

I SPY IN MY LITTLE ICON



By Kh. Jocelyn Abyad

Holy Prophet Daniel



Public Domain photo of Russian Icon from the Iconostasis of Kizhi Monastery

These gifts made some of the other advisors to the king jealous. They plotted to turn the king against Daniel and tricked him into sentencing Daniel to death. Daniel was placed overnight in a den full of ferocious lions. A stone was placed over the top of the den so he could not escape. But God chose to spare Daniel's life and closed the mouths of the lions. When the king removed the stone to check on Daniel in the morning, he was amazed to see Daniel unharmed. Daniel gave glory to God for his rescue. The Holy Prophet Daniel died peacefully in old age after a life of service to the True God whom he worshiped and glorified.

If we look at the icon this month, we see that the Holy Prophet Daniel is dressed in expensive, royal clothes. He even has gems on the collar around his neck. He wears a strange-looking hat called a Phrygian cap, which was in fashion in the Babylonian Empire at the time. You may also notice that he does not have a beard, showing that he was still a young man when these dramatic events occurred. As a prophet, he holds a scroll that says, "The God of Heaven will establish a kingdom which will never be destroyed (Dan 2:44).

The Babylonian Empire conquered the Jewish people about six hundred years before Christ. The king of Babylon at that time was named Nebuchadnezzar, and he chose only the finest, strongest, most handsome men in the Jewish communities to train to become servants in the royal court. Among these men was the Holy Prophet Daniel.

While working for the king, God gave Daniel the gift of interpretation of dreams. He once used this gift to tell King Nebuchadnezzar the meaning of his strange dream. The dream was about a statue of a giant made of gold, silver, bronze, iron, and stone. A rock hit the giant, the statue crumbled, and in its place grew a mountain that covered the whole world. Daniel knew this was a prophecy about the coming of Christ and that His Kingdom would rule all others. This interpretation of the dream earned Daniel a place as one of the king's closest advisors, and he was lavished with gifts.

Editor's Note: What a cool story about the effect of stress on a person's quality of sleep! Imagine the restless sleep of King Nebuchadnezzar! He really liked Daniel but was tricked into sending him into the lion's den to be eaten to death. The fact that he hurried to the den in the morning shows us that he was expecting to find his servant torn limb from limb, and he was powerless to do anything to help him. What torment! Do you think he was able to get any rest that night at all?

Now imagine Daniel asleep in the den with the lions once he realized that God had taken charge of his situation and that he was enclosed with peaceful animals who refused to harm him. I like to think that they acted as sweetly toward him as my little kitten behaves at night time when she licks me and snuggles at my feet at night time! How warm and cozy! With God to protect him, he had nothing more to fear. What a good night's sleep he must have had that night!