

The Sabbath School.

INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

May 12th.] B. C. 606. [Daniel i: 8-17.

THE CAPTIVES IN BABYLON.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“A good understanding have all they that do his commandments.—Psalms CXI: 10.

HOME READINGS.—M. Ps. 137: 1-9. T. Isa. 64: 1-12. W. Ps. 79: 1-13. Th. Ps. 80: 7-19. F. Jer. 50: 33-46. S. Dan. 1: 1-21. S. Ps. 111: 1-10.

The captivity was not effected all at once, but at three distinct periods. (1). In the 4th year of Jehoiakim, B.C. 606, see 2 K. 24: 1. (2). In the 1st year of Jehoiachin, B.C. 599, see 2 K. 24: 14. (3). Finally, in the 3rd year of Zedekiah, B.C. 588, see 2 K. ch. 25. Daniel informs us that he was carried off in the first deportation, v. 6, from which time the 70 years of the Babylonish captivity is dated. It may be inferred that Daniel was of the seed royal, and that he and his three companions were selected on this account, as well as from their likely appearance and superior intelligence—as hostages: called *chaldæans*, having reached the age of 12 or 14. The changes made in their names, v. 7, signified the service expected from each. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were the eunuchs called, *Belshazzar*, *Shadrach*, *Meshaeh*, and *Abednego*. In the same way Joseph's name was changed by Pharaoh to *Zaphnath paneah*, Gen. 41: 45. Daniel was dedicated to BEL, the heathen deity of Babylon; *Shadrach* was named after the SUN; *Meshaeh* answered to the EARTH, or else VENUS—*mirra*; *Abednego*, “*servant of the shining light*,” to the fire God—to whom the three children were indeed literally consigned when they refused to worship the golden image. ch. 3. It was customary at the king's table to throw a part of the viands and wine upon the hearth as an offering to the gods, this Daniel could not do, without tacitly giving his sanction to idolatry, hence his firm “purpose” in v. 8, that he would adhere to his simple vegetable diet. Like Moses, these Hebrews chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, Heb. 11: 25. There was a principle involved. Melzar, the chief butler, coaxed them to comply. “If you don't take nourishing food and stimulants your good looks will be spoiled, and we will be blamed for it.” “Try us for ten days on pulse and water,” said the captives, “and we will shew you that the use of wine is unnecessary.” v. 12. The result proved that they were right: they were better without it. The experiment is worth trying to-day by all young men who want to have clear heads and steady nerves. “As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom”—especially to Daniel, understanding in visions and dreams, in other words, *prophecy*. Verse 19. “They stood before the King”—a common expression for an attitude of conscious integrity, Prov. 22: 29 and Luke 21: 36. Verse 21. Daniel continued unto the 1st year of King Cyrus: reference to ch. 1: 1 shows, that he lived to the 3rd year of Cyrus, so that he witnessed the whole 70 years of captivity, and must have been nearly 80 when he died.

LEARN to have a purpose in life, and live up to it. Acquire as good an education as you can: it is sure to prove useful some time. Cultivate sobriety, and self-control. If sinners entice thee, consent not.

“Dare to be a Daniel!”

Dare to stand alone!

Dare to have a purpose firm!

Dare to make it known!”

May 19th.] B. C. 603. [Daniel ii: 36-45.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM.

GOLDEN TEXT.—“There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets. Verse 28.

HOME READINGS.—M. Dan. 2: 1-13. T. Dan. 2: 14-30. W. Dan. 2: 31-49. Th. Dan. 7: 1-28. F. Pa. 2: 1-12. S. Isa. 35: 1-10. S. Isa. 65: 17-25.

Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown! Nebuchadnezzar, at this time the greatest monarch on earth, was troubled with dreadful dreams. One he had, stranger than all the rest, so alarming that he could not sleep, so incoherent that he could not recall it. He sends for the magicians and astrologers and demands from them an explanation of its meaning. They reply “tell us the dream and we will interpret it. Nebuchadnezzar was not to be riled with, nor imposed upon either,—“tell me both the dream and the interpretation, *immediatly*, or every one of you shall be slain.” They could not do it, and the decree went forth that the wisemen should be slain. Daniel and his fellows with the rest, v. 13. Now follows a surprising exhibition of presence of mind, prudence, and knowledge of human nature. Daniel coolly replies, “why is the decree so hasty? give us time and see what we can do.” The time was granted. Daniel and his three friends prayed together, the secret was made known to them, and they united in a song of thanksgiving to God, v. 23. Daniel is again brought before the King. He relates the dream precisely as it was, v. 31-35. Next he gives the interpretation of it. *Thou O King art a King of Kings*, &c., v. 37. This was not empty flattery, for Nebuchadnezzar had reduced many provinces besides Palestine. He had almost unlimited dominion, though he did not recognize that God had given it him. *Thou art the head of gold*, v. 38. Mark, it was only the head of the great image that was of gold; the rest of it was of baser metal, and the feet, on which it rested, were part of iron and part of clay, which could never unite, or have strength. The whole thing meant this, “Babylon the great” is beautiful to look at, but it has not the elements of durability. Notice the different materials, *Gold, Silver, Brass, Iron*. The first represents the splendor of the Chaldean monarchy as it now is; the second, symbolizes the Medes and Persians; the third, the monarchy of Alexander the Great who boasted of universal empire and sighed that there were no more worlds to conquer; the fourth, the Roman Empire which in turn became “the mistress of the world.” The second part of the king's dream came true 66 years afterwards, in the overthrow of Babylon, during the reign of Belshazzar, when Darius the Median took the kingdom Dan. 5: 31. The last part of it was as distinctly fulfilled, for Christ was born when Rome at the height of its glory had decreed that all the world should be taxed, Luke 2: 1. “In the days of these Kings,” v. 44, i. e., before the last of these dynasties shall have passed away. *The stone cut out of the mountain without hands*, v. 45, has a distinct reference to the Messianic kingdom—a spiritual kingdom. Christ as its monarch, was to have no successor. “It shall stand for ever,” v. 44. See Ps. 145: 13. A continually progressive kingdom, 1 Cor. 15: 28. Christ refers to this when speaking of the stone the builders set at naught, Matt. 21: 43-44. So, in every sense, “the dream was certain and the interpretation sure,” v. 45. Nebuchadnezzar was honest enough to admit that Daniel had solved the mystery, and chivalrous enough to promote him and his three friends to positions of honour.

LEARN from vs. 17-18 the efficacy of united fervent prayer: see also Matt. 18: 19: that all human institutions are unstable and changeful, but that the kingdom of Christ shall endure for ever.