



## THE PROPHECY OF DANIEL

### *Lesson Number 2*

TRANSLATION LEGEND: ASV=American Standard Version, BBE=Bible in Basic English, DRA=Douay-Rheims KJV=King James Version, NKJV=New King James Version, NAB=New American Bible, NASB=New American Standard Bible, NAU=New American Standard Bible 1995, NIB=New International Bible, NIV=New International Version, NJB=New Jerusalem Bible, NLT=New Living Translation, NRSV=New Revised Standard Version, RSV=Revised Standard Version, YLT=Young's Literal Translation.

----- *Bible Translation Codes with Identification* -----



# THE FIRST GREAT TEST OF FAITH

1:3 And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; <sup>4</sup>Children in whom was no blemish, but well favored, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. <sup>5</sup>And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king. <sup>6</sup>Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: <sup>7</sup>Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego. <sup>8</sup>But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. <sup>KJV</sup> (Daniel 1:3-8)

## INTRODUCTION

### THE WAYS OF GOD

As we enter into the record of the first great test of faith, it is important that we again get our spiritual bearings. When we read and study books like Daniel, we must mortify the human propensity to classify Divinely recorded events as history

– in this case, Jewish history. As commonly defined, there is history in Scripture – but that is not its thrust. Strictly speaking, the Bible is not a record of human history as much as it is the workings of the Lord. This is precisely why vast periods of human history are

often scanned with very little comment. The first two thousand years of human history, for example, are covered in less than eleven chapters of the Bible (Gen 1:1-11:25). **More chapters** (nearly fourteen) **are devoted to the life of Abraham than that** (Gen 11:26-25:9) –

## OUTLINE

- < A FOCUSED DEMAND IS GIVEN (1:3)
- < THERE ARE DEMANDING REQUIREMENTS (1:4a)
- < EXTRAORDINARY ABILITIES ARE REQUIRED (1:4b)
- < THE DAILY PROVISIONS ARE ESTABLISHED (1:5)
- < THE DIVINE FOCUS IS ONLY ON FOUR (1:6)
- < SPECIAL NAMES ARE GIVEN TO THEM (1:7)
- < DANIEL PURPOSES IN HIS HEART (1:8)

one hundred and seventy-five years (Gen 25:7). Even then, we know hardly anything about the first seventy-five years of Abraham's (then Abram) life. Thus, fourteen chapters of the book of beginnings is devoted to a record of ninety-five years of Abraham's life, while eleven chapters are devoted to a brief overview of over two thousand years.

This is a Divine manner, and must be duly noted by students of Scripture. Those who are devoted to the study of history cannot deal with interruptions of vast periods of time, or to anything less than a continuous record. Normally, history has little meaning if little attention is given to successive details.

### THE DIVINE MANNER

It is the Divine manner to put the emphasis on pivotal things – things that determine outcomes, and around which central decisions and occasions gather. **Whether we are speaking of the masses of people, as in the flood and prior to Abraham, or the life of Jesus Christ, the spotlight of inspiration is always on things through which God made a difference.** There is a heavenly emphasis in Scripture. If it is not seen, Scripture will not be properly understood, and lasting benefits will not be realized.

I use the term "Divine manners" in the sense of the "ways" of God – how

He works within the affairs of humanity. You may recall that the Lord acquainted Moses with His "ways," while the people were only familiar with His works. Thus we read, "He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel" (Psa 103:7).

**I suggest to you that God's "ways" are revealed to us in the book of Daniel:** in particular, in the incident that will now be placed before us. Because this is the case, I will make several observations about this record that point to the ways of the Lord. These observations are not departures from the text. Rather, they are a way of putting a handle on it, so it can be carried with profit in the heart and mind.

### THE STAMP OF DIVINITY

The book of Daniel has the stamp of Divinity upon it, and is extraordinary from several points of view. It is in the very midst of these extraordinary occurrences that the working of the Lord is declared. In order to set the stage for the text before us, it will be good to consider some of these things.

### EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES

- ☐ Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah are captivated by a heathen king (1:1-6).
- ☐ Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah are educated in the Babylon court (1:5).
- ☐ Nebuchadnezzar worships Daniel (2:46).
- ☐ Nebuchadnezzar makes Daniel the ruler over the whole province of Babylon (2:48).
- ☐ All people are required to fall down and worship a golden image (3:3).
- ☐ Darius makes Daniel the first among his presidents (6:1-3).
- ☐ Because of his excellent spirit, Darius considered setting Daniel over the whole realm (6:3).
- ☐ Daniel prospered in the reign of

Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian (6:28).

### EXTRAORDINARY MIRACLES

- ☐ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego delivered from the fiery furnace (3:23-29).
- ☐ Belshazzar makes Daniel the third ruler of the kingdom (5:29).
- ☐ For a period of thirty days, whoever asked anything of any God or man but Nebuchadnezzar would be cast into a den of lions (6:7).
- ☐ Daniel is delivered from the lion's den (6:21-27).
- ☐ In a single hour, Nebuchadnezzar is given a beast's heart, begins dwelling seven years with the beasts, eats grass, his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle, and nails became like a bird's claws (4:16,25, 33).
- ☐ The fingers of a man's hand writes on the wall of the king's palace (5:5).
- ☐ In one night, Belshazzar is slain, ending the Babylonian kingdom, and the Medes take the kingdom (5:30-31).

### EXTRAORDINARY DREAMS AND VISIONS

- ☐ Dream of a great statue that was crushed to dust by a stone cut out without hands (2:31-45)
- ☐ Dream of a great tree that was cut down, leaving its stump and roots (4:1-17).
- ☐ Vision of four differing beasts rising out of the sea (7:1-8)
- ☐ Vision of the day of judgment (7:9-10).
- ☐ Vision of the coming of One like the Son of man in the clouds of heaven (7:13-14).
- ☐ Vision of a ram with two horns pushing westward, northward and southward (8:3-4).
- ☐ Vision of a he goat from the west, with a notable horn between his eyes, which smote the ram and became very great (8:5-7).
- ☐ Vision of four prominent horns that came out of the ram's broken horn (8:8).

**THOSE WHO LIVE BY FAITH THINK DIFFERENTLY FROM OTHER PEOPLE. THEY ARE NOT TURNED ASIDE BY THE CIRCUMSTANCES, EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE EXTRAORDINARY.**

- ▣ Vision of a little horn that arose from the four horns, waxing great and magnifying himself (8:9-12).
- ▣ Vision of a man clothed in linen, girded with a belt of pure gold (10:5).

**EXTRAORDINARY EXPLANATIONS**

- ▣ Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the great image destroyed by a stone (2:30-45).
- ▣ Daniel interprets Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of a tree that was cut down (4:19-27).
- ▣ An angel interprets Daniel’s vision of the four beasts (7:16-28).
- ▣ An angel interprets Daniel’s vision of the ram and he goat (8:16-26).
- ▣ An angel interprets the vision Daniel had by the side of the river (10:8-21).

seems to be against the believer. **The will of the Lord cannot be neutralized by difficulty or oppression.** These realities are lived out in the book of Daniel.

Although Daniel is young, away from home, separated from his parents, in a heathen land, and marked out to serve an idol-worshipping king, **he survives.** He not only survives, he **flourishes.** During such times he receives unparalleled revelations from God, and interpretations are given to him from heaven. The angels of God minister to him, explain to him, and deliver him.

The book of Daniel confirms *“that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things*

**DIVINE PROVIDENCE**

As in all of Scripture, the book of Daniel unveils Divine providence. I refer to the secret, but purposeful, working of God, whereby two great objectives are accomplished. First and foremost, He is *“working salvation in the earth”* (Psa 74:12), orchestrating the affairs of men in order to accomplish His own magnificent purpose. Secondly, He is working all things together for the good of those upon whom He has set His love, or who have found grace in His eyes. **In both the accomplishment of His purpose, and the good of His people, nothing is left strictly in the hands of men.** Even though, from outward appearance, it may seem as though men are in charge of the matter, yet it is the Lord who works in them both to will and to do of His own good pleasure (Phil 2:13). Solomon said it this way, *“The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD”* (Prov 16:33). Later versions read, *“But its every decision is from the LORD,”* NKJV/NASB/NIV and *“but the decision is wholly from the LORD.”* NRSV Another version reads, *“When the lot is cast into the lap, its decision depends entirely on the LORD.”* NAB

**WHETHER IN NATURE OR AMONG MEN, ALL THINGS ARE ORCHESTRATED, OR HELD TOGETHER, BY THE HAND OF THE LORD. HE IS WORKING BEHIND THE SCENES FOR HIS OWN GLORY, AND THE GOOD OF THOSE WHO DARE TO TRUST IN HIM.**

**EXTRAORDINARY SCOPE**

The book of Daniel has unusual scope, of breadth.

- ▣ The dynasties of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Cyrus, and Darius are covered.
- ▣ A number of kingdoms are mentioned. Judah (1:1), Israel (9:7), Babylon (1:1), Chaldeans (5:30), Media (8:20), Persia (10:1), Greece (11:2), Egypt (11:8), Lybia (11:43), Ethiopia (11:43).
- ▣ The time of world kingdoms is outlined (2:30-45; 8:16-26).
- ▣ Details of the Messiah’s death are described (9:25-26).
- ▣ Circumstances attending the time of *“the end”* are spelled out (7:9-10; 7:13-14; 12:1-10).

**LEARNING HOW TO THINK**

**Those who Live by faith think differently from other people. They are not turned aside by the circumstances, even though they are extraordinary.** Faith thrives in trouble, and hope flourishes when everything

*present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Rom 8:38-39). If such marvelous benefits could be realized by four young men in Babylon, what is possible for you today? They were blessed in unprecedented ways before Christ Jesus, before the sins of the world were taken away, and before the world was reconciled to God. Their benefits were realized before the devil was destroyed, before principalities and powers were plundered, and before men were given the *“Spirit of adoption.”*

Thus, as we approach this first test of the faith of Daniel and his three colleagues, I encourage you to be perceptive. Look for the hand of the Lord, and behold how He works for them who trust in Him *“before the sons of men”* (Psa 31:19). **This book, and this particular occasion, is written “To make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom” (Psa 145:12).**

**The providence of God involves the overturning of some human decisions, and the establishment of others.** Some examples will suffice to establish this critical point.

- ▣ It was God who worked in the circumstances of Joseph, overturning the counsel of his brothers, and establishing him as prince over Egypt (Gen 45:5-8; 50:20).
- ▣ The Lord overturned Pharaoh’s decision to keep Israel, showing both Israel and the Egyptians that He alone is God (Ex 14:4).
- ▣ God hardened the hearts of nations so they would come against Israel and be destroyed by them (Josh 11:19-20).
- ▣ God sent an evil spirit between Abimilech and the children of Shechem (Judges 9:23).
- ▣ The Lord appointed the defeat of the sound counsel of Ahithophel so that He might bring evil upon Absalom (2 Sam 17:14).
- ▣ When Samson sought a wife from among the heathen, the cause was actually from the Lord, who sought

an occasion against the Philistines (Judges 14:4).

- ▶ When David numbered Israel, resulting in a great plague, it is written that **GOD** “*moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah*” (2 Sam 24:1).
- ▶ The Lord stirred up adversaries against Solomon (1 Kings 11:14,23).
- ▶ God stirred up “*the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, and the spirit of Tilgathpilneser king of Assyria, and he carried them away, even the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh*” (1 Chron 5:26).
- ▶ When Rehoboam forsook the counsel of the older men, and hearkened not to the people, “*the cause was of God, that the LORD might perform his word, which he spake by the hand of Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Neat*” (2 Chron 10:13-15).
- ▶ The Lord “*stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia,*” to build the house of the Lord (2 Chron 36:22).
- ▶ When the enemies of the Jews tried to stop them from building the house of God, “*the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they could not cause them to cease*” (Ezra 5:4-5).
- ▶ In the days of Ezra, when the people kept the feast of unleavened bread, the Lord “*turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God*” (Ezra 6:22).
- ▶ In the case of the Babylonian captivity, at its peak during the time of our text, God said, “*and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive into Babylon*” (Jer 20:4).

**Whether in nature or among men, all things are orchestrated, or held together, by the hand of the Lord. He is working behind the scenes for His own glory, and the good of those who dare to trust in Him.** If we fail to see this in the book of Daniel, it’s value will not be realized. We are being exposed to the working of the Lord, and that is how it must be seen.

**WHAT ABOUT FREE WILL?**

Immediately, some will ask about the “free will of man.” How does that fit into these things. You would think that the way men speak about “the free will of man”

surely confirms it is an emphasis in Scripture. However, this is not at all the case. In fact, the term, as normally used, is not even found in Scripture – not a single time. It is NEVER the subject of Divine exposition. We read about “*the heart of man*” (1 Cor 2:9), “*the spirit of man*” (1 Cor 2:11), “*the wrath of man*” (James 1:20), and “*the glory of man*” (1 Pet 1:24). However, we NEVER read of “the free will of man.” The Spirit does speak of “*the will of man,*” but in quite another way. The new birth is said to be NOT “*of the will of man*” (John 1:13). The Scriptures themselves are said to have come in old time NOT “*by the will of man*” (1 Pet 1:21).

Rather, the responsibility of men is encapsulated in words like “*receive*” (Acts 8:14; 1 Thess 2:13), “*believe*” (John 1:12; Rom 1:16), and “*obey*” (Acts 5:32; Heb 5:9). In this way, the emphasis is **not** placed upon the **capacities** of men, but on

determined of their own will to go up to Jerusalem (Ezra 7:13).

**Throughout Scripture, the will that determines, decides, or arbitrates, is the will of God.** It is the peculiar prerogative of faith to bring us into accord with the “*good and acceptable, and perfect will of God.*” A failure to see this circumstance casts a cloud of mystery and confusion over the entirety of God’s Word. God can, and does, impose His will upon men. He did upon the entire world in the flood (Gen 7:21), the builders at Babel (Gen 11:8), Pharaoh (Psa 136:15), the people of Egypt (Ex 3:21; 12:36), and the sinners of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:25). In the Babylonian captivity God imposed His will upon Judah (Dan 1:2; Isa 42:24). He imposed it upon Belshazzar, stripping his kingdom from him (Dan 5:22-30). He also did so upon Nebuchadnezzar by giving him the heart of a beast, and removing all rationality

**A PARADE OF OTHER WITNESSES COULD BE SUMMONED BEFORE US TO ATTEST OF THIS FACT: NAMELY, THAT GOD CAN AND DOES IMPOSE HIS WILL UPON CERTAIN PEOPLE.**

their responsibility and accountability to God. Sin has infected all human capacities, creating the condition of fallenness (Rom 3:23). For this reason, Apostolic doctrine deals with the renewal and empowerment of those capacities, and not the capacities themselves.

My intention is not to aimlessly address the matter of the human will, which itself is an aspect of the Divine imagery with men. **My point is that the human will is not the subject of exposition in Scripture.** Truth is never bent around the presence of man’s will. Rather, it is always within the perimeter of God’s will.

Sixteen times, the word “*freewill*” is applied to offerings – offerings that were determined by the giver instead of a hard law (Lev 22:18,21; 22:23; 23:38; Num 15:3; 29:39; Deut 12:6,17; 16:10; 23:23; 2 Chron 31:14; Ezra 1:4; 3:5; 7:16; 8:28; Psa 119:108). Once it is used of those who

from him for a season (Dan 4:16,32).

A parade of other witnesses could be summoned before us to attest of this fact: namely, **that God can and does impose His will upon certain people.** Herod (Acts 12:20-23), Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 10:1-10), and many disobedient Corinthians could testify to this truth (1 Cor 11:29-30).

**It is quite true that God does not impose His will upon men in the matter of salvation.** He does, however, deliver a Gospel to them which is His “*power unto salvation*” (Rom 1:16). Through that glorious Gospel, and the belief of it, the people become “*willing in the day of His power*” (Psa 110:3).

**The Relevance of These Observations**

These few remarks ARE relevant to our study of Daniel. In this book, God will orchestrate the affairs of men, often moving upon their wills, to fulfill **His** will.

The particular point to be seen is that all of this is done to give His people the advantage, and to bless them with blessing. That is, in fact, the very point that must be seen in the text before us.

**Working upon the hearts and minds of men, the Lord is moving Daniel into a place of extended prominence.** God will put Daniel where He intends for him to be, working through Nebuchadnezzar, the prince of his eunuchs, Belshazzar, Cyrus, and Darius. The affairs of the world are being ordered for the ultimate glory of God, and the fulfillment of His appointed purpose.

Thus, Daniel's promotions, though implemented through the edicts of kings of the earth, really came from the Lord. **He was the One shaping the circumstances.** Thus it is written, "For

*promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another"* (Psa 75:6).

#### **A KEY TO UNDERSTANDING PROPHECY**

There are many magnificent prophecies in this book. Yet, if they are not perceived as the Lord fulfilling His own purpose, they will be viewed as intrusions into God's purpose, rather than the execution of it. They will be seen without regard to the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. They will also tend to produce fear, even moving men to adopt ridiculous theologies in order to assuage their unbelieving hearts. **It is not uncommon for men to take the prophecies of Daniel and formulate dogmas about nations rather than proclamations of the Lord's doing.**

Such men shine the spotlight on earthly rulers with scarcely a thought about them being raised up and put down by the Living God.

The way to avoid these erroneous conclusions is to behold the working of the Lord in the very beginning of this marvelous book. **If we can see His hand clearly here, it will not be difficult to believe His hand will be seen just as clearly in the outworking of the prophecies made known through Daniel.**

Let novel views of Scripture be cast from us forthrightly and with zeal, particular regarding the book of Daniel. Look for God's working, believing it is all for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose. Let God confirm to you His care for you!

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## **A FOCUSED COMMAND IS GIVEN**

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***“ 1:8 And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes . . . ”*** Ever keep before you that we are witnessing the unfolding of Divine purpose. God is

Nebuchadnezzar unquestionably thought the whole matter proceeded from his own mind, and the "master of his eunuchs" undoubtedly thought the same. It is wholly improper, however, for those with "the mind of Christ" to think in such a manner. **God does not finish what**

(Prov 21:1).

#### **CALLED IN A DISCIPLINED PROCEDURE**

On the surface, the first part of Daniel is wholly historical. Yet, as I have pointed out, it is actually a record of God Himself working things together for the ultimate good of the four Hebrew children.

There is nothing slipshod about the working of the Lord. **Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah are called within the framework of a disciplined procedure.** They did not wander into the king's court, or seek by some other means to gain an advantage with the king. The king spoke to the person responsible for the care of these young boys. He directed him to bring specific children to him. They were to be "of the children of Israel" – deported Jews. Only selected boys from this group were acceptable: "of the king's seed, and of the princes."

Such children were mentioned by Jeremiah. Such were "of the seed royal, and the princes of the king" (Jer 41:1). Certain children in Scripture were

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**EVER KEEP BEFORE YOU THAT WE ARE WITNESSING THE UNFOLDING OF DIVINE PURPOSE. GOD IS WORKING THROUGH THE KING AND THE MASTER OF HIS EUNUCHS TO FULFILL HIS OWN WILL. HE WILL PREPARE DANIEL TO BOTH RECEIVE AND COMMUNICATE INSIGHT INTO DIVINE WORKINGS.**

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working through the king and the master of his eunuchs to fulfill His own will. He will prepare Daniel to both receive and communicate insight into Divine workings. **Our text is showing us the Divine prelude – how personalities and events were purposefully orchestrated for God's own purpose.**

**men begin, and men do not finish what God begins.** That is fundamental to sound thinking! The Lord is not simply taking something conceived by Nebuchadnezzar and turning it into something good for Daniel. Rather, He is turning the king's heart, directing it "like a watercourse wherever He pleases"<sup>NIV</sup>

identified as “the king’s seed,” or children of a kingly lineage. Thus Hadad the Edomite is described as “of the king’s seed in Edom” (1 Kgs 11:14).

#### PRECISE PROPHECY FULFILLED

This episode is the fulfillment of a prophecy delivered to Hezekiah by the prophet Isaiah. It was delivered shortly after the extension of Hezekiah’s life, which thing occurred in answer to his prayer. King Hezekiah was “sick unto death,” and Isaiah had come to him saying, “Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live” (2 Kgs 20:1). Immediately, the king turned his face to the wall, fervently pleading with the Lord to consider how he had walked faithfully before Him. Before Isaiah “was gone out into the middle court . . . the word of the LORD came to him” (20:2-4). He was instructed to go back to Hezekiah and tell him his prayers had been heard.

As a consequence, the Lord added fifteen years to his life, and delivered him out of the hand of the king of Assyria, defending the city of Jerusalem for His own name’s sake. The sickness Hezekiah had apparently involved an inflammatory tumor, or boil. Thus, Isaiah instructed him “Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered (20:5-8).

It is ironic that during his illness, Hezekiah had heard from the king of Babylon. It is written, “At that time Berodachbaladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present unto Hezekiah: for he had heard that Hezekiah had been sick” (20:12). In response, Hezekiah “showed them all the house of his precious things, the silver,

and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armor, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah

taken of the king’s seed . . .” (Ezek 17:12-13). Now, over one hundred years later, Daniel unfolds what the Lord did with that circumstance. **What was a period of judgment for Israel became a**

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### OUR TEXT IS RECOUNTING THINGS THAT RESULTED FROM THAT VERY CAPTIVITY: SOME OF THE KING’S SONS AND PRINCES WOULD BE TAKEN AWAY TO BECOME EUNUCHS IN THE PALACE OF THE KING OF BABYLON. NOW, IN THIS VERY TEXT, ISAIAH’S PROPHECY IS BEING FULFILLED IN REMARKABLE DETAIL.

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showed them not” (20:13). It was because of this misjudgment that Isaiah delivered a scathing prophecy to Hezekiah, showing that he did not do well to consider the Babylonians worthy of such treatment. After some dialog between Hezekiah and Isaiah, the prophet delivered the following prophecy.

“Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon” (2 Kgs 20:17-18; Isa 39:6-7). Ezekiel also referred to this. “Behold, the king of Babylon is come to Jerusalem, and hath taken the king thereof, and the princes thereof, and led them with him to Babylon; and hath

**time of unparalleled opportunity for Daniel.** As in the time of Balaam, “God turned the curse into a blessing” (Deut 23:5).

Our text is recounting things that resulted from that very captivity: some of the king’s sons and princes would be taken away to become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. Now, in this very text, Isaiah’s prophecy is being fulfilled in remarkable detail.

Whether this means Daniel was immediately related to Hezekiah, we do not know. His lineage, however, was from a princely order. The point to be seen is the precise manner in which the word of the Lord was being fulfilled. **Daniel will be given advantage during the fulfillment of a prophetic word** – a fulfillment that was not of itself pleasant. How unsearchable are God’s judgments!

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## THERE ARE DEMANDING REQUIREMENTS

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“<sup>4a</sup> **Children in whom was no blemish, but well favored, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science . . .**” The requirements set forth by the king were most demanding. Not only was a proper lineage required, personal abilities, achievements, and appearance were essential. Keep in mind,

these are the requirements within which four notable young men will rise to prominence. **Those who meet extraordinary requirements are extraordinary individuals.**

Keep the unusual circumstances in mind. This was a time of Divine chastening. The children of Judah had

been captured, taken from their homeland, and housed in heathen surroundings. Yet, the conditions that are to be found in them indicate they were **not** living in despair, had **not** given up, and were still mentally and spiritually active. It is one thing to flourish under ideal circumstances. **It is quite another to maintain comely qualities during**

**times of great oppression and isolation from the things one loves and values.** It is not unusual for professed believers to lose all of their comeliness during trials and afflictions. But you will find no such degeneration in the four Hebrew children.

#### **Faith Always Triumphs**

The book of Daniel confirms that faith always triumphs. It can keep the soul in a foreign land, maintain a hold on God, and stand the test of time. Numerous examples of this are found in Scripture, and we do well to ponder them.

– even when they were young and captives in Babylon. The king was not looking for captives huddled in corners of despair, and he did not find such children in Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

Let me underscore that the king was looking for extraordinary “*children*.” The word translated “*children*” means “a lad, boy, or young child.”<sup>STRONG</sup> This is not the same word translated “*children of Israel*.” In that expression, “*children*” refers to the general offspring of someone, without regard to their age. In our text, the word “*children*” emphasizes tender

**however, the Lord is manipulating the situation to elevate certain of his people to places of prominence.**

In this case, they are very young people. Let every young person take heart as we uncover the working of the Lord among tender youth.

#### **NO BLEMISH**

“*Children in whom was no blemish.*” Other versions read “*no defect,*”<sup>NASB</sup> and “*without any physical defect.*”<sup>NIV</sup> They had to be of sound body. I am careful to approach this matter knowing that physical appearance is not the basis upon which Divine choices are always made. There are, however, certain occasions in which they were pivotal. I understand these to be incidents of moral and spiritual tutelage that point to higher truths. Allow me to illustrate this point.

#### **Jewish Sacrifices**

The sacrifices under the Law had to be “*without blemish*” (Ex 12:5; 29:1; Lev 1:3; 6:6). There was a time when God severely upbraided Israel for ignoring this qualification. They offered animals to God that had defects, and were judged because of it. “*And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts . . . ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD*” (Mal 1:8,13). **Thus God taught the people of the necessity of offering the best to the Lord, not things that had been rejected for normal purposes.**

#### **The Priesthood**

Those who served God in the office of the priest could not have physical defects. Those, for example, who approached “*the bread of God,*” serving in the capacity of a priest, had to be free from physical defects. “*Whosoever he be of thy seed in their generations that hath any blemish, let him not approach to offer the bread of his God. For whatsoever man he be that hath a blemish, he shall not approach: a blind man, or a lame, or he that hath a flat nose, or any thing superfluous, or a man that is brokenfooted, or broken handed, or crookbacked, or a dwarf, or that hath a blemish in his eye, or be scurvy, or*

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## **THUS GOD TAUGHT THE PEOPLE OF THE NECESSITY OF OFFERING THE BEST TO THE LORD, NOT THINGS THAT HAD BEEN REJECTED FOR NORMAL PURPOSES.**

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- ▶ Noah in a degenerate world.
- ▶ Abraham among heathen peoples.
- ▶ Joseph in Egypt.
- ▶ Israel in Egyptian bondage.
- ▶ Moses in Egypt.
- ▶ Jeremiah in a pit.
- ▶ Ezekiel in Babylon.
- ▶ Paul in a Roman prison.

**The people of God will be tempted to imagine faith can only function during pleasing circumstances.** Thus some professed believers are greatly cast down by their seeming misfortunes. They wonder why such things have happened to them, and begin to struggle with fear and doubt. However, the notion that ideal conditions are the only realm where blessing is sure, is not a true postulate. This whim is an enemy to both mind and soul. **Faith is not changed by circumstance, but has in it the power to change the circumstances.**

You will find no such attitudes among the believers revealed in this book. There is not a syllable of cynicism or pessimism credited to the four Hebrew captives. They maintained their faith, a good countenance, and strong assurance

age prior to adulthood. This is the word used to describe Isaac before he was “*weaned*” (Gen 21:8). It is the word used to describe Jacob’s very young children who were “*tender*” (Gen 33:13). It is even the word used to describe baby Moses when he was providentially found by Pharaoh’s daughter (Ex 2:6). To get our bearings, the parallel Greek word (τέκνον, tenon) is used to describe Jesus when He was **twelve years old** (Lk 2:48).

**Nebuchadnezzar has commissioned a search to be made among very young boys.** While we do not know their exact age, some have estimated them to be between fifteen and eighteen. That seems to be on the high end. I prefer the view others espouse, who see them as being between thirteen and fifteen. I do not want you to be distracted by these considerations. Perhaps they will assist us to see how unusually God works – among the young, a class of people so sorely neglected by the contemporary church.

The king, therefore, is looking for young and tender youth who can be molded to his seeming advantage. He is intending to shape them to the Babylonian pattern. **Behind the scenes,**

scabbed, or hath his stones broken; no man that **hath a blemish** of the seed of Aaron the priest shall come nigh to offer the offerings of the LORD made by fire: he **hath a blemish**; he shall not come nigh to offer the bread of his God. He shall eat the bread of his God, both of the most holy, and of the holy. Only he shall not go in unto the veil, nor come nigh unto the altar, because he **hath a blemish**; that he profane not my sanctuaries: for I the LORD do sanctify them” (Lev 21:17-23).

This served as an example of the coming “*holy priesthood*” that would be realized in Christ Jesus (1 Pet 2:5).

It appears to me that God would not allow Daniel and the three Hebrew children to be His emissaries in Babylon, while failing to measure to the qualifications of His servants under the covenant to which they were subject.

**WELL FAVORED**

“... but well favored...” Other versions read “good-looking,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “handsome,”<sup>NIV</sup> “of good appearance,”<sup>WEBSTER</sup> “of goodly countenance,”<sup>DARBY</sup> and “beautiful in appearance”<sup>SEPTUAGINT</sup> The idea behind the expression “well favored” is that God Himself had blessed the lads with a comely appearance. **A pleasing appearance is given by God.**

There are other people in Scripture who are said to be “well favored,” or blessed of God with a beautiful appearance.

- ▶ The daughters of men (Gen 6:2).
- ▶ Sarai (Gen 12:11,14).
- ▶ Rebekah (Gen 24:16).
- ▶ Rachel (Gen 29:17).
- ▶ Joseph (Gen 39:6).
- ▶ Saul (1 Sam 9:2).
- ▶ David (1 Sam 16:12).
- ▶ Abigail (1 Sam 25:3).
- ▶ Bathsheba (2 Sam 11:2).
- ▶ Absalom (2 Sam 14:25).
- ▶ Tamar (2 Sam 14:27).
- ▶ Abishag (1 Kings 1:3-4).
- ▶ Adonijah (1 Kings 1:6).
- ▶ Esther (Esth 2:7).
- ▶ The daughters of Job (Job 42:15).

Those familiar with Scripture will recognize that beauty was the downfall of some people (Absalom), while

others were exploited because of their appearance (Bathsheba). **The point to be seen is that those with a comely appearance are to see it as a gift from God.** As with all gifts, this is to be used for the honor and glory of God. It is not to be allowed to neutralize ones affection for and devotion to the Lord.

Thus far we see the king is looking for young men with a sound body, and with a handsome and undistracting appearance.

**SKILLFUL IN ALL WISDOM**

“... skillful in all wisdom...”

Other versions read “gifted in all wisdom,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “showing intelligence in every branch of wisdom,”<sup>NASB</sup> “showing

**IT APPEARS TO ME THAT GOD WOULD NOT ALLOW DANIEL AND THE THREE HEBREW CHILDREN TO BE HIS EMISSARIES IN BABYLON, WHILE FAILING TO MEASURE TO THE QUALIFICATIONS OF HIS SERVANTS UNDER THE COVENANT TO WHICH THEY WERE SUBJECT.**

aptitude for every kind of learning,”<sup>NIV</sup> “trained in all wisdom,”<sup>BBE</sup> and “well versed in every branch of learning.”<sup>NLT</sup>

When you consider the possible age of those who will be discovered in this quest, this is a most remarkable requirement. In a day when lopsided wisdom is extolled, and specialists are lauded, it is refreshing to hear of anyone showing “*intelligence in every branch of wisdom.*” The phrase “*every branch of wisdom*” would include categories like horticulture, biology, language, etc. Solomon had such knowledge without having to learn it through conventional processes (1 Kgs 4:29-34). **Later we will find that God had especially blessed Daniel and his friends with their extraordinary abilities.** “*As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom*” (Dan 1:17).

The notion that understanding and wisdom are wholly unrelated to the

work of the Lord is not true. We know this is the case, because God Himself gave this ability, thereby sanctifying it for His own use and purpose.

**Those with extraordinary abilities ought to give them to the Lord, for they have been given to them by Him.** It is disappointing to me that it is so common for gifted and attractive people to give these qualities to the world, rather than to the Lord. Much of the dreadful mediocrity that plagues the contemporary church is owing to this tendency and circumstance.

Men who were noted for their wisdom include Joseph (Acts 7:10), Moses

(Acts 7:22), Bezaleel (Ex 31:3), Aholiab (Ex 31:6), Hiram (1 Kgs 7:13-14), Solomon (1 Kgs 3:28), Ezra (Ezra 7:25), and Paul (2 Pet 3:15). **God used them all for His own glory. It is in order for the children of God to seek to excel in this area.** In the work of the Lord, mediocrity, is never an asset. This is particularly true when that condition exists by choice.

**CUNNING IN KNOWLEDGE**

“... and cunning in knowledge.”

Other versions read “possessing knowledge,”<sup>NKJV</sup> “endowed with understanding,”<sup>NASB</sup> “well informed,”<sup>NIV</sup> “acute in knowledge,”<sup>DOUAY</sup> and “quick to learn.”<sup>NAB</sup>

**This expression emphasizes the ability to articulate knowledge, as opposed to simply knowing many things.** Those possessing the ability to speak on, and elucidate, a wide variety of subjects are exceedingly rare – even among the older set. Yet, in our text, such

individuals are sought among the youth. It is at this time that four young men of faith will surface. **Since they were no doubt raised during a period of oppression, they had advanced in these areas under difficult and burdensome circumstances.** Perhaps they had witnessed some of the atrocities that were associated with the sacking of Jerusalem and the captivity of its people. This would include such things as the killing of Zedekiah's sons and the putting out of his eyes, and the killing of the princes of Judah (2 Kgs 25:7; Jer 52:10-11). Whether these young boys heard of such things, or actually witnessed them, it is remarkable that they kept their wits through it all. Many a person has lost

capabilities can be developed. Far too much religion gives no advantage to the mind, expressive abilities, or a wide latitude of capability. It is difficult for me to see such religion as being related to God in any significant way. If those living under the Law could provide such a culture, how much more is the church, which is the fulness of Christ, capable of doing so for the honor of God and Christ. **Our churches should be incubators for the development of God-given gifts and abilities.**

#### UNDERSTANDING SCIENCE

“. . . *understanding science.*” Other versions read “*quick to understand,*”<sup>NKJV</sup> “*discerning knowledge,*”

beyond memorizing principles or theorems, like mathematical tables, or natural laws or principles. When a person “*understands science,*” or is “*quick to understand,*” **they are able to use the knowledge wisely.** Thus, a person who understands mathematics is able to solve mathematical problems. The individual who understands botany is able to grow and care for plants, making them productive.

This is a quality that is rarely found among adults, to say nothing of being prominent among children. Those who are moved about by statistics, as though they testified to reality, would never look among captive children for those who were “*prudent in judgment,*” or had acute abilities to use tools of mind and thought. However, even Nebuchadnezzar, who worshiped strange gods, engaged in such a search. **I understand that he did so by Divine prompting, in order that these four young boys might be discovered.** Yet, the endeavor did not seem strange to Nebuchadnezzar. It certainly should not seem strange to the saints of God.

There is something of significance to be learned here. How comely it would be if gifted young men could be discovered among those under the New Covenant.

How marvelous it would be to find young men among us who were “*without any physical defect, of good appearance, versed in every branch of wisdom, well-informed, discerning, suitable for service at the royal court.*”<sup>NJB</sup> The church cries out for the presence of such potential! May God raise up men who will look for such resources, then providing wholesome environments for their development.

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**THE PEOPLE OF GOD MUST BREAK OUT OF RIGID INSTITUTIONAL AGENDAS. THERE ARE RICH KINGDOM RESOURCES WITHIN THE BODY OF CHRIST – YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN WHO HAVE BEEN ESPECIALLY GIFTED BY GOD. THEY MUST, HOWEVER, BE DISCOVERED BY MEN, AND PLACED WITHIN ENVIRONMENTS THAT BRING ADVANTAGES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THOSE GIFTS.**

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their abilities under great stress and affliction. They have, in a sense, become another kind of people. **However, the book of Daniel confirms that faith can sanctify human capacities even under duress and great difficulty.**

In my judgment, the professing church would do well to endeavor to produce a spiritual environment in which such intellectual and expressive

<sup>NASB</sup> “*discerning,*” <sup>NJB</sup> “*endowed with knowledge and insight,*” <sup>NRSV</sup> “*prudent in judgment,*”<sup>NAB</sup> and “*good sense.*”<sup>NLT</sup>

The word “*science*” means knowledge, or a body of knowledge. To “*understand*” science it so have the ability to grasp it. This involves seeing the whole picture, and the manner in which facets of knowledge relate to the particular compartment of knowledge that is being considered. Such understanding goes

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## EXTRAORDINARY ABILITIES ARE REQUIRED

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“<sup>4b</sup> . . . and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.” I ever want to keep before you what is developing before our minds. **God is preparing to do a work within**

**the kingdom of Babylon – in the very heart of its glory and power.** Those who will be employed in this work must meet certain criteria. This is not a military exploit, like the conquering of Canaan: thus God will not use a shrewd military captain like Joshua. It is not a

violent overthrow like that of the Philistines: thus a man endowed with great strength, like Samson, will not be sought.

**The work God will do at this time involves wisdom, interpretations, prophecies, and**

**direction. It will require courage, the ability to quickly grasp the situation, and the power to speak insightfully and boldly.** Those who are called by God, therefore, must be adapted for the work into which He will lead them. That is the **real** reason for Nebuchadnezzar setting forth these requirements, even though he himself was not aware of it. This was God's way of readying four young men for a place in history that would fulfill His purpose, and bring encouragement to generations to come. If we do not discern this, the text will be nothing more than an interesting story for little children. However, rest assured, **this account is filled with evidences of Divine manners that are to be appropriated by the heart.**

#### ABILITY IN THEM

*“ . . . and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace.”* Other versions read, *“who had ability for serving in the king's court,”* <sup>NASB</sup> *“qualified to serve in the king's palace,”* <sup>NIV</sup> *“competent to serve in the king's palace,”* <sup>NRSV</sup> *“able to take positions in the king's house,”* <sup>BBE</sup> and *“have the poise needed to serve in the royal palace.”* <sup>NLT</sup>

It is one thing to possess *“ability.”* It is quite another for it to be seen by others. Ponder some of the abilities that have been noted in the Scriptures – abilities that were used by God to fulfill His purpose.

- ▣ Among the children of Benjamin, for example, there were seven hundred men who were left-handed. It is said of them, *“every one could sling stones at an hair breadth, and not miss”* (Judges 20:16). That ability had no place in a king's court, but gave the advantage to the army during the time of battle.
- ▣ Among the children of Issachar there *“were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do”* (1 Chron 12:32). They were able to give godly counsel during critical times.
- ▣ When Solomon became king, he knew the criticality of possessing the ability to govern the kingdom. He therefore prayed God would give him wisdom, making him *“able to judge”* so great a people (1 Kings 3:9).
- ▣ When describing the fighting men of

the sons of Reuben, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, Scripture speaks of *“men able to bear buckler and sword, and to shoot with bow, and skilful in war”* (1 Chron 5:18).

#### Moses

Moses was *“was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians”* (Acts 7:22). However, before God used him, he was removed from that environment for four

**THE POINT TO BE SEEN HERE IS THAT GOD RAISES UP PEOPLE APPROPRIATE FOR THE WORK HE IS DOING, THE PLACE WHERE IT IS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED, AND THE TIME DURING WHICH IT IS BEING DONE.**

- ▣ Warriors among the tribe of Zebulun were described as being *“expert in war, with all instruments of war, fifty thousand, which could keep rank: they were not of double heart”* (1 Chron 12:33).

**The point to be seen here is that God raises up people appropriate for the work He is doing, the place where it is to be accomplished, and the time during which it is being done.**

We are living in a culture that does not think in terms of *“ability.”* In many facets of our society, the key factor has become appearance rather than aptitude. Thus we often have leaders that cannot lead, teachers that cannot teach, singers that cannot sing, and builders that cannot build. Unfortunately, this tendency has crept into the church, and the results have been disastrous. Academic credentials are often assigned a greater weight than spiritual gifts. Abilities given by God are thus ignored, while those willing to subscribe to this new manner are vaulted into places of religious prominence.

**This manner is aggressively pursued even though there is a striking and consistent absence of it throughout the entirety of Scripture.** No man or woman was ever chosen by God because of their earthly credentials. In fact, precious few of all Kingdom leaders ever possessed any earthly credentials at all.

long decades – a time during which he had no apparent opportunity to use Egyptian wisdom. When Moses led the people out of Egypt and gave them the Law, it was according to the ability God gave to him, not according to the wisdom of Egypt.

#### Paul

Churchmen are fond of citing Paul as an example of a highly educated man. However, his education was not obtained at the University of Tarsus, but at *“the feet of Gamaliel,”* a Pharisee and doctor of the Law of Moses (Acts 5:34; 22:3). Paul confessed he was *“thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers.”* <sup>NIV</sup> However, even in this matter, the Apostle abandoned any personal advantages gained during that time, counting them all but *“dung”* (Phil 3:8). In Ephesus, Paul did dispute daily in *“the school of one Tyrannus”* (Acts 19:9). However, as with Moses, when it came to the work of the Lord, it was according to the ability God had given to him.

#### Does not Denigrate Learning

This observation by no means denigrates systematic learning or education. That ought to be apparent, for our text is going to speak about disciplined learning. **The point is that the opportunity was afforded in strict accord with the ABILITY of the young men** – an ability that already existed, and was independent of anything acquired in Babylon.

#### Faith Brings Abilities to their Apex

One other observation should be made here. Faith brings God-given abilities to their apex. Take, for example,

the writings of Peter and John: the Gospel of John, First, Second, and Third John, the Revelation, First Peter and Second Peter. **Is there a person in all of the world that can read these books and conclude their writers were fishermen?** Where is the person willing to affirm they are simplistic, on a grade-school level, or academically elemental? Will exposure to the book of Matthew lead anyone to the conclusion he was a lowly publican, or tax collector? Indeed not!

The astuteness and precision

young men for the call – even though they are probably unaware of it themselves.

The word “*ability*” (ability to stand in the king’s palace) emphasizes strength. In fact, the literal meaning of the word includes “might, power, or strength.” The requirement is one of vigor or fortitude. The idea is that these young men had to be able to survive being in the king’s palace. **There would be certain demands placed upon them, and they must be able to stand up under them.** Many a soul has chosen an occupation or task for which they proved incapable.

Nebuchadnezzar’s intention.

**However, it was NOT the objective of the Lord, who was using Nebuchadnezzar for His own glorious purpose.** The Lord was providing an occasion and circumstance in which He could freely make known His will to Daniel. Some of that will would then be announced to the world’s greatest ruler, in order that God might receive glory. The placement of Daniel in the king’s favor would also provide time for him to write the book of Daniel, which has, throughout the ages, proved to be a bright beacon to the people of God. **It has revealed the real intention of worldly empires, and their ultimate demise.** It has also confirmed that worldly powers eventually come against God, for which cause ALL of them will be decimated and brought to oblivion.

## THE ABILITY GOD GIVES BECOMES DISCERNIBLE TO OTHERS. IN THIS CASE, IT WILL BE APPARENT TO THE PRINCE OF THE KING’S EUNUCHS. THAT IS BECAUSE DIVINELY ACQUIRED ABILITIES ARE TO BE USED.

### Language and Literature

It was the manner of great empires to have their own language and literature. It was designed to promote their own interests. **How people talked and what they read was a means of identifying them.** The Jews had their own language (Neh 13:24). A comparison was made between the Jews and other people by referring to their language. This Eliakim said to Rabshakeh, “*Speak, I pray thee, to thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand it: and talk not with us in the Jews’ language in the ears of the people that are on the wall*” (2 Kgs 18:26). Peoples were often identified by their language (Esth 1:22). When Israel was delivered from Egypt, they were said to have been delivered “*from a people of strange language*” (Psa 114:1). When Isaiah prophesied of an appointed change in Egypt he referred to a change in their language. “*In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan*” (Isa 19:18).

with which these men wrote was not owing to earthly credentials. Rather, their faith sanctified their minds, and gave them expressive abilities. In the words of Peter, they ministered according to “*the ability which God giveth*” (1 Pet 4:11).

### The Case Before Us

The ability God gives becomes discernible to others. In this case, it will be apparent to the prince of the king’s eunuchs. That is because Divinely acquired abilities are to be used.

And what a marvelous ability is sought! It is the “*ability to serve in the king’s palace.*” <sup>NKJV</sup> **A certain competence was required that could adapt to a royal environment.** Discipline and alertness would be required, as well as an interest in serving the king and bringing certain advantages to him. Do not fail to grasp this requirement. **The king was looking for young men who could function in a society of cultured adults – even the king and his court.**

God has now moved the king to look for such youth among the captive “*children of Judah.*” In preparation for this event, God has already cultured some

Either they could not fulfill the requirements, or they became too discouraged to continue to be exposed to them. **The young men chosen by Nebuchadnezzar had to be able to remain where they would be placed.** This would involve how they thought, how they spoke, and how they responded.

### THAT THEY MIGHT TEACH

“*... whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.*” Other versions read, “*language and literature of the Chaldeans,*” <sup>NKJV</sup> and “*to speak and write the language of the Chaldeans.*” <sup>NJB</sup>

In my opinion, there is a reason why Nebuchadnezzar wanted these Jewish lads to meet such rigid qualifications. No doubt, he had in mind the ultimate influencing of the other captive Jews. He could win them over to his side through especially trained men taken from their own ranks. Perhaps he could send them back to Judah, pioneering a change of the whole Jewish culture to be but a branch of Babylon. **One of the chief means of accomplishing this was to change the language and literature of the people.** This, as I have said, was probably

In Esther’s day, the king’s scribes prepared writings for all people. The reference to the Jewish people is interesting: “*to the Jews according to their writing, and according to their language*” (Esth 8:9). Thus the Jews were distinguished by their writings and by their language. When Jeremiah prophesied the Babylonian captivity he said, “*it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language*

*thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say*" (Jer 5:15).

Thus Nebuchadnezzar seeks to conform the Jewish lads to the Babylonian way of life, that they might serve his purpose. However, he will learn later that the Most High rules, overturning rulers and purposes contrary to His own.

### **The Lesson to be Learned**

There is a subtle lesson to be learned here. People are noted for their writings and their language. **Those who seek to destroy a people, often do so by changing their writings and their language, thus adapting them to a different society.**

This observation is of particular relevance in our day. The church, which is the body of Christ, is especially identified by **its writings and its language.** Those two things contribute to the uniqueness of the church of the Living God. What we read is different, and how we speak is different. When either, or both, of those things is changed, the people themselves can be changed. **If the world can get the people of God to speak and write in the world's language, they will change them.**

I suggest that this is exactly what has happened in our time. The church has learned the language of the world, and it is seen in their writings. Whether we are speaking of musical language or literary language, there is too much of the world in much of what the church is saying. It

has adopted a new and different vocabulary, being taught in the world's court instead of *"the courts of the Lord"* (Psa 84:2). The contemporary church is being exposed more to the writings of the world than to the *"holy Scriptures,"* which are able to make men *"wise unto salvation"* (2 Tim 3:15).

**When we are exposed to the language and literature of the world, it must always fall under the**

improper balance of worldly knowledge.

We will see throughout this book that Daniel always gave the precedence to what he was taught by God. **He will never tell us what he learned in the king's court.** He will not comment on the various aspects of life among those being trained for the king's service. Nor, indeed, will he provide the details of the daily responsibilities of those chosen to stand in the king's court. **He will,**

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**THUS NEBUCHADNEZZAR SEEKS TO CONFORM THE JEWISH LADS TO THE BABYLONIAN WAY OF LIFE, THAT THEY MIGHT SERVE HIS PURPOSE. HOWEVER, HE WILL LEARN LATER THAT THE MOST HIGH RULES, OVERTURNING RULERS AND PURPOSES CONTRARY TO HIS OWN.**

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**government of the language and literature of God.** By that I mean worldly knowledge must be appropriated within the context of the knowledge of God and acquaintance with the scriptures. **If this is not done, knowledge from an earthly perspective will taint the soul, corrupt the understanding, and begin the process of spiritual deterioration.** I have witnessed this process numerous times, and it has proved to be a great discouragement to my spirit. Men and women who could have been great in the eyes of the Lord were reduced to a state of spiritual mediocrity because they possessed an

**however, tell us what was revealed to him from heaven! He will never quote Babylonish literature, but will only reveal messages brought to him by heavenly representatives.** When he obtains wisdom from literature, he will not refer to the books of Babylon, but to the books of the prophet Jeremiah (Dan 9:2). It is imperative that we learn from Daniel's manners. **Although he will be summoned to the king's court, he will conduct himself there as a man of faith.** In him, and with the consent of his will and dominance of his faith, heaven's court will be given the precedence over Nebuchadnezzar's court.

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## **THE DAILY PROVISIONS ESTABLISHED**

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***"<sup>5</sup> And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king."*** Here the purpose of king Nebuchadnezzar is mentioned. **That purpose, however, is not what drives the events that follow.** It was actually God who was working behind the scenes, preparing the way for the extended and unusually

productive ministry of Daniel. Circumstances found him in the land of the enemy, housed among those who were slated to serve the king of Babylon. All of these "circumstances," however, are being worked together for the good of Daniel. We must have this in our mind as we review this text.

### **A DAILY PROVISION**

*"And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of*

*the wine which he drank."* If the targeted boys were to stand before the king, they must become accustomed to the diet of the king. They will be given the same food eaten by the king, and drink the same wine he drank. That, at least, is the aim of the king. **This plan, however, will only prove to be an opportunity for the faith of Daniel and his three associates to shine forth.** Their true nobility, created by their faith, will now become very apparent.

Some have thought Nebuchadnezzar provided food and wine from his own table to weaken the wills of those who served him. Thus, they would feel more obligated to Babylon than to Jerusalem, and to Nebuchadnezzar than to God. Such benefits have often occasioned the fall of weak souls. That is why Solomon wrote, *“When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee: and put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite. Be not desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful meat”* (Prov 23<sup>1-3</sup>).

While this presupposed intention of Nebuchadnezzar is quite possible, nothing in the text infers such a thing. It

basis.

If Babylonish life was not lived on a cyclical basis, much more is spiritual life not on that basis. **Many believers live such sporadic lives to the Lord, that scarcely a work of grace can be accomplished within them.** They never seem to be close enough to the Lord for any significant change to be wrought in them. This is NOT the manner of the Kingdom of God!

When Israel was journeying through the wilderness, they gathered their manna *“daily”* (Ex 16:5). Their leading was on a daily basis (Num 13:21). Their offerings to God were *“daily,”*

which the young men could become expert in the literature and language of the Babylonians. For ordinary children, this would not be sufficient time. However, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were not ordinary children. They were extraordinary because they were of Abraham’s seed. They were also unusual because they were of the royal seed. Additionally, they were uncommon because they possessed unusual abilities. Finally, they were extraordinary because they had been chosen by God to administer in His name during these times. They will therefore do well in the three year period that is assigned for their further development.

### A Lesson to be Learned

Because this book details the working of the Lord, the role of these boys is primarily one in His Kingdom. Even though they have been chosen by God, and will be fully equipped by Him, yet it will not all take place instantly. **They will spend time developing their faith, and honing up their wisdom.**

Great men of God have been noted for spending several years orienting them for their work.

- ▣ Elisha ministered to Elijah for approximately ten years before taking his place (1 Kgs 19:19-21; 2 Kgs 2:1-15).
- ▣ Based upon the Passover’s He observed (John 2:13,24; 6:4; 11:55), the Apostles were taught by Jesus for two to three years.
- ▣ Paul was taught by the resurrected Christ for three years before going up to Jerusalem to meet the Apostles (Gal 1:18).

**The point is that the calling of God does not exclude the necessity of preparation.** In certain segments of the Christian community, there is unwarranted naivete in this area. Some suppose that the calling of God is accompanied with instant enablements. While I do not deny such a thing is possible, it is not the kingdom norm. For example, after Timothy had been set apart to the work of God, and had received a gift for ministry, he was challenged to engage in a hearty effort.

- ▣ *“Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the*

## JUST AS SURELY AS THE FOUR HEBREW CHILDREN WERE ORIENTED FOR STANDING BEFORE THE KING BY “DAILY” PROVISIONS, SO THE PEOPLE OF GOD ARE BEING ORIENTED TO DWELL IN THE COURTS OF THE LORD BY “DAILY” NOURISHMENT.

seems better to me to take the text as it stands, without attempting to merge it with Babylonian customs as declared by worldly history.

The thinking seems to be that of promoting superior health, appearance, wisdom, and perception. In the mind of Nebuchadnezzar, this could best be done by offering the best living style available in Babylon. He knew a *“daily”* regimen would serve his interests best, not a periodic or infrequent one.

Notwithstanding, as we will see, this whole event constitutes a test to the faith of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. **Therefore, they will be required to recall and heed the words of king Solomon.**

### A Principle Is Seen

A principle can be seen here. It is important to see it. While the general and extended diet of the four Hebrew boys will now be what the king demands, **their discipline will remain on a daily**

included *“daily meal offerings”* and *“daily burnt offerings”* (Num 4:16; 29:6). David spoke of performing his vows to the Lord *“daily”* (Psa 61:8). The Lord loads us *“daily”* with *“benefits”* (Psa 68:19). David’s prayers were *“daily”* (Psa 86:3). The early church continued with one accord *“daily”* (Acts 2:46). The early Bereans searched the Scriptures *“daily”* (Acts 17:11). Paula said he died *“daily”* (1 Cor 15:31). Believers are exhorted to *“exhort one another daily”* (Heb 3:13).

Just as surely as the four Hebrew children were oriented for standing before the king by *“daily”* provisions, so the people of God are being oriented to dwell in the courts of the Lord by *“daily”* nourishment.

**God will prepare the lads on a daily basis, even though they will not follow the diet of the king.**

### THREE YEARS

*“ . . . so nourishing them three years.”* Three years were assigned in

gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands” (2 Tim 1:6).

- ▶ “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15).
- ▶ “Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all” (1 Tim 4:14-15).

#### Why Mention This?

On the surface, it may appear as

It may be countered that Jesus instructed His disciples to avoid preparation when He said, “And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak” (Matt 10:18-19). However, there is a vast difference between being unprepared, and studying how you will answer a dignitary – particularly since Jesus did not give them the slightest hint about the manner in which they would be questioned, or how they would be asked to account for

representatives of the King of kings.

#### AT THE END

“ . . . that at the end thereof they might stand before the king.” Other versions read, “so that at the end of that time they might serve before the king.”<sup>NKJV</sup> “at the end of which they were to enter the king’s personal service.”<sup>NASB</sup> “so that at the end of that time they could be stationed in the king’s court.”<sup>NRSV</sup> and “and, and then some of them would be made his advisers in the royal court.”<sup>NLT</sup>

There were a number of boys to be chosen for special assignment from among the captives of Judah. The criteria was strict, and yet **not everyone who passed the entrance examination would finally stand in the king’s court.** At the end of three years, a selection would be made within the already selected group. It would be something like, “many are called, but few are chosen” (Matt 22:14). Thus the NLT version reads, “some of them . . .” We also know this is the case by the wording of the next verse: “now **AMONG THESE** were . . .”

#### A PROPER FRAMEWORK

I cannot leave this section without observing how excellent this framework is for the working of the Lord. **It is orderly, daily, and demanding. It required thought, preparation, and commitment. It involved calling, selection, and excellence. Proper responses necessitated faith, boldness and confidence.** Are these not a superb environment for the working of the Lord to be made known? I suggest these conditions are not happenstance, but were ordered by God. **They were surroundings made suitable for Divine intervention.**

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## WE ARE WITNESSING HOW HE WORKS WITH YOUNG MEN, PREPARING THEM FOR AN LIFE OF FAITHFUL SERVICE TO HIMSELF. IT IS THE LORD’S MANNER TO ALLOW TIME FOR PREPARATION, FOR HIS WORK IS TOO EXTENSIVE FOR MEN TO RUSH INTO IT.

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though I have been diverted from our text into an area of vain jangling. But that is not the case at all. If we remember the book of Daniel is not a mere record of history, but a record of the works of God, the record before us takes on a different color. In it, we are beholding how the Lord works. **We are witnessing how He works with young men, preparing them for an life of faithful service to Himself.**

It is the Lord’s manner to allow time for preparation, for His work is too extensive for men to rush into it.

themselves. **No Apostle ever stood before any earthly dignitary unprepared.** The area in which they were prepared, however, was not in the area of speech making, but by tuning their hearts by faith, walking in the Spirit, and feeding their souls on heavenly fare.

During the three year period, the subjects of our text will learn to depend more fully upon the Lord. **They will not only be oriented to stand and minister in the presence of Nebuchadnezzar, but to do so as**

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## THE DIVINE FOCUS IS ON ONLY FOUR

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“<sup>6</sup> Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaal, and Azariah . . .” We have no idea of the number of “children” involved in this search. Nor, indeed, is there a need for us to know. The Kingdom of God has nothing

whatsoever to do with statistics, probabilities, and the likes. These highly taunted areas of thought are absurd to one seated in heavenly places. How foolish to speculate on the likelihood of finding four children among the captives of Judah who precisely met such rigid

qualifications! Who is the statistician who can affirm the chances of such a thing taking place? **God does not work according to probability. Rather, He deals with impossibilities.** The words of Jesus apply here, even though they immediately addressed the matter of

someone being “saved.” *“With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible”* (Mark 19:26). **Situations that appear hopeless to men are the soil from which a robust hope springs!** Seen from a heavenly perspective, it is just as likely to find four promising young men among the captives of Judah as it is for two brothers mending their nets to be called to the Apostleship. It is just as likely as a tax collector being called by Jesus while he was sitting *“in the tax office!”*<sup>NASB</sup> This is the Lord’s doing!

We do not know how long the quest for superior youths lasted, or how many were examined. Having identified the requirements under which God would use His servants, our attention is immediately turned to the four Hebrew lads. The Spirit will not waste our time with an extended commentary on *“Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs.”* He will not tell us of the possible disappointment that many of the young men have experienced, or how nervous they were under examination and interrogation. Our attention will now be turned to the ones through whom God will work – the ones He has chosen for Himself. This too is a Divine manner.

- ▣ Men might be captured by the stunning effects of the sons of God marrying the daughters of men, but God will look at Noah.
- ▣ Men may talk about Abimelech, king of Gerar, but God will speak of Abraham.
- ▣ Men may speak of Pharaoh, but God will speak of Moses.
- ▣ Men will be impressed by the giant Goliath, but God will focus our attention on a shepherd boy with a sling and five smooth stones.
- ▣ The conquering Philistines and their god may catch the attention of men, but God will point us to blinded Samson.
- ▣ Innovative Herod would draw the attention of men, but God will show us John the Baptist, clothed in camel’s hair.
- ▣ The reporters of this world would be impressed with the pomp of Felix and Agrippa, but the Spirit will show us Paul in shackles.

You must not miss this Divine manner – the way God walks us through

the history of men. In our text, we are confronted with the most glorious kingdom in all of the world. The greatest monarch of the time has issued an order, and one of his princes is carrying it out. **Yet, the Holy Spirit moves the inspired pen to direct us to think upon four young boys.** They are not even free, as men count freedom. Yet, these are the ones through whom God will work, and therefore they are the ones He calls us to consider.

**Those who imagine that background is everything must know this is the first time in all of the Bible these four children are mentioned.** What can you tell us of their past accomplishments? At this point, all we know is that they were from Judah, of the royal seed, had been taken captive, and met the preliminary requirements set

the word *“LORD.”* This abbreviated name of Deity is used fifty-two times in Scripture.

**The very names of these four lads are a sort of commentary on God’s work through them.** Through them, Divine judgment will be announced (*“Judge of God”*). The favor of the Lord will be upon them (*“Jah has favored”*). Divine qualities will be revealed in them (*“He is what God is”*). And the Lord will be their Helper (*“Jah has helped”*). **The fact that they were given such names suggests a sort of prophecy of what they would become.**

**FROM THIS POINT ON**  
**From this point on, everyone else in this book becomes incidental.** God will show us what He can do with four young men in the palace of a king, in

**FROM THIS POINT ON, EVERYONE ELSE IN THIS BOOK BECOMES INCIDENTAL. GOD WILL SHOW US WHAT HE CAN DO WITH FOUR YOUNG MEN IN THE PALACE OF A KING, IN A HEATHEN EMPIRE. THEY WERE RELATIVELY NOTHING BEFORE THIS, BUT SUDDENLY THEY ARE VAULTED INTO PROMINENCE.**

forth by the king.

For your own information, here are the meanings of their Hebrew names.

- ▣ *“Daniel”* – Judge of God or the judgment of God.
- ▣ *“Hananiah”* – Jah has favored, or one who has obtained mercy from God.
- ▣ *“Mishael”* – He is what God is, or required or demanded of God.
- ▣ *“Azariah”* – Jah has helped, or one whom God helps.

“Jah” is a name for the Lord, and is used in Psalm 68:4: *“Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by His name JAH, and rejoice before Him.”* The name means “the Lord most vehement,” and is a contraction for *“Jehovah.”* English versions of the Bible generally translate

a heathen empire. They were relatively nothing before this, but suddenly they are vaulted into prominence.

**DANIEL’S MANNER**

There is one more thing to be seen in this text. Remember, these are the writings of Daniel. **Note how he introduces himself to us.** He does not identify his mother or his father. Although the requirement of the king uncovered that he was of noble lineage, he does not tell us what it was. Instead, he identifies himself in two unique ways. First, he was *“of the children of Judah.”* Second, he associates himself with *“Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.”*

**Godly identity was sufficient.** Since he is going to unveil the works of God, there is no need for him to shine the spotlight on himself or his

past. Remember, he is writing these things long after the prince of the eunuch's engaged in a search for children meeting the kings requirements. Decades

later, toward the end of his ministry, he will record these events. When he does, it is not coincidence that he speaks so modestly of himself when but a child. His

heart has been so enraptured by Divine tutelage, that he is able to speak in such a way of his past, as not to turn our attention from the Lord.

## SPECIAL NAMES ARE GIVEN TO THEM

***"Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego."*** It is not improbable that the "prince of the eunuchs" changed the names of the lads to assist in removing their past from their thinking. Perhaps they would more readily adapt to the ways of Babylon if they had Babylonish names. This seemed to be a trend among conquerors. You may recall the "king of Egypt," Pharaoh Necho, changed Eliakim's name to "Jehoiakim" before making him a puppet king in Judah (2 Chron 36:4). When Nebuchadnezzar carried Jehoiachin, captive to Babylon, he appointed Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, as a puppet king in his place, changing his name to "Zedekiah" (2 Kgs 24:17). This, then, was the manner of heathen kings.

These new names were not given at the behest of Ashpenaz, but by order of the king. We know this from what Daniel writes later. "Daniel, whom **the king named Belteshazzar**" (5:12). Here are the suggested meanings of their new names. Scholars have found it difficult to precisely identify their meanings. They do, however, concur that they were given to honor the false god's of the Babylonians.

- ▣ "Belteshazzar" – May Bel protect his life.
- ▣ "Shadrach" – Command of Aku, or the great scribe.
- ▣ "Meshach" – The servant of Sin, or guest of the king.
- ▣ "Abednego" – The servant of Nego, the Babylonian god of wisdom.

If you have ever been discontent with you name, consider the renaming of these four young men. **You must remember that the person makes the**

**name, and not the name the person!**

Following this narrative, the "Daniel" is mentioned seventy-four times in his book. "Belteshazzar" is only mentioned ten times (2:26; 4:8,9,18,19, 5:12; 10:1). Most of the times Daniel is called by his Babylonish name, Nebuchadnezzar is speaking. The other times, the reference is to "Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar." One other thing; when Nebuchadnezzar called for Daniel, he would say "let **Daniel be called,**" as though honoring his Hebrew name" (5:12). **His Babylonish name was not honored in heaven.** Angelic messengers consistently referred to him as "Daniel" (9:22; 10:11; 12:4).

"Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah" are mentioned three times after this (1:11,19; 2:17). "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego" are mentioned fourteen times after this (2:49; 3:12,13,14,16,19, 20,22,23,26,28,29,30). They are always mentioned together, never individually. When Daniel requested that they be placed over the affairs of the province of Babylon, he referred to them by their Babylonish names (2:49). However, when he gathered with them in prayer, he referred to them by their Hebrew names (Dan 2:17).

### A LESSON TO BE LEARNED

It is possible that the change of names was calculated to leave the impression these young men were favored by the gods of Babylon. However, though young, they were not easily swayed – even by unusual favors. Solomon once said, "He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live" (Prov 15:27). We will find these lads were unwilling to displease their God because of the favors of a heathen king. They fought the good fight of faith, maintaining their integrity before the Lord. Even the most powerful among the

heathen could not move them from God.

In the fall of 1957, I began to experience ostracization from the brotherhood with which I was identified. By the end of 1958, the separation was total, and without any seeming remedy. I was forced to work in the business world in order to support my family. During the next thirty years, I was provided unusual opportunities in the business world, eventually becoming a Director – but my heart was not there. During those years I began a fellowship in Indiana where I ministered regularly, started publishing The Word of Truth, and was the speaker on a national radio broadcast, as well as a local Christian talk program. In 1988, I was contacted by brother Don DeWelt of Joplin Missouri, who brought me back into acceptance. From that time until 1992, I wrote the book Kingdom of God, and produced sixty-five 30-minute videos at Good New Productions, Intl. Then, in 1992, I was able to retire from the Corporate world, entering into my present ministry. I can testify that faith provides a canopy of protection when you are in the land of the enemy. It also enables you to fulfill your calling, even when you are located in unusual places. Through the years, I have derived great comfort and instruction from the four young men in our text. Their testimony still glows with celestial glory.

Given O. Blakely, 1/25/2002

During my lifetime, I have witnessed several men and women forsake the work of the Lord because of what the world offered them. They were hasty to justify their abandonment of things most excellent for the baubles of this world. They had a choice before them – the work of the Lord, or a professional career. However, although given a clear choice in the matter, they chose a worldly profession, making a miserable mistake, and it was seen in the deterioration of both their sensitivity and values. **I am speaking of people with spiritual understanding, who have been obviously gifted in ways that bring profit to the people of God.** These are also people who sense the call of God upon their lives, and have doors of opportunity placed before them by Jesus, who has the "key of David." However, to them, the world's call was more loud.

There will come times when gifted and disciplined people will be courted by the world. They will seek to change their name, as it was, conforming

them to the fashion of this world, which is passing away. I know from experience of this tactic of the evil one. I also have learned that during such times, one must extend himself to serve the Lord with more vigor and commitment than ever before. **If circumstance leaves you in a spiritual Babylon, like the four children of Judah, then you must**

**serve the Lord there.** Your prayers must not be hindered, and your fellowship with kindred believers must not be diminished because you are in a strange land! You must pick up your spiritual pace when you are among the Babylonians – even when it is in a place of favor and seeming advantage. Your relationship to God must not suffer

because you are in an uncomely place!

I can also tell you that God can provide an escape from the inferior domain. For myself, I waited thirty-four long years before it came. But when it did, I thought nothing of leaving a place of worldly prominence to be back in Jerusalem, doing the work of the Lord.

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## DANIEL PURPOSES IN HIS HEART

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***“<sup>8</sup>But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.”*** Again, there is no indication of the time involved, for that is not the point of the text. We are not told if the “prince

*man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well”* (1 Pet 2:13-14). Had not Solomon said, “*My son, fear thou the LORD and the king*” (Prov 24:21). He also said, “*I counsel thee to keep the king’s commandment, and that in regard of the oath of God*” (Eccl 8:2).

supposition is that they are subject to others by Divine mandate, and there is no valid exception to that arrangement.

But what will such people say to young Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Here they are in a foreign country. They are there by Divine appointment, under the chastising hand of God. The prophet of God has told the people not to resist Nebuchadnezzar. They have even been told to pray for the place where they have been relocated (Jer 29:7). Now, they are in a favored status, and have been assigned a certain diet from the king. Their future, it appears, depends upon yielding to the desires of the king – the king whom God is using to chasten their nation. Now, what is the godly thing to do? Particularly since they are young in the first place, and ought to rise up before the more mature (Lev 19:32). **Thank God none of these self-made teachers were in the vicinity to counsel Daniel and his friends**

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## THERE ARE TIMES WHEN OBEYING THOSE PLACED OVER US IS NOT IN ORDER. IN FACT, THERE ARE TIMES WHEN IT IS SINFUL TO DO SO!

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*of the eunuch’s*” told the boys about the diet appointed by the king, or if he simply began imposing it upon them. All of that is of little consequence.

**The real point is how Daniel responded to the kingly appointment.** Although Jeremiah had told the people to bend their wills to Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 27:8-9), yet young Daniel was able to wisely consider what he should do.

### WHAT ABOUT YIELDING TO AUTHORITY?

A sophist might suggest to Daniel that we are to submit to the higher powers, not resisting the will of the king, for all power is of God. The legalist would make an effort to enforce this rule upon the four lads, saying they ought to “*Submit yourselves to every ordinance of*

Centuries later Paul would say to Titus, “*Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates*” (Tit 3:1). Besides all this, God Himself had referred to Nebuchadnezzar as “*My servant*” (Jer 27:6). Surely his edict must be obeyed, and none should resist it! **That is how a casuist, or fallacious reasoner, thinks – someone who is spiritually juvenile and without understanding.**

The Christian community is plagued with teachers who seek to make the godly yield to the ungodly under certain conditions. They cite those who have been placed over others, and declare they are to be obeyed under any and all circumstances. They deal with all manner of associations from wives to husbands, children to parents, citizens to governors, and believers to elders, etc. The

The Lord will leave no doubt about this matter. He will cause the Holy Spirit to move a holy man to record this whole event, thereby dispelling the doubts and confusion caused by those “*desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm*” (1 Tim 1:7). **There are times when obeying those placed over us is NOT in order. In fact, there are times when it is sinful to do so!**

### HE PURPOSED IN HIS HEART

*“But Daniel purposed in his heart . . . ”* Other versions read “*made up his mind,*”<sup>NASB</sup> “*resolved not to,*”<sup>NIV</sup> “*come to the decision,*”<sup>BEBE</sup> and “*was determined not to.*”<sup>NJB</sup> We are not told **when** Daniel

“purposed in his heart,” but it must have been early in his Babylonian experience.

Right here we strike at the heart of spiritual setbacks and defeat. **The fall of many a believer is owing to the absence of godly resolve!** There is a notion in the Christian community that God will not allow one of His children to do something wrong. He will keep them from all contamination and transgression, even doing so independently of their own volition and thought. But such notions are utter folly. The very first man and woman are a gigantic contradiction to this imposition upon sound thought.

**No person has ever avoided sin without first purposing to do so.** Further, those who are overcome by sin have reaped the results of their lack of purpose.

- ☐ Before Ruth found her way into the Messianic lineage, she first purposed, and then expressed, “for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me” (Ruth 1:16-17).
- ☐ Before Solomon built the temple, he first said, “behold, I purpose to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD spake unto David my father” (1 Kgs 5:5).
- ☐ The meticulous obedience of David was preceded by resolve: “I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments” (Psa 119:106).
- ☐ During the early days of the church, believers were admonished, “that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord” (Acts 11:23).

Such a spirit is altogether too uncommon among the churches. That is - precisely why defilement is spreading like a plague among them. Paul spoke of the person who “standeth steadfast in his heart” (1 Cor 7:37). David said he “purposed he would not transgress” with his “mouth” (Psa 17:3). Paul frequently acknowledged that he “purposed” to do things (Acts 19:31; 20:3; Rom 1:13).

Such purposing is living “unto

the Lord” (Rom 14:8). It is acknowledging the Lord in all of our ways (Prov 3:5-6), and living by faith (Hab 2:4). **Faith cannot survive in an ad hoc environment, where individuals live by fits and starts.** God Himself purposes (Isa 14:24-27; 19:12; 23:9; 46:11; Eph 1:9; 3:11). It should not surprise us, therefore, that those who bear His image are also noted for purposing.

**Purposes are made in the heart, and thus dominate the will and the mind.** There is surely place for godly purposes among the people of God. Such noble intentions will soon evidence themselves in superior manners.

**HE WOULD NOT DEFILE HIMSELF**

“ . . . that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s

Daniel must have been acquainted with this incident, as well as the dietary guidelines of the Law. Or, perhaps Daniel remembered how **the entire race of man had been defiled by eating** – when Adam disobeyed God by eating forbidden fruit (Gen 3:6; Rom 5:12).

There are some things to note in this text. These are particularly noteworthy in view of the ages of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

- ☐ Although he was young, Daniel was familiar with the manner of the Old Covenant, and the various prohibitions within it.
- ☐ Even though he was away from his homeland and taken from his family, yet his thinking was God-centered. He thought primarily of what would

**THERE IS A NOTION IN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY THAT GOD WILL NOT ALLOW ONE OF HIS CHILDREN TO DO SOMETHING WRONG. HE WILL KEEP THEM FROM ALL CONTAMINATION AND TRANSGRESSION, EVEN DOING SO INDEPENDENTLY OF THEIR OWN VOLITION AND THOUGHT. BUT SUCH NOTIONS ARE UTTER FOLLY.**

meat, nor with the wine which he drank.” Although young, Daniel knew a person could become defiled with the portion of someone else. Although chosen by God by virtue of being a Jew, and favored by God with unusual ability, God had made no provision for Daniel to be defiled. Being chosen by God does not exclude a person from normal Divine requirements. **There was a higher law than that of Nebuchadnezzar!**

The “king’s meat” violated the laws of the Lord, and thus they would cause defilement. Either they fell in the category of “unclean,” or they had been offered to idols – and either class was strictly forbidden to the Jews (Lev 11:4-8; Ex 34:15-16). Once, when Israel ate things offered to Baal of Peor, the wrath of God was kindled against them (Num 25:2-3).

please God, not what would please the king.

- ☐ He thought in terms of the effect things would have upon him before the Lord.
- ☐ He had not been devastated by the Babylonian captivity, as others who were taken captive (Psa 137:1-2).
- ☐ He first determined to do what was right, then sought the best way in which that determination could be fulfilled.
- ☐ He was not changed by his environment.
- ☐ He was able to commune with his own heart, making firm resolves that would dominate how he lived.

**HE REQUESTED OF THE PRINCE**

“ . . . therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might

not defile himself.” Other versions read, “so **he sought** permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself,”<sup>NASB</sup> “and **he asked** the chief official for permission not to

Babylonians.

Here the gifts and abilities of young Daniel surface. He does not simply reject the king’s daily provision without a

Daniel is thus providing an environment in which the Lord can work for His own glory, as well as Daniel’s benefit.

**It is far better to carry out the will of God in a peaceful environment, if at all possible.** Thus it is written, “*If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men*” (Rom 12:18). Long before Paul was moved to write that exhortation, Daniel was familiar with expressions like, “*I am one of them that are peaceable and faithful in Israel*” (1 Sam 20:19), “*seek peace, and pursue it*” (Psa 34:14), “*I am for peace*” (Psa 120:7). **The effect of Scriptural knowledge is evident in young Daniel**, providing instruction for the young men and women of our time.

There would be challenges enough in Babylon without creating any unnecessary ones! Therefore, Daniel proceeds in wisdom. **He is a glowing tribute to the wisdom of faith!**

## TRUE WISDOM SEEKS HONORABLE MEANS BY WHICH TO CARRY OUT HOLY PURPOSES.

defile himself this way,”<sup>NIV</sup> and “so he asked the palace master **to allow him** not to defile himself.”<sup>NRSV</sup>

This request would serve to introduce the “*prince of the eunuchs*” to the manner of Hebrew children, as directed by the Covenant given to them by God. **It was not enough to merely learn the way of those in Babylon.** The superior ways of the people of God could also be introduced to the

word, but honors proper protocol. **True wisdom seeks honorable means by which to carry out holy purposes.** We know from the rest of this book that Daniel and his friends would not bow to a demand that contradicted their faith. Yet, Daniel sought to implement his purpose with the least amount of distracting friction. **If his request would be honored, it would provide a way for him to demonstrate the blessing of God upon those who are obedient to Him.**

## CONCLUSION

### SIMILARITIES WITH EDEN

The occasion we have just reviewed is much like that of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. **A moral dilemma is created by what a person can eat.** In both cases, an evaluation of the quandary is to be determined by the Word of the Lord. In Eden, the word was solitary, having only to do with the food before them. In Babylon, the Word of God was many sided, dealing with a variety of foods.

Temptation was involved in both cases. In Eden, the devil directly approached Eve, suggesting that God had not told them all the truth. In Babylon, the devil did not work directly, but through the edict of an earthly monarch. In Eden, the devil focused on the food itself. In Babylon, he was even more crafty, focusing on political protocol.

In both Eden and Babylon, the adversary of men chose what appeared to be a morally neutral matter – eating. He did not tempt Eve or Daniel with murder, theft, or some other form of moral

debauchery. In both cases, however, he moved to cause the individuals to despise the Word of the Lord by either questioning it or forgetting it. Eve, though mature and free, failed the test. Daniel, though young and in captivity, passed the test.

### THE CIRCUMSTANCE OF BELIEVERS

In many ways, we are in circumstances similar to those in which Daniel found himself. Because of this, there are many advantages that can be

young – “*little children*” (1 John 2:1, 18,28; 3:7,18).

- ☐ We are also in a foreign land, the earth, in which we are “*strangers and pilgrims*” (1 Pet 2:11).
- ☐ We are faced with demands from the world that contradict both faith and the Word that sustains faith (1 John 2:15-17).
- ☐ The devil often tempts us through those who have worldly authority over us, moving us to obey men who contradict God (Acts 5:29).
- ☐ We also must be “*filled with wisdom,*”

## IT IS ONE THING, HOWEVER, TO KNOW THE BIBLE SAYS THIS, IT IS QUITE ANOTHER TO TRUST IN SUCH DIRECTION.

gained by an extended consideration of the text just reviewed.

- ☐ From the standpoint of what we ought to be, and will be, we are all

that we might know how to “*answer every man*” (Col 1:9; 4:6).

- ☐ Our spiritual heritage overrides our earthly circumstances (Phil 4:20).
- ☐ Those who possess extraordinary gifts

and abilities are still required to obey God in ordinary matters.

**The world tempts the children of God to view their earthly circumstances according to the flesh.** Working through them, Satan undertakes to allure believers into the room of complaint and the dungeon of sorrow. He makes every effort to move them to view the earth and their place in it as the most important thing.

The world reasons differently about difficulties, trials, and adversities. The sons of God must avoid adopting these ways of erroneous thinking. God has revealed *“tribulation brings about*

*Your paths, that my footsteps may not slip”*<sup>NKJV</sup> (Psa 17:5). And again, *“Direct my steps by Your word, and let no iniquity have dominion over me”*<sup>NKJV</sup> (Psa 119:133). **It is one thing, however, to know the Bible says this, it is quite another to trust in such direction.**

The Lord assists us in believing that He DOES direct the lives of His children, showing them where to go and how to live. The chief means through which this assistance is realized is the Word of God itself. As Paul told Timothy, the Scriptures are able to make us *“wise unto salvation”* (2 Tim 3:15). **Salvation does include the direction of our steps, as well as our extrication from**

for His presence or blessing.

All of these things have been evident in our text. They were not there by chance, and neither are the circumstances in your life. The direction of the Lord is not always preceded by stirring announcements and prophecies. **More frequently it is undetected to every human sensibility, discerned only by faith.**

You have gained great profit from the account just reviewed when you can see the hand of the Lord in it all. **If you have faith in God, just as surely as those four lads were being guided by the Lord, so certainly are you.**

Some lessons that can be learned from this account include the following. These are, of course, only a sampling of the vast repository of knowledge that is found in this textual container.

- ▣ Even though hidden by earthly circumstances, God is able to have you, so to speak, discovered.
- ▣ What men intend by their actions are often overturned by Divine decree.
- ▣ Those who are over us in the world can be brought to listen to us and be attracted to us.
- ▣ God can cause words of wisdom make sense to those who are unacquainted with Him.
- ▣ Even though our bodies are hindered by circumstance, yet firm resolves can be made in our hearts.
- ▣ If we are resolved to do the will of God, He will make a way for that to be accomplished.
- ▣ The Lord can cause a king in Babylon to think of a conquered and captive people as having resources he needs.
- ▣ Through God, those who are young in years can be given skilled wisdom, cunning knowledge, and the ability to learn quickly.
- ▣ What things earthly rulers appoint are not always to be honored by the people of God.
- ▣ Our responsibility to God supercedes our responsibility to government.
- ▣ The children of God can learn how to ask people of the world to consider things their faith prohibits.
- ▣ Those who live by faith can have fellowship with God when there are no surroundings conducive to it.

**YOU HAVE GAINED GREAT PROFIT FROM THE ACCOUNT JUST REVIEWED WHEN YOU CAN SEE THE HAND OF THE LORD IN IT ALL. IF YOU HAVE FAITH IN GOD, JUST AS SURELY AS THOSE FOUR LADS WERE BEING GUIDED BY THE LORD, SO CERTAINLY ARE YOU.**

*perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us”*<sup>NASB</sup> (Rom 5:3-5). Do not doubt this is true! The text before us will confirm this to be the case.

**When their trials became more fierce, Daniel and his friends became more steadfast!** Their wisdom became more pronounced, and their faith more dominant. Their hope did not wither in the heat of trial, but blossomed as a rose in the desert of Babylon. They became more resolved, and thus were blessed the more.

**ORDERED STEPS**

The Word of God declares *“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD”*<sup>NKJV</sup> (Psa 37:23). This is precisely why David prayed, *“Uphold my steps in*

**sin and deliverance from the snares of the evil one.**

In order to help us trust in Him, the Lord provides several accounts of His direction in Scripture. One such account is that of Daniel, Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abednego). The record of these young men must not be viewed as lifeless history. Rather, it unveils to us HOW the Lord directs the steps of His people.

- ▣ He orders their circumstances.
- ▣ He empowers their wills.
- ▣ He gives them favor with men.
- ▣ He assists them to recall His Word.
- ▣ He gives them firm resolve.
- ▣ He helps them to perceive what will defile, or contaminate, them.
- ▣ He opens doors of opportunity.
- ▣ He gives them wisdom to speak.
- ▣ He delivers them from fear.
- ▣ He sustains them in places not noted

- ▶ The Lord can work uniquely with a few individuals in a large group.
- ▶ God knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation.
- ▶ The worldly famous can be inclined to relatively unknown believers.
- ▶ The heavens are still open to those living in the midst of chastening.
- ▶ People of faith can form holy alliances in an alienated world.

- ▶ The world's demand to do something wrong, can be changed to an opportunity to reveal the superiority of believing and obeying God.
- ▶ While in a place of dominating captivity, a sudden opportunity to stand in a place of honor can occur.

**There is no such thing as a test of faith that is not accompanied**

**with grace to face it.** He who holds the key of David will not allow a door to be opened that causes challenges to rush in that exceed our ability! He will see to it that we have the advantage, even in the midst of unimaginable hindrance. Our text confirms this is true. Have faith in God! Do not faint in the day of adversity, for that is evidence of small strength (Prov 24:10). Be strong in the Lord!

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 2/8/2002. We will continue our overview of the book of Daniel, covering verses 9-16 of the first chapter. Our lesson will be, **"FAVOR, WISDOM, AND GOD-HONORING RESULTS."** Daniel pursues a peaceable solution, and God honors his faith by granting him favor with men. He also sets the stage for a public demonstration of the transcendency of serving God with ones whole heart. Our meeting will convene at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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