

“But God be thanked,” he states, “that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you” (Romans 6:17). Christ Himself speaks to an entire church era that had every form of commendable obedience a true Christian could possibly want, and yet was on the verge of being rejected by God because it failed to maintain its first love for the Savior (see Revelation 2:1-7).

This was the point upon which King Hezekiah had failed. His heart was proud and lifted up (see 2 Chronicles 32:25). When ambassadors came to Jerusalem to inquire of the great healing powers of the God of heaven, “God left him to himself to try him, that He might know all that was in his heart” (2 Chronicles 32:31, Amplified).

Daniel, on the other hand, was constrained by the love of God (see 2 Corinthians 5:14). He desired to honor God because his heart had been changed by the love of God for him. With this purpose in his heart, nothing could separate Him from God’s love—not “tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword” (Romans 8:35). Daniel was persuaded “that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature” was able to separate him “from the love of God” (Romans 8:38-39).

Despite outward appearances, Daniel understood that God’s love carried him to Babylon. Now he would exemplify that love in this heathen court. So what that he was surrounded by the enemies of his nation! And worse yet, he was pressured by less-than-committed, fellow countrymen. Daniel was determined to represent to the Babylonians God’s great atoning purpose for mankind. And so he did. His faithfulness led to some of the most wonderful revelations of truth ever given to mortal man.

How powerful is the influence of God’s love when it is given access to unbelievers through His humble servants? “Now God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. 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. Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. 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. So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days” (Daniel 1:9-14).

Daniel’s witness was powerful enough to cause the prince of the eunuchs to risk the king’s wrath upon himself! The lesson here is profound. The Bible says, “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die” (Romans 5:7). In a very short time Daniel had demonstrated the goodness of God to such a degree that a heathen lord in a foreign land would dare to risk his head that Daniel might follow the convictions of his heart.

The Source of Wisdom

By the time we arrive at the end of chapter 1, it is clear that the faithfulness of Daniel and his three friends is rewarded. “As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king. And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm” (Daniel 1:17-20).

As we prepare to launch out into the rest of the book of Daniel, it will be reward-

ing to pause and consider the source of the wisdom demonstrated by these Hebrew captives. “God gave them learning and skill in all letters and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams” and “God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs.” This is a message we may carry through the entire book. In fact, it is a theme that rings with clarity through the final episodes of Bible history. The everlasting gospel calls the world to “Fear God, and give glory to Him” (Revelation 14:7). Like Daniel, we are called to learn the lesson so amply illustrated in this first chapter, that “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Psalm 111:10).

The kings of Judah showed more fear of man than of God; and it led them to captivity and death (see Jeremiah 38:17-28). Yet Daniel revealed a reverential fear of God that far exceeded his fear of any earthly potentate. While God gave the nation of Judah into the hands of Babylon, He was preparing to give the nation of Babylon into the hands of Daniel and his companions. But for now, the winning combination of God’s love and fear had taken Daniel and his friends to a position of prominence in the very presence of the king (see Daniel 1:19).

The Way of the Cross

So why did God allow Judah and some of His faithful followers to be taken captive by a heathen king, hauled through one thousand miles of hot, rocky country, only to serve as eunuchs in a heathen court? Why did God allow the vessels of His sanctuary to be added to the treasury of a heathen temple, a sign of victory for the Babylonian gods?

Because, through the humiliation of His favored people, He would reveal Himself to the world. He purposed to show what His people would have been like had they been faithful. He designed to prove that faith and trust in God, no matter what the pressure, means more than all the wisdom of the world. He prepared Daniel and his friends to reveal, in the end, that God’s love is more powerful than any heathen deity or earthly power, as we shall see in the coming chapters.

Despite what is happening to others around us, regardless of others’ apostasy or weaknesses, God is in control of our individual lives. He considers our case as if there were no other. He deals faithfully with us according to our response to His love and mercy. Daniel 1 confirms that God is able to do abundantly above all that we can ask or think according to His good pleasure in Christ Jesus (see Ephesians 3:20).

This first chapter of Daniel introduces the key principle of the government of heaven—the way of the cross, that the way to up is down. It shows that God is on the path of humility with His people. God allowed His name to be humbled among the nations through His people’s captivity. Before He could be exalted through His faithful servants in Babylon, He allowed Himself to be looked upon as a weak God, not able to defend His own people from the gods of Babylon. This is a principle God Himself has practiced many times, the greatest example being that of Jesus Christ’s life and death in behalf of sinners.

For our sake we find Christ humbling Himself “unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:8). Then we see that God the Father has “highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9-11). The book of Daniel is replete with this wonderful theme. Its message is truly one of reconciliation through the “unsearchable judgments” and humility of God (see Romans 11:33; Matthew 11:29).

The Unsealing of Daniel

Study Number 2



It was approximately one thousand miles on foot that Daniel and his three friends had to travel to reach Babylon. Modern travel time to reach most of the world is just a few days or hours. By the time he reached Babylon, Daniel was probably two months from his homeland. Why was Daniel taken captive and Judah overthrown by a heathen nation? Part of the reason is found in the opening verses of Daniel 1:

“In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god” (Daniel 1:1-2).

Daniel and the Hebrew captives were taken to Babylon because God gave Judah into the hands of the Babylonians. The Sovereign Lord of the Universe allowed His chosen people to be taken captive. From our perspective, it may seem terrible that God would allow such tragedy to come upon His own nation. But from God’s perspective, it is never a tragedy. In His omnipotence God always works on the principle of love. Even His “chastening” is for our “profit” (see Hebrews 12:6-11).

Jeremiah, a contemporary of Daniel, wrote, “Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel; Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans *for their good*” (Jeremiah 24:5). The 195-stripe-beaten, twice-rod-beaten, once-stoned, ship-wrecked apostle Paul, who eventually died a martyr, could say, “And we know that all things work together *for good* to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

I’m sure that Daniel would say “Amen” to Paul; for, as we are about to see, Daniel would also give anything, including life itself, to bring honor to God. And that degree of commitment comes only when the selfish human heart has seen something of the grace and love of the Savior. “We love Him,” said John the beloved, a former son of thunder, “because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19; Mark 3:17). When we fall in love with God, we long to please Him. “If ye love Me,” said Christ, “ye will keep My commandments (John 14:15, RSV). Love comes first, obedience always follows, for true faith in God “worketh by love” (Galatians 5:6).

Revelation 12:11 points to a people who have a similar experience. Having tasted of the forgiving power of the blood of the Lamb, “they loved not their own lives unto the death” (see Revelation 12:11). Their love for God is no silent, compromising

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witness. It is a testimony calculated to give glory to God by overcoming the devil (see Revelation 12:12). This was the experience of Daniel. Whether in life or in death, his destiny was to give glory to God. And what a destiny! There is none finer in this world, nor in the world to come.

Captivity Prophesied

The events of Judah's captivity, which open up the book of Daniel, can be understood as the climax to an important series of events that began some one hundred years earlier. Considering the significance of Daniel's prophecies, especially to our time, the issues leading up to the overthrow of Jerusalem by the Babylonians deserve some consideration.

The beginning of the end for the nation of Judah actually started with a prophecy given to King Hezekiah by Isaiah. "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. 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 (Isaiah 39:6-7).

Hezekiah had been sick unto death. But through faith and prayer, God brought healing to the king of Judah, giving him a miraculous sign as evidence (see Isaiah 38:1-8). When the news of this wonderful deed, marked by the turning back of time itself, reached the Babylonians, they were very impressed. The prince of Babylon sent ambassadors with letters and gifts to Hezekiah. It was a perfect opportunity for the king of Israel to draw their attention to the true God of heaven and give Him glory (see Isaiah 39:1-2).

But instead of showing the Babylonian ambassadors God's glory, Hezekiah showed them his own. The treasures and earthly wealth accumulated by Hezekiah became the theme of his witness to these men. These Babylonian ambassadors came to Judah with an interest in the heavenly, but they left with an interest in the earthly. Babylon eventually conquered Judah to acquire its wealth.

What a lesson for Christians today! When people come to us looking for our God, do they leave dazzled with a vision of us? Does the Christianity we represent offer others financial prosperity and worldly advantages, or a faith which gives peace and assurance in spite of them? (See James 4:4; Revelation 2:9.) If Christians offer unbelievers the world in the church, then they can expect the world to take over the church, as Babylon took over Judah!

God designed that, through His people, the message of His love and His character would be carried to Babylon and to the entire world. But the message that went forth to Babylon from Israel was full of self-glorification, leaving no room for God's glory.

It was in this context that Isaiah prophesied of the Babylonian captivity. Once it was put in the inspired record, Isaiah's prophecy was repeated from one generation to the next, until that fateful event finally came to pass. Isaiah's prophetic words gave opportunity for faithful parents in Judah to prepare their children to stand firm for God in the coming trials. And so we find Daniel and his Hebrew associates, who like Timothy in the New Testament, seem to have "known the Holy Scriptures" from childhood through the instruction of Isaiah and the faithful tutoring of their parents (see 2 Timothy 3:15).

Temptation on the Point of Appetite

The fateful day finally arrived. Daniel and his friends were probably teenagers, perhaps 15 or 16 years old. We can only imagine how frightened these young men must have been to be taken from their families and made to serve in a foreign nation of people whose lifestyle, culture and religion differed from their own. Leaving the family today to do missionary work can be difficult, but Daniel and his companions had two added trials: (1) It was forced, and (2) it was lifelong. But there are advantages to being in the mission field. When set afloat on the water of a world that has no knowledge of

our faith, plenty of opportunities arise for witnessing. Daniel's entering wedge for witnessing was on the point of appetite:

"And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king. . . . But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself" (Daniel 1:5, 8).

The importance of understanding this area cannot be underestimated. We can appreciate God's counsel to us concerning our dietary habits, if we will remember that mankind's fall in the Garden of Eden was upon this point (see Genesis 2:16-17). Consider also that Christ, after fasting for six long weeks, was tempted upon the point of appetite in order to gain in our behalf what Adam had lost (see Matthew 4:1-4).

In fact, the Bible's warnings to those who live just prior to the second coming of Christ include direct instruction concerning our habits of eating and drinking. Christ says, "But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 24:48-51).



Pulse to Eat

The record states that Daniel asked for a test to be given to the four Hebrews concerning their diet. "Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink" (Daniel 1:12).

The word *pulse* in this Scripture means anything that is planted and infers a vegetarian diet—not that Daniel was a strict vegetarian. On another occasion Daniel states, "In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth" (Daniel 10:3).

Daniel knew diet played an important factor in times of mental or physical taxation. Even professional athletes understand the benefits of a high-carbohydrate, low-fat diet. Today, scientific study is revealing that the body runs better on a diet based on legumes, grains, fruits and vegetables, rather than animal products.

This is nothing new in the Bible. In the beginning our Creator established the very diet that modern studies now deem best. Recorded in verse 29 of the first chapter of the Bible is the Genesis diet: "And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat" [or "food"] (Genesis 1:29, Hebrew). Yet, in the wake of sin, God allowed man to eat the flesh of animals. This was especially needful after the flood when most of the earth's vegetation was wiped out (see Genesis 7:4).

Daniel understood these principles, but there was more to his commitment than this. While he appealed for a vegetarian diet for the purpose of keeping a strong mind and body during his three years of vigorous mental training, the king's food included unclean meats. In this area God had placed some restrictions upon the flesh-food diet. For instance, He told Noah to take the animals that were clean into the ark by sevens and the unclean by twos (see Genesis 7:2-4). God never designed that we should eat the unclean animals, for had Noah done so, unclean animals would have had no offspring and would be extinct today. These unclean animals, listed in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14:3-19, are the scavengers of the earth. The food they eat is primarily waste, something our Cre-

ator knows is not good for humans. Not that clean flesh food is best either. After the flood, with the eating of flesh food, the life span of mankind was reduced dramatically (see Genesis 5). Today modern medical science understands why God warned us, even in eating clean meat, not to eat the blood and the fat (see Leviticus 3:17). These are the two main culprits in the health problems that plague the Western world and make heart disease the No. 1 killer in America.

Peer Pressure

The test that came to these four young Hebrew boys assailed more than their physical desires. They must have been urged to conform to what we call "peer pressure." The fact that this pressure came not just from the Babylonians, but also from their fellow Hebrew captives, tested the four young men to a greater degree. No one likes to stick out in the crowd, especially young people. The language of their overseer tells us that others who had been taken captive from Judah were less concerned about their diet: "For," questions the prince of the eunuchs, "why should he [the king] see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort?" (Daniel 1:10). Or "other young men your age," as the NIV puts it. Often the greater pressure facing God's people comes from the compromise of fellow professors rather than from the world itself.

I like the whole scenario described here because God knows we live in a time when young people need encouragement to follow spiritual truth. We could say that the first chapter of Daniel is written with young people in mind, more than anyone else. Of course, it offers lessons for the rest of us too.

Today we see a great deal of pressure in the church to compromise Christian standards in order to reach the young. The Word of God here tells us of a better way. Daniel and his teenage friends stand as encouraging examples of what young people can do when confronted not only with dietary temptations, but also drugs, alcohol, music, entertainment and so on. The devil has devised a host of temptations that stalk young people today, like hungry, carnivorous animals (see 1 Peter 5:8-9). Yet, with faith and trust in God, none need fall prey to these allurements. They can be resisted (see James 4:4-10; 1 Corinthians 10:13).

The Wisdom of the World

The issue these four Hebrew boys faced was life and death. "Then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king," was the main concern of the prince of the eunuchs. To refuse to comply with the king's request promised to excite his hottest passions and most formidable threats (see Daniel 2:12-13; 3:19-21). If the church today is tempted to think that some of the previously mentioned topics are not significant enough to be made an issue, let's read Daniel 1 more carefully. Daniel thought diet was a serious enough issue to risk his life. God's Word says, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise" (1 Corinthians 3:16-18).

The wisdom of the world in Daniel's day, Babylon's wisdom, said Daniel's health would be benefited by the king's food and drink and hurt by a simple diet. The wisdom of the world today says the same about our food and drink, though more recent health studies show that popular opinion is wrong and God is right.

Daniel Purposed in His Heart

The key phrase to be studied in Daniel 1 is found in verse 8: "But Daniel purposed in his heart." If we were to understand nothing more in this entire chapter, this point itself would be sufficient, at least for practical Christian experience. It offers to the diligent seeker after truth insight more valuable than all the wisdom of the world. The apostle Paul speaks of this essential principle in his epistle to the church in Rome.