

# Exiles<sup>1</sup> as Missionaries



## SABBATH—JULY 25

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Daniel 1–12; Isaiah 39:5–7; Daniel 2:44; Matthew 24:14, 15; Genesis 41.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “ ‘And he [Jesus] was given authority, glory [honor] and a kingdom. People from every nation and language worshiped him. His authority will last forever. It will not pass away. His kingdom will never be destroyed’ ” (Daniel 7:14, Nlrv).

**AS A PEOPLE OF PROPHECY, SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS BELIEVE IN THE SOON COMING OF JESUS CHRIST.** His coming will end this world as we know it. And finally it will bring in God's everlasting kingdom, pictured in the book of Daniel in this way: “Then the authority, power and greatness of all the kingdoms on earth will be handed over to the people of the Most High God. His kingdom will last forever. Every ruler will worship and obey him” (Daniel 7:27, Nlrv). This kingdom is the goal of our faith. It is what the book of Hebrews (Hebrews 11:16) called the “better country.” It is the one that all God's people through the ages have trusted will come. It is the one whose “builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11: 10).

But the book of Daniel is also a kind of handbook for missionary work. From it we can learn lessons on how the Lord was able to use some of His people to witness to those who were involved in spiritual darkness. Through their strong faith, these believers revealed the reality of the living God to those who knew only false ones and gave these pagans (idol worshipers) a chance at a place in this everlasting kingdom too.

### DEFINITIONS

1. exiles—people who are removed from their home country.

## THE EXILE (Isaiah 39:5–7)

**Read Isaiah 39:5–7 and Daniel 1:1, 2. How are these verses related?**

Daniel's name means "God is my judge." He was forced to march from a defeated Jerusalem into the Babylonian capital. The book of Daniel gives examples of his life in the courts of Babylon and Persia. After three years of "education" in Babylon, Daniel worked as a civil servant and royal advisor. Through the power of God, he rose above his position as a slave to become a highly placed missionary to two superpowers.

The book of Daniel is more than a treasure of messages from God. The reader meets some of the challenges facing Hebrews living in a foreign country that gave no support for their loyalty to the God of Israel. It also paints a beautiful picture of men who learned to live out their commitment to truth in the absence of the temple, the priesthood, and sacrifices.

**Read Daniel 1:8–13; Daniel 5:12; Daniel 6:4; Daniel 9:3–19. What do these verses tell us about Daniel's character (thoughts; feelings; actions) that made him the great missionary he was?**

"Every organization that has the name of Seventh-day Adventist is to be to the world as was Joseph in Egypt, and as were Daniel and his fellows in Babylon. In the leading of God these men were taken as slaves, that they might carry to heathen nations the knowledge of the true God. They were to be representatives of God in our world. They were to not give in to the idol-worshiping nations. But they were to stand loyal to their faith, bearing as a special honor the name of worshipers of the God who created the heavens and the earth."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies [Messages] for the Church*, volume 8, page 153.

**Think how easy it would have been for Daniel to have given up. What does Daniel's example teach us about how weak our excuses are for not living up to our faith and beliefs?**

## WITNESSES (Daniel 2:47)



**By their faithful witness, Daniel's three friends were able to show the power of the true God to King Nebuchadnezzar.**

In Daniel 2, Daniel had an opportunity to witness to the power of the true God, as opposed to the false ones of Babylon. Daniel sang a hymn of praise with his Jewish friends and thanked God for answering their prayers (Daniel 2:20–23). Afterward he told the meaning of the king's dream and testified (told about; witnessed) to God's greatness and control over all earthly kingdoms.

**What does the king say that reveals he learned something about the true God? Read Daniel 2:47.**

In Daniel 2, Daniel did not have a choice: he had to either give the king what he wanted or face death. But in chapter 3 Daniel's three friends could have saved themselves from the fiery furnace if they simply had obeyed the king's command. Instead, by their faithful witness, they were able to testify to the power of the true God.

"How did Nebuchadnezzar know that the fourth person in the furnace was like the Son of God? He had heard of the Son of God from the Hebrew slaves that were in his kingdom. They had brought the knowledge of the living God who rules all things."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, May 3, 1892.

**In Daniel 4, what confession did King Nebuchadnezzar again make about the true God as the result of Daniel's witness? Read Daniel 4:37.**

In Daniel 5, Daniel made his last appearance at the Babylonian court. There he is called upon to explain the unusual writing upon the wall of Belshazzar's palace. It foretold the overthrow of the Babylonian Empire at the hands of the Medes and Persians. No doubt Belshazzar had been impressed by what Daniel did. But it was too late: the king's fate was already sealed. The sad thing is that according to the Bible (read Daniel 5:17–23), Belshazzar had opportunity to learn truth and to be humbled by it. As we know, he did not make use of those opportunities.

**How important that we look at our own lives and ask ourselves, What kind of witness does my life give to the world? What does your answer tell you?**

**DANIEL IN PERSIA (Daniel 6:28)**

The king called Daniel the “ ‘servant of the living God’ ” in Daniel 6:20 (NKJV). What is suggested by those words?

In Daniel 6, with the change of empire and king, Daniel still kept his position and was even promoted. He became one of three presidents to whom 120 governors were to report. King Darius even thought about choosing him as vizier (a high-ranking political advisor) over his whole kingdom. This stirred up the jealousy of the other presidents and governors. They influenced the king to make an empire-wide law that really was aimed at imprisoning and killing Daniel. Daniel was thrown into a den of lions. But God stepped in to save Daniel from a situation that not even the sympathetic king could keep from happening. Daniel’s miraculous rescue so pleased the king that he ordered an empire-wide royal law praising the God of Daniel in Daniel 6:25–27.

**Read Daniel 6. What in the chapter reveals that Daniel had already been a great witness to the king? Also, what in the king’s law reveals that he knew more about Daniel’s God than he could have learned just from the amazing rescue? What does this tell us about Daniel’s witness to him?**



**Daniel was thrown into a den of lions, but God delivered him.**

## DANIEL AND GOD'S ETERNAL KINGDOM (Daniel 7:13, 14)



**Daniel points often to the end times in his writings.**

Daniel did not just give the meanings of other men's dreams. In Daniel 7–12, Daniel had his own visions that revealed the future of great world superpowers. Daniel's visions proved that, no matter what earthly rulers plan to do, God holds the final control of the nations. In the end, He and His final kingdom will succeed, and that victory will be complete (read Daniel 2:44).

**Read Daniel 7:13, 14. What is being described in these verses? How does it relate to the idea of Christians taking the gospel to the world?**

Whatever else those verses are talking about, the important issue is the coming of God's eternal kingdom. It does not come until after the return of Jesus. And what point did Jesus Himself say in Matthew 24:14–16 was important in connection with His return?

Jesus' prophecies (special messages) of the end of the world in Matthew 24 are connected to Daniel's prophecies. The "abomination of desolation"<sup>2</sup> foretold by Daniel (Daniel 11:31; Daniel 12:11) was further explained by Jesus to be in force in His own day and beyond. The point is that Jesus closely connected the book of Daniel to the end times, which is no surprise. This is because Daniel in many places does indeed point to the end times (Daniel 8:17, 19; Daniel 11:35; and Daniel 12:4, 13). And, according to Jesus, the end does not come until "this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world" (Matthew 24:14, NKJV).

**The gospel is to be preached in "all the world," and only then will Jesus return. And we are the ones called to preach it. Some then argue that Jesus cannot return until we do our work. How are we to understand our part in the timing of Jesus' return? Bring your answer to class on Sabbath.**

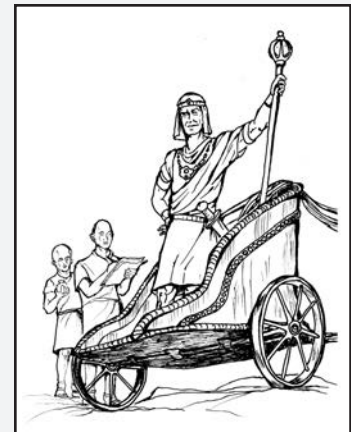
### DEFINITIONS

2. abomination of desolation— an abomination is a hateful, disgusting thing. Desolation is something that is completely ruined or destroyed. The abomination of desolation that Daniel spoke about in Daniel 11:31 took place when the Roman army destroyed the temple in Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Jesus used the wording "the abomination of desolation" to mean the future attack on God's truth.

**MORE EXILES AS MISSIONARIES (Genesis 41)**

Daniel was an Israelite away from his home country as Joseph and Moses were in Egypt, as Nehemiah was in Babylon, and Esther was in Persia. Their lives teach us that it is possible to live faithfully to God in unsupportive places. With God’s leading, it was even possible to gain high positions in these foreign places. Each lived a creative and rich life, skillfully managing difficult religious, social, and political situations that were far different from those of their home culture. They were loyal members of exiled Hebrew communities, and they were also good missionaries for the God of Israel.

Witnessing in exile sometimes meant living a quiet godly life. And sometimes it meant speaking out boldly and taking a strong stand for God. We see both examples in the lives of Esther and Daniel.



**With God’s leading, Joseph became the most powerful man in Egypt next to Pharaoh.**

<b>Esther</b>	<b>Daniel</b>
1. Was not known as a Hebrew until called to reveal it.	1. Was known as a Hebrew.
2. Kept her religion to herself until she needed to reveal it.	2. Made known his religious beliefs.
3. God protected her and her family.	3. God protected him and his friends.
4. Witnessed in high places to save her life along with the lives of her people.	4. Witnessed in high places to save his life along with other people’s lives.
5. Helped establish religious freedom and the right to self-defense of a smaller religious group.	5. Indirectly influenced King Cyrus to let exiled Hebrews rebuild the Jerusalem temple.

**Read through Genesis 41. In what ways was Joseph able to witness to the Egyptians? What does his story share in common with the stories of Daniel and his friends in Babylon?**

**How can you witness for your faith in the places where you find yourself? Are you giving a quiet or active witness, or both? What are things you can either say or do that would make a more powerful impression on others about the goodness and love of our God?**

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** “Large crowds of people will be called to a wider ministry [work done for God]. The whole world is opening to the gospel. . . . From every part of this world of ours comes the cry of sin-stricken hearts for a knowledge of the God of love. . . . It depends on us who have received the knowledge to answer their cry. To every household and every school, to every parent, teacher, and child upon whom has shone the light of the gospel, comes at this crisis an important question. It was the same question put to Esther the queen at that important crisis in Israel’s history. And that question is ‘Who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?’ ”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Adventist Home*, pages 484, 485.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 Discuss the prophecies in the book of Daniel, especially Daniel 2, Daniel 7, and Daniel 8. In what ways are these a powerful testimony (witness) that the Bible is always right and that God knows everything about the future? For example, notice how, between Daniel 2, Daniel 7, and Daniel 8, three of the four main kingdoms are named for us. How should this help us to learn to trust in the Word of God and His promises to us?
- 2 In these stories in the book of Daniel and some of the other stories (such as Joseph’s), there were some miracles that helped the exile’s powerful witness to the pagan unbelievers. But, at the same time, too, what parts of the exile’s characters (thoughts; feelings; actions) make their witness even more powerful? In what way can character and faithfulness, even more than signs and wonders, be a more powerful witness to others about how real God is and what He can do in our lives?
- 3 As we saw in Wednesday’s study, Matthew 24:14 says that the gospel needs to go to the ends of the earth, and then the end will come. Does this mean that Jesus will not come back until we do the work that He has called us to do? Discuss.