

Daniel, the devout youth and interpreter of dreams



Daniel 1 and 2

Daniel and his three friends were the sons of noble Jewish people who had been taken captive and forcibly taken from their homeland, Israel. They now lived in exile in Babylon. Daniel and his friends were educated at the court of the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar. But they wanted to remain faithful to their own God. They therefore kept the laws of their people regarding the eating of certain foods. They suffered no disadvantages by firmly acknowledging their principles of faith. On the contrary, they had many wonderful experiences. One day Nebuchadnezzar demanded that a dream which he had forgotten, be recounted and interpreted to him. The wise and learned men of the land could not do this. After Daniel and his three friends had brought this matter to the Lord in prayer, God showed him the dream and its meaning. When Daniel, as the messenger of God, had explained the dream to Nebuchadnezzar, the king praised and glorified the greatness of God.

The answering of a devout and fervent prayer shows to the children the care and solicitude of God. They marvel at the greatness and omniscience of God.

1

Far away from Israel, in the great city of Babel, lives the king Nebuchadnezzar. All who are allowed to live with him in his palace, rejoice at their good fortune. But there are four youths who do not rejoice at all, because they would much rather be in their own country, Israel. King Nebuchadnezzar wishes to educate these four young men, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, to be learned counsellors at his court.

The youths are told: "You will be given the same food to eat as the king, in other words, the very best food and wine." On hearing this, Daniel decides to approach the highest servant of the king and ask him something of great importance: "We know that you mean well and that we are privileged to receive royal fare. But we are unaccustomed to this food. According to our belief we are even forbidden to eat some of it. We want to remain faithful to our belief," Daniel explains to the highest servant. "I really do not understand you. What do you actually want?" "We would much rather eat only vegetables and drink water," answered Daniel.

"That is quite impossible. You would look pale and sickly in no time. If our king should see you like that, I can expect to be severely punished. After all, I am responsible for you," and the highest servant turns away from Daniel. "Please, please wait," pleads Daniel, "let us at least try for ten days." "All right! But only for ten days, not a minute longer," and the highest servant walks away quickly. Daniel is happy, he folds his hands in prayer. Then he hurries off to find his friends to tell them the news. After ten days, Daniel and his friends stand before the highest servant. He looks at them sternly. Then, suddenly, he smiles. "It is unbelievable! You really look better and healthier than the other youths in the royal school! You may continue to eat and drink whatever you want." Happily the four youths thank the Lord who has stood by them.

2

They continue to grow beautifully and learn eagerly. The king notices their great wisdom. Their God, to whom they pray daily, helps them. They become highly esteemed servants and advisors to the king. He often asks their advice and they give him ten times better advice than the other advisors.

God is close to his own – Daniel

One night King Nebuchadnezzar wakes up, bathed in perspiration. He has dreamt something which has frightened him. Unfortunately he has forgotten the dream. He immediately calls all the wise men and interpreters of dreams. They have all read widely and claim to know everything. The king commands them: "Recount my dream to me and explain its meaning."

But not one of these wise men can help the king. They say: "You expect the impossible from us!" Nebuchadnezzar now becomes so furious that he commands: "None of you know anything at all! Away with you! I do not want to see you or any other wise men of this land ever again! You shall all be put to death!" Daniel and his three friends are also going to be killed. Daniel immediately hurries off to see the king's captain and asks that he be given a little time, after which he will interpret the dream. Nebuchadnezzar agrees to this.

Daniel goes to his friends at once and tells them all that has happened.

"Come, let us tell the Lord everything," says Daniel. "We will

ask him for his help in prayer." Fervently the four friends plead with the Lord.

The following night Daniel receives the answer. God shows him the dream as well as its meaning. Daniel fervently thanks the Lord.

The next morning Daniel quickly goes to Nebuchadnezzar. He recounts and interprets the king's dream. Nebuchadnezzar is astonished: "How can you know my dream so exactly?"

"It is not I who discovered your dream. My God in heaven who knows all things, has shown me your dream and explained it to me," was Daniel's reply.

The great king is speechless. Then he calls out loudly: "There is no doubt! Your God is a mighty and great God who knows all secrets and is greater than all kings!"

As a sign of his gratitude, Nebuchadnezzar gives Daniel and his friends many precious gifts and appoints them as governors of his kingdom.

3



Daniel prayed often. He and his friends experienced God's power. With God's help, Daniel could interpret a dream to the king. God was always close to him. The Lord is close to us too.

1 We look with the children at the picture of Daniel praying.

In conversation we point out the following to the children:

In prayer we speak to our heavenly Father, we can tell him everything. We can unite with him at any time through prayer.

Then we discuss the question: Daniel prayed often. When do we pray?

2 Daniel and his friends thank God for his help.

We may also bring praise, thanks and petitions to God in prayer.

We look at the photographs in the children's book of children praying.

We ask the children what these children could be giving thanks for and what they could be asking.

3 Daniel and his friends pray because of a particularly frightening situation.

We speak to the children about similar incidents they experienced.