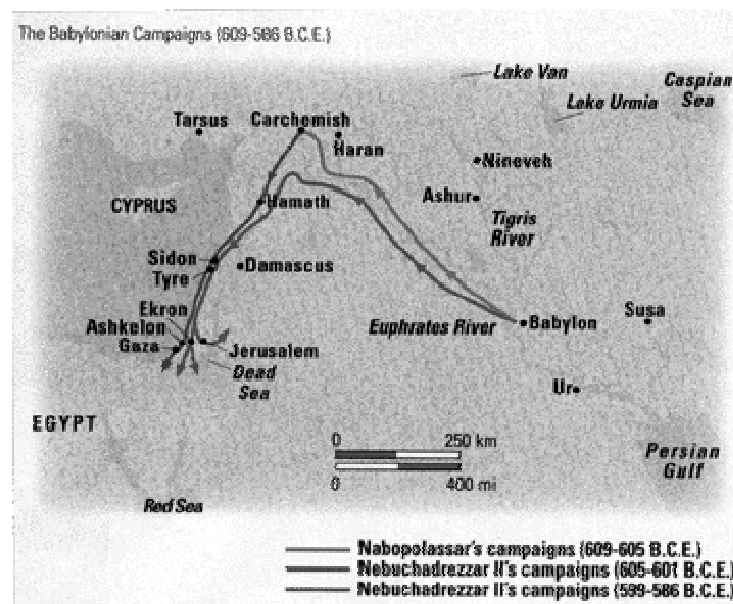


DANIEL CHAPTER 1

The first chapters of Daniel sets for us the historical introduction to all that is to transpire in the remaining eleven chapters.

"It tells us how Daniel & His 3 Hebrew companions were carried from their homeland of Israel over to the land of Babylon & how they were incorporated into the service of mighty King Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonia King at that particular time." (Dr. Renald Showers).

I. JERUSALEM CAPTURED (1:1,2)



- There was major unrest in the Middle East
- Two great 'Super Powers" - Egypt & Babylon were fighting for control of the entire area & they were bent on fighting until one of them was the ultimate victor.
 - That battle eventually did take place in the summer of 605 BC outside a city called Carchemish
 - The war resulted in heavy losses for both sides with the final outcome that Babylon defeated Egypt & Egypt retreated to their home.
 - The leader of the Babylon army was Nebuchadnezzar
 - He was not yet king, but son of the king, Nabopolassar who was the king of Babylonian Empire.
 - Nebuchadnezzar would succeed his father as king over this great Babylonia Empire & now that Egypt

was out of his way he wanted the land of Palestine where the Israelite nation was located.

- In the summer of 605 BC he began to march South into the land of Israel & take control of the Jewish people & gradually planned to take the whole nation of Israel into Babylonian Empire.

- One of the key centers was of course Jerusalem - the Jewish Capital City.

- In July of 605 BC he attacked & conquered Jerusalem & took control.

- In August 15 or 16 his father Nabopolassar died & Nebuchadnezzar had to hastily return to Babylon to be crowned King.

- He took with him some of the prime young men of the Jewish nation.

- Among them - Daniel & his three friends.

- Also - he took with him some of the vessels from the temple which Solomon had built in Jerusalem. (vs. 2)

- Babylonians - 'Polytheists' Worshipped many Gods.

- Nebuchadnezzar brought these vessels to the Pagan temple of

'Chief God.' of the whole group of Gods. His name was 'Marduk'

He did this for 2 reasons

a) Because of their value. Most were constructed from the finest gold.

b) "This was the way of a conqueror shaming & degrading the God of the people he had just conquered. For you see in ancient times to the pagan way of thinking, if one nation could conquer another nation this was an indication that the God of the conqueror was greater & more powerful than the God of the conquered people. And so it was the custom of ancient conquerors to take sacred vessels of the Gods of the people they had conquered and put them in the temple of their God as a thank you offering to their God as their way of saying 'I thank you for enabling me to conquer these people'. But also as a way of deforming & degrading and putting down the God of their conquered people."

" It was Nebuchadnezzar way then of saying to Jehovah - the God of Israel, 'My god Marduk is supreme to you. You are not the Sovereign God of this world but my God is.'"(Dr. Renald Showers)

BUT

Look at the beginning of VS.2

'And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim King of Judah into his hand' (NIV)

'And the Lord gave Jehoiakim King of Judah into his hand' (KJV)

God had something to do with Nebuchadnezzar's victory.

God permitted it.

Why?

"Jerusalem had been unconquerable because it was the city & the glory of Jehovah. All enemies had been held in check by the power of Israel's God, but when the cup of Jerusalem's iniquity was full, Nebuchadnezzar was chosen by God to become the first ruler of Gentile times." (W.G. Heslop)

(See Isaiah 39: 5-7; I Tim. 1: 18-20)

There comes a point where God must withhold His Grace.

What is that point? It is at the point - whether by word or by deed we demonstrate a rejection of that offer of Grace.

Israel as a nation had reached that point!

DANIEL

II. Pro God In An Anti God Society (1: 3-7)

(Daniel & his three friends)

VS. 3-5

- Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael & Azariah were 'the cream of the crop'

- They were selected for a special training program in order

to equip them to be servants of the King.

- How old were they? The word translated 'Children' (KJV) or 'Young men' (NIV) in VS 4 indicates that the four were anywhere from 15 - 20 years of age at this particular time.

They were to be taught by the elite special care of intellectuals of Babylon. These were the formed 'Wisemen of the East.' They were also the priests of the Babylonia Pagan worship system.'

They were to teach Daniel & his 3 friends such subjects as:

- a) literature & languages of Babylon**
- b) Astronomy & Astrology (Study of heavens & movements of Planets)**
- c) Babylonian Agriculture**
- d) Babylonian Architecture**
- e) Mythology**
- f) Math**
- g) History of Nature**

All with an Anti Jehovah flavor to their teachings. They were attempting to brain wash these impressionable young men by enslaving their minds to the ways & religion of Babylon.

In addition they were to receive the diet of the King.

Then, at the end of 3 yrs. they were to stand before the King to be tested.

VS. 6,7

They also underwent a significant name change. The four believers had names which glorified Jehovah. Look at what their names were & what they were changed to.

- a) Daniel - 'God is Judge' To Belteshazzar - 'Bel (a heathen idol)
Prince. (Prince of Bel)'**
- b) Hananiah - 'Jehovah is gracious' to shadrach
'Command of AKV
(moon God)'**
- c) Mishael - 'Who is what Jehovah is?' to Meshach who is what
AKU?'**
- d) Azariah - 'Jehovah is Keeper' to Abednego 'Slave of Nebo'
(Servant of the shining fire)**

Conclusion:

There were now approximately 10 pressure points coming to bear on these four young Hebrews and each one of these would have the tendency to squeeze these Jewish young men into the pagan Babylonian mould & to force them to forget their allegiance to their Jewish heritage & to the true & living God. (Dr. Renald Showers)

1. These young men now belonged to a conquered & humiliated people. A tough situation for young people.
2. They had been uprooted from their families, friends & culture.
3. They were in a strange environment & culture. Total strangers in a new land.
4. They were a very small minority amongst the Babylonian people.
5. They were teenagers who often have difficulty with peer pressure.
6. Their God had been greatly humiliated.
7. They were placed under the instructions of Godless teachers who would have a tremendous influence.
8. They were taught Anti God subjects.
9. Their names were changed to names honoring Babylonian Gods designed to make them forget their heritage & allegiance to Jehovah.
10. Their name change implied that they were under the rule of the Babylonians. If somebody has the authority to change your name that implies that you are under the dominion of that person.

DANIEL

III. Daniel Stands Firm (1: 8-16)

A. The Decision (VS. 8)

In this section we will see an amazing illustration for Perseverance Under Pressure. Daniel and his three companions will model for us the only kind of commitment that is God honoring and God pleasing.

To make these verses more applicable to us, we would do well to first of all glance at Romans 12: 1,2

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - This is your spiritual act of worship.

(2) Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.

The Challenge:

⁵ The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service.

a) This posed a two-fold problem for them'

i) The Diet Contradicted God's Law

God, under the law, had forbidden the Jews to partake of certain kinds of food. It would make them ceremonially unclean (Lev. 11:44-47) Since the Pagan King did not submit to such law, certainly some of those foods would be contained in the Kings daily menu. They would have to disobey God in order to partake of their assigned diet. They had to make a decision. The King was desperately trying to lift them out of God's mould, & squeeze them into his own.

ii) The Kings Food Was Offered To Pagan Idols As A Sacrifice

Before the king received his food, it was the practice of his day, that it would first be brought to a pagan temple where it would be offered as a sacrifice to one of the Babylonian Gods.

To the Babylonian mindset, to eat the sacrificed food, was to participate in worship of the god to whom it was offered.

'If Daniel & his companions were to have eaten the King's food, they would thereby have given a clear - cut impressions to the Babylonian people around them that "we have now forsaken our God Jehovah & we have begun to participate in the worship of the pagan Babylonian Gods.' (Dr. Renald Showers)

b) Now in the making of this decision, they could have rationalized their thinking in favor of accepting the Kings food by thinking:

1) 'Who's going to know? We are 100's of miles from home & our family & friends aren't here to check us. (Parents beware how important it is to 'train up a child' because we never know when they will end upon their own little Babylon right on - for example, their own high school campus!)

ii) They could have blamed God & said 'God let us be captured & so it is His fault that we have to eat this food

iii) They could have thought 'If we obey the King's command - we will be accepted & then we will have more influence a Jews in this pagan culture. Now wouldn't God want His people in a position of influence here so we could bring about some necessary changes?

iv) If we disobey, we will probably die. Now isn't, in God's sight, our lives worth more that obedience to some small command?

v) Look at their superiors reply to their request (vs. 10). Wouldn't a true servant of Jehovah love this man enough to want to protect his life? Would God not then understand why they must eat the forbidden food?

All of these thoughts & more may have surfaced in their thinking but to no avail.

VS. 8 tells us that no amount of rationalization could persuade them to disobey God.

"Daniel purposed in his heart. It was a decision made in his soul. He resolved to obey God, not man. They could change his NAME but not his NATURE. Custom, fashion, social pressures were nothing; God's word was everything. The four Hebrew captives could burn but not turn. They could die but not deny. It was to God & to Him alone they yielded their lives." W.A. Criswell)

"inner Conviction Can overcome any outer pressure to compromise." (Chuck Swindoll)

In this day, the temptation to compromise comes far more often than the temptation to blatantly sin.

Eve was tempted to 'eat a piece of forbidden fruit'. Satan didn't try to persuade her to Curse God or Deny His existence. He was contented to see her 'slip' into his clutches.

It is not the 'Lion Image' of Satan that conquers the most Christians. it is rather when he came masquerading as a 'angel of light' (II Cor. 11:14) & subtly leads us into the land of rationalized compromise,

May we now by the Grace of God 'Resolve not to defile ourselves!'

3. THE ACTION (9-20)

- Daniel & his friends not only made a decision, they also took action.

'Once he had made his decision, Daniel "Sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself". The Hebrew lad acted out of conviction, but he did so with respect for authority.' (Chuck Swindoll)

Daniel obviously did not precipitate an unnecessary further crisis, but graciously requested permission.

- Daniel was obviously assisted (VS.9) God even rules sinners & can cause them to act according to His will!

-The agreement was made with a 10 day limit set.

VS. 15,16

-Daniel & his three companions were out on a limb with God & God did not fail them.

'A little with God is better than much without God. The presence & blessing of God are more important than fatted hogs & boiled beans'. (W.G. Heslop)

'God-honoring convictions yield God - given rewards! (Chuck Swindoll)

'Clearly, God had intervened to honor the faith of those young men who had put Him to the test. God, in fact,

never fails the person who tries to do His will & who puts his trust in Him!' (Donald K. Campbell)

God honored this Stand of Faith - but then He always does.'

IV THE PROGRESS OF THE FAITHFUL FOURSOME (17-21)

VS. 17

Note the little phrase 'God Gave' God always equips us for the task He assigns. We will see throughout this book that the Jewish youth would never have survived their Babylonian experience without God's special equipping.

He provided them with the 'knowledge & understanding of all kinds of literature & learning.' - all they would need for their 'missionary' appointment.

- Daniel was especially gifted with the ability to 'understand visions & dreams of all kinds.' This was very important in Babylon where dreams & visions were thoughts to be greatly significant.

VS. 18-20

At the end of the three years, Daniel & his friends were tested by the King and found to be ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole Kingdom.

VS. 21

In spite of all the negative things that would take place - committed to the Sovereign God of Israel.

1:21 Daniel continued until the first year of Cyrus the king. Daniel continued: This verse tells of still a third aspect of God's blessings on Daniel. He lived and continued as a valuable member of the court until old age. He not only was rewarded with a fine position on his graduation from training (v. 19), and later served more capably in that position than any other (v. 20), but he also continued in that capacity until the "first year of Cyrus." As Daniel so wrote, he must have thrilled at what it meant that God had blessed him with

such a long life and long service. Through all the plots and intrigues that regularly exist in oriental courts; through all the jealousy and envy that could only be expected toward a foreign captive in high office; through a series of four rapid successions of Babylonian kings, two of which had suffered assassination; and through the fall of Babylon itself to the genius of Cyrus, the Medo-Persian, he, Daniel, had lived and still served in high office! first year of Cyrus: Babylon fell to Cyrus in October, 539BC. This was 66 years after Daniel's captivity, making him at the time about 81 years of age. From 10:1, it is known that Daniel actually lived at least until Cyrus' third year. There may have been two reasons why he did not mention the later date here. One is that he merely wanted to make the point that he had continued throughout the entire Babylonian period, even until the conquest of Cyrus. The other is that the time of his writing this chapter may have been in Cyrus' first year, when he could not have known concerning any later years.

DANIEL CHAPTER TWO

A very unique feature of Ch. 2-7 is that the greater part of these are written in the Aramaic language as opposed to the Hebrew language consistent with almost all of the rest of the O.T.

Why?

"In Daniel's day, the Aramaic language had truly become a universal language. It was the language that business men used when carrying on their trade from one part of the ancient world to the other. It was also the language in which the politicians and leaders of nations carried on negotiations & treaties from one nation to the other. Since God in chapters 2-7 was dealing mainly with his Sovereign rule over the Gentiles, if He were to have it written in the Hebrew language, most of the Gentile people of that time did not understand the Hebrew language. But because the Aramaic language was universal language most of the ancient Gentile people knew that language."

(Dr. Renald Showers)

Chapter two

"God's Sovereign Rule Over Gentile Empires"

I NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM (1-13)

VS. 1

The King has a disturbing dream

VS. 2

The King summons the best of the best from four groups./

a) Magicians - diviners who used charts or magical designs to answer peoples questions.' (Merrill F. Unger)

b) Enchanters - The 'Practiced the magic art of contacting the dead to discover the future' (Chuck Swindoll)

d) Astrologer - 'A special class of astrologer - Soothsayers who apparently acted spokesmen for the other groups of Babylonian Wiseman that the King had summoned.' (Gleason C. Archer)

VS. 3-6

The King usually would reveal the dream and then ask for the interpretation. This time however, he demanded that they tell him both the dreams & the interpretation. If they did not comply with his command their punishment would be twofold (VS. 5)

a) They would be cut into pieces

b) Their houses would be turned into 'piles of rubble' (literally 'public bathrooms') This was the ultimate degradation of a person in the ancient way of thinking. It perpetuated a memory that you were a dishonorable person & died a dishonorable death (III Kings 10:27)

On the other hand, if they did comply - the King promised them great honor in his Kingdom.

VS. 7-9

-They once again appealed to the King to tell them his dreams.

-The Kings reply was very sharp & to the point. If they could not tell the dream, how could he believe their interpretation thereof?

VS. 10-11

The insinuated that the King is being unreasonable and that nobody can do what the King asks 'except the Gods & they do not live among men!

VS. 12-13

The King reacted in a rage & ordered that 'ALL the wiremen of Babylon' be executed - even Daniel & his friends.

II. Daniel knocks & God opens the Door (14 - 30)

Vs. 14-16

When Daniel was about to be taken for execution, he asked the reason. Upon receiving the answer, he went to see the King & asked for a certain period of time & he would produce the King's desired answer. The King agreed.

VS. 17-18

Daniel returned to the other three & they had an emergency prayer meeting. Their lives were on the line & they 'laid hold of God' by their prayer.

VS. 19

During the night as Daniel and his three friends knocked on Heaven's door, God opened it! God gave Daniel the necessary information.

VS. 20 & 23

Daniel prays and God says - write that down! This is a model prayer of praise.

VS. 24

Daniel then requested that his execution be stopped & that he be brought before the King.

VS. 25,26

Daniel is presented to the King & the King questions Daniel.

VS. 27

Daniel confirms the response which the wiremen initially made to the King. He indicates that no human power is sufficient to satisfy the King's quest.

VS> 28

-Here Daniel gets opportunity to witness & he seizes it.

-He makes sure that it is 'To God Be The Glory'. He wants no doubt in Nebuchadnezzar's mind as to who his source was. He wanted the record clear.

VS. 29-30

-Daniel reveals that god was even aware of the place where he was sleeping and he assures Nebuchadnezzar that this was no ordinary dream. He tells the King that God put this dream in his head for a specific purpose.

-In vs. 30, Daniel makes it abundantly clear that he is only a mere man. Nothing special above the rest but a vessel used for the purpose of God.

III. THE DREAM REVEALED (31-35)



VS. 31

- An Enormous Image.
- Dazzling, Brilliant (highly polished metals)
- Awesome in Appearance.

VS. 32

- Head made of pure Gold
- Two arms coming from one chest, all made of Silver
- The belly & thighs were made from Bronze (or some say Brass)

VS. 33

- From knees to ankles - Solid Iron

**-The feet & toes were made of a mixture of Iron & Clay
Vs. 34**

**-A stone was inhumanly cut out of a mountain (VS. 45)
-Strikes the image on its feet of Iron & Clay**

VS. 35

**-The image crumbles into small pieces & a great wind comes & blows it away
-The rock becomes a large mountain & filled the whole earth**

IV. DANIEL REVEALS THE INTERPRETATION OF THE DREAM (VS. 36-45)

VS. 36

I would think that by this time, Daniel has the King's attention! Now he is ready to give the interpretation of the dream which is actually a prophetic message from God.

VS. 37-38 (a)

-Daniel seeks to make Nebuchadnezzar aware to God's ultimate authority over the affairs of men! In no uncertain terms, Daniel assures the King that he is subject to God's divine will, conscious of it. God has allowed him to be King & God will begin & stop the clock of Nebuchadnezzar's Kingdom.

VS. 38(b)

"It is important to note that Daniel starts first with the top of the image & then he moves downward on the image part by part. The essential thing to note is that as he moves down on to homage, he is progressing through the future course of world history. The further down you move on the image, the further or deeper you go into the future. History is passing by as you move down on this particular image." (Dr. Renald Showers)

A. THE GOLDEN HEAD (38b)

The Babylonian Empire

He begins with the head of God & informs Nebuchadnezzar the head of Gold represents him and his Babylonian Empire

Why Gold?

a) Babylon was often referred to as the 'City of Gold' (Isa. 14:4 KJV) more than any on the ancient people, the Babylonians used gold in the construction of their religious shrines & worship effects.

b) 'The Babylonian referred to their chief God Marduk as the God of Gold' (Showers)

B. The Silver Chest & Arms (39a)

The Medo-Persian Empire

-God now begins to move from telling Nebuchadnezzar what is to what shall be.

Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian empire will fall & another will rise in its place. - the Medo-Persian Empire.

Why two arms protruding out of one Breast?

Because God was forecasting the union of two separate nations - The Medes & the Persians, into one nation forming the Medo Persian Empire. This happened around 550 B.C under King Cyrus. One arm represents the Persians & the other the Medes, meeting in a common breast representing the coalition which took place in 635B.C.

Why Silver?

a) In O.T. times, Silver was always used as a symbol of money. It is a fact of history that Medo-Persian Empire when it came to its power made as its power base money. That was the whole foundation of its power & influence. - money!

b) They were noted for their Superior 'tax Collection System'. They built a major road system in all directions & its major purpose was to make it easier for the tax Collectors to collect the taxes. Money - Silver was very important.

How were they to be inferior?

In geography - larger

In military strength - they conquered Babylon

But they never were able to become a complete union. There were always conflicting and competing elements between the two nations. Disunity was to be their major downfall.

C THE BELLY & THIGHS OF BRONZE (39 (b))

The Grecian Empire

Their first ruler of this Empire was Alexander the Great. Under this brilliant leader, Greece was led to victory over the powerful Medo-Persian army.

Why a Stomach leading to the thigh all of Bronze?

Even in 8 Short years Alexander's Empire came to encompass the Medo-Persian Empire, & all the way from Egypt & Europe & India. Even though this was a massive area - by his strong leadership, he managed a tremendous unity - symbolized by the belly.

BUT

When Alexander was 32 yrs of age, he died suddenly while on military maneuvers with his troops. The big question was- 'who would succeed such a brilliant leader?'

He had four leading generals in his army & they subdivided the Kingdom among themselves. However, only two of those four decisions proved to be very powerful & these are represented by the two thigh.

**The Eastern Division headquarters in Egypt
The Northern Division headquarters in Syria.**

Why Bronze?

History bears out the fact that the ancient Greeks did develop bronze as a metal to the greatest extent. They were the first to bronze in their instruments of warfare.

D. LEGS OF IRON & TOES OF CLAY/IRON (40-43)

The Roman Empire

WHY TWO LEGS?

When Constantine became Emperor of Rome, it was so huge, he began to realize that one man could not efficiently govern the Empire. So, he divided it into two equal divisions.

1) The Eastern Division includes - Eastern Europe, the Middle East & Eastern Africa with the City of Constantinople as its capital.

II) The Western Division includes - Western Europe & Western Africa with the City of Rome as its capital.

Why Iron?

Dr. Renald Showers offers some interesting reasons.

a) Iron is the strongest metal in this image. The Romans were known for their iron made implements of warfare.

b) Iron was so strong that it could crush & shatter the other metals used in the construction of the image. The Roman Empire did just that. It crushed every opponent that dared challenge its authority & it devoured large areas of the world through military conquest.

VS. 41-43

Some Important Factors To Keep In Mind Here

a) The ancient Roman Empire fulfilled their part of this prophecy in the 60's B.C. when they devoured the Greek Empire.

b) We come to the feet of Clay & Iron, we are still moving down the image 7 thusly still progressing through history.

c) The Legs of Iron were first & that represented the ancient Roman Empire, which is past history.

d) Now we are dealing with another form of the Roman Empire - yet to come.

e) There will be the unusual composition of Clay & Iron which will not bond together.

f) The Ten toes of Iron & Clay seem to represent a federation of ten countries allied for economic & military reasons, but yet separate as far as individual internal government is concerned.

VS. 44-45

g) This Kingdom will be existent when God comes to set up a Kingdom that will

- i) Never be destroyed
- ii) Destroy all other Kingdoms.

h) There are two views currently held as to the timing of the coming of God's Kingdom.

Obviously this Kingdom is future beyond Daniel day but there is some disagreement as to if it is future beyond our day.

a) 'Some believe that this Kingdom of God being foretold here is already present on planet earth. They believe that his future Kingdom beyond Daniel's day is the Church.' (Showers)

b) Others believe that it is a Kingdom to come - it has not yet appeared and that it will take place when Jesus comes to set up His Millennial Kingdom.

The second view seems more credible because;

The coming of this Kingdom was to mark an end to all other Kingdoms 'Bring them to an end'.

When the church began in the 30'A.D., the Roman Empire coexisted with the church until 476 A.D. when the Western division was destroyed. However, the Eastern half of the Roman Empire continued until 1453 A.D.

So, since the ancient Roman Empire was not destroyed by the establishment of the church, that portion of the dream was not fulfilled.

That means then that there must be a revival of the Roman Empire existing when God sets up His Kingdom & he will then crush it forever. And the Roman Empire will feature a 10 Nation economic alliance & that is yet to come - but the stage is being set.

V. THE KINGS REACTION

The King lays himself prostrate at Daniel's feet - a picture of respect & worship.

VS. 47

He recognized that Daniel's God is superior over all other Gods.

VS. #48

Nebuchadnezzar rewards Daniel & makes him the ruler over

- a) The Wisemen'
- b) The Province of Babylon

VS. 49

Daniel also requested that his prayer partners be appointed administrators over the affairs of Babylon. The King so granted.

What a lesson we can learn here. They decided to follow God even when the results could have meant their death, but still they followed faithfully. Now look at them from chains to commanders. From prisons to thrones. How God honors those who obey Him even when it is not easy to do so.

How firm a foundation ye Saints of the Lord,
I laid for your faith in His excellent Word!
What more can He say than to you He hath said
To you who for refuge to Jesus hath fled.

The Soul that on Jesus hath fled.
The Soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose
I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
That Soul, though all hell
should endeavor to shake,
I'll Never - no, never, never forsake!

Our God is Sovereign!

CHAPTER 3

Undoubtedly there was much jealousy in the ranks of the Babylonians because of this promotion of these four Hebrews. The captives were now the ruler over their jailers. The students were now the rulers over their teachers. That would obviously not sit well with the Babylonians & no doubt they chafed under the thought of such promotions. They would undoubtedly look for any opportunity to get rid of the wholesome foursome.

One of those opportunities would come in the events recorded for us in Chapter 3.

I. NEBUCHADNEZZAR 'S IMAGE (1-7)

VS. 1

The Image was 90ft. high and nine feet wide
Partly the height probably consisted of a large base upon which the image was built.
Dura - 12 miles South East of Babylon

'The archaeologist Julius Oppert states that he found on one of these mounds (one of several found in Dura) a large brick square 45 feet on a side and 20ft high, which he believes was the foundation for the image' (Leon Wood)

Some scholars believe that Nebuchadnezzar got his idea to build this image from his dream in Chapter 2 & the fact that it is made of Gold suggests that he wanted it to represent his great Kingdom of Babylon.

However, in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, only the head was made of gold. Why now would the entire image be made of Gold?

Dr. Renald Showers makes an interesting observation
'This was his way of saying I refuse to accept the idea that my Kingdom will last for only a part of Gentile world dominion as my dream indicated. I am convinced that my Babylonian Empire is so great and so powerful that it will endure forever throughout the whole course of Gentile world power here on planet earth and I refuse to accept what Daniel's God has said. 'I will erect an image out of pure gold as my way of saying my Kingdom will never fall.'

VS. 2-3

Nebuchadnezzar summoned all the leaders in the empire to the dedication.

- a) Satraps - the Leading official in the various provinces of the empire**
- b) Prefects - A 'superintendent' - (comparable to our Cabinet post in our Government system.**
- c) Governor - one who would be serving in one of the provinces.**
- d) Judge - a judge who would be serving in one of the provinces.**
- e) Treasurers - Those responsible for financial matters**
- f) Lawyers - legal experts**
- g) Sheriff's - minions of the law**
- h) All the officials - this must refer to all other minor officials not listed above.**

This list suggests that this was an extremely important event for Nebuchadnezzar.

VS. 4-5

A musical ensemble was assembled & Nebuchadnezzar commands that when the music begins to play - everyone must fall down & worship his image.

VS. 6

Those who refused to comply would be cast into a raging furnace & burned to death.

'Ancient records indicate that one of the favourite forms of punishment was to burn people alive in furnaces.'
(Showers)

VS. 7

The command was given & this precipitated a crisis for Daniel's Three friends.

- a) They were under the authority of Nebuchadnezzar & he had commanded them to bow and worship the image.**
- b) They were under the command of God not to worship any graven image.**

There was a conflict between two God ordained powers. The God given authority of Nebuchadnezzar & the authority of God himself.

What were they to do?

'When the two authorities that are over you disagree with each other you cannot obey both. When one authority commands something that is directly opposed to God's authority, God's people must always obey God, even though it will cause them to disobey the lesser authority over them.' (Showers)

As W. A. Criswell points out they could have endeavoured to rationalized their way out of their dilemma.

They could have offered many excuses for bowing down, some of them most modern and most acceptable.

-Nebuchadnezzar was their friend and benefactor. In his hands rested their liberties and their hope of promotion. To please him was a natural thing to do.

-they could have concluded that it was useless to resist.

-they could have pointed out that they were in high office in the empire and they could not for so small a thing as bowing before an image throw away their chances and discard their opportunities.

-they could have said that the idol is nothing, just a symbol of the Kingdom, and that in bowing they were but paying political homage to the empire.

-the three Hebrew youths could have said that since everyone else was bowing - other Jews, other famous officials of government and all the counsellors around the King - they ought to bow, too.

-they could have reasoned that the genuflection was only for one time and that not for long. Once in a lifetime to bow to please the king is surely a trivial gesture of good will and appreciation.

-they could have argued that they could do more good by living than by dying. He who fights and runs away will live to fight another day. Better be a live dog than a dead lion. "Better be Red than dead."

-they could have suggested that to die in such a horrible way as being thrown into the furious flaming furnace is more than could be expected of them. It was too much to ask.

The apostle John wrote in Revelation 13 of his vision of the antichrist and his false prophet - the first beast and another beast. Speaking of the false prophet, John writes,

Rev. 13:12-15 And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed. And he performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life. And there was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast might even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

II. THE GODLY TRIO REFUSE TO BOW (8-12)

Vs. 8,9

-obviously an opportunity they were delighted to have.

VS. 10,11

They reminded the King of his command

VS. 12

They reminded the King of his Kindness to three who would not bow

III. THE GODLY TRIO SUMMONSED & EXAMINED (13-18)

VS. 13

The rage of this powerful King was nothing to be trifled with.

He had probably been aware of the disgruntlement over his appointment of them as rulers.

Now they are publicly embarrassing him.

He commands that they be brought.

VS. 14

He gave the trio an opportunity to answer the charge

VS. 15

He offers them another choice.

He then threatens them & belittles their God. He seems to have forgotten the lesson he learned in 1:47. God now has another fantastic opportunity to demonstrate his power & sovereignty.

VS. 16,17

-In the original text this is not an arrogant & ignorant answer but rather means `We have no defence to offer. We are guilty of disobeying you because we are choosing to obey Jehovah.

-Our God will deliver us from your hand.

VS. 18

-But even if he does not!. we will not serve your Gods.

-This is a demonstration of real faith. They could not prove what God would do. They could only trust Him blind to what their earthly punishment might result, but with eyes wide open to the kind of God they were serving.

-They could hear the King & see the furnace but they still trusted in their God.

IV. THE GODLY TRIO SENTENCED (19,20)

In his fury Nebuchadnezzar ordered that the furnace be made 7 times hotter than it normally was & he chose his best & strongest soldiers to bind the three & throw them into the furnace.

V. THE GODLY TRIO PUNISHED (22,23)

-They were fully clothed with highly flammable material
-Bound
-Thrown into the furnace

VS. 22

-The fire was so hot that those obedient & valiant soldiers of Nebuchadnezzar were burned alive while just throwing the trio into the furnace.

VS. 23

`They fell into the blazing fire.'

Archaeologists confirm that

1. The furnaces were deep & you climbed an incline plane to reach the opening through which the flammable materials were dropped. So when they were dropped, they fell & were trapped. It seems as if Nebuchadnezzar had set up his throne opposite this door so that he could oversee the punishment.

VII. THE GODLY TRIO'S TRIUMPH (24-27)

`Nebuchadnezzar saw five things that astounded him.

- i) 3 men were thrown in & now there were four.
- ii) All four men were loose – their ropes were burned off
- iii) All four men were standing up & walking around in the midst of the fire.
- iv) None of the men were harmed while his most powerful soldiers died while just putting them in.

v) The 4th person had the appearance of 'A Son of the Gods' (literal translation)
Nebuchadnezzar now came face to face with, for the second time the overwhelming power of God.

VS. 26

Nebuchadnezzar goes to the side door & calls out the trio. Notice that he did not summons the fourth men? He know that a God like their God would not need his permission to leave just as he needed no permission to come.

He calls their God 'The most High God' right in the presence of the powerful elite of his empire.

VS. 27

-The group of officials now gathered around to witness A miraculous delivery.

They were astounded by several things

- 1) The fire had absolutely no effect on the bodies of the trio whatsoever.
- 2) The hair on their head was not even singed.
- 3) Their clothing was not scorched.
- 4) They did not eve smell of smoke.

VIII. NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S RESPONSE (28-30)

VS. 28

-This miracle leaves verbal praise on the tongue of the King for the God he previously discounted as impotent.

-He was impressed by the response of God to the trio's faith.

VS. 29

-He decrees a punishment of death & humiliation to anybody who speaks against the God he once ignored.

-He admits that 'no other God can save in this way.'

VS. 30

-Instead of the punishment that the rulers wanted for the trio -they get promoted! They are even invested with more power because they took their stand for God.

'When the three stood before Nebuchadnezzar's image, it had seemed like they might loose all, 'but God worked matters out so that they were actually receiving much more.' (Leon Wood)

DANIEL
Nebuichadnezzar's Second Dream
(Chapter Four)

There is a very unique feature of this chapter. All other chapters were written by Daniel, but this chapter was written by king Nebuchadnezzar himself.

**I. NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S ROYAL
PROCLAMATION (1-3)**

VS. 1

King Nebuchadnezzar has been so moved by his encounters with God that he decides to let the whole world know.

VS. 2

It is strange to hear such words of praise from a man who is still deeply embedded in ungodly ways.

VS. 3

Listen to the change in his attitude toward the true living God.

Would you have thought this possible when you read the statements and understood their significance recorded in Daniel 1: 1-2?

Notice Nebuchadnezzar's praise in this verse Leon Wood comments. 'Nebuchadnezzar was comparing God's rule with His own so recently taken from him by illness. God was not subject to interruptions of this kind. His rule was stable, unchanging, eternal - From generation to generation.

In contrast to hum kingdoms, which change in rule even between generations, God's kingdom was perpetual. No assassinations or usurpations could bring a halt to it. The same authority, the same set of rules, the same rewards and punishments continued in His kingdom without variation.'

II. NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S 2ND DREAM (4-18)

-Historical records tell us that Nebuchadnezzar spent the first half of his reign out on the battle fields enlarging his empire by conquering new territories.

-However, halfway through his reign, he stopped his conquest and decided to stay at home. This resulted in great peace & prosperity in Babylon.

It is during this time he is writing

VS. 5

-Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that 'Terrified' him.

VS. 6,7

-He called for the Wisemen and this time told them the account of the dream.

-But these men could not solve the puzzle as to the meaning of the King's dream.

-For some reason, Daniel did not appear with the other wisemen.

VS. 8

4:8 Until at last Daniel came in before me, whose name is Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god, and in whom is the spirit of the Holy God; and I told him the dream.

Until at last Daniel came: Numerous reasons have been suggested as to why Daniel did not come with the main group of wise men.

- 1. One is that the King simply had forgotten him and his remarkable interpretation of some thirty years before. This hardly seems likely, however, both because of the great significance of that occasion for the king and also because of the glad manner with which Nebuchadnezzar greeted him when he did come.**
- 2. Another is that Nebuchadnezzar himself suspected the ominous meaning of his dream and hoped that it might prove to be less unpleasant if it came from the lips of wise men other than Daniel. But certainly the king was too wise a man to fall into unrealistic and wishful thinking of this kind.**
- 3. A third suggested reason is that the custom does not present itself as having been likely.**
- 4. A fourth is that Daniel was considered more an officer of the state (being head of the province of Babylon, 2:48) than chief of the wise men, and accordingly was not called first. When Daniel appeared, however, the king readily called him "master of the magicians," as though he did so think of him.**
- 5. A more likely answer is suggested by the text itself. It does not say that "*at last Nebuchadnezzar called Daniel,*" but "*at last Daniel came in.*" It is quite possible that Daniel's lateness was of his own choosing, not the king's. When Nebuchadnezzar's word calling for the wise men was received, Daniel may simply have intentionally stayed behind, possibly because of an undisclosed revelation from God to that end. The reason could have been that such a delayed appearance of Daniel would give time for the deficiency of the other wise men to show itself once more, which in turn would make his true interpretation all the more impressive.**

Nebuchadnezzar expresses his confidence in Daniel's ability to handle the assignment.

'THE TREE' (10-12)

- He saw a gigantic tree that reached into the heavens themselves
 - It could be seen by all people
 - It was loaded by all foodstuff & fruit, enough to feed the birds of the air, beast of the field and many people.
- He also saw;

'A HOLY WATCHER' (13-16)

- Probably an angel from heaven
- The angel commanded that the tree be destroyed
- The stump was to remain
- The stump was to be bound with a band of iron & bronze
- The 'heart' or 'mind' of this stump was to be replaced with the 'heart' or 'mind' of an animal for seven times of seven years.

VS. 17

The purpose of this action is to make the declaration that Jehovah is Sovereign' and chooses the rulers He pleases to rule over the affairs of men.

VS. 18

Nebuchadnezzar now asks for Daniel to do what the Babylonian wisemen could not do.

VS. 19

- Look at Daniels reaction to the dream
- Daniel had come to be fond of this ruler & seemingly did not want to be the bearer of bad news to the king.

III. THE INTERPRETATION (20-27)

VS. 20-22

-Daniel informs the King that the tree represents Nebuchadnezzar himself.

Why Would God Portray The King as a Tree?

- (a) This great tree with its gigantic size represented the tremendous power and influence that Nebuchadnezzar had developed for himself at that time.
- (b) In some of the writings that Nebuchadnezzar had written, archeologists have discovered that he repeatedly talked about the gigantic cedar trees of Lebanon that he personally observed when he was on military campaigns there. He was so impressed with them that he was known to say that they were the greatest living thing on the earth.
- (c) Also, records show that Nebuchadnezzar prided himself, boasted of the fact, of just how well he supplied food for his people. So God in this dream weaves all this together and portrays Nebuchadnezzar as a giant tree supplying an abundance of food for his people.

VS. 23

Just as the tree was chopped down, God would cut Nebuchadnezzar down for a designated period of time.

VS. 24,25

He is to be severed from his authority and will have no more sway than a beast of the field. In fact he will be struck with a mental illness and will literally act like a wild beast. He will eat grass and live in the open fields.

VS. 26

The stump left in the ground recovers when Nebuchadnezzar finally believes that Jehovah is Sovereign - God will restore him to the throne.

VS. 27

Daniel now pleads with the King to stop some of his brutal acts upon his people. Ancient records tell us that Nebuchadnezzar had a cruel & mean streak in him & was often brutal to some of his people.

David begs the king to renounce his wicked way & then maybe his rule would continue uninterrupted.

IV. THE FULFILLMENT OF THE DREAM (28-33)

VS. 28

Nebuchadnezzar gives testimony as to the accuracy of the record

VS. 29

-12 months later
-walking on the roof of the palace.

VS. 30

-Basking in his own pride
-Boosting over `his' accomplishments
-Glory to self - none to God.

VS. 31

`And now a word from your Creator!'
-Nebuchadnezzar is being brought down in order that he might look up.

VS. 32-33

Nebuchadnezzar began to suffer from a mental illness which doctors & scholars examining the records call `boanthropy' a disease well documented in which a person imagines himself to be a wild animal.

Some say that such a mala could never have befallen King Nebuchadnezzar.

But interestingly, there is at least one secular writer who also documents Nebuchadnezzar's illness. He lived in the late 300's & 200's B.C. & as far as is known never saw the book of Daniel. `Megasthenes' indeed verified the same details of Nebuchadnezzar's illness as we have recorded for us in these verses.

V. NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S REACTION (34-37)

VS. 34(a)

- Babylonian believed that all divinity comes from the earth
- but Nebuchadnezzar looks `up`
- His sanity is restored

VS. (34 (b) -35)

- Nebuchadnezzar now recognizes the Sovereignty of God.
- He learns
 - a) God's Kingdom is indestructible
 - b) God's power is insurmountable

**Glory Glory Hallelujah,
His Truth is Marching on!**

VS. 36

Nebuchadnezzar is restored to his rule of Babylon & the confidence of his people is restored.

VS. 37

Nebuchadnezzar's attitude towards God is corrected & he is humbled in His presence.

