

THE STORY OF DANIEL

by

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“Aunt Hattie’s Bible Stories” for Boys and Girls

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CHAPTER ONE

DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS

“HELLO, Hananiah, when are you off duty to-day?”

“Three P. M., Daniel.”

“Fine! I am off then, too. Find Mishael and Azariah and meet me down by the Pool of Siloam, outside the wall.”

“All right, but what’s up?”

“Oh, I want to talk about some happenings.”

Promptly at the appointed hour the four young princes, who were serving in the court of King Jehoiakim of the House of Judah in Jerusalem, met as they had agreed.

“Let us walk across the Valley of Jehoshaphat and find a quiet place on the mountain slope, sheltered from the sun, where we can talk and not be seen or heard by passers-by,” suggested Daniel, the leader.

“What is the latest news in the court, Daniel? You have a better opportunity of hearing what is going on than we do,” said Azariah as they flung themselves under the welcome shade of a wide-spreading olive tree, a few rods from the main highway.

“We are going to be carried captives to Babylon,” came the answer in a hoarse whisper.

“Do you really think affairs are as bad as that?” ventured Mishael.

“That’s what I want to talk over with you. We may as well face the facts as they are.

“We have all studied the books of Moses. It is a good thing that we came into the Temple service while King Josiah was reigning or we might not know as much as we do. Have you noticed that we are no more required to study the sacred books?”

“Yes, but we still find great pleasure in reading the books together when we are off duty and have been greatly interested of late in reading some of the prophecies of Moses, but they fill us with alarm,” said Mishael.

“I’ll say they are more than alarming. For example, there are the blessings and the curses that God gave to Moses—blessings upon Israel, if she obeyed, and curses for disobedience. No need to go into detail, for we all know Israel’s history has been one long story of idolatry, disobedience, and sin of every kind.”

“Yes, and I was thinking about our Sabbath. Do you know, boys, we do not observe the Sabbath any more? It is just a holiday, with no reverence at all for God’s Word or for the Ordinances,” quietly put in Azariah.

“One would think to hear the leaders of Judah in the court now-a-days that the books of Moses were out-of-date. They seem not to realize that this is God’s Word and cannot fail. I read where God said that if this nation, whom He has chosen, disobeyed, kept not His Sabbath, worshipped idols, and sinned against Him that He would send a nation to carry the people away captives to another land, and that this land that God gave to our father Abraham and to us would remain desolate.”

“But, Daniel, do you not think those prophecies were for the people of the Northern Kingdom, long ago carried away by the Assyrians?” asked Hananiah.

“Both Israel and Judah are included, for, after all, they are the same nation. It is only because of a few righteous kings like Josiah that the House of Judah has been spared until now. But, even so, God said He would spare Judah only so long as Josiah lived and then He would punish her for the sins of Manasseh.”

“When I remember,” continued Daniel, “that the prophets, Isaiah and Micah, prophesied one hundred and fifty years ago, that we would be carried away captives, Micah even naming Babylon as our captor, it makes me tremble. Look at the situation we are in right now. A little while ago our nation was paying tribute to Egypt; then Nebuchadnezzar overthrew Egypt and conquered everything from the Euphrates to the Nile River, and now for about three years we have been paying tribute to Chaldea of which Babylon is the capital.

“We well know the wicked, sinful, and corrupt ways of King Jehoiakim. He isn’t one bit like his father, Josiah. I am looking any day for him to revolt against Nebuchadnezzar. Then, if he does, as I said before, I can see myself and thousands more captives on the way to Babylon.”

“Whose fault will it be, Daniel?” questioned the three friends.

“Absolutely Judah’s own fault, for she has been warned again and again. That makes me think, did any of you hear the prophet Jeremiah address the men of Judah at the Temple gate a few days ago?”

“Yes, we did, and he was great, too.”

“I believe I never heard from any prophet such an impassioned plea for a return to righteousness as this last one was. You will remember that he said—

“From the thirteenth year of Josiah, the son of Amon, king of Judah, even unto this day, that is, the three and twentieth year, the word of the Lord hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but you have not hearkened.

“And the Lord hath sent unto you all his servants, the prophets, rising early and sending them; but you have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear.

“They said, Turn you again now everyone from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that the Lord hath given unto you and to your fathers for ever and ever.

“And go not after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, and provoke me to anger with the works of your hands; to your own hurt.

“Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Because you have not heard my words,

“Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the Lord, and Nebuchadrezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring him against this land, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing and perpetual desolations. And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.”

“My, that was putting it up to them in plain words, wasn’t it?” said his companions in one voice as Daniel finished quoting Jeremiah.

“Daniel, what do you suppose God meant by calling Nebuchadnezzar His ‘**servant**’?” asked one of the number.

“Just what He said,” answered Daniel. “A servant is one who serves and God will use the king of Babylon to bring about the punishment of the House of Judah.”

“Wasn’t that a strange meeting to which we were called with the priests in the palace?” asked Daniel.

“Yes, we thought the priests and the prophets were calling a day of prayer for Judah, but instead of that they wanted to kill Jeremiah,” added Hananiah.

“Wasn’t Jeremiah great when he made that plea for his own life? You remember he said:

“The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words you have heard.

“Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God; and the Lord will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you.

“As for me, behold, I am in your hands: do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you.

“But know for certain, that if you put me to death you shall bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the Lord hath sent me to speak all these words in your ears.”

“I am glad that we were there to speak up in Jeremiah’s favor, for there aren’t many of the princes who think as we do,” said Azariah.

“We were all of us glad that we could lend our influence in that way,” rejoined the others.

“We trembled to think that they should have sought the life of Jeremiah and we said so. It has come to a strange time when a man who comes to us with the Word of God and gives it to us truthfully must be threatened with death,” said Daniel, thoughtfully.

“And have you heard what they call this good man of God? They have nicknamed him ‘Joy-killer,’ for they say he goes around all of the time telling about conditions in the nation getting worse and worse.”

“Why, Daniel, those priests and prophets up in the Temple are telling the poor, deluded people every day that times are getting better and better and that they need have no fear of a coming disaster.”

“Yes, that is true, but what alarms me most of all is that when I read the prophecies of God’s Word, I see them being fulfilled this very minute. I know some of these predictions cannot come true in our day; but, as regards Judah and Babylon, boys,” cried Daniel, as he arose to his feet, “this calamity may fall upon us in the next twenty-four hours. I tell you it is at our very doors.”

All four companions, now standing to their feet, looked one to another in grave silence. Finally one said, “Let us make a covenant between us here and now, that whatever comes to us in our land or in a foreign land, that we will be faithful to the Word of our God, Jehovah, the God of Israel and Judah.”

Joining hands, I think they bowed their heads and hearts before God and solemnly swore allegiance—at any cost.

It was a sober group of four, manly, young Hebrews who went back that day to serve once more in the Temple in Jerusalem.

I have given you a word picture of the events leading up to the captivity, a bit fanciful, perhaps, but nevertheless based upon the account given in the Bible.

As I write this story I have been again and again reminded that, but for the date and place, I might have been picturing today instead of 606 B. C.

God's Word foretells the events preceding the Second Coming of Jesus Christ as plainly as Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Micah prophesied the Babylonian captivity, and yet, men do now just as the priests and false prophets did then, they deny the Word of God in the face of the literal fulfillments of many prophecies and scoff at His imminent return.

~ end of chapter 1 ~

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