

Sabbath School Lesson #5 – Exiles as Missionaries – 25-31 Jul 2015

Christ calls us to be missionaries even as we would be if in captivity as was Daniel. “And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed” (Daniel 7:14). We behold Christ now as a High Priest preparatory to beholding Him as King, and this is in order that we shall be with Him there and reign with Him there, for even of us it is written: “the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even for ever and ever,” and “they shall reign for ever and ever” (Daniel 7:18; Revelation 22:5).

Preparatory for that everlasting dominion, we do well to learn lessons from Daniel who was a missionary in exile. We first recount how Israel went into exile. God had delivered Israel from Egypt, and had united them to Himself in order that they might be separated from all the nations in order to be missionaries to the world. And having brought them out of Egypt, and joined them to Himself, He said of them, “lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations” (Numbers 23:9). It was only by remaining faithful to their union with God that they could be separated from all the nations (Exodus 33:16).

But by becoming like all the nations, Israel lost the power to arrest and command the attention of all the nations, that the nations might know God, and be taught of Him. God in His mercy allowed Israel to go into captivity. God would still use Israel to enlighten those who, under Him, had acquired the power to arrest and command the attention of all the nations. By Israel still He would bring to all the nations the knowledge of the true God, that “the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will” (Daniel 4:17). This is the whole essence of the captivity and subjection of Israel and Judah to Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Grecia, and Rome. God conveyed to the kings and people of these mighty empires, the knowledge of Himself and of His truth for people and kings.

As a result of being in captivity, the few faithful Israelites like Daniel were missionaries, causing repentance even of heathen kings. In the book of Daniel there are proclamations of God’s truth to the world made by kings of the world (Daniel 2:47; 3:28; 4:37; 6:25-27). All this exile missionary work was by the faithful Daniel and his three companions in captivity. Israel being in captivity was simply the consequence of their failure to be faithful out of captivity.

If the people of God had been as faithful in Judea as they were in Babylon, they never would have seen Babylon; and if the people of God being as faithful in Judea as they were in Babylon, the light shining through them in their faithfulness in Judea as in Babylon, God would never have needed to use the kings of the kingdom aside from the special people of God to spread His truth to the world. The situation in Daniel is present truth now. It is, and has been, in the people always to be most faithful only under the greatest disadvantages.

It is a truth that God’s people are the light of the world, whether they are free and in peace, and dwelling as He longs for them to do, or whether they are in the darkness and the gloom of a dungeon and captivity. They are the light of the world, and the light shines through them. If they will believe it, if they will not let it shine during peace and quietness, and through all the advantages which He gives, and which He longs for us to enjoy, then it will shine anyhow, and it will have to shine through the disadvantages of distress and captivity. But it will shine: and it will reach the people of the world, whom it should reach, and they will receive it and glorify God. In captivity, whatever is done, is preaching the Gospel, and is reaching souls. While we have that comfort, we would do all that without the captivity if we were only as faithful to God out of captivity as we always will be in captivity.

In captivity in Babylon, Daniel’s influence is recorded for our admonition. When Daniel found that he was expected to drink wine from the king’s table in Babylon, and eat food which he could not conscientiously accept, he at once “purposed in his heart” (Daniel 1:8) that he would not do it. How naturally he might have reasoned that the matter was a comparatively small one, and that if he did not do as the rest did in the strange city he would only get into trouble; he would seem odd and eccentric, and perhaps lose his influence.

Many since Daniel’s day have overcome their scruples about wrong doing by such processes of reasoning. They knew perfectly well what they ought to do, but they did not

want to do it, and it was easy to find a fairly presentable moral argument to excuse the disobedience. To make themselves peculiar and different from others would be to lose their influence, and then they would be unable to do much good that they were now doing. Self-deceived, they stifled the voice of conscience and decided to do evil that good might come.

But did Daniel lose his influence for doing right? We hear much of him and of his three faithful companions; they were only four amongst the captives of Judah who were chosen for their grace and ability to stand in the king's palace with his counsellors and wise men. What of other young men in Israel? They doubtless decided to save their influence and when in Babylon to do as the Babylonians did. They followed the world about them and the customs of the 'best society,' and compromised principle. They are nameless, and so far as we know were useless. But God stood by Daniel and his fellows and by their faithfulness witnessed of Himself before Babylon and all the world. Daniel did not lose his influence by doing right.

We also find recorded in Daniel a demonstration of Daniel's faith in God is with us. When the Chaldeans protested to the king Nebuchadnezzar that he required too much of them, in demanding that they should declare his dream, they said that only the gods could tell such a thing "whose dwelling is not with flesh" (Daniel 2:11). But Daniel knew the true God, whose dwelling is with flesh, and he obtained the desired answer for the king. It is not enough to assent to the fact that Divinity is in the heavens. What we must know is that God is near at hand to help, and that "wisdom and might are His" (Daniel 2:20), as Daniel said. His name is Immanuel – God with us. If any lack wisdom – and who does not? – He will supply it, and as for strength, He will strengthen "according to His glorious power" (Colossians 1:11).

Lest we forget, we note that Daniel's patriotism was for the Promised Land even by faith for the "everlasting dominion" of Christ. Adventists, who often cite Daniel as a statesman in excuse for their politics, show great blindness. Daniel's conduct never conflicted with focus to the everlasting dominion of Christ. Daniel was a captive, and therefore in the condition of a slave, in Babylon. And, though placed in high position and given great responsibility, he was not in any sense a citizen of the kingdom or commonwealth of Babylon, or of Medo-Persia. His patriotism was not in any sense love of the country of Babylon, or of Medo-Persia, but only of Jerusalem, the city of God, and the Lord's holy mountain.

It is great blindness for Adventists to voluntarily meddle into politics citing Daniel. Daniel would not have volunteered to meddle into politics had he been a citizen of Babylon. Moses was a citizen of Egypt, of a royal family, heir to the throne, but Moses did not volunteer to meddle into political affairs of Egypt. Moses "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater than the treasures of Egypt" (Hebrews 11:26) and than any political position attached to Egyptian citizenship. This being what Moses, the great exemplar of that era, did, and Daniel being of the same character, we know by it precisely what he would have done had he been a citizen of Babylon instead of a slave. Daniel being a slave of the kings, like all God-fearing men, was respectful, obedient, and faithful to his "masters according to the flesh" (Ephesians 6:5).

Witness Daniel's deep anxiety to know when the time would expire and the desolations of Jerusalem be accomplished. Witness his wonderful prayer that God would cause His face to shine upon His sanctuary, and bring His people once more to their beloved Zion (Daniel 9). And witness "his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem," and him there praying "upon his knees three times a day" (Daniel 6:10). Witness his loyalty to the law and government of God, against those of Babylon and Medo-Persia. He was a servant of the kings of Babylon and of Medo-Persia: a highly-honoured servant, it is true, yet always only a servant; and even when he was in his most exalted position, he was still referred to as "that Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah" (Daniel 6:13). Daniel served the kings where he was a captive, as he and all his people were commanded by the Lord to do (Jeremiah 29); but through it all he was of those who mournfully chanted (Psalm 137:1-6):–

"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us a mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the LORD's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."