

Young Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah have been taken captive to Babylon; they've been made eunuchs and put onto a special education path; they would be trained to serve in Nebuchadnezzar's palace who had ordered that they be given the finest foods and wines to enhance their minds and bodies...

Daniel 1:8: *'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.'*

Daniel asked to not eat the special foods because they would have been first offered up unto Babylonian idols. This was a dangerous proposition for Daniel as it would be countermanding the expressed will of Nebuchadnezzar who held the power of life and death over everyone everywhere but the One Who truly holds power over all things, including Nebuchadnezzar, God Almighty, had already gone before Daniel:

Verse 9: *'Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.'*

There was nothing perverse in Ashpenaz' love for Daniel; he is a highly intelligent young man whose heart is pure toward God and people; he was respectful and trustworthy but most of all, Daniel held only love and faithfulness toward God Who was guiding and directing Daniel and all things around him in order to glorify Himself in and through Daniel and in Nebuchadnezzar, as well, which we'll see just a few chapters later...

And the same is true in the lives of any of God's elect; when we purpose in our hearts to honor and glorify God in all we think, say and do. *'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.'* Rom 8:28

Daniel understood this same truth even 700 years before the Holy Spirit led Paul to write it out for us...

Verse 10: *'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.'*

Ashpenaz understood who Nebuchadnezzar was, that he could and would command the death of anyone who displeased him, no matter how slight the offense. 'Daniel... if the king sees you as unhealthy, it's my head that'll roll; your health and care is my responsibility!

Daniel could have given up and said, 'I tried, God but I guess it's not that important to You and, so, I'll just go ahead and eat and drink what they provide; after all, that great food and wine is really tempting; I really wouldn't mind being forced to enjoy it...

But Daniel's God-given wisdom devises the way for Daniel to faithfully serve God first...

'There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.' ¹⁴ *Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.'* (and food offered to idols) 1Cor 10:13

Verse 11: *'Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, ¹² Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days.'*

Notice that Daniel takes his plan not to Ashpenaz, 'captain' over all the eunuchs but, instead, he takes it to a lower authority, to Melzar, the 'lieutenant' whom Ashpenaz had placed over these four obviously special boys. Whenever possible, follow the proper chain of command...

Melzar was open to Daniel's plan because Daniel had given his promise to submit to Melzar's final decision; he wouldn't then go above Melzar's head to the higher authority, Ashpenaz.

Daniel requests a diet of 'pulse;' it sounds gross but the Hebrew word is: Zeron/zay-ro'ah; it means: something 'sown' which would include fruits, vegetables and grains but not meats or dairy; this is not to assume that God

requires or even thinks it best that we be vegetarians or vegans; this is simply the best way to receive foods not intended for Nebuchadnezzar's household and, so, not having been offered up to their false gods.

Melzar sees the wisdom in Daniel's suggestion; what could go wrong!? It's only 10 days; they couldn't look that much worse after such a short time but if they look at all worse than the others who were eating the king's foods, then Daniel would have to give up on his ill-conceived ideas. But lo and behold...

Verse 15: *'... at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat.'*

Obviously, God had His Hand in this test; after only 10 days these four were noticeably healthier than all of the others; they were not skinny and their boyhood acne had all cleared up! They looked like fine young men whom you'd want your daughter to bring home... except, of course, for the eunuch thing...

But for God's plans... they were perfect! But not everyone was pleased with this test's outcome...

Verse 16: *'Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse.'*

All the rest of this latest crop of handsome young servants were, most likely, not at all pleased with Daniel's plan; they rather enjoyed eating and drinking the best of the best! Daniel, Shadrack, Meshach and Abednego, are the only ones of all the Hebrew captives of whom we're told of their faithful hearts toward God; these four, at least, were determined to glorify God in who they were and in all they did:

'What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? ²⁰ For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.' 1Cor 6:19 (your spirit and body belong to God)

Yes, Paul wrote this to the Corinthians some 700 years after this time but It was the same Holy Spirit, Who inspired Paul, Who led, directed and inspired Daniel to do as he did. God's Word is Eternal and Never-ending.

'For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.' Psalm 119:89

'... the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever' 1Pet 1:23

God did not devise some new thing about which to inspire Paul's writing; God is Eternal and the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, is Eternal; the Word of God is Eternal and forever settled in Heaven.

Verse 17: *'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.'*

Melzar decided to give all the new 'recruits' the same diet as requested by Daniel, imagining that they would all show the same wisdom and abilities as Daniel, Shadrack, Meshach and Abednego but, in reality, these four had wisdom, knowledge and skill that only comes from God Who highly honored these four because, in their hearts, they first highly honored God; they put God first Who then put them first among all their peers but Daniel is the only one to whom God gave *understanding in all visions and dreams* which will soon be proven.

Verse 18: *'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. ¹⁹ 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.'*

At the end of the time of training, Nebuchadnezzar had them all brought before him so that he could speak with each one while testing them on various areas of knowledge and understanding and these select four showed themselves to have learned and understood far more than any others; in fact...

Verse 20: *'And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them **ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.'***

Imagine! These four stood out far above all the rest... in fact, Nebuchadnezzar found them to be 10 times better than all the 'wise men' in all his empire! Daniel is ready to take his place as the wise and trusted counselor to kings and emperors.

Verse 21: *'And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus.'*

Daniel served at least four kings/emperors: first we see Nebuchadnezzar; then we see Belshazzar whose kingdom fell in one night to the Medes and Persians; then under Darius and finally to Cyrus whom God raised up to allow the Jews, taken captive under Nebuchadnezzar, to begin returning to Israel.

In fact, God even named Cyrus through His Prophet, Isaiah: *'... of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid, Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; ² I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: ³ And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. ⁴ For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me. ⁵ I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: ⁶ That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. **I am the LORD, and there is none else. ⁷ I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.'** Isaiah 44:28*

Daniel 2:1: *'And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him. ² Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams.'*

Nebuchadnezzar has a dream which really bothers him; he wants to understand its meaning; he couldn't sleep afterward so he commands all his magicians, astrologers, sorcerers and Chaldeans to stand before him and to show him its meaning but we notice that Daniel is not among those called; perhaps this is still during his time of training.

Verse 3: *'So they came and stood before the king. ³ And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream. ⁴ Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriack, O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation.'*

Syriack is the Syrian language.

And, so, they all, naturally, say, 'Yes, your majesty... just tell us the dream and we will, as always, act like we are seeking wisdom from the gods while we, together, formulate some wild imagination to satisfy your need to be amazed and so that you will continue to see us as wise, understanding and indispensable.'

These are very like our own congress persons whose number one priority is always their own, continual, never ending reelection after reelection after reelection; nothing else matters! and also very like so many false teachers/evangelists/pastors/authors of today as they spew forth ever more outlandish proclamations, prophecies, phony miracles, new and never before seen secrets hidden in their own Bibles as their weak-minded, spiritually retarded acolytes and followers stay tuned, hoping to be amazed once more...

But this time will be different; God is opening Nebuchadnezzar's eyes to the need for truth and understanding because this is, after all, a very special dream from God...

Verse 5: *'The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill.'*

He had their undivided attention at the mention of 'dunghill!' This would be different! All his 'wise men' are beginning to panic because they know that when Nebuchadnezzar is serious, when he really means business, people can die; people do die ... and this is, suddenly one of those times!

Whether or not it's true, that he cannot remember the dream... we've all had those times when we wake up and our dream begins to drift away like smoke in a breeze; one minute it's there but, then, quickly it's gone... but Nebuchadnezzar didn't become emperor of the World without sly wisdom, knowing how to test those

around him, whether they be honest or liars...

Now the 'wise men' are desperately trying to buy some time... time to think of an effective answer, an effective deception... but Nebuchadnezzar says:

Verse 6: *'... if ye shew the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honour: therefore shew me the dream, and the interpretation thereof.'*

That certainly sounds better than the alternative... a dunghill... but please... at least tell us the dream...

Verse 7: *'They answered again and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation of it. The king answered and said, I know of certainty that ye would gain the time, because ye see the thing is gone from me.'*

Reality is beginning to settle in on Nebuchadnezzar; these 'wise men' are all crooks, liars and charlatans; God is preparing him for the presentation of God's chosen servant, Daniel, and it's beginning to settle in on all these 'wise men' that maybe this wasn't their best career choice...

Verse 9: *'But if ye will not make known unto me the dream, there is but one decree for you: for ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, till the time be changed: therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that ye can shew me the interpretation thereof.'*

First, tell me the dream! Then I'll know that you are genuine. When you're in a really tight spot and you don't even know the only One Who can really protect you... once again... you play for time; additional time is your only hope as you put your heads together to come up with a life-saving lie!

Verse 10: *'The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. ¹¹ And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.'*

No one has ever asked or expected something like this; you don't want to be known as someone who would ask the impossible... do you!? We're only concerned with your reputation, Sire... no one could do such a thing! So you really mustn't expect us to do so either! We're only human... like you! Only the 'gods' can give such information and you know that we are the only ones who have a connection to the 'gods.'

Verse 12: *'For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.'*

Their whole world explodes! With typical royal overreaction, Nebuchadnezzar commands all the wise men throughout Babylon... that all of them should be destroyed! No explanation or extenuating circumstances, no appeal is possible; his word is law!

In a flash, he sees it all; the lot of them are nothing but a nest of vipers, liars and deceivers all. Surely, not all of the 'wise men' throughout the empire are gathered together here at court but his command is that all of them be rooted out and destroyed; all the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers and the Chaldeans are to be killed and their every house to be destroyed and be made a dunghill.

I can't help thinking that this is similar to what so many of today's false teachers, prophets, pastors, evangelists and authors will hear one day soon; *'Depart from Me, I never knew you!'*

In fact, Nebuchadnezzar even lashes out at the young apprentices for whom he had such hope; if they have been taught by this crowd, then there is, for them as well, no hope or usefulness to me... I will start over!

Verse 13: *'And the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain.'*

This is the first of many attempts to kill Daniel and the three. However, unlike all the so-called 'wise men,' Daniel, Shadrack, Meshach and Abednego have something which all the others lack: not a relationship with the 'gods' but with the only True God in Whom they will continue to trust while seeking only *His wisdom*.

Verse 14: *'Then Daniel answered with counsel and wisdom to Arioch the captain of the king's guard, which was gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon: ¹⁵ He answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, Why is the decree so hasty from the king? Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel.'*

Daniel didn't just now begin praying for God's Wisdom and direction; that was his habitual lifestyle.

Daniel answered *with counsel and wisdom*, with wisdom from God he was able to offer wise council.

He doesn't panic but calmly asks the captain of the king's guard the reason for such a commotion; all the 'wise men' around him are screaming and being murdered. However, Daniel and his friends are surely well known and popular which causes Arioch to move slowly enough to allow Daniel's question:

'Why is the king so hasty in this serious reaction!?'

And Arioch tells him.

Verse 16: *'Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would shew the king the interpretation.'*

Notice Daniel's boldness in going directly to the king with his request, showing that he already had a closeness of relationship with Nebuchadnezzar. When Daniel asks for time, it is granted; he promises to tell the king his dream and its interpretation!

Notice, as well, Daniel knows nothing at this point other than that he can trust the One, True God with Whom he has a far closer and even more intimate relationship.

This is reminiscent of when Esther later goes before king Ahasuerus, unannounced and God's answer to Daniel would have been the same as Mordicai's to Esther:

'Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews. ¹⁴ For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?' Esther 4:13

And the same is God's answer to us as we stand on our own wicked and perverse generation...

Verse 17: *'Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: ¹⁸ That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.'*

The first thing Daniel does is to enlist his 3 companions to join him in fervent prayer to the Only True God Who knows all things and all secrets; they don't cry or complain; they trust God alone; if He gives Daniel this dream and interpretation, they will thank and praise Him. If, however, He chooses not to save them, so be it! They will continue to entrust themselves to His loving care. After all, if this is how Nebuchadnezzar treats his valued 'wise men,' why bother anyway!? Going to Paradise would be far, far better, to be sure!

Verse 19: *'Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision.'*