

We just finished studying Acts; we learned of the beginning of the True Church and also came to know Paul, the man of Faith, through whom God chose to give us most of our crucial doctrine for the Church and our understanding of the New Covenant, the Gospel of God's free gift of Eternal Life by His Grace through our Faith, the message soundly rejected by most Jews since it was given.

Now, as we begin our study of Daniel, we will learn of God's Grace through Faith as given under the Old Covenant to this man of Faith whose message has also been rejected by most Jews.

To Jews, to their rabbis, Daniel is not considered one of the Prophets; his Book is contained in the Ketuvim: the 'Writings' such as Psalms, Proverbs, Ruth, Job, etc. but not with the Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc.

This, then, is one more proof that it is unwise to study, rely upon or quote the various rabbis, sages, etc. from rabbinic Judaism through the centuries; these men are/were not 'saved,' not born again, not indwelt and led by the Holy Spirit and they are most assuredly not speaking forth the Wisdom of God.

Daniel is unquestionably a Prophet of God; to him, in fact, God gave one of the most monumental prophecies in all of Scripture; **The 70 Weeks of Daniel** in Daniel 9, actually pinpoints, to the day!, when their Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ would enter Jerusalem, offering Himself as their long awaited King and also His Sacrificial Death which is, surely, the main reason why they reject Daniel as a Prophet; to not do so, they would have to admit that the Lord Jesus Christ is, in fact, exactly Who He said He is and that they are responsible to Him and for what was done to Him.

But don't take my word, alone, for it... Jesus said it: '*...When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by **Daniel the prophet**, stand in the holy place...*' Matt 24:15

The Son of God, the Word of God, God Himself told us that Daniel is a genuine Prophet of God!

Throughout Acts, we learned about Paul 's life after his conversion but of his younger life, we know next to nothing: only that he was the son of a Pharisee and that he studied under Gama'liel. In Daniel, we learn about Daniel more about his history: more, even, than we may have previously recognized...

**Daniel 1:1**: '*In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it.*'

Daniel lived during some of the darkest days in the history of Israel and we now live during some of the darkest days of our nation's history. Daniel's life was upheld by hope and faith and our lives can be upheld by that same hope and faith because the object of our hope and faith is the same as was Daniel's.

Daniel is different from other Biblical Prophets; others, such as Isaiah, Ezekiel, Micah, etc. were sent by God to warn Israel and her kings of coming judgment for their continued descent, deeper and deeper into the sins of the pagan nations around them. If they would not turn back to God, He would bring judgment upon them from another even more evil nation: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Rome...

Daniel, on the other hand, had been sent, by God, to counsel and to warn the evil king God had used to bring judgment upon Israel!

Throughout Daniel, the theme remains, whether to Israel, God's own special chosen nation or to powerful Gentile, pagan nations, God Almighty is Absolute Sovereign over all the affairs of Man; He is in complete control of all things, in all places, in all times and over all men and all things are directed by Him under His Eternal Plan which is, of course... the Glory of God!

Jeremiah and Ezekiel had been warning Israel that judgment was coming. Judgment came and Daniel was lifted up to be God's light to these Gentiles.

Paul wrote: '*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*' Eph 2:10

Daniel was His workmanship, created unto good works; God orchestrated Daniel's life to place him exactly where God had always planned... just like He has done with each of us.

Israel had become a great nation under David and Solomon. Then the nation was split: Israel in the north and Judah in the south. God sent Elijah, Elisha, Amos, Hosea and others to warn the north but they would not listen; in 722 B.C., God sent the Assyrians to destroy the northern kingdom; Israelites were taken captive and other captured Gentiles were planted into the north which became known as Samaria; the Samaritans were the hated 'half-breeds.' The Jews taken captive by the Assyrians never returned but God still knows exactly who they are and where they are; some are of His Elect, others are not.

To the southern kingdom, Judah, God sent His Prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zephaniah and others in warning; neither did they listen and in 605 B.C., God sent the Babylonians to judge Judah but God had better plans for Judah; He would eventually restore them and bring forth His Son through the line of David.

Through a series of three deportations, Jews were taken captive back to Babylon; Daniel was among the first. We will find Daniel in Babylon but we need a little more background.

After the height of Israel's glory under David and his son Solomon, Israel and Judah had many evil kings and a few good kings... Hezekiah was a good king but he was also a very foolish king and it was he who helped set Judah on the path to invasion and captivity. A little less than 100 years earlier, we find Hezekiah in Jerusalem:

*'At that time Berodachbaladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present unto Hezekiah: for he had heard that Hezekiah had been sick. <sup>13</sup> And Hezekiah hearkened unto them, and shewed them all the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not. <sup>14</sup> Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country, even from Babylon. <sup>15</sup> And he said, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All the things that are in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them. <sup>16</sup> And Isaiah said unto Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD. <sup>17</sup> Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD. <sup>18</sup> 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.'* 2Kings 20:12

Hezekiah's pride led him to open Israel's treasury to enemy spies which eventually led to the destruction and captivity of Israel. These spies reported back to Babylon of all the riches Israel had collected since the apex of her glory under Solomon; Hezekiah foolishly showed them everything! Imagine! You live in the worst neighborhood of Portland; an evil motorcycle gang's headquarters are just down the street and you invite one of them in and you open up your wall safe to show them all your gold coins and you even tell him the combination just to prove how much you trust him... what an idiot!!! That was Hezekiah!

And so... Berodachbaladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon began to make plans for the eventual invasion to recover all those gold coins which he assumed were rightfully his... until finally, his great grandson, or whoever, was in power at God's exact moment in time to bring his army back to carry out God's long planned judgment.

**Verse 2:** *'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.'*

This verse lays the groundwork for Daniel chapter 5 when the last Babylonian king, Belshazzar, will give a great feast and he will bring these same holy, dedicated utensils from God's destroyed Temple; that is when he will see a disembodied hand writing out his judgment, from God, upon the wall: the 'handwriting on the wall.'

But that will be for some chapters from now...

Now we will meet Daniel and learn how this young man's life of faith and faithfulness kept him safe and secure in the dark and demented kingdom of Babylon, while looking for the Light of the promised, coming Messiah which is given as not only an example of a prophet of God but even more, as an example for us as we seek to

faithfully live by faith in our own dark and demented Babylon as we look for the Light of our coming redeemer. Babylon is the first World Empire founded by Nimrod, the first emperor and antichrist on the Plains of Shinar...

**Verse 3:** *'And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes;'*

Daniel is a young man, just a teen, from the royal family; he has been brought up in the palace; he was being raised to rule, perhaps, but he is definitely among the top echelon of Israeli society; he has been kidnapped and taken captive away from everything he had ever known; he likely never saw his parents or any of his family ever again.

He had been raised with every advantage but God saw to it that he had also been raised to know, to serve and to love Him Who was first and foremost in Daniel's heart and mind, as was Daniel in God's heart; later, we will see God's angel address Daniel as such: *'And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved...'* and, *'O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong.'*

When Nebuchadnezzar's army laid siege to Jerusalem, terror gripped the entire city; men, women and children would have been cruelly murdered; Daniel and his family may have been hiding in some small room within the palace complex, a place Daniel and his friends may have played in, hidden in, run to during their many times of games but this day, only terror filled every heart. The Babylonian commander was commanded to watch carefully for handsome boys and young men, especially those of noble families; these would have been kept and carefully guarded from any errant soldier intent on destruction and mayhem and all would have been judged strong enough to make the 500 mile march back to Babylon... only the healthiest and strongest would have been chosen; most others would have been killed as soon as the army entered the city.

Now, with the first wave of captives finally having arrived in Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar speaks to *Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes...* Daniel would have fit into one of these...

**Verse 4:** *'Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.'*

Nebuchadnezzar wants the best looking and most intelligent Hebrew boys to be trained to serve in his palace; not only is he wanting the best and brightest around him but these also would serve as displayed trophies from his latest conquest... better a living, beautiful servant than a stuffed head mounted on the wall...

First, they would be tested as to their understandings of all wisdom, knowledge and science and then they would be trained with the finest, most advanced education available, that of the Babylonians, and then they would be taught all the hidden knowledge and language of the Chaldeans... like the 'wise men' who would come looking for the Child, Jesus some 600 years in the future.

But who, then, is Ashpenaz? He is the master of Nebuchadnezzar's eunuchs; who are his eunuchs?

Remember back in Acts 8... *'And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.'* <sup>27</sup> *And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,'* Acts 8:26

Eunuchs were an important part of ancient royal society; they served as guards and servants in women's areas, as trusted advisors and many other functions. Here, in our study, captive boys and young men would have been castrated to keep them more docile, less apt to rebellion and to keep them from any thoughts toward women, especially Babylonian women and, to keep any Babylonian women from having designs on any handsome young captive Hebrews... remember Potiphar's wife and Joseph...

Ashpenaz is in charge of all the eunuchs in the Babylonian court and, lest we make any mistake... all of these young Israeli captive boys and young men would have undergone forced eunuchization...

Daniel and the others were, doubtless, all made to be eunuchs...

Nebuchadnezzar would have wanted perfect boys, young enough to be molded into fine young Babylonians but made into eunuchs to better ensure submission to himself and to all the ways of Babylon.

This is, in fact, the fulfillment of God's prophetic warning through Isaiah to Hezekiah after he so foolishly opened the temple and his treasures to the Babylonian spies: again...

*'Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country unto me, even from Babylon.*

*<sup>4</sup> Then said he, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All that is in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them. <sup>5</sup> Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD of hosts: <sup>6</sup> Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, (imagine just how much from Solomon on...) shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD. <sup>7</sup> 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 39:3

This is so consequential that God gives it to us both in 2 Kings 20 and in Isaiah 39... Keep your mouth shut; do not boast in what God has done for/in/through you; beware of strangers: if they are not children of God... they very well could be children of the devil: *'Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: <sup>7</sup> Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. <sup>8</sup> Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.'* 1Peter 5:6

**Verse 5:** *'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.'*

Nebuchadnezzar tells Ashpenaz to feed them with all the best that the king himself eats and drinks so that they will become the very best they can be. Then after 3 years of training, they would, hopefully, be ready to serve in the king's palace.

**Verse 6:** *'Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah:'*

Daniel has 3 friends, all from Jerusalem, perhaps friends or even cousins of Daniel. Daniel we know but who are these others...

Perhaps we know them better by their Babylonian names:

**Verse 7:** *'Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego.'*

The first step in Babylonianizing these young men would be to take away their Hebrew names to be replaced with good, strong Babylonian names. Their given names honored the True God; their new names would also honor a god but false Babylonian gods.

Marduk was the chief god of Babylon, also known as Bel/Baal.

His son, Nabu was the god of wisdom; the moon god was Aku.

It is these 3 false gods after whom Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah will be named...

Daniel means 'God is my Judge;' he is renamed Belteshazzar meaning: Bel protect the prince.

Hananiah means 'God has favored;' he is renamed Shadrach meaning: Command of Aku

Mishael means 'Who is what God is;' he is renamed Meshach meaning: Who is like Aku

Azariah means 'Jehovah has helped;' he is renamed Abed-ne'go meaning: Servant of Nabu

**Verse 8:** *'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.'*

Why would Daniel think he'd become defiled simply by eating the best foods and wines offered them in Babylon? Do you remember what the letters said which James and the council sent back with Paul to the Gentiles? They were told they were not under the Law but that they should simply abide by a few restrictions, the first of which was: *'That ye abstain from meats offered to idols...'* which would have been so very offensive to Jews who were strictly commanded to not eat anything offered to idols! Ex 34:15 All these best foods would have first been offered up to their false gods for blessing... a gross defilement to the Hebrews.