

## SESSION TWO

### DANIEL 1:3-21

#### *A New Life for Daniel in Babylon*

#### THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

See chart *Suppl. 2.1* for an overview of the book.

#### PRIMARY PURPOSES OF THE BOOK

The Book of Daniel certainly has several purposes, but the primary purposes must be seen in light of Judah's deportation to Babylon and the theological questions that this raises in light of her calling to be God's "holy nation" (Ex 19:5-6) and a blessing to all the nations of the earth (Gen 12:1-3).

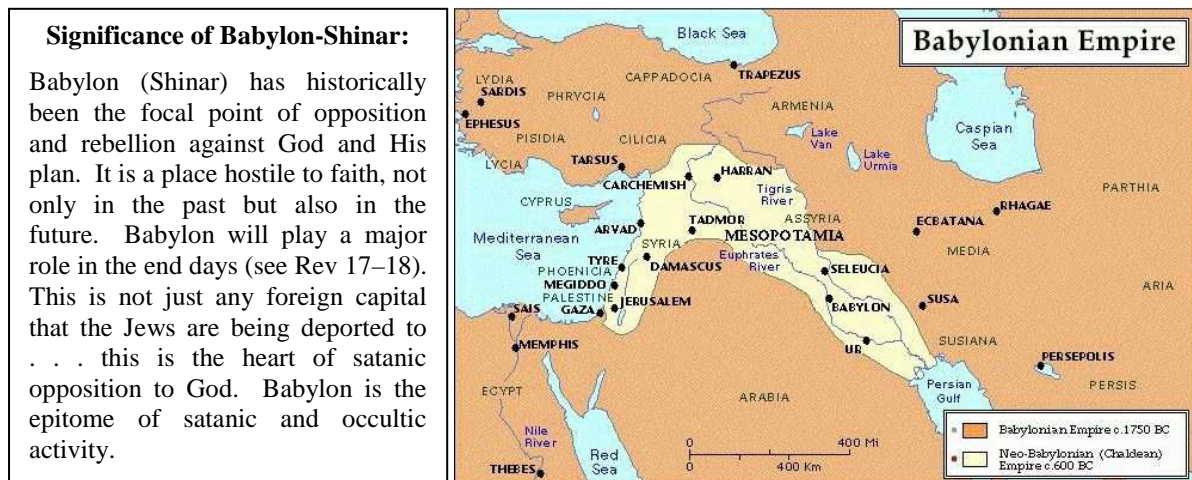
- A. Even though Israel was created to be the focal point of God's redemptive program, Gentile kingdoms will dominate over Israel for most of history ("the times of the Gentiles" - Lk 21:24), but only until the time when God is ready to establish His kingdom under Messiah.
- B. God will fulfill His plans with Israel in the latter days, when the Messiah defeats the Antichrist and establishes His kingdom. [Believing OT saints will eventually be resurrected to join in the kingdom].
- C. Daniel's personal dedication to God provides an example of how to live in a godless society.

#### REVIEW OF SESSION ONE

In the opening verses of Dan 1:1-2, we saw how God allowed Nebuchadnezzar to lay siege to Jerusalem and rob her temple treasury. The Bible says that he took them to *Shinar* (NIV has "Babylonia"). Although it is true that Shinar is Babylonia, the translation "Shinar" (so NASB) serves a purpose. It calls to our mind certain associations:

Gen 10:10 - Nimrod, the founder of the kingdom of Babel (in Shinar)

Gen 11:2 - The Tower of Babel which served as an attempt to rebel against God's divine plan.



## NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S ATTEMPT TO REPROGRAM DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS (1:3-7)

### A. The Point of This Section

Daniel and his friends are being subjected to an all-out effort by Nebuchadnezzar to reprogram and reshape them to think and act like the world.

1. Subjected to "elitism" - only royalty and nobles allowed (v 3)
2. Humanistic environment - everyone aspires to being humanly the best (v 4)
3. Lifestyle - they are assimilated into a lifestyle in which godly values are ignored.



One of Saddam Hussein's personal projects has been the restoration of ancient Babylon.

#### Problem of the food (v 5):

We are not told exactly what was wrong, but this probably violated the Old Testament food laws as well as being the product of the pagan sacrificial use.

- a. OT food laws  
Lev 11 and Deut 14:3-21 - prohibition against unclean foods
- b. Foods from pagan sacrifice  
Ex 34:15 - Jews were forbidden to eat foods that had been sacrificed or offered to pagan deities or idols.

#### **Foods offered to deities in Babylon:**

"The image was fed, in a ceremonial fashion accompanied by music, from offerings and the produce of the temple land and flocks. When the god was 'eating', he was, at least in later times, hidden from human view, even the priests, by linen curtains surrounding the image and his table. . . . When the god had 'eaten', the dishes from his meal were sent to the king for consumption. What was not destined for the table of the main deity, his consort, his children or the servant gods was distributed among the temple administrators and craftsmen. The quantities of food involved could be enormous." (Joan Oates, *Babylon*, rev. ed., 175).

4. Pagan education (v 4) - an attempt to brainwash them

"The writer of Daniel implies no objection to the study of a polytheistic literature in which magic, sorcery, charms and astrology played a prominent part, though these had long been banned in Israel (Dt. 18:10-12; cf. I Sa. 28:3ff.). These young men from Jerusalem's court needed to be secure in their knowledge of Yahweh to be able to study this literature objectively without allowing it to undermine their faith."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, 80.

## 5. A new identity (v 7)

They were given names (with probably allusions to pagan deities) that not only disassociated them from a godly heritage but actually aligned them with false religion and idolatry.

HEBREW NAME		NEW NAME GIVEN	
Daniel	"God is my judge" or "God has judged"	Belteshazzar	Etymology uncertain, but possibly "protect his life!" <sup>1</sup> (implying, "May Bel protect his life")
Hananiah	"Yahweh has been gracious"	Shadrach	Uncertain, but Archer suggests that this name means "The Command of Aku," a Sumerian or Elamite moon-god. <sup>2</sup>
Mishael	"Who is what God is?"	Meshach	Uncertain, but Archer suggests that his name means "Who is what Aku is?" <sup>3</sup>
Azariah	"Yahweh has helped"	Abed-nego	Possibly, "Servant of (the god) Nebo" <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The notion that this is a theophoric name may receive some support from Dan 4:8. Others have suggested that the name means "Lady, protect the king," a reference to the wife of Marduk. See Baldwin (81) for an explanation.

<sup>2</sup>Gleason Archer, "Daniel," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 34.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Baldwin writes, "*Abed-nego* apparently an Aramaic form meaning 'servant of the shining one', possibly involving a wordplay on an Akkadian name including the god Nabû" (*Daniel*, 81).

**B. An Observation on Verse 4**

Observe what is missing in verse 4. Excellent qualities were sought in the young men, but nothing is said of God's Word.

## A Lesson for Our Life

Just as Nebuchadnezzar sought to pressure these young men to compromise their faith and seek humanistic goals, so we too are lured to the world's standards. Compare Rom 12:1-2! We are called to be different from the world, because we now belong to Jesus Christ (cf. the high priestly prayer of Jesus [Jn 17:6-10, 14-17]).

## THE FIRST DEMONSTRATION OF FAITH

(1:8-16)

### A. The Unfruitful Appeal to the Commander (1:8-10)

1. The Issue: they did not want to defile themselves.

Feinberg states, "If we are to gain the most from the study of this book, we must bear in mind that the visions and truths in this book were revealed to a spiritually minded man who was separated from the sin and degradation of his day."<sup>2</sup>

2. Daniel as a Model

One of the rewarding things about the Bible is that it not only teaches us what is right and wrong, but it lets us see this fleshed out in the lives of men and women who are faithful . . . who have convictions and live by them.

Here are two things to remember:

- a. Daniel and his friends were probably only teenagers.
  - b. They were probably separated from their parents.
3. Notice the approach they took for a solution:  
They did not run away & flee Babylon. They looked carefully to see where they had to obey God and drew their battle lines carefully.
  4. Note the balance between conviction and action!

- a. Observation

Verse 8 points out that he "resolved in his heart" while the following verses point out that he sought to work through appropriate channels of authority.

- b.

#### A Lesson for Our Life

There is a time when we need to do as Martin Luther ("Here I stand, I can do no other"), but often we need to trust God to use His established authorities. Conviction does not excuse us from acting with sensitivity, tact, and respect. Although Daniel had made up his mind, he went about it in a courteous way.

**PRINCIPLE:** *Do not offend unnecessarily!*



Interior walls of the palace at Babylon in glazed brick

<sup>2</sup>Charles Feinberg, *Daniel*, 21.

God honors an approach in which we know God's will but still honor authority.

**B. The Appeal to the Overseer for an Alternative (1:11-13)**

"creative thinking"

**C. The Successful Outcome of the Test (1:14-16)**

**THE OUTCOME OF THE THREE YEAR TRAINING PROGRAM (1:17-21)**

**A. The Reward of Obedience (v 17)**

1. Compare 1 Sam 2:30 "those who honor Me I will honor."
2. Notice the nature of the reward

God did not free them or return them to Jerusalem. Faithfulness to God paid off in the ways that really mattered.

**B. The Process Leading to Reward**

1. Inner conviction
2. Wise approach
3. Divine assistance
4. Unique distinctions

Baldwin writes, "As representatives of the only God they needed to prove in Babylon's highly competitive setting that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. High intelligence and hard work alone did not account for their success, but their wisdom was God's gift."<sup>3</sup>

**C. The Issue of the Occult (v 20)**

1. Definition: magicians and conjurers (*NIV* = enchanter)
  - a. magicians - "The term for 'magicians' (v.20) is *ḫarṭummîm*; a *ḫarṭôm* was probably a diviner, one who used some sort of inscribed chart or magical design (possibly imposed on a chart of the stars) in order to arrive at an answer to questions put to him."<sup>4</sup>
  - b. conjurer/enchanter - This term is derived from the Akkadian word *āšipu*, meaning "incantation priest."<sup>5</sup>
2. Implications

This does not imply that Daniel or his friends relied upon occult practices in providing information to the king. They were able to penetrate the world of the supernatural legitimately, but "illegitimate" means must be avoided (Deut 18:9-13).

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<sup>3</sup>Baldwin, 84.

<sup>4</sup>Gleason Archer, "Daniel," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 7:37.

<sup>5</sup>Louis F. Hartman, *The Book of Daniel*, The Anchor Bible, 131.

## 3. A Lesson for Our Life

God has revealed many things which we would not have been able to know otherwise. But we are to gain this through His Word, not by channelling, magic, etc. There is a great deal of the supernatural that must be left alone (Deut 29:29). All that we need to know is in His Word.

## 4. "ten times better than all the magicians and conjurers"

Reminds us of the 10 plagues by which Moses demonstrated Yahweh's supremacy over the occult in Egypt.

**D. Daniel's Period of Service (v 21)**

## 1. Observation:

This verse is not saying that his time of service did not go beyond this (cf. 10:1). The point is that Daniel not only served through the reign of Nebuchadnezzar but throughout the entire remaining time of the Babylonian empire.

## 2. Daniel's Long Life

Daniel served in the Babylonian court for over sixty years, and lived to see the Persian king Cyrus issue the decree permitting the Jews to return (cf. Ezra 1:1-3). Daniel lived to see God's faithfulness with Israel begin to be worked out.

## The Major Lesson for Our Life

**A. Question**

Daniel's decision to be obedient resulted in a long life of faithful service to God. How can we, too, live a lifetime of faithful service for God?

**B. Faithful Service is Built on Devotion to God**

Devotion to God is something that even a teenager can experience, but it is something we always have to maintain and nourish, and develops in proportion to the degree that we are "God-centered" in our life.

**THE PRACTICE OF GODLINESS**

*"The practice of godliness is an exercise or discipline that focuses upon God. From this Godward attitude arises the character and conduct that we usually think of as godliness. So often we try to develop Christian character and conduct without taking the time to develop God-centered devotion. We try to please God without taking the time to walk with him and develop a relationship with him. This is impossible to do."*

Jerry Bridges, *The Practice of Godliness* (NavPress, 1983), 18.

**C. Personal Response**

What are you doing to develop a God-centered devotion? Are you taking regular time to be alone with God and communing with Him in prayer and the study of His Word?

It is sometimes easy to excuse ourselves in our thought-life and actions because of the world we live in. If we are not careful, we begin to define our standards in relation to the world rather

than with God Himself. As long as our standard is just a little bit better than the world's, we may think we are pleasing God (cf. Titus 2:11-13!).

**D. A Personal Challenge**

I will commit myself to . . .

**Closing Thought**

"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain  
what he cannot lose!"

Jim Elliot, missionary martyr for Jesus Christ