

Chapter Twenty Eight – Daniel Destroys the Babylonian Idols

King Cyrus of Persia became the ruler of Babylon in later years. He often went to seek advice from his best friend, Daniel. One day Cyrus asked Daniel why he did not worship the god Bel like all the Babylonians did. Daniel replied, “I worship only the true and living God who created all things. I do not worship statues created by human beings.”

But Cyrus answered, “Surely Bel is a living god. See how much he eats and drinks every day – one dozen measures of flour, forty sheep and fifty gallons of wine.”

Daniel laughed and said, “Your Majesty, do not be deceived. Bel is made of clay and brass and, therefore, cannot eat or drink.”

Cyrus sent for the seventy priests and told them what Daniel had said. They answered, “This evening we will bring all the food and leave it outside the temple. You and Daniel can place it before the altar and you will lock the door and keep the key. If Bel does not consume the offerings by the morning, we are all ready to die.”

That evening Cyrus placed the offerings before the god. After that, Daniel asked his man to spread fine ashes all over the floor right up to the door. Cyrus then locked it and they went away. Early the next morning, Cyrus and Daniel went to the temple. As soon as the king opened the door he saw all the food gone and he praised Bel as a living god. But Daniel stopped him from entering and pointed to the floor. It was covered with the footprints of small and large feet and all led to a secret door under the altar. They went down and found the remains of the food that had been eaten by the priests, their wives and their children. Cyrus was furious. He had them all put to death and the statue broken into pieces.

There was another god that the Babylonians worshipped. This was a great and fierce dragon. Every day it would come out from the forest to be fed. One day Cyrus said to Daniel, “This time you cannot say that this is not a living god.”

“It is living,” said Daniel, “but it is not a god. If I have your permission, I will kill it without sword or club.” Cyrus challenged him, “If you can do so.” Daniel went to the market and bought some fat and some hair from the tail of an animal. He went home, boiled the fat and chopped the hair into pieces. Then he took some tar and mixed it with the fat and hair and made a cake. He fed the dragon with the cake. The fat melted and the hair began to irritate the stomach of the dragon. In a short time, it tore itself to pieces and died.

When the Babylonians heard of this, they were very angry as Daniel had killed their two gods. They demanded that Daniel should be thrown into the lions’ den. At first, Cyrus tried to save his friend but in the end, he had to give way because the angry crowd might start a riot. The lions were very hungry for they had had no food for many days. The gate was opened and Daniel was locked in. A week later, Cyrus went to the den and was surprised to see Daniel among the lions. At once he set him free and praised the God of the Jews for protecting his innocent friend. He then ordered the men who had attacked Daniel to be thrown into the den.

Later King Cyrus allowed all the Jews to return to Palestine and that was the end of the Babylonian Captivity. He gave them money and everything they needed for the journey. He also returned all the treasures of the Temple which King Nebuchadnezzar had taken away to Babylon. When the Jews reached Jerusalem, the first thing they did was to restore the walls of the city. After that, they rebuilt the Temple. The kingdom established by King Cyrus was the silver kingdom foretold by Daniel. Alexander the Great, the King of Macedonia, established the bronze kingdom. After the Roman Emperor Augustine had established the iron and clay kingdom, he appointed Herod the Great, the King of Judah to rule Palestine. That was the time when the Son of God Jesus Christ was born. And finally, the rolling stone that became bigger and bigger became the kingdom of God established by Jesus Christ - the kingdom for all peoples and the kingdom that never ends.



Daniel in the lion's den

Questions:

1. Why did King Cyrus worship Bel and the dragon?
2. Why did Daniel refuse to worship the Babylonian idols?
3. Was King Cyrus a friend of the Jews? Explain your answer.
4. How did Daniel show his wisdom when destroying the idols?
5. Imagine you were Daniel in the lion's den. Write TWO diary entries.
6. Why do more and more people join the kingdom of God established by Jesus?