

## Article of the Month – January 2010

### Power Encounters as Missionary Method – IV – Daniel & Friends

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Alternating with our Genesis series we look at examples of power encounters in spiritual frontline battles. Earlier we considered such encounters with Pharaoh, Amalek and Balaam, and recently we studied some in the books of Samuel and Kings. Today we look at five such contests in the book of Daniel, in a real cross-cultural mission's context.<sup>1</sup>

The name Daniel means 'God is my Judge' or 'God will judge'. The truth of his name is seen in the confrontations between God and Babylon's idols. Judgment (meaning 'separation') is made between true and false by five striking examples, seen in chapters 2-6.

Power encounters are God-designed tools in missionary outreach. We see the *first* in chapter 2. Daniel had been specifically equipped to confront Babylon's idols with God.<sup>2</sup> He did not take this for granted, but engaged his friends as prayer partners until revelation came. They prayed for their salvation and Daniel praised the Lord for His answer.<sup>3</sup> The picture of the coming Kingdom<sup>4</sup> is a gem of OT revelation with regard to the Millennium. It contains the message of God's universalistic purpose – to be the recognized God of all nations. When Daniel was in Babylon, the king apparently longed for truth and reality,<sup>5</sup> found it and was willing to believe it – temporarily.<sup>6</sup> The true God honors the true seeker with true revelation, which then brings responsibility to the finder: will he believe and act upon it? Nebuchadnezzar didn't, and set up a great statue some years later – for himself.

This led in chapter 3 to a fire-baptism<sup>7</sup> for Daniel's friends. Their commitment to God was seen in their willingness to lay down their lives for His honor: a *second* power-encounter was invoked by the king, when he said 'What god will be able to rescue you from my hand?'<sup>8</sup> He would know soon, in front of a multi-national company of witnesses, because God turned this devilish meeting into a preview of what will come: all nations, tribes, peoples and languages standing before His Throne.<sup>9</sup> The confession of these men is touching: 'He will save us ... but even if not ... we will still not serve your gods'.<sup>10</sup> Only with grim determination can missionaries stand such persecution and teach all nations that no other god can save.<sup>11</sup> These men were ordinary people, not ministers. Yet, they were pure 24-carat genuine missionaries!

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<sup>1</sup> See also my article of January 2009 'Missions Training in Babylonia'

<sup>2</sup> Dan. 2:27,28

<sup>3</sup> Dan. 2:17-19 and 20-23 respectively

<sup>4</sup> Dan. 2:34,44

<sup>5</sup> Dan. 2:5,6

<sup>6</sup> Dan. 2:29-47

<sup>7</sup> See Matt. 3:11b

<sup>8</sup> Dan. 3:15

<sup>9</sup> Rev. 5:9 & 7:9

<sup>10</sup> Dan. 3:17,18

<sup>11</sup> Dan. 3:29

In chapter 4 we see the *third* power-encounter, also of great importance because of the presence of all nations. Nebuchadnezzar had learned a lesson but did not live up to it; his words were only lip service to God; in his heart he glorified himself.<sup>12</sup> Warned in a dream, interpreted by Daniel, he got one year to repent – which he left unused.<sup>13</sup> The miracle that followed when Nebuchadnezzar’s mind became like an animal’s (for 7 years) is that he was restored to royalty, reaching greater heights than before; which underlined Daniel’s earlier words:<sup>14</sup> ‘He sets up kings and deposes them’. Then N. utters a wonderful confession,<sup>15</sup> the last we hear from him. God bestowed much grace upon N. by revealing His sovereignty, and by giving him second and third chances to repent of his pride. N. apparently did not harden his heart to the degree that Pharaoh did; N. was taught, slid back, repented and was restored. Just like some believers, who are not unwilling, but too lazy to seek God’s way.

In chapter 5 we see that at the end of the exile, during the last night of the Babylonian Empire, God and Daniel are forgotten again. Daniel was now over 80 years old and idolatry was rampant. Once more God’s revelation appears, announcing judgment on a ruler who could have used his historical knowledge to fear the sovereign God, but chose not to;<sup>16</sup> hence the verdict that resulted in Babylonia’s take-over by the Medes and Persians. The golden head was replaced by the chest and arms of silver, as Daniel foretold much earlier.<sup>17</sup> It was an indirect power-encounter: the material gods versus the Most High:<sup>18</sup> this was His last meeting with dissipating Babylon.

In chapter 6 we see the *fifth* power-encounter. Daniel’s jealous colleagues challenged God’s ability to save him, which cost them their lives; nobody can equate God with pagan gods and live.<sup>19</sup> The first meeting between God and the new Empire inspired the king to utter a confession, similar to Nebuchadnezzar’s. This again was a powerful witness to all nations.<sup>20</sup> The characters of Daniel and his secular colleagues present strong contrasts. Daniel’s life-long Godly training qualified him to rule; contrary to his jealous, power-hungry and self-seeking co-workers. Similarly, those who walk with Christ now will rule with Him later<sup>21</sup> while today’s Godless rulers will never have authority again.

In 539 BC the Babylonian Empire ceased to exist. The only righteous survivor was Daniel. In the future the idolatrous world system, called Babylon in Revelation, will come to a definite end. Daniel and Revelation are books of power-encounters, where God annihilates the gods.

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<sup>12</sup> Dan. 4:1-3,30

<sup>13</sup> Dan. 4:27-29

<sup>14</sup> Dan. 4:36; compare Dan. 2:21 with 4:17,25,32

<sup>15</sup> Dan. 4:34b,35,37

<sup>16</sup> Dan. 5:2-6; 11,12; 22-28

<sup>17</sup> Dan. 2:32,39

<sup>18</sup> Compare 5:4,23 with 5:18-30

<sup>19</sup> Dan. 6:20,24

<sup>20</sup> Compare Dan. 2:47; 3:28,29 and 4:49 with 6:25

<sup>21</sup> Dan. 7:18,22b,27 and Rev. 3:21 & 20:4b,6b

