not to defile themselves with a portion of the king's meat, which before it was eaten, was consecrated to idols. As a result of their life of separation, when the time came for them to appear before the king it says "**In all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.**"

We are told in the last verse of the first chapter that Daniel "**continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus.**"

We are now ready to take up our study of the second chapter of Daniel, which is too long for us to read all at one time. It will be necessary, therefore, to give somewhat of an introduction to the entire chapter and then, we can read and study it, a portion at a time.

## **THE THEME OF THE CHAPTER**

The great theme of the entire chapter is "**The times of the Gentiles.**"

The chapter opens with an account of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which he soon forgot and about which he was greatly troubled. When the wisemen and the astrologers were unable to tell him what the dream was and the interpretation of it, he threatened to destroy all the wisemen of Babylon, which of course included Daniel and his fellow princes.

## **A PRAYER THAT WAS ANSWERED**

We next have recorded the prayer of Daniel and his fellow captives for wisdom and for help from the Lord.

As a result of this prayer, the secret of Nebuchadnezzar's dream was revealed to Daniel, which he told to the king.

The interpretation of the dream is given in the later portion of the chapter: and the last few verses of the chapter reveal how Daniel was promoted, as were also Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon.

## **A GREAT KING AND A WORLD-WIDE KINGDOM**

Before we take up our discussion of this interesting and important chapter concerning the time of the Gentiles, I want to read a brief passage in Jeremiah 27:5-9 which gives to us some detailed information concerning Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.

The Lord said, **"I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me. And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him. And it shall come to pass, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the Lord, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand. Therefore hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanters, nor to your sorcerers, which speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon."**

## **THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES -- WHEN THEY BEGAN**

From our lesson text, we know that these things which were prophesied by Jeremiah concerning Nebuchadnezzar came to pass. Therefore, with the coming into power of king Nebuchadnezzar came to pass. Therefore, with the coming into power of king Nebuchadnezzar, who was a world monarch, the times of the Gentiles begun.

It so happens that the expression, **"The Times of the Gentiles"** is not found in the Book of Daniel but occurs rather in the New Testament.

They were the words of JESUS Himself and are recorded in Luke 21:24, where He said, in His great prophetic discourse concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, **"And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."**

This is a very important statement but we should not get the idea, from it, that **"the times of the Gentiles"** began with the destruction of Jerusalem, for that is not true. The times of the Gentiles began with the Babylonian captivity, which, as we have already discovered, came to pass because of Israel's disobedience and idolatry in the land.

When Nebuchadnezzar came and carried the Jewish People into Babylon, the glory of the Lord departed from Jerusalem. This is confirmed in Ezekiel 11:23, where it says, "**And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city.**"

Thus, when the city of Jerusalem was robbed of its people and the glory of the Lord departed from the city the Jewish people were made subject to Gentile overlordship, "**The times of the Gentiles**" began.

## **THE FULNESS OF THE GENTILES**

There is another expression in the New Testament which speaks of "**The fulness of the Gentiles.**"

It is necessary to remind you that "**The times of the Gentiles**" and the "**Fulness of the Gentiles**" do not mean exactly the same thing.

In Romans 11:25, the Apostle Paul said, "**For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.**"

Concerning this statement of the Apostle Paul, Dr. A.C. Gaebelien says, "This is one of the mysteries Paul makes known. The fulness of the Gentiles means the full number of that people taken out from the Gentiles (i.e., the church). The fullness of the Gentiles coming in, means the removal of the church from the earth. With that event Jewish history will be resumed and GOD, in His grace, will call the remnant for their work, during the 'time of the end.'"

## **DANIEL WAS THE PROPHET TO THE GENTILES**

Let us remember that Daniel, is the great prophet to the Gentiles. It is interesting and important, however, for us to know that Daniel did not receive any revelation of truth concerning the church, which is the body of CHRIST. At the time Daniel prophesied, the church was a hidden mystery "**Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit,**" as stated in Ephesians 3:5. The mystery of the church was revealed to the Apostle Paul, after the resurrection and ascension of CHRIST.

While Daniel was a captive in Babylon among the Gentiles, he prophesied concerning "**the times of the Gentiles**" and has given us a prophetic foreview of those events which will come to pass preceding the establishment of the Messianic kingdom.

## **OUR LESSON TEXT -- DANIEL 2:1-13**

After this rather lengthy introduction, we are ready to take up our study of the lesson text in

Daniel 2:1-13, where it says,

**“And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him. Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to show the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king. And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream. Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriack, O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation. The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill. But if ye show the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honour: therefore show me the dream, and the interpretation thereof. They answered again and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation of it. The king answered and said, I know of certainty that ye would gain the time, because ye see the thing is gone from me. But if ye will not make known unto me the dream, there is but one decree for you: for ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, till the time be changed: therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that ye can show me the interpretation thereof. The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can show the king’s matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can show it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh. For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. And the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain.”**

## **WHY THESE THINGS WERE WRITTEN**

To say the least, this is a very interesting narration of events which occurred in Babylon, but we remind you that it is more than just a story written for our entertainment.

This portion of the Book of Daniel gives to us the necessary historical background to understand the great prophecies which are revealed in the other portions of the book.

## **THE KING WONDERED ABOUT THE FUTURE**

The occasion for this dream which King Nebuchadnezzar had is revealed in the 29th verse of this same chapter where Daniel said, **"As for thee, O King, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter: and he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass."**

This statement shows why King Nebuchadnezzar had been so deeply impressed by the dream and why he was in such a desperate state of mind to recover it, so that he might discover its true meaning. To say the least, he must be given credit for desiring to know the

future of the kingdom over which he had become the supreme ruler. In this respect, he was more wise than most men. The average person seems to live only for the present and while they may remember some things of the past, they are little concerned about the events of the future. Not so, however, with King Nebuchadnezzar. As a result of the desire in his heart to know what the future had in store for him, and for the great empire over which he was the ruler, GOD had sent to him the dream which troubled him.

## **DANIEL AND HIS COMPANIONS IN GREAT DANGER**

It is interesting to note from our lesson text that because of his anger and his furious state of mind, the lives of Daniel and his three companions were endangered. You will remember that they had received instruction in the Chaldean mysteries and therefore, even though they had been brought as captives from Jerusalem, they were counted among the wisemen of Babylon. Therefore, when the decree went forth that the wisemen should be slain, it included Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Certainly, this was a desperate situation and was one which called, not only for wisdom but also for prayer.

## **DANIEL CAME TO THE RESCUE**

There is no record of what the other wisemen in Babylon did about the matter, but in verses 14 to 18 of our lesson text it says **"Then Daniel answered with counsel and wisdom to Arioch the captain of the king's guard, which was gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon: He answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, Why is the decree so hasty from the king? Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel. Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would shew the king the interpretation. Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: That they would desire mercies of the God of Heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon."**

## **ANSWERED PRAYER**

Thus, my friends, we see that the king's decree which provoked the other wisemen of Babylon and made them angry and drove them to desperation and to a confession of their utter hopelessness, did not strike fear to the mind and heart of Daniel or his companions but rather drove them to prayer. Thus they accepted the problem and the circumstances as a divine challenge to their faith and in consequence they set themselves to the task of prayer in which they earnestly sought the Lord for His help and for His mercy and that He would reveal unto them, the very thing, which the king desired to know. That, my friends, is exactly what He did, and the answer to their prayers was not long delayed, for in verse 19 it says, **"Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of Heaven."**

~ end of chapter 2 ~

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