



THE PROPHECY OF DANIEL

Lesson Number 3



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* -----

FAVOR, WISDOM, AND GOD HONORING RESULTS

Dan 1:9 Now God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. ¹⁰ And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king. ¹¹ Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, ¹² Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. ¹³ Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants. ¹⁴ So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days. ¹⁵ And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat. ¹⁶ Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse. ^{KJV} (Daniel 1:9-16)

INTRODUCTION

As we approach this text, I want to keep before you the profit that is to be realized through it. Scripture has been written deliberately, with a Divine objective in mind. God chose "holy men," moving them along by the Holy Spirit, to put into writing His own purpose and perspective. I acknowledge that applying

the word "perspective" to the view of the Living God comes far short of what I intend. It is not that there are any other valid perspectives. Viewed correctly, God's view, or perspective, is really the ONLY valid one. I use the word to underscore that there is a heavenly way of seeing things - even history. **The**

interrelationships of humanity are under the supervision of the Almighty. I am careful to note this does not mean everything that happens between people is orchestrated by God in all of its details. We must take care not to ascribe the murder of Abel by Cain as directed by the Lord. Such events,

OUTLINE

- < FAVOR WITH THE PRINCE (1:9)
- < A PROBING QUESTION (1:10)
- < THE ANSWER OF FAITH (1:11-12)
- < FAITH SUBMITS TO EXAMINATION (1:13)
- < THE TIME OF TESTING ESTABLISHED (1:14)
- < TRUST IN GOD IS REWARDED (1:15)
- < THE DESIRE OF THE HEART IS GRANTED (1:16)

however, are all managed by Him, work together for His ultimate glory, and are written for our learning. This perception is essential to a profitable understanding of Scripture.

How frequently we are reminded of the **reason** for Scripture. Jesus spoke of His imminent death as a fulfillment of Scripture. *“Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished”* (Luke 18:31). When speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem, He said, *“For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled”* (Luke 21:22). Jesus told those who came to arrest Him in the garden, *“Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take Me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took Me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled”* (Mark 14:49). When Peter sought to defend Him in the garden of betrayal, Jesus responded, *“Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?”* (Matt 26:53-54).

Following His resurrection, when walking with the two on the road to Emmaus, *“He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself”* (Luke 24:47). His declarations confirm **there are Divine intentions reflected in Scripture**. This is involved

in their inspiration. They are not merely an accurate record of what happened. Neither, indeed, are they primarily an outline of obligations God has placed upon humanity. Nor are they only an abstract of what is required to be saved. All of these are, indeed, found in Scripture, but they are not its heart.

THE SCRIPTURES HAVE PURPOSE

Men must come away from a merely intellectual view of the Word of God. God has provided the Scriptures for purposes that have more to do with life than with bare information. Through them, the Holy Spirit is doing infinitely more than acquainting us with past events, although that is involved.

THESE THINGS HAPPENED FOR A REASON!

“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples . . .” It would be difficult, if not impossible, to substantiate that every single occurrence in the lives of all people are determined by God. However, when it comes to Scripture, the records of those people and events directly relate to Divine purpose. Within that context, what is recorded was not only orchestrated by the Lord, but actually occurred for our benefit and learning. In these events, such as the record before us, an example of Divine direction is made known. The manner in which God manages the affairs of His people is also revealed.

WRITTEN FOR OUR ADMONITION.

“. . . and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” (1 Cor 10:11). The purpose for the Scriptures includes our admonition, or warning. Care must be taken not to conduct our lives in such a manner as to contradict God’s way of working. In our text, that would involve refusing to yield to the edicts of men when they are in violation of the Word of the Lord.

WRITTEN FOR OUR LEARNING.

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning . . .” Learning goes beyond mathematical theorems, historical events, and reading skills. Through Scripture, or what is written, **we**

become acquainted with the ways and purposes of the Living God.

We learn how He reacts to those who trust in Him, and how He works all things together for the good of those who love Him, being called into His purpose.

THAT WE MIGHT HAVE HOPE.

“. . . that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.” (Rom 15:4). Hope comes from God (2 Thess 2:16), but not independently of means. Patience (or endurance) and comfort (encouragement) are obtained through the Scriptures. That is, as we perceive the hand of the Lord in its recorded events, and the unwavering commitments of an unchanging God, we receive the resources needed to complete the race set before us.

MAKE US WISE UNTO SALVATION.

“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” (2 Tim 3:16-17). The Scriptures raise our spiritual IQ concerning the salvation of God. Through them, we become more familiar with the nature of salvation, as well as how it is appropriated and maintained within the individual.

PROFITABLE.

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim 3:16-17). When correctly perceived, the Scripture are fuel for the soul. They enable believers to engage in the “good works” for which they were created in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:10).

NOT LIFELESS DOGMA

All of this is, indeed, pertinent to the review of our text. In our study of the Scriptures, we must do everything possible to avoid the development or embrace of lifeless dogma. This is particularly relevant when we are considering the providential working of the Lord. If we do not guard our hearts, such knowledge will tend to make us less

IT IS POSSIBLE, AND NEEDFUL, THAT WE LEARN FROM THIS TEXT THAT THOSE WHO BELIEVE WILL NOT BE ASHAMED. IF WE ARE IN CIRCUMSTANCES THAT ARE LESS THAN IDEAL, AN ENDURING SPIRIT, STRONG CONSOLATION, AND GOOD HOPE, WILL BE MINISTERED TO US IN THIS TEXT.

involved with the Lord, moving us to suppose that God works independently of human involvement.

The above texts have related the Scriptures to admonition, learning, patience, comfort, hope, wisdom, profit, and being ready to do every good work. **Those are all aspects of life -**

spiritual life. If our text does not yield these benefits in some decisive measure, we have missed its purpose. What is outlined in this text “*happened*” as an example for us. It shows how God works things together for the good of those who love Him, and are called according to His purpose (Rom 8:28). They have been written to admonish our hearts about not

yielding to competing influences, but to stand firm in the faith. It is possible, and needful, that we learn from this text that those who believe will not be ashamed. If we are in circumstances that are less than ideal, an enduring spirit, strong consolation, and good hope, will be ministered to us in this text. If our faith will take hold of these words, we will become more adequate to do the works God has planned for us – and He has surely planned works for us (Eph 2:10).

Faith is able to make a connection between this text and the personal good fight of faith. Through it we can be assured of God’s involvement in our own walk of faith and labor of love. We have not been left alone in this world!

FAVOR WITH THE PRINCE

“ Dan 1:9 Now God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.” Other versions read, “*God had brought Daniel into the favor and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs,*”^{NKJV} “*God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials*”^{NASB} “*God made Daniel to find kindness and compassion in the sight of the prince of the eunuchs,*”^{ASV} “*God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel,*”^{NIV} “*God allowed Daniel to receive favor and compassion from the palace master,*”^{NRSV} “*God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs,*”^{RSV} “*God had given the chief official great respect for Daniel,*”^{NLT}

THE LORD’S DOING

The Holy Spirit is careful to give us an accurate view of the circumstance. He will not allow us to remain ignorant of the particular working of the Lord – of His involvement in the affairs of men. In unveiling these affairs, He never exaggerates, is totally without guile, and avoids vagueness and ambiguity. He will not leave us thinking about fate, luck, or happenstance. He will precisely and effectively explain to us WHY Daniel was well liked and held in high regard by an official of the king’s court.

“*Now God had brought Daniel into favor . . .*” Other versions further unfold the intricacies of this statement. The favor of Daniel in the eyes of the prince was “*granted*” by God,^{NASB} “*caused*” by God,^{NIV} and “*brought*” by God.^{Webster} The Lord, then, who has access to men’s hearts, caused the prince to be especially favorable to Daniel. He did so without compromising His own holy character, and without violating the Divine imagery in the prince.

Several preliminary conclusions can be drawn from this text.

- ▣ **The work had already been done:** “*had brought.*”^{NKJV} “*had caused the official to show favor.*”^{NRSV}
- ▣ **This was a special dispensation**

from the Lord: “*granted Daniel favor.*”^{NASB} “*God gave Daniel favor.*”^{RSV} “*had given the chief official great respect.*”^{NLT}

- ▣ **This was something God caused, or made to happen:** “*made Daniel to find kindness.*”^{ASV} “*had caused the official to show favor.*”^{NRSV}

An Answer to Solomon’s Prayer

This circumstance was, in a sense, an answer to the prayer of Solomon during the dedication of the Temple. In that marvelous and lengthy prayer, the king prayed, “**and give them compassion before them** who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them” (1 Kgs 8:50). Other versions read, “*grant them compassion,*”^{NKJV} “*make them objects of compassion,*”

AS MAGNIFICENT AS THIS INCIDENT IS, IT IS NOT AN ISOLATED ONE. THIS IS THE MANNER OF GOD WITH HIS PEOPLE – TO CAUSE THEM TO RECEIVE FAVOR FROM THOSE WHO WOULD NORMALLY BE CONSIDERED THEIR ENEMIES.

^{NASB} and “cause their conquerors to show them mercy.”^{NIV}

Not An Isolated Incident

As magnificent as this incident is, it is not an isolated one. This is the manner of God with His people – to cause them to receive favor from those who would normally be considered their enemies. His power is used for such purposes.

- ▶ **JOSEPH:** “But the LORD was with Joseph, and showed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison” (Gen 39:21). “And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house” (Acts 7:10)

him mercy in the sight of this man . . . And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me” (Neh 1:11; 2:8).

Solomon put it this way, “When a man’s ways please the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him”^{NKJV} (Prov 16:7). The Living God is over the mind, affections, and emotions of men. He can “open” hearts (Acts 16:14). He can also “turn” hearts (Prov 21:1). This is not a circumstance for which endless details are provided. There are, however, examples given of this activity in order that our faith may be strengthened.

God’s people are not moved about at the whims of mortal men! Although, on the surface, it may appear as though everything was in the hands of men, it

fiery furnace. OR, He can cause you to find favor with those who are your enemies, as He did Joseph in prison, or Ezra and Nehemiah in Persia. With God, all things are possible!

TENDER LOVE

The expression “tender love” is not a romantic one. With the general acceptance of sodomy, base and corrupt views of this text have been espoused and zealously promulgated. That circumstances requires that something be said about this expression.

The words “tender love” are translated as follows in other versions. “Goodwill,”^{NKJV} “compassion,”^{NASB} “sympathy,”^{NIV} “mercy,”^{Douay} “pity,”^{BBE} and “great respect.”^{NLT}

The word “tender” emphasizes the sympathy, pity, and respect the “prince” had for Daniel. The word “love” confirms that he was inclined to do good to Daniel, and seek certain advantages for him. “Tender love” is the opposite of the perspective of an enemy, who lays traps and snares for those he hates, and seeks an occasion to bring them into shame and disgrace. The “prince of eunuchs” did not seek to make Daniel stumble and fall, but to protect him, and see to it that his interests and protection were served.

THE LIVING GOD IS OVER THE MIND, AFFECTIONS, AND EMOTIONS OF MEN. HE CAN “OPEN” HEARTS (ACTS 16:14). HE CAN ALSO “TURN” HEARTS (PROV 21:1). THIS IS NOT A CIRCUMSTANCE FOR WHICH ENDLESS DETAILS ARE PROVIDED.

- ▶ **ISRAEL:** “And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians” (Ex 3:21). “And the LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians” (Ex 11:3). “And the LORD gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians” (Ex 12:36). “He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives” (Psa 106:46).

- ▶ **EZRA:** “Blessed be the LORD God of our fathers, which . . . extended mercy unto me before the king, and his counselors, and before all the king’s mighty princes” (Ezra 7:27).

- ▶ **NEHEMIAH:** “O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant

was not. God was orchestrating the affairs of Daniel, just as He does with all who are in His favor. That is precisely involved in the statement, “God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose”^{NASB} (Rom 8:28).

The Lesson to be Learned

There is a lesson to be learned here. Those who put their trust in God can have the assurance that God will defend them. “But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because Thou defendest them” (Psa 5:11). Again, those who seek the Lord in their afflictions and trials will not be disappointed. “for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee” (Psa 9:10). The Lord can lift you out of the circumstances, as He delivered Israel from Egypt, Daniel from the lion’s den, and the three Hebrew children from the

Note, the attitude of Ashpenaz was “caused” by the Almighty God. It was a heavenly grant, or gift, to prepare the way for Daniel’s protection and prominence before king Nebuchadnezzar. Now, when Daniel presents his case to the man placed over him, that man will be inclined to hear what he says, and provide the provisions he requests. As “the Breaker” God had gone before him, preparing the way (Mal 2:13). As with Cyrus, the Lord went before Daniel, making crooked places straight (Isa 45:2), clearing the path on which he was placed. It is no different with you!

I have found that it requires great faith and a persistent spirit to maintain this perspective. Our current spiritual environment, at least in the Western world, is not conducive to the maintenance of such a view. Yet, it is absolutely essential that we do so. Let us encourage such a posture!

A PROBING QUESTION

“¹⁰ And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king.”

I FEAR THE KING!

The “prince” is a good servant to the king, as well as one who seeks the genuine interest of the four Hebrew lads. He does not simply order Daniel to eat what is set before him, but reasons with him. **Nor, indeed, does he immediately grant Daniel his request.** Daniel had “asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way”^{NIV} (verse 8). Now his faith will be tested. Even though Ashpenaz was especially drawn to Daniel, and desired to do good to him, yet he also was mindful of the king. He knows all too well that the suggestion of Daniel will not set well with Nebuchadnezzar. Thus he immediately answers, “I am afraid of my lord the king, who has appointed your food and your drink.”^{NASB} He would not violate the trust of the king at the suggestion of a young captive!

SOMETHING TO SEE

In this we see that God does not turn men into impersonal and unthinking robots. The fact that He “caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel”^{NIV} did not mean that official would have no regard for the king. Neither, indeed, would he simply default to showing Daniel favor at the expense of displeasing the king.

In a moral arena, where decisions are made, and thoughtfulness occurs, it is essential that patience and wisdom be found in those who trust the Lord. They will be required to assess their circumstances, and to respond to them in the wisdom of faith.

Times When God Does It All

There are times when believers are simply brought through a circumstance with little of their own involvement. In such cases, the Lord

undertakes for them as they simply wait upon Him.

- ▣ **The drowning of Pharaoh’s army.** “The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace” (Ex 14:14).
- ▣ **When Jehosaphat faced the Ammonites and Moabites.** “Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you . . . And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab,

engage in considerable preparation and activity.

- ▣ **Noah building the ark.** “Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits.” (Gen 6:14-15).
- ▣ **Paul being lowered over wall in a basket by the disciples.** “But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in

NOW HIS FAITH WILL BE TESTED. EVEN THOUGH ASHPENAZ WAS ESPECIALLY DRAWN TO DANIEL, AND DESIRED TO DO GOOD TO HIM, YET HE ALSO WAS MINDFUL OF THE KING. HE KNOWS ALL TOO WELL THAT THE SUGGESTION OF DANIEL WILL NOT SET WELL WITH NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten” (2 Chron 20:17,22).

- ▣ **Peter’s deliverance from prison.** “And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me” (Acts 12:7-8).

Times When Involvement Is Required

However, every deliverance is not after this manner. There are times when the ones being delivered are required to

a basket” (Acts 9:24-25).

- ▣ **Obadiah hiding one hundred prophets in a cave during the oppression of Jezebel.** “For it was so, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water. (1 Kgs 18:4).

Times of No Apparent Deliverance

There are also times when no deliverance is apparent – when it appears as though the enemy triumphs.

- ▣ **The killing of Abel.** “And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him” (Gen 4:8).

▶ **The murder of Zachariah the prophet.** *“That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar”* (Matt 23:35).

▶ **The stoning of Stephen.** *“And they*

as the standard. Those with a propensity toward works will be inclined to declare that the only valid picture of deliverance is that of Noah and his family. Those who do not see the Lord as a great Deliverer might be inclined to think Stephen’s experience is the standard. All three views are wrong. They neither represent God nor circumstance correctly. Living by

would cost him his life. Both of these are weighty considerations. How will Daniel respond? Or will he respond at all? Unbelief would conclude it must be the Lord’s will to eat the king’s diet. However, Daniel trusts in God. Now, we will see how faith works, trusting God and speaking wisely at the same time. It faces potential danger, finding a way to confront it that will honor God, and respect the king as well.

NOW, WE WILL SEE HOW FAITH WORKS, TRUSTING GOD AND SPEAKING WISELY AT THE SAME TIME. IT FACES POTENTIAL DANGER, FINDING A WAY TO CONFRONT IT THAT WILL HONOR GOD, AND RESPECT THE KING AS WELL.

stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep” (Acts 7:59-60).

▶ **Those who imagine that living by faith is simplistic do well to examine their persuasion.** There are no guarantees about the details of Divine deliverance! The Lord may simply crush your enemies without you lifting your hand or voice, as He did with Pharaoh and his armies. He may extend your presence among your enemies, calling upon you to engage in prolonged and hearty activity, like Noah building the ark. And, you may fall before your enemies in seeming defeat, like Stephen before the Jewish council. Deliverance occurred in all of these cases, but it was identical. Israel realized instant and obvious victory. Noah waited long, and then was delivered in seclusion from his enemies. Stephen was wafted into the heavenly realms, and afforded a glimpse of a standing Savior while he was dying.

Simplistic souls are prone to declare the details of Israel’s deliverance

faith is not that simplistic, and we do well not to be so naive as to think it is.

A PROBING QUESTION

The way in which the Lord will accomplish the deliverance of the four children of Judah will portray yet another Divine manner. **In this case, some dialogue will be required, as well as judgment and wisdom.**

“ . . . For why should he see your faces looking worse than the young men who are your age? Then you would endanger my head before the king.” A worthy question, indeed! The *“prince of the eunuchs”* has been given an order by the king. Under ordinary circumstances, this involved a diet that would promote a healthy appearance before the king. Now, Ashpenaz reasons that the failure of Daniel and his colleagues to submit to this diet would promote an inferior appearance. That, in turn, would reveal he had not obeyed the edict of the king, and would result in his sure death.

Thus he puts forth two reasons why the suggestion of Daniel does not seem wise. First, it would result in haggard looks for the boys. Second, it

NOT ALL YOUTHS WERE THE SAME

The directive of the king was *“that he should bring **certain** of the children of Israel, and of the king’s seed, and of the princes”* (1:3). While we may conclude that only Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were selected, the text does not demand such a conclusion. In fact, verse six affirms they were *“among”* the ones chosen for special orientation. The larger group were *“of the children of Israel, and of the king’s seed, and of the princes”* (verse 3), while within that group were the four *“of the children of Judah.”*

There is no record of any of the other young men speaking up, or objecting to the special diet imposed by the king. Three years later, when all of those in the orientation were brought before the king, **“among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah”** (verse 19). An apparently significant number of children were found among the captures Israelites. Yet, only the four children of Judah *“stood before the king.”* Many were selected. Many successfully passed through the orientation program. However, only four of them were brought into the royal court.

It is a principle in the Kingdom of God, that those who are at last exalted, must prove faithful in the beginning. What a noble example we have in these boys! Thank God for their record!

THE ANSWER OF FAITH

“¹¹ Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael,

and Azariah, ¹² Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to

drink.” Keep in mind, this is a young boy replying to the decree of a king. He does not fall backward in fear at the

answer of his custodian. Nor, indeed, does he conclude there is no need to say anything more. He has determined in his heart not to defile himself, and human reasoning will not move him to abandon that determination. It is for this reason, that God now grants Daniel wisdom to answer the objections of those over him.

HE ANSWERS THE IMMEDIATE SUBORDINATE

Daniel honors the king, giving due respect to the protocol that has been put in place. He does not send a letter to Nebuchadnezzar. Nor, indeed, does he speak directly to Ashpenaz. Instead, he addresses his words to “Melzar,” whom Asphenaz has placed over the four boys.

It appears from this text that the prince, Ashpenaz, had concluded his discussion with Daniel. His last word was that he would be putting himself at risk to disobey the king, and he felt the four children of Judah would be the worse for choosing another diet. For many, that would have ended the matter. Flesh would reason that the Lord had closed the door to any possible change in the diet. After all, the one in charge had rejected the pleas of Daniel. There was no need for further discussion. A shallow person would conclude it must be all right to eat what the king sets before them. A legalistic heart would simply refuse to eat the food, going on a self-imposed fast. Being full of faith, however, Daniel will choose yet another course.

Faith Is Persistent

However, faith can find paths that are not evident. Godly intentions do not retreat into forgetfulness when they are challenged by earthly dignitaries. Faith can reach upward, laying hold upon the Living God. It can then probe earthly circumstances, being used by God to arrive at creative solutions. This, as we will see, is done in wisdom and prudence.

A TEST IS PROPOSED

Remember, this is a young boy that is speaking. Yet, it is not merely a young boy, but one who has faith in God and a determination not to eat what His Lord has forbidden – even though the king demands it.

One Speaks for All

“Then said Daniel . . .” Although

there are four lads, and each one “*showing intelligence in every branch of wisdom, endowed with understanding, and discerning knowledge, and who had ability for serving in the king’s court,*”^{NASB} yet they do not all speak for themselves. **They are in perfect accord, and one can speak for them all.**

This is one of the marvelous benefits of the “*unity of the faith*” (Eph 4:13). One can accurately and effectively speak for all. This is what happened on the day of Pentecost, when Peter spoke in the behalf of the other eleven Apostles.

LIKE DANIEL, WE CAN APPEAL TO THE DIVINE IMAGERY IN PEOPLE – THE PART THAT IS CAPABLE OF KINDNESS AND CONSIDERATION. YOU MAY THINK THE PERSON INCAPABLE OF SUCH A REACTION, BUT DO NOT ASSUME THAT IS THE CASE.

“*But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them . . .*” (Acts 2:14). He did not upstage the others, but spoke for them all, thereby removing the confusion caused by simultaneous voices.

In our text, Daniel does the same, presenting the case of all four children about something concerning which they were in perfect accord.

A Earnest Appeal

“*Prove . . . I beseech thee . . .*” Other versions read, “*Please test*”^{NKJV} “*Try, I beseech thee*”^{DOUAY} “*Try, I pray thee.*”^{YLT} Although they are members of a Divinely chosen race, the seed of Abraham, they speak humbly, making an appeal to the one placed over them. They are, after all, in a foreign land, and their nation is under the chastening hand of God. This is not the time to be arrogant, or affirm the superiority of the Jews. Yet, their circumstance still does not justify forgetting their covenant with God, and the various dietary laws that God had imposed upon them. Therefore, Daniel makes an earnest appeal to the official.

Although “*all have sinned, and*

come short of the glory of God,” vestiges of the Divine nature remains in them. God can enable His people to make appeals to that part of man in which a spark of tenderness may yet exist. While this is not an area where we can make laws, it is one that can offer great hope to believers that are living under less-than-ideal circumstances. It is possible to be under a person who seems heartless and inconsiderate. It could be a husband, a father, a manager, or the governor of the land. Such circumstances can open the door for the entrance of despair and hopelessness, pummeling the oppressed

person down to the basement of depression. There is an alternative.

Like Daniel, we can appeal to the Divine imagery in people – the part that is capable of kindness and consideration. You may think the person incapable of such a reaction, but do not assume that is the case. The “*prince of the eunuchs*” has already rejected Daniel’s plea. Now he presses the matter further, making a strong appeal to the willingness of an official to submit to a fair test.

A few examples will serve to buttress this principle in our thinking – namely, that we can make appeals to people to be considerate, rather than attempting to impose our will upon them, or giving the appearance of being obstinate.

☐ **Abraham** appeals to Lot when contention arises among their servants. “*Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren*” (Gen 13:8). A solution was found.

☐ **Joseph** appealed to Pharaoh to allow

him to go and bury his father Jacob, even though it would interrupt his official duties. *"If now I have found grace in your eyes, speak, I pray you, in the ears of Pharaoh, saying, My father made me swear, saying, Lo, I die: in my grave which I have digged for me in the land of Canaan, there shalt thou bury me. Now therefore let me go up, I pray thee, and bury my father, and I will come again"* (Gen 50:4-5). Pharaoh consented to do so.

- ▶ **Rahab** appealed to the good will of the Israelite spies, even though she was a citizen of a cursed city. *"Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the LORD, since I have showed*

when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of. For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain" (Acts 28:19-20). He was given a hearing, and even provided Roman protection from the evil intentions of the Jews.

As I have said, this is not an area in which hard and fast laws can be made. It is, however, an area in which faith can work and wisdom can be exhibited. Sometimes our desires are not met simply because we did not have the good sense to

They are willing to serve, and would not have raised this issue if very important matters were not at stake.

After David had killed Goliath, Abner brought him before king Saul *"with the head of the Philistine in his hand."* When Saul asked him, *"Whose son art thou, thou young man?"*, David quickly answered, *"I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite"* (1 Sam 17:57-58). He was not ashamed to acknowledge the obligation of his family to the king. It was not the superior relationship, but it was a valid one.

Daniel now presents his case to the officer. He is responding for four Jewish lads who, under ordinary circumstances, were quite willing to do what the king requested. They were his servants, and he would make his petition for them in that capacity.

A Limited Duration

" . . . ten days . . ." The test that Daniel proposes is not a long one. He seems to sense a lengthy duration of time would tax the patience of the officer, and give room for doubt in his mind. He therefore asks for a period of testing that is less than one and a half weeks – *"ten days."* Considering the nature of his request, this is an extremely short period of time. It is apparent, however, that Daniel knew God could work within this time frame. It was reasonable for God, and would be nearly, if not altogether, miraculous in the eyes of a Babylonian. By the same token, if the king's diet was actually superior, this would be sufficient time to prove the inferiority of the suggested substitute diet.

Thus, Daniel asks for a period of time adequate to yield observable results, yet reasonable enough to **NOT** tax the patience of the officer.

It is my persuasion that this period of time was made known to Daniel by the Lord. I do not know if Daniel himself was aware of this, for the Lord can put a thought in a person's mind without the person being fully aware of its Source. When Jesus was among us, He confessed, *"I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things"* (John 8:28). This is the manner of the Kingdom. The difference is that Jesus

SOMETIMES OUR DESIRES ARE NOT MET SIMPLY BECAUSE WE DID NOT HAVE THE GOOD SENSE TO MAKE A HUMBLE APPEAL TO THE DIVINE IMAGERY IN THOSE WHO SEEM TO HAVE BEEN OVERCOME WITH HARDNESS AND BITTERNESS.

you kindness, that ye will also show kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token: And that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death" (Josh 2:12-13). She received her request.

- ▶ **Esther** appealed to the good will of king Ahasuerus as she pled for her people, the Jews. *"If I have found favor in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request: For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage"* (Esth 7:3-4).

- ▶ **Paul**, when faced with the unjust accusations of bigoted Jews, appealed to Caesar, allowing God to work through the judicial system. *"But*

make a humble appeal to the Divine imagery in those who seem to have been overcome with hardness and bitterness.

I am not suggesting that all such appeals will be honored, for no such guarantee is given to us. Herod killed John the Baptist and James the brother of John. Stephen was stoned by the Jewish council to whom he appealed. Notwithstanding, we can cast out bread upon the waters, doing our best to work with the circumstances before us, as Daniel did in our text.

As Willing Subordinates

" . . . thy servants . . ." Notice, Daniel does not present his case as one who is being held hostage against his will. He speaks for all four of the lads, affirming themselves to be *"thy servants."* Rebelling against the will of the king is not their manner. They are not insurrectionists like Barabbas (Mark 15:7). They are not anti-Babylonians, standing against all of their customs for no other reason than that they are Jews.

operated in full cognizance of this situation. Others have been moved by God, but were not fully aware that was the case. Examples of this lack of awareness include Samson (Judges 14:2-4) and David (2 Sam 24:1).

An Alternative Diet

“... and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.” Nothing was left to guesswork. Daniel did not suggest that the officer find another diet, but suggested one himself, thus making the choice easier for the man.

“Pulse”

The word “pulse” is a contemporary word, though not often used. It means “the edible seeds of various leguminous crops (as peas, beans, or lentils)” MERRIAM-WEBSTER The word is also used in Second Samuel. The occasion was the conflict between David and his son Absalom, who was engaged in a quest to seize the throne. A number of men were with David, and they were “hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness.” Three men (Shobi, Machir, and Barzillai) brought beds, basins, and food for the men. Part of the food they provided was “parched pulse,” or “roasted grain.”^{NIV}

“Pulse,” or leguminous crops, are plants whose seed itself is the food, whether from the root (as potatoes or turnips), or from the plant above the ground (as peas, beans, or grain). This distinguishes the food from leafy vegetables (as greens), or the plant stalk (as with broccoli or celery). This is the kind of food God initially gave to Adam: “every herb that yields seed”^{NKJV} (Gen 1:29). It was even the type of food with which God miraculously sustained Israel in the wilderness – “manna,” which “was like coriander seed” (Ex 16:31).

“Water to Drink”

Daniel asks for the ordinary beverage – nothing unusual. God’s law did not demand that His people drink only water. If fact, unless a person was a Nazarite (Num 6:3) or a priest (Lev 10:9), there was no prohibition against drinking wine in moderate portions. God even blessed the winepresses of the Israelites, telling them to share that bounty with liberated Hebrew slaves (Deut 15:12-14). But Daniel did not suggest they drink Jewish wine instead of the king’s wine.

Nor, indeed, does he suggest they drink “milk,” found abundantly in the promised land (Ex 3:8; 33:3). The superiority of faith would not be seen in such a procedure.

But when plain water causes the lads to be more healthy and comely in appearance, God will be more apt to

*is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, **yet because of his importunity** he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one*

WHEN HE WAS FIRST REJECTED, DANIEL DID NOT GIVE UP. HE PRESSED THE MATTER, TAKING IT UP WITH THE NEXT IN CHARGE. HE HAD “IMPORTUNITY!” HE DID NOT SIMPLY REPEAT THE REQUEST, BUT WRAPPED IT IN A PLAUSIBLE SUGGESTION.

receive the glory. Let it be clear, “pulse” and “water” did not give the lads a superior countenance because they promoted good health, but because God blessed the four boys, honoring their faith and determination to please Him.

A Near Miraculous Diet

Considering the desired outcome of the king’s diet, I would be inclined to consider “pulse” a near miraculous diet. Some have noted that such a diet is “not naturally calculated to render them fatter in flesh than the others.”^{TSK-ALL NOTES} It would rather be more apt to produce a lean and less fat appearance, **NOT** “fatter in flesh” (verse 15).

IMPORTUNITY

There is a lesson here in importunity, or a faith that continues to press the issue. Ordinarily, this is applied to prayer made to God. On one occasion, Christ’s disciples asked Him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.” It was at that time that Jesus gave them what is commonly known as “the Lord’s prayer” (Matt 6:9-13). Luke gives only the first part of that prayer, then adds some words pertinent to our text. “Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door

that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened” (Lk 11:1-10).

When he was first rejected, Daniel did not give up. He pressed the matter, taking it up with the next in charge. He had “importunity!” He did not simply repeat the request, but wrapped it in a plausible suggestion. As I have said, I cannot but believe God was moving him in this matter, giving him the wisdom to recommend a reasonable solution.

All of this followed the determination Daniel had already made in his heart. “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” (1:8). That decision opened the windows of heaven to Daniel. Strength was imparted to carry out his resolve. Faith was granted to do so confidently. Wisdom was imparted that would allow for his request to be fulfilled in an orderly way that caused no disruption among the king’s officials.

DANIEL’S CONSIDERATION

I do not want to leave this section without noting Daniel’s consideration of Melzar, the steward of Ashpenaz. Remember, Ashpenaz considered Daniel’s request a threat to his own life. If the youths stood before the king “looking more haggard than the youths who are your own age? Then you would make me

forfeit my head to the king”^{NASB} (1:10).

Daniel had not forgotten that

word. Through the gracious direction of the Lord, he carefully crafted a suggestion that would also preserve the lives of those

placed over him. He sought to “do good unto all men” (Gal 6:10), even in this critical matter.

FAITH SUBMITS TO EXAMINATION

“¹³ Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king’s meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.” Those who lean their souls upon the Lord can stand before the scrutiny of men! God has declared, “And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame” (Rom 9:33). Some versions read, “will not be disappointed,”^{NASB} or “will never be put to shame.”^{NIV} Isaiah, who lived and wrote before Daniel, said, “But Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end” (Isa 45:17).

could well be more prominent among us. **The Lord encourages us to seek to avoid disappointment and shame.** He is not only able to keep us from falling (Jude 24-25), but to keep us from being ashamed, confounded, or disappointed. His Word promotes such a posture!

FIRST, He promises that those who trust and hope in Him will not be ashamed.

▣ “The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever. **They shall not be ashamed in the evil time**” (Psa 37:18-19).

▣ “For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him **shall not be ashamed**” (Rom 10:11).

SECOND, He has inspired holy men to record their requests that they not be ashamed, confounded, or disappointed.

▣ “In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: **let me never be put to confusion**” (Psa 71:1).

▣ “O my God, I trust in thee: **let me not be ashamed**, let not mine enemies triumph over me” (Psa 25:2).

▣ “O keep my soul, and deliver me: **let me not be ashamed**; for I put my trust in thee” (Psa 25:20).

▣ “**Let me not be ashamed, O LORD**; for I have called upon thee” (Psa 31:17).

▣ “Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live: and **let me not be ashamed of my hope**” (Psa 119:116).

FAITH IS NOT AFRAID TO SUBMIT TO THE MOST METICULOUS SCRUTINY. THE FAITH THAT KEEPS THE SOUL ALSO ENHANCES THE VISIBLE LIFE WITH COMELY TRAITS THAT CANNOT BE CONDEMNED. FAITH DOES NOT SHOUT OUT, “WHO ARE YOU TO JUDGE!” RATHER, IT BOLDLY INVITES JUDGMENT!

We dare not read the book of Daniel without these things in mind. This is not the record of a mere hero, or one who excelled among his peers because of unusual natural abilities. Rather, it is the report of how God worked with a young man who was willing to trust Him. Daniel trusted the Lord when torn away from his homeland. He trusted Him while in a foreign land, and amidst heathen gods. He depended upon the Lord when he was asked to do things his faith did not allow. Daniel lived out what the Scriptures affirm to be truth.

EXAMINE US!

Faith is not afraid to submit to the most meticulous scrutiny. **The faith that keeps the soul also enhances the visible life with comely traits that cannot be condemned.** Faith does not shout out, “Who are you to judge!”

Long before the inauguration of the marvelous New Covenant, holy men sensed that God could keep those who made holy resolves. They would petition God to keep them from being ashamed or confounded. David prayed, “In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; **let me never be ashamed**: deliver me in thy righteousness” (Psa 31:1). Isaiah wrote, “For the Lord GOD will help me; therefore shall **I not be confounded**: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that **I shall not be ashamed**” (Isa 50:7).

This is an aspect of faith that

▣ “But Israel shall be saved in the LORD with an everlasting salvation: **ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end**” (Isa 45:17).

▣ “. . . and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: **for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me**” (Isa 49:23).

▣ “Fear not; for **thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded**; for thou shalt not be put to shame” (Isa 54:4).

Rather, it boldly invites judgment! The person who cries out to God, “Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart” (Psa 26:2), and “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thought” (Psa 139:23), has nothing to fear from the examination of mere mortals!

“Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee.” Other versions read, “Then let our appearance be examined before you,”^{NKJV} and “Then let our appearance be observed in your presence.”^{NASB} Daniel is not suggesting the steward merely look at them, but that he view them with a mind toward the king’s demands. He challenges the man to carefully examine them after ten days to see if anything inferior or unacceptable could be found in them – anything that would disqualify them from standing in the presence of the king.

This reminds me of the challenge Peter hurled at “Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.” When they questioned the Apostle about the healing of the impotent man, Peter replied, “If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole” (Acts 4:9-10). **Faith does not back away from scrutiny, cringe when put to the test, or cower and hide when examined.**

The thought has occurred to me that much of contemporary Christianity cannot stand up under the scrutiny of men. It has produced multitudes that are in no way better than those who are in total ignorance of God, and alienated from Him because of it. Such things ought not be! They are conditions that unveil the lack of faith in the very ones professing it.

COMPARE US!

“. . . and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king’s meat.” Other versions read, “Then **compare** our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food,”^{NIV} and

“You can then **compare** our appearance with the appearance of the young men who eat the royal rations.”^{NRSV}

Daniel urges that a comparison be made between the four children of Judah, and those who were given the royal fare of the king. This is to be a thorough examination, not a cursory one. From the

WE HAVE A SITUATION BEFORE US WHERE PEOPLE ARE SETTLING FOR CREEDS THAT DO NOT CHANGE MEN. THEY EMBRACE MOVEMENTS THAT DO NOT TRANSFORM, AND POSITIONS THAT LACK MORAL POWER. CONSEQUENTLY, A WHOLE NEW THEOLOGY HAS ARISEN THAT SEEKS TO JUSTIFY THE FACT THAT PROFESSED CHRISTIANS ARE NO DIFFERENT THAN THOSE WHO DENY HIS NAME AND REJECT HIS SALVATION.

standpoint of the Babylonian official, the test was to see if the lads were the worse for not eating the king’s food. From the standpoint of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, it was to see if their faith was in vain, or if trusting in the Lord would be a source of shame.

There are two possible meanings of “the children that eat of the portion of the king’s meat.” It could be those who were already in the king’s service. If that is the case, then the four boys would be compared with Chaldean servants who were at their peak. It could also be the other Jewish boys who did not have the scruples of Daniel. In that case, the comparison would be made with others who, like themselves, were being honed to perfection, but were not yet ready to stand before the king.

The test that Daniel proposes reveals the magnitude of his faith, even though he was young. A person in the grip of fear and doubt would not suggest such a procedure. He knew that honoring God could not result in inferiority – not even in this world. Young Joseph refused to dishonor God by caving in to the lustful cries of Potipher’s wife (Gen 39:9). But this did not make him subaltern or inferior in anyway. **Faith never pushes men lower, but rather raises them higher.** It does not produce or make

people inadequate, but imparts to them an adequacy that brings glory to God.

A Challenging Thought

What value is faith, if it produces no difference? No change? Nothing for the true betterment of the individual? If those who have faith are no different than others, and often even inferior to them,

what point is there to it? Much of the religion of our day has produced no moral or spiritual change in its constituents. **The same sins that are prominent in the world are often found within the professed church.** Its leaders have moral failures like political and business leaders of this world. All of this is a blotch upon the name of the Lord. If the queen of Sheba will rise in the judgment to condemn those who stood aloof from wisdom superior to that of Solomon, why will not Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, rise in judgment against those who wore Christ’s name, yet fell into all of manner of immorality?

We have a situation before us where people are settling for creeds that do not change men. They embrace movements that do not transform, and positions that lack moral power. Consequently, a whole new theology has arisen that seeks to justify the fact that professed Christians are no different than those who deny His name and reject His salvation. I hear people fairly shouting out, “We are sinners like everyone else – except that we are forgiven ones.” Or, “I am just a sinner saved by grace.” “God loves us just the way we are.” Or, “The Lord accepts us just the way we are.” There are a host of trite little sayings like these that not only lack substance, they

are a total misrepresentation of the effectiveness of faith.

After all, the grace of God, which brings salvation, has not only appeared to "all men," but is **"Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly,**

who examined them.

It is quite true that those in Christ are not to "judge according to appearance" (John 7:24). That does not justify crude and worldly appearances, and that is not what our Lord intended to convey by those words. What He meant

doubt about how the whole procedure would conclude, Daniel had proposed something from which the steward could recover. It was to be three years before they would stand before the king for their final examination. If, at the first, only ten days were consumed, adequate time remained for full recovery to be made. In my judgment, this consideration would have made the whole thing of little consequence to the steward. It could also be concealed from Ashpenaz.

While this way of thinking might be imagined in the steward, it would have been wholly unacceptable for Daniel. He had to be motivated by faith, not probabilities. Besides that, his intention was not to defile himself, and from that intention he could not turn away. Notwithstanding, he so presented the suggestion as to remove any fear of the steward entering into a condition from which he could not recover. Better to perceive how a matter will be judged by others, framing our actions so as to diffuse unnecessary difficulty.

An Unconventional Tactic

I acknowledge that this may appear to be unbelief on the surface. However, allow me to show how God has employed this type of approach before. He has framed the fulfillment of His will in a way that does not allow potential opponents to suspect what is really taking place.

▣ **Instance #1.** There came a time when the Lord rejected Saul as king of Israel. After Samuel had mourned the rejection of Saul for some time, the Lord spoke to him. "And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided Me a king among his sons." Fearful for his life Samuel replied, "How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me." The Lord replied, "Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the LORD. And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me him whom I name unto thee" (1 Sam 16:1-3). The Lord moved in such a way as to

IT IS CLEAR THAT DANIEL HAD CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD. HE WAS YOUNG. HE WAS AWAY FROM HOME. HE WAS IN A HEATHEN COUNTRY. YET HE KNEW THAT FAITH DOES NOT HAVE GEOGRAPHICAL BOUNDARIES, NOR DOES HOPE WITHER WHEN IN A FOREIGN LAND.

righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Tit 2:12-14). Where men have not been effectively taught to say "NO!"^{NIV} to ungodliness and worldly lusts, they simply have not been taught by God's grace. Nor, indeed, has grace brought them salvation. If people cannot live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world, then they do not have grace or the salvation it brings. If they are not looking for the glorious appearing of Christ, their profession is empty and meaningless. **If they are not zealous of good works, and redeemed from the power of iniquity, they are a gigantic contradiction to the grace of God.**

How would it have sounded for the four children of Judah to have said to Ashpenaz or Melzar, "We make mistakes just like you Babylonians, except God has accepted us!" Or, "God doesn't love us anymore than He does those who worship idols." Do you suppose their Babylonian keepers would have given a second thought to their request for a special diet? And keep in mind, in our text, the difference will be seen in the appearance of the four lads – how they looked to those

was that Satan can fabricate wholesome appearances, making people appear to be godly when they are really ungodly. **You may rest assured that God, however, never cultures ungodly appearances among those who are godly.** I sense in my spirit, however, that such a notion is being entertained by altogether too many people.

DO ACCORDING TO WHAT YOU SEE

"... and as thou seest, deal with thy servants." Other versions read, "and as you see fit, so deal with your servants,"^{NKJV} "and deal with your servants according to what you see,"^{NASB} and "and treat your servants in accordance with what you see."^{NIV}

It is clear that Daniel had confidence in the Lord. He was young. He was away from home. He was in a heathen country. Yet he knew that faith does not have geographical boundaries, nor does hope wither when in a foreign land. He could side with the Lord, seeking to honor Him by NOT defiling himself. He had no trouble leaving the outcome of the whole incident in the hands of the steward placed over them. He knew the appearance would be so significant, even a Babylonian could not miss it.

A WISE COURSE

From the steward's point of view, this was a wise course. If there was any

diffuse needless trouble. Of course, Samuel did, in fact, offer a sacrifice. However, that was not the chief purpose of his trip.

- **Instance #2.** On one occasion, the king of Syria sent soldiers to arrest Elisha, who had been divulging the campsites and strategies of the Syrian king to the king of Israel. Early in the morning, Elisha's servant arose, and seeing the whole city compassed with horses and chariots, cried out to his master, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" Elisha then prayed the Lord would open the young man's eyes, whereupon he beheld that the whole mountain was "full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." As the soldiers came down to Elisha, he prayed that God would smite them with blindness. He then went to the men, who were seeking him in that very place, and said, "This is not the way, neither is this the city: follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek." He then led them to Samaria, which was the capital, where the Lord opened their eyes (2 Kgs 6:14-20). Did Elisha lie to the soldiers?

A TIME FOR COMPARISONS

I remember another time when a comparison was in order. The challenge took place on Mount Carmel. There, on that mount, stood a lonely figure, aligned against four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and four hundred prophets of the grove. The children of Israel had also been gathered to the mount. Now Elijah stands before them and cries out, "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him." Numbed by unbelief, the people "answered him not a word." But that is not the end of the matter!

Elijah then proposed a test. Two bullocks were to be brought forward. The prophets of Baal were to choose one for themselves, and Elijah would take the other. Each bullock was to be butchered,

to see a comparison between those who trust God and those who do not. People have seen enough similarities between professed Christians and the world. They have heard enough about fallen leaders

WE ARE LIVING IN A DAY THAT NEEDS TO SEE A COMPARISON BETWEEN THOSE WHO TRUST GOD AND THOSE WHO DO NOT. PEOPLE HAVE SEEN ENOUGH SIMILARITIES BETWEEN PROFESSED CHRISTIANS AND THE WORLD. THEY HAVE HEARD ENOUGH ABOUT FALLEN LEADERS AND STRAYING MEMBERS. IT HAS HAD ITS FILL OF CHRISTIAN MUSICIANS WITH A WORLDLY APPEARANCE, AND CHURCH MEMBERS WITH NO MORE INTEREST IN THE LORD THAN DRINKERS AT THE LOCAL PUB. SOMEWHERE, SOMETIME, IN SOME GENERATION, THE CHURCH OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST NEEDS TO CHALLENGE THE WORLD TO MAKE A COMPARISON.

cut in pieces, and placed upon wood that was on an altar. No fire could be placed under the offerings. The prophets of Baal were to call upon their God first, after which Elijah would call upon the name of his God. The God who answered by fire, Elijah said, "let Him be God." All of the people answered and said "It is well spoken" (1 Kgs 18:19-39). I am sure you know the rest of the account.

Let me ask you a question. Do you suppose there was any doubt in Elijah's mind about the outcome of this challenge? Could he have been so bold if there was the slightest question in his mind about which God would answer by fire? The answer is obvious, and requires no further comment. Elijah spoke by faith, with the full assurance of things hoped for.

We are living in a day that needs

and straying members. It has had its fill of Christian musicians with a worldly appearance, and church members with no more interest in the Lord than drinkers at the local pub.

Somewhere, sometime, in some generation, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ needs to challenge the world to make a comparison. They need to stand their leaders before the world and call for a comparison. They need to stand their young people before them and demand a comparison. They need to present people who have been fed a steady and consistent diet of the Word of God, and call for a comparison! If there is no difference between what the church produces and what the world produces, it is because they both have the same spirit. This day calls out for real comparisons God needs to be vindicated by a godly people!

THE TIME OF TESTING ESTABLISHED

"¹⁴ So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days." Other versions read, "So he consented with them in this matter, and tested them ten days,"^{NKJV} "So he listened to them in this matter and tested them

for ten days,"^{NASB} "So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days,"^{NIV} and "So he agreed to this proposal and tested them for ten days."^{NRSV}

Extended discussion was not

required. So far as the record is concerned, the proposal of Daniel was received without hesitation. In this, at least four worthy principles can be seen. These are matters that cannot be learned like mathematical tables. Rather, they are

perceptions into which faith ushers us.

PERCEIVED AS TRUSTWORTHY

The fact that Ashpenaz listened to Daniel, and Melzar received his proposal,

comes down from above, which *“is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated”* (James 3:17).

GOD PREPARED THE WAY

THE GIFTS AND ABILITIES OF MANY PEOPLE ARE OVERSHADOWED BY THEIR LACK OF MORAL FIBER AND LOOSENESS IN CONDUCT. THEY SIMPLY ARE PEOPLE WHO CANNOT BE TRUSTED. DANIEL WAS NOT SUCH A PERSON.

confirm that Daniel was perceived as trustworthy. He was obviously a noteworthy young man whose conduct did not detract from his abilities. The gifts and abilities of many people are overshadowed by their lack of moral fiber and looseness in conduct. They simply are people who cannot be trusted. Daniel was not such a person. The doctrine he embraced was *“adorned”* by the life he lived (Tit 2:10).

GOD HAD GIVEN DANIEL WISDOM

It is also evident that God granted wisdom to Daniel – wisdom to frame his proposal in such a way as to make it acceptable. The word was spoken at the appropriate time, or *“in due season”* (Prov 15:23). Whether or not his words were given to him at that moment, I do not know. It does, however, appear to be a notable example of the Lord teaching in *“the same hour what ye ought to say”* (Lk 12:11). They were words with which a Babylonian official could find no fault. That is an example of the wisdom that

It is God’s manner to prepare the way for His people – to lead out before them, removing unnecessary obstacles. Surely Daniel was familiar with the word of the Lord to Israel. When they came out of Egypt, and before they came to the promised land, the Lord spoke of His direction of the people. *“Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him. But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries. For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off”* (Ex 23:20-23). Later He told them, *“And I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite,*

and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite” (Ex 33:2).

This is involved in the expression, *“and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground”* (Ezek 38:20). Again it is written, *“Take the stumbling block out of the way of My people”*^{NKJV} (Isa 57:14). I suggest to you that the smoothness with which Daniel’s proposal was carried out confirms Divine preparation, as well as implementation.

THE OFFICIAL’S HEART TURNED

King Nebuchadnezzar’s mind on the matter of the boys diet was fixed. Ashpenaz gave no indication that he would violate the word of the king. How is it that the steward acquiesced so quickly to the plan advanced by Daniel. Nothing in Scripture suggests it was his manner to go against the word the king, or to act in contradiction of the clear word of *“the prince of the eunuchs.”*

His heart had been softened by God, just as surely as God had brought Daniel into favor with *“the prince of the eunuchs.”* Thus is the truth confirmed, *“The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the LORD”* (Prov 16:1). And again, *“Man’s goings are of the LORD”* (Prov 20:24). It is still true that God can *“put such a thing”* in the king’s heart (Ezra 7:27). God can not only *“turn”* people’s heart to *“hate His people”* (Psa 105:25), He can also make them *“to be pitied”* by the very ones who carried them captive (Psa 106:46). Blessed are the eyes that see this, and the heart that depends upon it. If you will allow it to do so, this record will cause faith and hope to grow in your heart.

TRUST IN GOD IS REWARDED

“¹⁵ And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king’s meat.”

A NECESSARY OBSERVATION

Again, I am very careful to note the manner in which the Scriptures have been recorded. This is a Divine manner,

not a human one. The Spirit moves the writers from significant event to significant event, not from miniscule detail to miniscule detail. In the matter before us, we leap from before the first day of testing to its conclusion, with absolutely no details of the intervening period. Such details are not relevant to the record. There is a reason for this. If history was driven along by purely human

influences, details, culture, and the likes, would be of significant importance. In them we could detect trends, the proclivities of those involved, and other such matters. However, if God is orchestrating the affairs for His own glory, the only details that are pertinent are the ones in which His particular influences are apparent. Thus we will learn primarily of His ways.



For this reason, I want to briefly rehearse what we have seen thus far. I do this for a reason. It is that we may more clearly see that God's Kingdom is driven by purpose – HIS purpose. That objective is not fulfilled by God tweaking the initiatives and responses of men, underwriting the good things men do, and overturning the bad things they do.

- ▶ In the third year of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem (1:1).
- ▶ The Lord gave Jehoiakim into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, together with part of the vessels of the house of God (1:2).
- ▶ The king brought these vessels into the treasure of the house of his god (1:2a).
- ▶ The king speaks to one of his officials, commanding that he bring certain of the children of Israel, of the royal seed and princes (1:3).
- ▶ The children must have excellent qualities, and would be schooled to stand as advisors in the king's court (1:4).
- ▶ A daily diet was established for these children, which included foods and wine from the king's own provisions (1:5).

- ▶ Among these children were certain "children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah" (1:6).
- ▶ The prince of the eunuchs gave Babylonian names to these children (1:7).
- ▶ Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat and the wine which he drank (1:8).
- ▶ Daniel requests permission to not defile himself with the king's food (1:8b).
- ▶ God caused the official over Daniel to show favor and sympathy to him (1:9).
- ▶ Ashpenaz refuses Daniel's request, saying there was no good reason for them to be disgraced before the king, which would cost him his head (1:10).
- ▶ Daniel presents his case to the next in command, a steward that was placed over the boys (1:11).
- ▶ He proposes a ten day test in which the four children of Judah would eat only "pulse" and drink only water (1:12).
- ▶ Daniel suggests they be tested at the end of the ten days, leaving the rest of the matter in the hands of the steward (1:13).
- ▶ The steward consents to the proposal, and proved, or tested, them for ten days (1:14).

If someone asked you how much time all of that required, what would you say? How would you know how much food they ate, or how often it was served? How about where they ate, and whether or not their decision was known beyond their small circle and the steward? What kind of "pulse" did they eat? Seeds? Parched seeds? Boiled roots? **While all of those things might be of interest to a historian, or a biographer, they are meaningless when the purpose of God is being delineated.**

When God begins executing His purpose, historical background, cultural customs, and the likes have little value.

He can move Joseph to be acutely conscious of Himself while he is in an environment that is oblivious to Him. He can train Moses and Aaron in His ways while they are yet in Egypt. He will move men to work contrary to their own instincts, and be favorably inclined to those who are their natural enemies.

The point of our text is that this is something God is doing. Just as surely as He "sent" Joseph into Egypt to preserve a people (Gen 45:7; Psa 105:17), He Sent Daniel into Babylon to testify of His purpose and preserve the knowledge of God among a heathen people. On the surface, it looked like Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery, and Potipher's wife lied him into prison. But God sent Him! On the surface, it may appear as though Nebuchadnezzar carried Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah into Babylon, attempting to impose their idolatrous ways upon them. But God sent them!

WHY SAY THIS?

I say these things for two reasons. **First**, there is no other way to account for the harmonious sequence of events. **Second**, it is only as the hand of God is seen in these things that they will produce patience and comfort in us (Rom 15:4). **At the very best, history presents us with possibilities.** Further, because the world's history revolves around influential people, it is improbable that good things will be repeated, and probable that bad things will occur again. **But when we perceive the working of the Lord, everything becomes possible, for that work does not center in people, but in Divine purpose.** God can work with Moses' sister Miriam to preserve him in Egypt. He can use a young boy who is keeping sheep to deliver the people from Goliath and the Philistines. A man who is plowing in a field can receive a double portion of the mighty prophet Elijah. Some men mending their nets can become two thirds of the inner circle of the twelve Apostles. A young man who kept guard over the garments of those who stoned Stephen can become the single Apostle sent to the Gentile world. **God can suddenly and decisively change things!**

The four boys we are reading about can stand for you. Their unlikely circumstances can stand for yours. That is

how you must read this account. That is how you must see it. The eyes of this same God still *“run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him”*^{NKJV} (2 Chron 16:9). That could very well be you! There may be a great work He is doing right now in your area. If you are determined and ready, He will no more pass by you than He did the four children of Judah.

AT THE END

When the ten days were completed, the boys were examined as agreed. They were not examined at the end of five days, or eight, or even nine. What is more, this would be a critical examination, not a casual one. Any failure of the boys to measure up to expectations could possibly cost Ashpenaz his life, and probably theirs as well. This would not be a lenient examination. Too much was at stake. If any blemish or sign of inferiority was present, it would be noted. If, in any way, these four boys proved inferior to the others, all would be lost.

It would do no good to simply be as good as the other boys, for that would prove nothing. A comparison had to be made that resulted in the boys being distinguished from the rest. Daniel had not suggested any criteria for the judgment. He simply said, *“You can then compare our appearance with the appearance of the young men who eat the royal rations, and deal with your servants according to what you observe”* (1:13).

The assessment is recorded for us. From the lower perspective, it precisely reflected what Melzar saw. From the high perspective, it declares what the Lord had done: *“their features appeared better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king’s delicacies.”*^{NKJV} Other versions read, *“they looked healthier and **better nourished** than any of the young men who ate the royal food,”*^{NIV} *“they appeared better and fatter than **all** the young men who had been eating the royal rations,”*^{NRSV} and *“their countenances appeared fairer and **stouter in flesh**, than the children that fed at the king’s table.”*^{Septuagint}

The word “fatter” is better translated “firm,” “muscular,” or, as the Septuagint reads, “stout.” The boys were

more robust, manly, and fleshed out. These qualities stood out in them as they were among others who had been given a diet calculated to produce such things.

Who in all of the world has heard of such remarkable results in a ten day diet of vegetables and water? The person who could successfully produce such results would become famous and wealthy overnight. **However, this was not the result of natural processes, but of supernatural working!** God took ordinary food and produced extraordinary results. Some do contend that this was purely the result of a good diet, and that nothing miraculous was in the matter at all. But it is not God’s manner to accrue great glory to Himself through nature alone. It is not merely by the sun shining

into wine (John 2:3-10), and a little meal and oil last through an entire famine (1 Kgs 17:12-16).

Those who intend to serve the Lord must set their minds on the extraordinary, even though they work with the ordinary. Although the brethren in Macedonia did not have much, they gave *“beyond their ability,”* even though they were simultaneously in *“a great trial of affliction”* (2 Cor 8:3-5). That is like becoming fairer and stouter on pulse and water – when a unlawful diet calculated to produce those effects was available.

AT THE END

“And at the end of ten days . . .” Daniel and his friends had an “at-the-end” mentality. They lived for the time when

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that God is glorified, but when it stands still for an extra day (Josh 10:12-13), or is turned backward ten degrees (2 Kgs 20:9-11). That is when God gets the glory. It is one thing for people to dig a deep well in the desert and thereby find water. It is quite another when water gushes like a river from a rock that has been smitten by a man (Ex 17:6; Psa 78:16). That brings glory to God!

God receives glory when the extraordinary come from the ordinary. That is when *“the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes”* (Isa 35:6-7). It is when men are made strong out of weakness (Heb 11:34), and when they can *“run and not be weary”* in the very place where the youths are fainting (Isa 40:30-31). It is when water is turned

they would be examined – when a comparison would be made between them and those willing to indulge their appetites. What occurred during the intervening days was important, but not as important as *“the end of ten days.”* That is what would determine their destiny. If they were not ready for that day, nothing else really mattered.

In my judgment, we are living in day when the church has lost the “at-the-end” view. There is altogether too much living for the present, and not enough for the future. All of the orthodox creeds and theologies acknowledge *“it is appointed unto man once to die, and after this the judgment”* (Heb 9:27). However, it would be exceedingly difficult to conclude this is what people believed by the way they lived. You surely would not conclude it from the frequency of their meetings, and certainly not from their length. One could attend a rather large number of church services without ever hearing about the coming of the Lord, the end of the world,

or the day of judgment. It simply is not fashionable to talk about such things.

But just as surely as the ten-day test of the four children of Judah came to an end, so life's little span will terminate for us all. Then we will be summoned to

the judgment seat of Christ for examination, *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad"* (2 Cor 5:10; Rom 14:10). In that day, we had better

not appear as "only human!" It will not go well for us if we have done no better in life than those who were *"having no hope, and without God in the world"* (Eph 2:12). That is when your faithfulness and consistency will really count – at the appointed end!

THE DESIRE OF THE HEART IS GRANTED

"¹⁶ Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse." The evidence was enough to convince Melzar. The idea here

for the things faith has substantized to the soul. Thus, the appearances produced by faith testify to its reality. I do not know if the steward thought about the God of Daniel when he saw the appearance of

protected. Thus, there was no further need for requests, and no more pressure placed upon the lads to eat the king's delicacies. The greater kindness, therefore, belongs to God, not to Melzar.

I have no doubt that Daniel thought about this before he made his request. This was not a short-term solution, and the results would have to be sufficient to produce three-year effects.

WE MUST LEARN FROM THIS THAT THE EFFECTS OF FAITH DO NOT CONTRADICT FAITH ITSELF. FAITH NEVER PRODUCES WORKS THAT BELIE OR NEGATE THAT FAITH. IT DOES NOT CONSTRAIN A PERSON TO LIVE WITHOUT REGARD FOR THE THINGS FAITH HAS SUBSTANTIZED TO THE SOUL.

NOT TEN DAYS, BUT THREE YEARS

The scheduled preparation period was three years! *"so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king."* There are, then, two "ends" in our text. First, *"at the end of ten days,"* and second, *"at the end" of "three years."* In this case, as with ours, the short-term test is the preparation for the long-term examine.

is that he continued the process that had lasted for the previous ten days – not that he started withholding these portions after the ten days. Thus the NASB reads, *"So the overseer continued to withhold their choice food and the wine they were to drink, and kept giving them vegetables."* The food kept coming in, according to the edict of the king, but it was NOT dispensed to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. There was no danger of being upbraided by the king, for the boys would prove superior at the time they were appointed to be examined by the king. Daniel knew it by faith. Melzar knew it by sight.

Daniel. But I suspect that as time proceeded, that association was soon made. If those who *"saw the boldness of Peter and John,"* noting what they said, and how they said it, taking *"knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus"* (Acts 4:13), surely that Babylonian steward made some connection between Daniel and his friends and the God they served! **From that day forward, they received the diet they had requested for ten days.**

Daniel had an enduring spirit, and was not among those Jesus described as believing *"for a while"* (Lk 8:13). Although he did not have the advantage of a godly environment, he made one of his own by setting his mind on pleasing God and being identified with His people. We will find that at the end of three years, all four of these young men proved to be most excellent, and advanced in every way. **But it all started with a ten day test!** It was a time of concentrated effort, the results of which would determine the rest of their lives. But the ten days were not the real point! It was the end of *"three years"* that was the real point.

We must learn from this that the effects of faith do not contradict faith itself. Faith never produces works that belie or negate that faith. It does not constrain a person to live without regard

It was kind of Melzar to do this. However, lest we ascribe too much glory to him, and not enough to God, let us remember he only did this because he knew it was safe for himself. He would not jeopardize his life for the sake of Daniel, nor would Ashpenaz. Knowing this, the Lord provided sufficient evidence to convince him he himself would be

CONCLUSION

Our text has shown ways in which the steps of a good man are *"ordered by*

the Lord" (Psa 37:23). It has revealed the God of heaven *"upholds"* a person's steps

in His *"paths"* (Psa 17:5). In this record it is confirmed that the Lord *"shall set us in*

the way of His steps” (Psa 85:13). It provides a most excellent example how our Father “works all things together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose” (Rom 8:28). Zechariah’s words ring in our ears as we peruse the manner in which the Lord worked with the four children of Judah. “And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God” (Zech 13:9).

How God’s people need to perceive these things. Every honest soul knows “the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer 10:23). The best among us cannot perfectly plan and implement a single day, or even hour, of our lives. Every purpose we devise, even if it is most noble, must be accompanied by the awareness, “If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that” (James 4:15).

From the human perspective, life itself is uncertain. “It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (James 4:14). We do not know “what a day may bring forth” (Prev 27:1). Viewing our life from the lower perspective, and without the purpose of God in mind, we must give heed to the words of our Lord. “Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (Matt 6:34).

All of this would cause us to throw up our hands in despair – except for the good knowledge of God. He has apprised us of the future – the critical future that will impact upon every person. There is no ambiguity about these things. They are all certain, and will involve all people.

▣ **DEATH.** “It is appointed unto men once to die” (Heb 9:27). There is an appointed time when we will put off this body. If we do not do so in the normal fashion, at death, we will do so when we are “changed” instantly at the coming of the Lord (1 Cor 15:51).

▣ **THE RESURRECTION.** Those who

have died have not passed into oblivion. The truth of this must come home to our hearts: “there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust” (Acts 24:25). For some, the resurrection will be a glorious triumph. For others, it will induct them into eternal condemnation. Jesus spoke of this time in no uncertain words: “for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28-29).

▣ **THE COMING OF THE LORD.** “For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up

▣ **JUDGMENT.** “Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead” (Acts 17:31). No one will be able to avoid this time. The “books,” or heavenly records, will be opened, “and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works” (Rev 20:12). The judgment will be just and final, and God will be proved to be true in everything He has said, done, or required (Rom 3:4).

▣ **A TIME OF ACCOUNTING.** Because we are God’s creation, we are accountable to Him. He has appointed a time when “every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom 14:10). This accounting will be

ALL OF THIS WOULD CAUSE US TO THROW UP OUR HANDS IN DESPAIR – EXCEPT FOR THE GOOD KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. HE HAS APPRISED US OF THE FUTURE – THE CRITICAL FUTURE THAT WILL IMPACT UPON EVERY PERSON.

together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess 4:16-17). The Lord Jesus is going to return visibly and bodily, just as He went back into heaven (Acts 1:11). “Every eye shall see Him” (Rev 1:7), and there will be no question why He is returning, or how it will impact upon us.

▣ **THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WORLD.** “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Pet 3:10). Everything that can be accessed by the human senses is going to pass away. That is a matter of revelation. It makes no difference how near to us or far from us it is, or how large or how small.

thorough. “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor 5:10). The accounting will be for everything. It is written, “That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matt 12:36).

▣ **THE TIME OF REAPING.** A time has been appointed when everyone will reap what they have sown. “For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Gal 6:8). Both rewards and punishments will be assigned that are appropriate for each individual.

A TOKEN OF MERCY

It is a great token of Divine mercy that He has informed us of these things.

They are all related to “*the end*,” which is surely coming – the end of life in this world, the end of this world, the end of absence from the Lord. With us, it is much like it was with Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. They were told of a time when they would stand before the king. At that time, a determination would be made if they would stay in his court or not. So far as they were concerned, their entire lives focused around being ready for that time.

They were given ten days to confirm their faith, and show why they did not need to indulge in forbidden things. The rest of the three years were spent to ready them for “*the end*,” when they would stand before the king. Briefly, those three years can be viewed as follows.

A PERIOD OF TESTING

During this time, their faith would be tested, as well as their determination or resolve. It would be a time when their commitment would be tested, and their

patience and consistency as well.

A TIME OF PREPARATION

It was also a time of preparation, during which they would become suited to function in the king’s court. What they learned during those three years would be used in a noble occupation.

DAYS OF ORIENTATION

The three years was also a time of orientation, when they would become familiar with the ways of the king, and to speak and work in his presence. They were being cultured to function in high places, and walk among princes.

THE PARALLEL

Can you not see the parallel with our own lives in Christ Jesus We are also in a period of probation, when our spiritual fiber and character is being tested. During this time, we dare not grow accustomed to the diet of this world, which is a kingdom destined for destruction. This is the time when our

appearance is being changed, so we will not appear spiritually haggard before the Judge. It is the time to become strong, capable, wise, and adept in discerning good and evil. This is the time for us to learn the language of Canaan, becoming expert in the understanding and speaking of spiritual things. Now, we are learning to navigate in the heavenly realms, where we have been placed in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:6). We are becoming acquainted with our Father, and the manner of His Kingdom.

I am very much concerned with how very little is being said about these things in the contemporary church. Multitudes of people never hear about death, resurrection, the coming of the Lord, the day of judgment, and the time of accounting and rewards. It is for this very reason that they are largely unprepared for these appointed events. **You may rest assured, that no one will survive these occurrences who is not prepared for them.**

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 2/22/2002. We will continue in our overview of Daniel, covering verses 17-21 of the first chapter. The lesson is titled, “**KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM, AND LEARNING, STAND THE TEST.**” The capabilities found in the four children of Judah must stand up under examination. It is still truth that the gifts received from God will stand up under the scrutiny of the world. Our meeting will begin 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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