

Living for the Lord in a Pagan Society

Daniel 1

Part 3

Introduction: The last two studies in Daniel we were looking at how God had given the king of Judah into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. This was the start of the Babylonian captivity. There were three deportations in which the Jews were carried off to Babylon.

Notice Daniel 1:1-2

This was the first of 3 deportations in which the Jews were carried off to Babylon.

- ✓ First deportation 605 BC
- ✓ Second deportation 597 BC
- ✓ Third deportation 586 BC

The first deportation was when David and his friends were deported. The second deportation included about 10,000 Jews and Ezekiel was in this group. The third deportation took place 19 years after the first one and this was very significant because it happened when Zedekiah was the king and the third deportation started the Times of the Gentiles. Tonight, we are going to move on in chapter 1 to see who the Babylonians carried off in the first deportation.

"The Captives"

Notice Daniel 1:3-4

As we read these verses, I am reminded of the question that often arises, "Were Daniel and his friends made eunuchs?" There is a verse that shines light on this question, but we still cannot be sure.

Isaiah 39:6-7

⁶ Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD.

⁷ And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.

Here in verse 7 the Word of God tells us that those who served in the palace were made eunuchs. This would have been Daniel and his friends. Now there are many who sit in the church today and ask, "Does it really matter?" The answer is, "YES IT DOES!" Why? If Daniel was made a eunuch, then his faithfulness to God is greatly magnified. To become a eunuch would have taken away all his hopes of being married and having a family. This combined with being separated from his family and his homeland was a great test of Daniel's faith. Why would the Babylonians make these men eunuchs? Notice the words of Clough.

"Those who served before masters, especially where a harem was involved, often underwent this procedure to guarantee their loyalty. It was an attempt to protect the harem. And that's, frankly, why the eunuchs arose. It was just to protect the king's girlfriends and to produce loyalty in the court. There was a second reason; the second reason was that being eunuchs they could never have children and since these men could never have children, they would never have allegiance to getting their son into a high place."

Notice Daniel 1:4 again.

The young men who were taken were those who were able to bring the greatest addition to the regime of Nebuchadnezzar. They had great God give abilities and they were required to learn the ways of the Babylonians. Notice the words of Pinches.

"The learning of the Chaldeans" comprised the old languages of Babylonia (the two dialects of Sumerian, with a certain knowledge of Kassite, which seems to have been allied to the Hittite; and other languages of the immediate neighborhood); some knowledge of astronomy and astrology; mathematics, which their sexagesimal system of numeration seems to have facilitated; and a certain amount of natural history. To this must be added a store of mythological learning, including legends of the Creation, the Flood (closely resembling in all its main points the account in the Bible), and apparently also the Temptation and the Fall. They had likewise a good knowledge of agriculture, and were no mean architects, as the many celebrated buildings of Babylonia show."

There is something very important to see in all of this. Nebuchadnezzar had a plan to train these young men for his palace. At the same time God in His sovereignty had given these men great intelligence so that they would be able to serve Him in the king's palace. When Daniel and his friends were born God knew what was ahead for them and therefore, He

equipped them with natural abilities so they could serve in the realm of a Gentile government.

Application:

Everyone of us is given natural abilities. Some can play musical instruments, some have the ability to build, some can sew, some have great minds to work in different fields, and some know how to repair certain things. This list can go on and on. We need to understand that all of us have God given abilities but none of these can reach their full potential until the person is saved. Daniel and his friends had the ability to learn the difficult teachings of the Babylonians but because they were born again their abilities were taken to the next level. They could now take their abilities into the palace where they could glorify God with them.

Let us also understand and be reminded of another Truth here. God has a plan for our lives, and His plans sometimes do not align with our hopes and dreams. As Daniel and these young men were growing up, I am sure it was not their plan to serve in a Gentile government. But it was God's plan for them to glorify Him in this difficult situation they were in. Sometimes it is God's will for His children to walk a very difficult path and to live in a very corrupt environment. God can place us in an office environment, or construction field, or possibly in a courthouse, or even the White House. God places His lights wherever He desires for them to shine. Daniel and his friends were placed in the most powerful world government of their day because that is where God desired for them to serve.

Notice Daniel 1:5

Daniel and his friends were believed to be around the age of 14 years old. They would be trained for 3 years and would then serve the king starting at the age of 17 years old. Plato tells us that education for Persian youths started when they were 14 and they were trained for 3 years.

Notice Daniel 1:6-7

Here is the first mention of Daniel and he and his friends were of the tribe of Judah. This is the very tribe that Jesus would come from so it should not be a surprise that these young men are chosen to be polluted with the Babylonian teachings. The names of each are very important and very meaningful. The new names they were given were connected with the Babylonian gods.

Daniel - "God is my judge" > Belteshazzar = "Bel Protect the King."

Hananiah - "Jehovah is Gracious" > Shadrach = "Command of Aku (Babylonian idolatrous god)."

Mishael - "Who is like God?" > Meshach = "Who is what Aku Is?"

Azariah - "Jehovah is my Helper" > Abed-nego = "Servant of Nego (Babylonian idolatrous god)" also called Nebo, a god of vegetation.

It is interesting that these young men did not protest their new names. I am sure that they did not like the new names. They showed great wisdom in allowing the Babylonians to give them new names without any protest. They understood that these names would in no way impact their walk with God. They were just names, and the names would not impact their hearts.

Notice Daniel 1:8

Here we are introduced to the decision of a young man to honor his God. How easy it would have been for Daniel to just go along with all that the Babylonians demanded. Allow me to paint the picture for you.

He could have been bitter toward the Jews because their sin had brought the judgment. He could have blamed God for allowing him to get taken in the captivity when he was living a Godly life. He could have justified compromise because his life was in danger under the Babylonians. There would have been peer pressure to submit to the demands. The food was the king's food, and they were far from home so what would it hurt to eat to survive? His parents were back in Jerusalem, and they would never know.

Along with these reasons to justify compromise was the atmosphere that Daniel and his friends were placed in. Babylon was much different than Jerusalem.

The city of Babylon was comprised of 225sq miles that is 4 to 5 times the size of London today. The walls that surrounded the city were 340 feet high, which was like a 34-story building, with walls 80ft thick. Chariot races of 6 chariots were conducted across the top of parts of the wall. Inside the city there were 200 open altars as well as 153 different temples. One had an 8-mile perimeter around the building another had a 3-mile perimeter. This was a city full of wealth and glitz but also gross paganism - sexual immorality and idolatry.

Notice Daniel 1:8 again.

The question comes up here, "What was the problem with the food?" Let us keep in mind that as a Jew there were restrictions upon what Daniel could eat and there were certain ways in which the food had to be prepared.

Leviticus 3:17

¹⁷ It shall be a perpetual statute for your generations throughout all your dwellings, that ye eat neither fat nor blood.

Leviticus 17:10-14

¹⁰ And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people.

¹¹ For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.

¹² Therefore I said unto the children of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood.

¹³ And whatsoever man there be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, which hunteth and catcheth any beast or fowl that may be eaten; he shall even pour out the blood thereof, and cover it with dust.

¹⁴ For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof: whosoever eateth it shall be cut off.

The Jews were forbidden to eat the fat or the blood of an animal. So, the way it was slaughtered and the way it was prepared had to be according to the Levitical Law. Then there were certain animals that were forbidden because they were unclean. There was also the possibility that the meat was from animals sacrificed to the Babylonian gods or to idols.

I want to consider what we are told when the verse says that "Daniel purposed in his heart" that he would not defile himself. This was not a decision based upon emotion. This was a well thought out decision by Daniel. This was as risky as his 3 friends not bowing down to the golden image in chapter 3. Daniel knew exactly what the cost of this stand could be. He may die in Babylon, but he would die standing for the Lord. He did not want to defile himself in anyway.

Conclusion:

How does a 14-year-old boy become this strong in his stand for the Lord? We can be sure that he was raised by parents that poured into his life the Word of God.

Psalm 119:9-12

⁹ *Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.*

¹⁰ *With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.*

¹¹ *Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*

¹² *Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes.*

Let us not miss the importance of taking the time to learn and to study the Word of God. Let us not miss the importance of teaching the young people the Bible. What the enemy tried to do to Daniel and his friends is exactly what he is doing today. He is going after the youth and those who are in their early teens are the most susceptible.

James Dobson and child experts say the most important years are the Jr. High years. These are the most formative years. We can see this today because when our kids get to that age the culture is starting to bombard them with things that they might be able to handle physically but they are not emotionally or spiritually prepared. Notice the words of another writer.

"Satan knows that the real wealth of a nation is not its silver and its gold but it is its youth."

Karl Marx declared - give me the poets and the musicians and I will take the nation.

Still Satan's plan today for He is after our youth.