

## PROPHET DANIEL

The hero of the book of Daniel, is Daniel, who together with three other friends, was deported to Babylon with the exiles and sent to work with the Babylonian service. The first six chapters give an account of the life of exiles in Babylon.

### **Babylonian Training**

The Babylonian's treatment of captured and exiled people was much more enlightened than that of the Assyrians. The fittest and most intelligent young men were taken and trained alongside the cream of Babylonian youth and then employed in government service. Four Judean exiles – probably still in their teens – selected for the three year training scheme were Daniel (Belteshazzar was his Babylonian name) and his friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah – better known by their Babylonian names of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They were supposed to be instructed in the language and culture of the Babylonians. They were also given food from the king's table, so that they may grow healthy. But such food contained many types of meat which the Jewish law regarded as "unclean" and so could not be eaten by Jews. Daniel did not to commit a sin by eating forbidden foods. He begged the chief courtier to give him and his three friends other kinds of food. But he was afraid and told them, "If the king were to see that your faces were leaner than the other boys – it would cost me my life". "Try it for just ten days" pleaded Daniel. "For ten days give us nothing but grain and vegetables to eat and nothing but water to drink. Then look at us and see if our faces are not just as full and ruddy, as the other boy's faces who had been eating from the king's table. After that you can do whatever you please". The chief courtier tried Daniel's suggestion for ten days. After ten days, the four young men looked better than the others. So he kept giving them the same food. God was pleased with them. He gave them wisdom and knowledge. Besides that, He gave Daniel the gift of interpreting visions and dreams. Three years later all the young men were presented to the king. He soon discovered that Daniel and his friends were wiser and more responsible than all the others, he took them in his personal service.

### **The king's dream**

Soon after Daniel entered into the civil service of King Nebuchadnezzar, the king had puzzling dreams that awakened him from his sleep (Daniel 2:1). At least one of them was so disturbing that the king called for his advisers to tell him his dream and to interpret it. If they didn't do so, the king told them that they would be killed (verses 2-5).

The king's wise men—his magicians, astrologers and sorcerers—simply had no idea of the dream or its meaning. They told the king, "It is a difficult thing that the king requests, and there is no other who can tell it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh" (verse 11). In anger, the king gave the command to begin killing his wise men—including Daniel and his three friends.

Daniel had great trust in God, who showed him exactly what to say. The king's dream had been about a great statue made from different materials; a huge stone had crashed on to the feet of

the statue and crushed it to pieces. The stone then grew into a mountain so big that it filled the whole earth. Daniel said, the different materials represented the rise and fall of the different empires. The first, like a head of gold, was the Babylonian empire, but this would be replaced by others. The great stone, cut from a mountain, was a sign that in the end the kingdom of God would be supreme.

### **The lion's den**

The Persians had conquered Babylonia. The Persian king in the city of Babylon was Darius and he liked Daniel. He knew that Daniel was a good worker so he decided to put Daniel in charge of the whole country. The other servants of the king were very jealous of Daniel and they tried to find something that would get Daniel in trouble. They were trying to get him fired, but Daniel obeyed God so they couldn't find anything. They decided to play on Daniel's weakness – which was his constant faithfulness to the Jewish law. So some of them persuaded the king to issue a command condemning to death, anyone who over a period of thirty days asked for anything from any god or person except the king himself. Daniel usually prayed three times a day, prostrating himself in the direction of the Temple in Jerusalem. It was not long before he was discovered disobeying the king's order and he was taken before the king. Darius was saddened by the accusation brought against Daniel. He felt, his edict could not be changed and so Daniel was thrown in with the lions and a huge stone rolled over the entrance way. The king returned to his palace and refused to eat. He watched anxiously all night, wondering the fate of Daniel.

Early the next morning the king hurried back to the lion's den. He was both surprised and overjoyed when he found Daniel safe and sound, protected by his God. The king knew that the men had tricked him into punishing Daniel so he punished them. After that the king made a new law and he said, "Daniel's God is great, and I order that everyone in my kingdom must respect the Lord God, who rescued Daniel from the lions." (Daniel 6:19-27).

The incidents show that God is in control of history and that like Daniel it is possible to resist temptation and remain faithful to Him. We too, in our day are inspired to resist being unfaithful to God, despite the strong forces in our lives tempting us to do so.

### **Reflection:**

1. Do we meet with situations which tempt us to compromise our faith? Recall the situations – copying, bribing or cheating in the exams.
2. Speak to God about the many temptations you have in today's world to betray God for achieving success at all costs. Pray for courage to be true to the Lord.
3. Like Daniel, a model for young boys and girls, ask for grace from God to never compromise your faith.