

Daniel 6: Unharmed by the Lions

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Last time, we went from King Nebuchadnezzar's reign to King Belshazzar's reign to the very beginning of King Darius' reign. A change has taken place in that Babylon has fallen and the Medo-Persian Empire was now in charge. Daniel would face the famous den of lions – and live in victory!

Captivity Continues

[Daniel 6:1-3.](#) Daniel and his friends were really still in captivity.

This period of time was known as the Babylonian captivity, but now Babylon had fallen and the Medo-Persian empire inherited the Judean captives.

But Daniel is still included as a resident of Babylon, so when King Darius demands that all of Babylon bow and worship, he was including all of the Hebrew captives.

So Daniel was a prisoner, but he was set above the rest to govern, one of 3 governors.

An Excellent spirit

[Daniel 6:3](#)

Daniel was distinguished “because an excellent spirit was in him.”

This is the mark of person who loves God.

You should have an excellent spirit. When you are at work, it should be so obvious that you are different. My Bible has some commentary and it says Daniel had a “surpassing ability to do his job” and he probably had a “commendable attitude.”

Are there ever times when you don't have a good attitude?

Ask the LORD to give you a positive outlook on life.

Daniel was so impressive that King Darius contemplated letting him run everything.

Being Blameless when those around you want to find fault

[Daniel 6:4](#) How many of you know that when you finally start doing something great for God, the devil starts using people around you to discourage you?

The other governors and satraps wanted to find some fault with Daniel. This guy is just too talented, he is making us look bad.

But they couldn't find fault.

The Bible tells us to be blameless.

[Philippians 2:14-16](#) “Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and

perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain."

Daniel is such a great example of that!

Daniel 6:5 They plot against him. We can only find a fault with Daniel if it relates to the law of his God. The conspirators know that Daniel will refuse to break God's law.

Daniel was coming up against a whole host of demons.

These accusers had an angry, wickedly ambitious spirit about them, overly critical, jealous, compulsive, reactionary spirits. Things of the enemy and things of the flesh.

But Daniel's faith was not in the things of the flesh, but rather in the truth of God's Word. He knew how to operate in victory.

When prayer is against the law

Daniel 6:7 King Darius' advisors conspire against Daniel and decide to make a royal decree.

Royal decrees were handled very differently back then than they are now.

Once a royal decree was issued, it couldn't be revoked, even by the king. The law could not be changed. Why not? Because if the law was changeable that would be admitting that the law was imperfect. And since they wanted everyone to obey their laws, they would essentially be saying their manmade laws were infallible.

The royal decree stated that no one could worship anyone except King Darius for 30 days. At least this law had an end

date.

But the king had to sign it.

Is it that he truly trusted his advisors? That they had all the best interests of his kingdom in mind?

Or was he pressured into signing it for political reasons?

He signed the decree. **Prayer was banned!** ([Dan.6:9](#))

Why did King Darius sign it!?

Did he honestly believe he was a god? He might've. That was the culture back then just like it remains in North Korea. These leaders want full submission including worship.

[Daniel 6:10](#). Daniel knew King Darius signed it, but instead of confronting the king about it or cowering in fear in some cave someplace, he simply went home.

He knew only God could intervene.

He opened his windows, got down on his knees 3x/day and prayed.

The Bible says as was his custom.

Daniel didn't let his circumstances change him. He remained steadfast in His devotion and he had unwavering faith that "pasa lo que pasa" whatever happens happens. It's in God's hands.

Nothing to hide

He not only prayed, but he prayed with his windows open. He had nothing to hide.

But there are always the tattletales and the troublemakers.

If it were suddenly against the law here in the US to pray,

would you be found guilty?

[Daniel 6:11-13](#) Daniel has disobeyed the king's decree. He must be cast into the den of lions.

That Daniel.

That _____ (*fill in your name.*) Those children of God are at it again, praying to the God who hears. The God who saves.

Notice the accusers in [verse 13](#) don't call him governor. They intentionally call him a captive from Judah. They want to make their case that Daniel is treasonous. He isn't good enough for their clique.

King Darius realizes his error

[Daniel 6:14](#) the king was mad at himself. He realized the foolishness of having signed the law.

He had sealed the fate – spoken death – over even his friend, Daniel whom he respected.

The king spent the whole afternoon trying to figure out how he could find a loophole in the decree so Daniel would be spared the lion's den.

[Daniel 6:15](#) but the accusers are back. Hey, king, the law is the law. Daniel's going to be lion dinner.

Daniel was thrown into the lion's den

[Daniel 6:16-17](#) King Darius encourages Daniel and confesses with some faith here, that God who you serve so continually, He will deliver you.

[Daniel 6:18-20](#) The king didn't eat all night. He was fasting, he refused entertainment. He couldn't sleep. And in the

morning he faced his worst fear and called out to Daniel.

The king asked, "has your God been able?"

Our God is Able!

Oh, let me tell you today, our God is able! Of course, our God is able!

[Daniel 6:21-23.](#) And Daniel answered King Darius. God sent His ministering angel to shut the mouth of the lion.

Daniel was unhurt, Hallelujah.

No injury whatsoever because Daniel believed in his God.

Servant of God, expect great things. If you believe in your God, He will deliver you.

[Daniel 6:24-26](#) The enemies of God can expect destruction.

All of the accusers were cast into the lion den along with their wives and children and none of them survived.

[Daniel 6:27-28.](#) King Darius pronounces a new decree that God should be honored.

So what does this all mean for us now?

Does it mean we should tempt God and jump the enclosures at the zoo so we can prove that God will protect us? Absolutely not, the Bible says do not tempt the Lord thy God.

There's a true story about that. A guy in Taiwan

Intentionally jumped into a lion's pen at the zoo holding his Bible and shouting at the lions that Jesus was going to save him.

Needless to say, the lions attacked him, he got severe bite wounds, and the zoo personnel had to tranquilize the lions and get him to safety.

This man put everyone danger.

Sometimes people (even Christians) get some crazy ideas and want to convince themselves or others that God told them to do something. I had heard of another guy who did something similar in Africa. Speaking in tongues and everything and he said, if I can survive the lion's den I will prove the power of God to everyone looking.

Make sure that you are legitimately hearing from God.

Otherwise, Christians rightfully get a bad rap. Y'all are crazy. Y'all are jumping into lions dens. God doesn't need our help in proving his power.

The serpent will not harm you Mark 16, but this is when the lion or the snake comes to you. Don't you go try finding it. Don't you go provoking the enemy.

It is entirely different if you were standing by the lion enclosure and an accident happened, and you found yourself in the midst of that den. God could make those lions the tamest little cats around.

So today I want to encourage you to:

1. Be like Daniel. Have an excellent reputation. Go the extra mile for God. Do something you might be uncomfortable with for the sake of the Gospel. Pray even when the world tells you not to.
2. Don't be like his accusers. The enemy wants you on his side to cast blame, doubt, to even discourage your own

self. When those thoughts come to you that bring division, seek the Lord's help. The Lord will help you to develop a kind and generous spirit. One that builds others up, and doesn't tear them down.

3. Have faith! You're going to find yourself in crazy situations you've never anticipated. When you feel like your in a lion's den with no escape and no plan, God can work His finest miracle in your life because you are powerless and hopeless without Him. When you have no choice but to depend on your Heavenly Father, you will see that He will pull you through.

Amen!

Daniel 4: Nebuchadnezzar is humbled before the True King

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- [A lesson for us today](#)

In the [previous chapter](#), King Nebuchadnezzar witnessed the miracle of the 3 Judean youth unharmed despite being thrown into Babylon's fiery furnace.

King Nebuchadnezzar now addresses everyone and decides to acknowledge God's wondrous works:

[Daniel 4:1-9](#)

["Nebuchadnezzar the king,](#)

[To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth:](#)

[Peace be multiplied to you.](#)

[² I thought it good to declare the signs and wonders that the Most High God has worked for me.](#)

[³ How great are His signs,
And how mighty His wonders!
His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
And His dominion is from generation to generation.](#)

[⁴ I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my house, and flourishing in my palace. ⁵ I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts on my bed and the visions of my head troubled me. ⁶ Therefore I issued a decree to bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. ⁷ Then the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers came in, and I told them the dream; but they did not make known to me its interpretation. ⁸ But at last Daniel came before me \(his name is Belteshazzar, according to the name of **my god**; in him is **the Spirit of the Holy God**\), and I told the dream](#)

before him, saying: ⁹ “Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the Spirit of the Holy God is in you, and no secret troubles you, explain to me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and its interpretation.” (Daniel 4:1-9, emphases added)

King Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges a difference between his god and Daniel’s “Holy” God.

Verse 2: “I thought it good...” In the NIV, “It is my *pleasure* to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me.”, (emphasis added). Daniel attributes the miraculous signs and wonders to the Most High God – hierarchically using terminology that makes the claim that his God is above all other gods.

King Nebuchadnezzar describes another dream

Daniel 4:10-12

¹⁰ “These were the visions of my head while on my bed:

I was looking, and behold,
A tree in the midst of the earth,
And its height was great.

¹¹ The tree grew and became strong;
Its height reached to the heavens,
And it could be seen to the ends of all the earth.

¹² Its leaves were lovely,
Its fruit abundant,
And in it was food for all.
The beasts of the field found shade under it,
The birds of the heavens dwelt in its branches,
And all flesh was fed from it.” (Daniel 4:10-12)

[Daniel 4:4](#) describes how Nebuchadnezzar was flourishing. This dream appears to be describing King Nebuchadnezzar's current situation at the height of his reign – he is like a tall, strong tree that provides for the kingdom in abundance.

Daniel 4:13

A message from above:

¹³ [“I saw in the visions of my head while on my bed, and there was a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven. \(Daniel 4:13\)](#)

In Deuteronomy, the Bible describes another time when holy ones came down:

² [He said,](#)

[“The LORD came from Sinai](#)

[and dawned from Seir upon us;](#)

[he shone forth from Mount Paran;](#)

[He came from the ten thousands of holy ones,](#)

[with flaming fire at His right hand.” \(Deuteronomy 33:2, ESV\)](#)

Daniel 4:14-15

The tree will be chopped down

¹⁴ [He cried aloud and said thus: ‘Chop down the tree and cut off its branches,](#)

[Strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit.](#)

[Let the beasts get out from under it,](#)

[And the birds from its branches.](#)

¹⁵ [Nevertheless leave the stump and roots in the earth,](#)

Bound with a band of iron and bronze,
In the tender grass of the field.
Let it be wet with the dew of heaven,
And let him graze with the beasts
On the grass of the earth.” (Daniel 4:14-15), emphasis added

Verse 15 reveals and confirms that the tree does indeed represent King Nebuchadnezzar with the verse saying, let “him.”

Daniel 4:16-17

Man to Beast

“Let his heart be changed from that of a man,
Let him be given the heart of a beast,
And let seven times pass over him.

‘This decision is by the decree of the watchers,
And the sentence by the word of the holy ones,
In order that the living may know
That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men,
Gives it to whomever He will,
And sets over it the lowest of men.’” (Daniel 4:16-17)

The watchers from the heavenly court have made a very strong decree so that “the living may know that the Most High rules . . . “: King Nebuchadnezzar’s heart will be transformed from that of a man to an animal.

And 7 times will pass.

Most interpret these 7 to be a literal 7 years. 7, again, symbolizes “completion.” In the completion of time, the fullness of time.

Daniel 4:18

¹⁸ “This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar, declare its interpretation, since all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able, for the Spirit of the Holy God is in you.” (Daniel 4:18)

King Nebuchadnezzar now expects Daniel to give the interpretation! He recognizes that the Spirit of the Holy God is in Daniel.

Daniel 4:19-26

Daniel did indeed receive the interpretation of the dream, but he was very startled by it:

¹⁹ “Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for a time, and his thoughts troubled him. So the king spoke, and said, “Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation trouble you.”

Belteshazzar answered and said, “My lord, may the dream concern those who hate you, and its interpretation concern your enemies!

²⁰ “The tree that you saw, which grew and became strong, whose height reached to the heavens and which could be seen by all the earth, ²¹ whose leaves were lovely and its fruit abundant, in which was food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and in whose branches the birds of the heaven had their home— ²² it is you, O king, who have grown and become strong; for your greatness has grown and reaches to the heavens, and your dominion to the end of the earth.

²³ “And inasmuch as the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming

down from heaven and saying, 'Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave its stump and roots in the earth, bound with a band of iron and bronze in the tender grass of the field; let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let him graze with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him';²⁴ this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king:²⁵ They shall drive you from men, your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make you eat grass like oxen. They shall wet you with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.

²⁶ "And inasmuch as they gave the command to leave the stump and roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be assured to you, after you come to know that Heaven rules.

The purpose of the coming trial for King Nebuchadnezzar is for him to "come to know that Heaven rules." King Nebuchadnezzar had a court, but the court of heaven is far superior to that of Babylon.

In [Daniel 4:20](#), the tree is described similarly to the Tower of Babel: having height reaching to the heavens:

Genesis 11:1-4 Now the whole earth had one language and one speech.² And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there.³ Then they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar.⁴ And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."

King Nebuchadnezzar had the same ambitious spirit.

The tree is to be chopped down, but the stump left in tact and bound up with iron and bronze.

In [Daniel 2](#), iron and bronze represented Rome and Greece, respectively. The Babylonian Empire would remain intertwined – rooted – and even so much as bound up – together with the empires that would follow. Rather than displaying its power and might freely, Babylon would be confined.

[Daniel 4:27](#)

[27 “Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity.”](#)

Daniel gives King Nebuchadnezzar some valuable advice: seek righteousness and mercy to break the power of sin in his life. Looking ahead to [Daniel 4:29](#), we see that God gave King Nebuchadnezzar a full year to repent!

[Daniel 4:28-33](#)

[28 “All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. 29 At the end of the twelve months he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon. 30 The king spoke, saying, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?”](#)

[31 While the word was still in the king’s mouth, a voice fell from heaven: “King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! 32 And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.”](#)

³³ That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws."

King Nebuchadnezzar was afflicted with what modern psychologists call "boanthropy." This is a mental disorder that causes its victim to believe he is an ox or a cow. But I think King Nebuchadnezzar had it even worse. I haven't seen anybody have hair like eagle's feathers and nails like claws. God allowed him to experience a pit of shame. Sometimes that's what it takes to get us to not think so highly of ourselves. His pride as Babylon's leader had to be stripped away.

From 1 Peter 5:5; . . . "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

We must pray for God's mercy, that we will always remain humble no matter what position we find ourselves in whether it is in ministry or a secular job or any type of leadership.

Daniel 4:34-37

³⁴ And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever:

For His dominion is an everlasting dominion,
And His kingdom is from generation to generation.

³⁵ All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing;
He does according to His will in the army of heaven
And among the inhabitants of the earth.
No one can restrain His hand
Or say to Him, "What have You done?"

³⁶ At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory

of my kingdom, my honor and splendor returned to me. My counselors and nobles resorted to me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me. ³⁷ Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down.”

Once the set time had been fulfilled, Nebuchadnezzar looked up to heaven and his understanding and reason was given back to him.

Notice he acknowledged Daniel’s God. Nebuchadnezzar “blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever . . .” (Daniel 4:34). He continued on, in a prayerful manner, confessing God’s dominion and power.

Daniel 4:36 tells us that for the glory of King Nebuchadnezzar’s kingdom, God allowed his honor and splendor to return to him. King Nebuchadnezzar extolled and honored God as the true King.

A lesson for us today

Pride sets itself up so very quickly, and when a person has access to privilege and material possessions, it can be a challenge to remain humble.

Our King Jesus demonstrated humility, as we talked about on Palm Sunday. May the Lord help each of us to always remain humble and give God all the glory in our lives!

Daniel 3: Four in the Fire

- [Recap of Daniel 2: Interpretation of Dreams](#)
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Recap of [Daniel 2](#): Interpretation of Dreams

Daniel was given the interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream because He relied on God's promises. He prayed together with his friends and sought God, and the interpretation of the dream was given.

Daniel, like Joseph

This week I was reminded that Pharaoh, King of Egypt, also had mysterious and troubling dreams. God used Joseph to give him the interpretation. Like Daniel in Babylon, Joseph in Egypt

was given favor by the pagan king and promoted to rule alongside the Pharaoh.

Genesis 41:37-41

³⁷ So the advice was good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants. ³⁸ And Pharaoh said to his servants, “Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?”

³⁹ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning and wise as you. ⁴⁰ You shall be over my house, and all my people shall be ruled according to your word; only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you.” ⁴¹ And Pharaoh said to Joseph, “See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.” (Gen.41:37-41, *emphasis added*)

“And Pharaoh said to his servants,
“Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?”

Genesis 41:38



Daniel 3:1-7

“Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

² And King Nebuchadnezzar sent word to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

³ So the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

⁴ Then a herald cried aloud: “To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages,

⁵ that at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up;

⁶ and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.”

⁷ So at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp, and lyre, in symphony with all kinds of music, all the people, nations, and languages fell down and worshiped the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.” Daniel 3:1-7

King Nebuchadnezzar's Image of Gold

Remember the statue-like image of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream? ([Daniel 2:32, 38](#))

He was the head of gold ([Daniel 2:38](#)). Babylon was extremely wealthy and prosperous.

So it is very fitting that King Nebuchadnezzar decides to *build himself* an image of gold.

A huge statue.

He clearly missed the point of the dream. The dream wasn't so that he would go out and build himself a golden image, it was to alert him about the future of his kingdom and the kingdoms after him, but he fixates on the gold.

See Babylon was like Texas. Everything had to be bigger there.

An Israeli cubit was about 18" while in Babylon a cubit was measured as about 20."

This would make King Nebuchadnezzar's statue the size of a 10 story building, which for ancient Babylon lacking modern construction machines, was a good size.

It was 60 by 6 cubits. Not 70 by 7. It was a mere imitation of greatness. Symbolically, the number 6 means incompleteness in the Bible, sinfulness of mankind, human weakness, and the evil devil.

What was the image?

The Bible doesn't tell us what the image actually was.

Was it a statue of one of the Babylonian deities? Or more likely: was it an image of King Nebuchadnezzar himself? Babylonian kings were worshipped as divine. Receiving a divinely-inspired dream, then, King Nebuchadnezzar may have

felt very entitled to being worshipped, considering himself one amidst a pantheon of gods.

Dedication of the image

King Nebuchadnezzar decrees that all of his government officials have to come to the dedication of the idolatrous statue. What's more, all of these people would be required to bow down and worship the gold idol when his pagan worship band starts playing.

Worship: or else . . .

The spirit of Babylon always forces a pluralistic and polytheistic agenda. Pluralism is the accepting of all religions as equally valid. Polytheism is the belief in multiple gods. Babylon claims to promote religious tolerance. We see evidence of that in their worship because the names of the instruments are actually written in Greek. The rest of this chapter is written in Aramaic, but the uniting of pagan practices and musical influences was occurring in Babylon. The empire wanted to put on a show of inclusivity and universalist worship!

But King Nebuchadnezzar's herald (or spokesman) warned all of his colleagues: ["whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."](#) (Daniel 3:6)

So much for tolerance.

It is the spirit of the antichrist.

[Daniel 3:8-18](#)

["Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews. ⁹ They spoke and said to King](#)

Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever! ¹⁰ You, O king, have made a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the gold image;

¹¹ and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. ¹² There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up."

¹³ Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king. ¹⁴ Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up?

¹⁵ Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, good! But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?"

¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷ If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. ¹⁸ But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up." (Daniel 3:8-18)

Accuser of the brethren

Some of the Chaldeans (remember, this is just another name for Babylonians) decide to accuse the Jews. ([Daniel 3:12](#)). The Aramaic term there in [Daniel 3:8](#) ܩܪܥܬܝܢ “*qerets*” translated as simply “charges” has a deeper connotation of “*maliciously accused*” and more literally, “to eat the pieces of, to devour piece by piece” (*NKJV Study Bible*).

So the Chaldeans came forward to maliciously accuse Daniel’s friends “to devour them a bit at a time, piece by piece.” It’s interesting that Daniel is not accused at this point, only his friends.

[1 Peter 5:8](#) says, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” Here we have the same description. And recall from last week that the military commander’s name [Arioch](#) is related to the word for lion. Babylonian art was full of lion depictions that represented the king’s power and one of their goddesses. The devil is an imitator. Roaring but always lacking. We serve the Lion of the Tribe of Judah:

“But one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.” [Revelation 5:5](#)

200 years later, we see the same accusatory spirit of Haman in the Medo-Persian Empire:

Esther 3:6

⁶“But he disdained to lay hands on Mordecai alone, for they had told him of the people of Mordecai. Instead, Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus—the people of Mordecai.” ([Esther 3:6](#))

The devil is the Accuser:

Revelation 12:10

“Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.” (Revelation 12:10)

In [Daniel 3:12](#), Daniel’s friends are listed by name. Their accusers are trying to really make a point. An “us” vs. “them” point.

They want to remind King Nebuchadnezzar that these *Jews*, who serve in the government *refuse to assimilate* into the pagan culture.

And King Nebuchadnezzar follows the antiSemitic lead of his advisors, but to his credit, ([Daniel 3:14](#)) he does ask the Hebrews directly if the accusations are true.

Refusal to Worship Pagan Deities

[Daniel 3:13](#) describes King Nebuchadnezzar as being in a “rage and fury!”

He addresses Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah by their Babylonian names Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego and asks them directly: is this true? Do you not worship my golden image?

He gives them a second chance. “*Next time you hear my worship team leading idol worship, make sure you fall down and worship.*” He even says that would be “good!”

And then he threatens them. Worship or else you’re being thrown into an oven.

King Nebuchadnezzar’s pride becomes very glaring.

[Daniel 3:15c "who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?"](#)

Back in [Daniel 2:47](#), King Nebuchadnezzar had acknowledged that Daniel's God is Lord of kings and able to reveal secrets. Did he forget already? Or did he not realize that Daniel's friends also shared strong faith in the God of Israel? King Nebuchadnezzar viewed himself as a god and because our God cannot be seen with human eyes, he didn't think there would be any intervention.

In [Daniel 3:16](#), the three Judean young men don't challenge Nebuchadnezzar. It kind of reads that way, like "we don't need to answer you!" But it's not that so much as they were admitting they had nothing to say, no answer for the king because their refusal to worship was so obvious.

A lot of people in our culture today, especially those who have grown up with a religious spirit are uncomfortable with expression in worship. They don't want to raise their hands or they don't want to physically bow before the Lord in prayer. But one of the very main definitions of worship used throughout the Bible is the Hebrew word "שָׁחָה" *shachah*, which means to "bow down, very low." It is a physical action shown the heart's devotion.

In the time of Babylon, it was no different. Worship, whether it was the worship of the One True God of Israel, or worship of a pagan deity, was understood as being physically prostrate before the object of worship.

So it was obvious that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were not physically bowing before anything. There was no need to defend themselves, they knew they were guilty of disobeying the king's order.

But they demonstrated great faith.

["Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning](#)

fiery furnace and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.” Daniel 3:17-18

For me this brings to mind Isaiah 26:3:

“You will keep him in perfect peace,
Whose mind is stayed on You,
Because he trusts in You.” Isaiah 26:3

The testimonies of believers who have gone before can really be encouraging. Daniel and his friends can really inspire us to trust in God no matter what happens and no matter the cost. Paul suffered and maintained an unwavering faith. He and Timothy wrote to the church in Corinth in 2 Corinthians 1:8-11:

“⁸ For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. ⁹ Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, ¹⁰ who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us,¹¹ you also helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift granted to us through many.” 2 Cor..1:8-11

The death sentence given by the world is meaningless.

1 Corinthians 15:55-58:

“O Death, where is your sting?
O Hades, where is your victory?”

⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the

law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

He has not forgotten about you. He knows the labor of love you do in service to Him. He sees you and He smiles. He died for you so you could live and when you face the world's fiery furnaces and you feel under attack or afraid for your future, just remember, place your hope and trust in Him. He is your confidence and your rescuer, your mighty Savior.

Daniel 3:19-25

¹⁹ Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. ²⁰ And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who were in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, and cast them into the burning fiery furnace.

²¹ Then these men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. ²² Therefore, because the king's command was urgent, and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. ²³ And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

²⁴ Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, "Did we not cast

three men bound into the midst of the fire?"

They answered and said to the king, "True, O king."

²⁵ "Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

The Bible says that Nebuchadnezzar's countenance – the expression on his face – changed. Some translate this as "his face was distorted with his fury." He took on a spirit of rage and his whole attitude worsened (NIV).

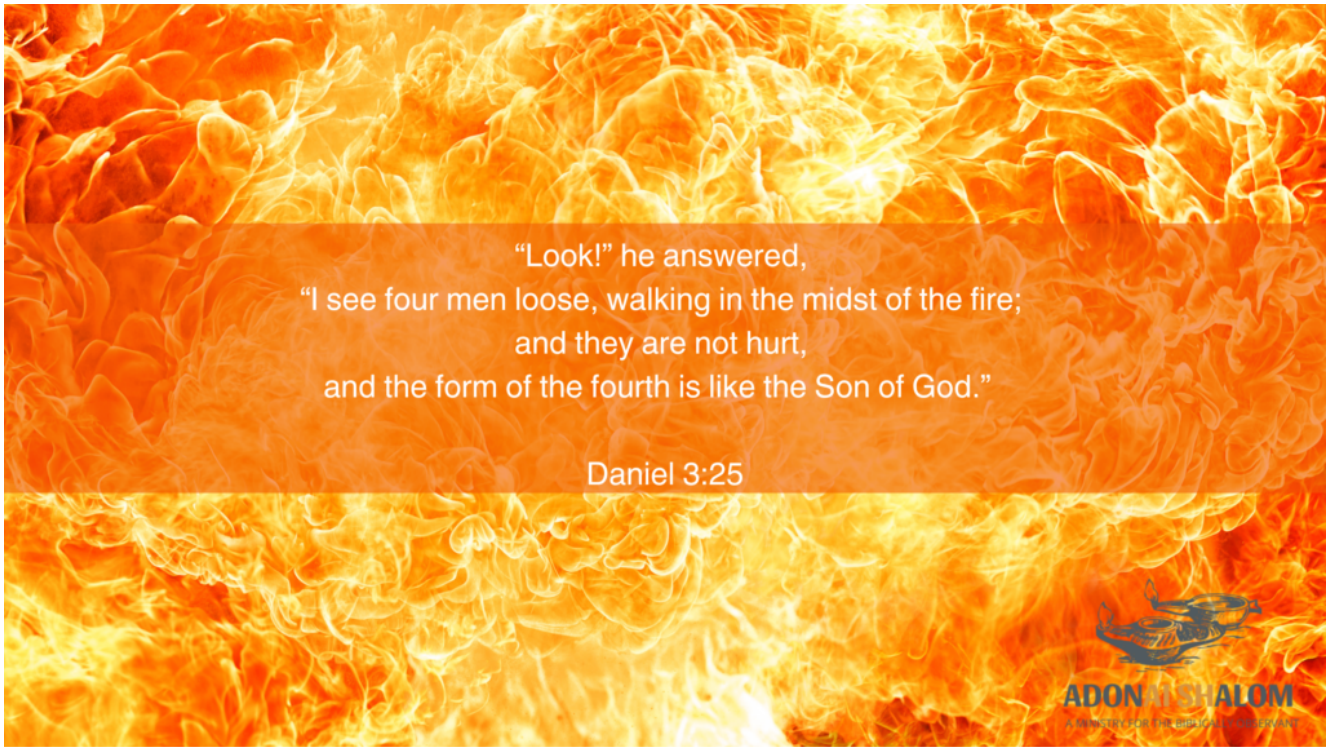
He orders the furnace turned up to 7x hotter than normal and then has his valiant army man bind up Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah and throw them into the fire.

The fiery furnace was so hot that it killed anyone near it. King Nebuchadnezzar's men died instantly. To Nebuchadnezzar they were disposable. He makes no mention of their death. He is satisfied to oversee the three Judeans falling over in a fire, but then . . . he is completely taken aback.

3 tied up Hebrew men were cast into the fire, but now they were freely walking in the fire unharmed, and now not 3, but 4! The only thing that had burned were the ropes that had tied them up! The Septuagint translation (the Greek translation of the original Aramaic/Hebrew) actually says that King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished because he heard the men singing praises! It reminds me of Paul and Silas singing praises in the jail ([Acts 16:25](#)).

The Fourth Man in the Fire

NKJV: "Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." Daniel 3:25



The New King James and the King James translates this as the Son of God. If you have commentary notes in your Bible, you might notice that Son of God could be translated as “son of the gods.” So which is it?

In Aramaic, the generic word for “God” is singular “Elah.” The plural for “Elah” is “elahin”, which although etymologically related to the Hebrew (a related Semitic language) for God, “Elohim,” the difference is that “*elahin*” is used only to refer to idols.

So (unusually!) the NIV actually translates this a bit more accurately:

NIV: [“He said, “Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.”” Daniel 3:25](#)

Why?

King Nebuchadnezzar wouldn’t understand a singular Son of God. We know it was Jesus. But, we have to be careful reading translations (the original manuscripts of Scripture are 100% right).

So King Nebuchadnezzar expresses in his own language and his own understanding that there is Someone, of divine origin, who has appeared in the fire. He doesn't know how to express what he is seeing from his pagan context.

I actually think that gives the text more power, not less. King Nebuchadnezzar is astonished because he is not the supreme deity. He has to really grapple with this . . . who are these Judeans and who is with them!?

This is an example of a *theophany*. A theophany is an appearance of God. The king of Babylon was astonished by this, but the Bible doesn't mention if the 3 youth even knew the 4th man (Jesus!) was there. Sometimes God will manifest in a very tangible, apparent way in our lives, but other times, He is working and we don't even realize how close He is to our situation.

Daniel 3:26-30

²⁶ Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace and spoke, saying, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here." Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire. ²⁷ And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king's counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them.

²⁸ Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God! ²⁹ Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or

language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this.”

³⁰ Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon.” Daniel 3:26-30

The Most High God and His Messenger

In [verse 26](#), King Nebuchadnezzar switches to “Elah,” the singular form! Here he is beginning to understand! He acknowledges that the 3 young men serve the Most High God (*Elah*). He is recognizing that the God of the Hebrews is greater than his Babylonian gods by singling Him out.

King Nebuchadnezzar only calls the 3 men out of the fire. The 4th man was heavenly enough in appearance, he knew not to even go there. The Chaldean advisors saw with their own eyes that the fire had no power whatsoever on them and they didn’t even smell like a fire.

Nebuchadnezzar celebrates this singular victorious God. Nebuchadnezzar sent his “Angel.” This is an accurate translation for the Aramaic מַלְאַךְ (mal·’a·chēh) (Hebrew: מַלְאַךְ malach). “Angel” can also be translated as “Messenger.” Nebuchadnezzar recognizes that a Messenger from God was in the fire.

No Other God can deliver like this

King Nebuchadnezzar realizes that no other God can deliver like this and he says no one is allowed to slander Hananiah, Mishael, nor Azariah. In keeping with his excessively brutal personality, King Nebuchadnezzar decrees that anyone who does speak against them shall be chopped up and their homes burned. This chapter ends with another promotion: the 3 Hebrew youth are once again promoted in the province of Babylon.

Faith and Obedience no matter the cost

The ordeal of Daniel's friends remind me of [Hebrews 11:32-40](#):

[³² And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: ³³ who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴ quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. ³⁵ Women received their dead raised to life again.](#)

[Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. ³⁶ Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. ³⁷ They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented— ³⁸ of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.](#)

[³⁹ And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, ⁴⁰ God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.](#)

Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were willing to pay the ultimate price to remain faithful and obedience to the One True God. And the LORD revealed Himself! May the LORD give us the strength to be that faithful!

Daniel 1: God our Governor (a verse-by-verse Bible study)

7 Adar I 5784 B"H

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Background on the Book of [Daniel](#)

[Daniel](#) is a complex, but very fascinating book of the Bible.

Time periods covered by the book of Daniel

The book of [Daniel](#) covers the Babylonian captivity though the second coming of Christ our Messiah!

Languages used in the original text of of the book of Daniel

[Daniel 1](#) and [8-12](#) were originally written in Hebrew while [Daniel 2-7](#) were written in Aramaic (which was the language of the Chaldean Babylonians.) Daniel had become so fluent in the language of the Chaldean regime that he actually wrote chapters [2-7](#) in *their (the Babylonians')* language.

There are also actually a few Persian words in the book of [Daniel](#) (Babylon was a "satrapy", meaning a province of the *Persian* empire). Additionally, some Greek language musical instrument names (indicating the origin of the instruments) are found in [Daniel 3](#), for example.

Who wrote the book of [Daniel](#)?

[Daniel 7:15](#) tells us in the first person that Daniel is the author. He wrote in 3rd person ([Daniel 1-7:14](#)) until that point when he switched into his 1st person account.

["I, Daniel, was grieved in my spirit within my body, and the visions of my head troubled me." Daniel 7:15](#)

Now for the skeptics out there who would like even further evidence that corroborates our claim of Daniel's self-authorship, Jesus (Yeshua) Himself ascribes Daniel's prophecies to – Daniel. ([Matthew 24:15](#); [Mark 13:14](#)). If Jesus accepted Daniel as the author of Daniel . . . that should be good enough for us. Scripture and even extraBiblical historical chronicles provide overwhelming evidence that Daniel was a reliable historian as well as prophetic figure.

Who was Daniel *prior* to [Daniel Chapter 1](#)?

[In Daniel chapter 1](#), which we will get to in a moment, the now-experienced servant of God, [Daniel](#), is reflecting upon his experience in being taken captive and deported to Babylon from Judah. He describes himself as one among the youths who were taken in the first wave around 597BC. Some say the date would have to be a little later, such as 587BC. In any case, it is believed to be accurate to say that Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem in 586BC.

But who was Daniel *before* he was taken captive?

We don't know Daniel's exact age when Nebuchadnezzar's army came, but we can reasonably deduce a few of his attributes. It is likely that Daniel came from Israel's upper class precisely because he was included in the first group of captives. Many kings in those days would conquer another king and capture the rest of their noble family and relatives. So Daniel would have had fairly prosperous and distinguished ruling class parents and he would have had opportunities available to him in Judah like attending the best schools or easily obtaining an influential job.

An analysis of the dates in the Biblical record shows that when [Daniel](#) was a child, the good, God-fearing young [King Josiah](#) would have been reigning. Daniel and his family would

have been well-aware of [King Josiah](#)'s positive reforms in restoring Solomon's temple and the finding of the [Book of the Law \(2 Kings 22-23\)](#). [King Josiah](#) was the last good king who reigned in the Southern Kingdom (Judah) prior to the Babylonian takeover. During King Josiah's reign, the people experienced revival and restoration.

After King Josiah died, Judah's leadership returned to the idolatry and wickedness that had characterized the Southern Kingdom for so long. Like those of us who lament the ungodliness that permeates our nation today, Daniel would have observed the stark difference between living under godly leadership versus living under the corrupt and ungodly leadership of people like King Jehoiakim as he was growing up. God was preparing Daniel, ever since his youth, to be an influential leader and also important writer of the Biblical text.

World History at the time of Daniel

Jeremiah

Not everyone realizes that Daniel actually lived at the same time as [Jeremiah](#) and [Ezekiel](#), so he was a contemporary of these prophets. During the reign of King Josiah (Daniel, remember, was a little boy then), [Jeremiah](#) was beginning his prophetic ministry.

[Jeremiah](#) ended up fleeing with a remnant to [Egypt](#) (he started in a northern town called Mizpah and ended up going through Gaza and then down into [Egypt](#) in a place known as Tahpanhes along the [Nile](#) River.) [Jeremiah](#) never gets a break from being the prophet of lamentation and he continues prophesying that Nebuchadnezzar would reach Egypt, as well, as part of God's judgment ([Jeremiah 43:8-13](#)).

Daniel grew up with positive spiritual influences. Besides

living under King Josiah's godly leadership, Daniel would have grown up hearing Jeremiah's prophecies. Daniel demonstrated exceptionally strong faith in the LORD and it is fair to attribute some of that to his godly upbringing. Never underestimate the value of training up your children in the way they should go:

["Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it." Proverbs 22:6](#)



Ezekiel

[Ezekiel](#) was taken in the second wave to Babylon where he was enlisted as a slave and preached by the rivers of Babylon:

[Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the River Chebar, that the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God. On the fifth day of the month, which was in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity, the word of the Lord came expressly to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the River Chebar; and the hand of the Lord was upon him there.](#)
[Ezekiel 1:3](#)

Aesop & The Greek Civilization

While all of that was going on in the Middle East, the Greek civilization was also flourishing. In Greece, a slave was gaining popularity for his storytelling abilities.

Have you ever read Aesop's fables? Aesop was born in 600BC so he would have likely been aware of Babylon's conquests east of the Mediterranean. Aesop's fables (like *the Tortoise and the Hare* or *The City Mouse and The Country Mouse*) were so clever that it is said that his master finally gave him his freedom.

If you know those stories, Aesop used animals to represent people. That would have been a very wise tactic in his day. Just as in Babylon, the Greek culture had a hierarchical society, so Aesop could make societal commentary without directly offending a noble and ending up in jail.

Within the next hundred years or so, democracy was established in Athens, Greece. Then the famous philosophers like Plato and Socrates lived, so there was a lot going on in that region.

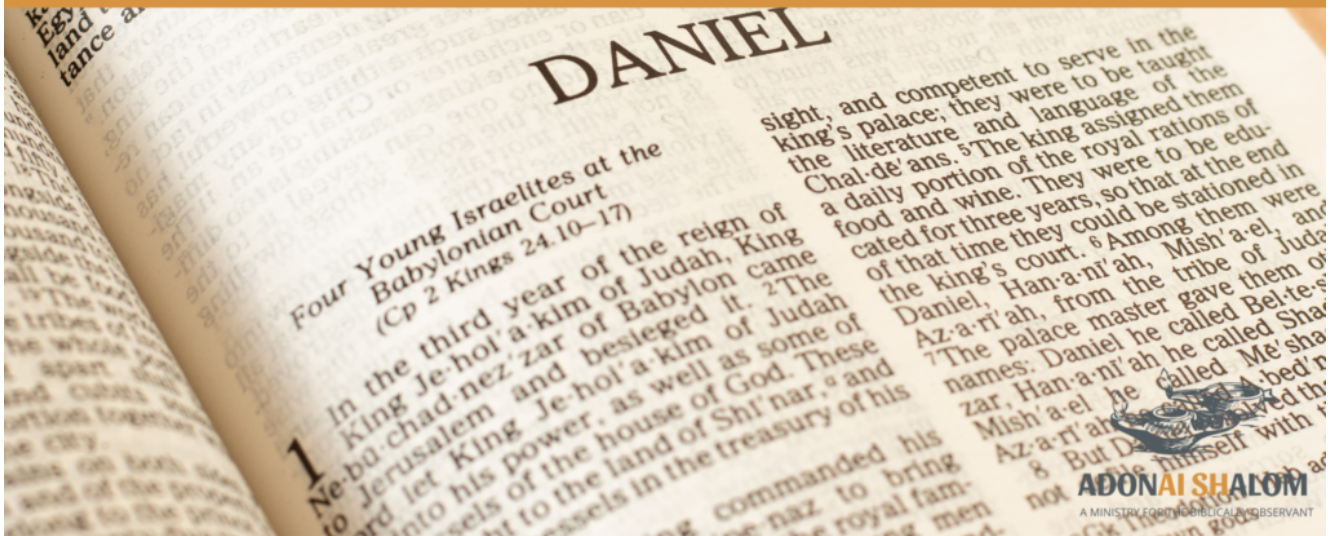
Let's get to the Biblical text now:

[Daniel 1:1](#)

["In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it." Daniel 1:1](#)

"In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it."

Daniel 1:1



[Daniel 1:1](#) records the existence of 2 different kings:

1. **Jehoiakim** (king of Judah – remember, Judah was the Southern Kingdom after the North/South split over the disputes between [Rehoboam and Jeroboam](#)).
2. **King Nebuchadnezzar** (king of Babylon). Nebuchadnezzar (II) was the son of Nabopolassar, the founder of the Neo-Babylonian/Chaldean empire. He was probably named after his grandfather, Nebuchadnezzar I. King Nebuchadnezzar reigned from 605-562 BC: 43 years – making him the longest reigning king of Babylon. He tackled a large number of construction projects, one of the more famous being the Hanging Gardens of Babylon which you may know were considered one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.



**The construction of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon
(one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World)
is attributed to King Nebuchadnezzar II**

Jehoiakim

Jehoiakim was one of Josiah's sons. He chose wickedness rather than following his father's righteous example of leadership. We find information about him in the Biblical Chronicles:

[2 Chronicles 36:1-8](#) "Then the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and made him king in his father's place in Jerusalem. Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he became king, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. Now the king of Egypt deposed him at Jerusalem; and he imposed on the land a tribute of one hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. Then the king of Egypt made Jehoahaz's brother Eliakim king over Judah and Jerusalem, and changed his name to **Jehoiakim**. And Necho took Jehoahaz his brother and carried him off to Egypt.

[Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And he did evil in the sight of the Lord his God. Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against him, and bound him in bronze fetters to carry him off to Babylon.](#)

Nebuchadnezzar also carried off some of the articles from the house of the Lord to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon. Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, the abominations which he did, and what was found against him, indeed they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah. Then Jehoiachin his son reigned in his place."
(emphases added)

Notice in 2 Chronicles 36:4, the Egyptian Pharaoh Necho (probably Necho II) changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim.

Hebrew names had great significance and we will talk further about this when we get to the changed names of Daniel and his friends, but a way for another nation to exert dominance would include the changing of an individual's name.

Interestingly enough, the name "Eliakim" meant, "God (or El/Elohim) will establish or raise up." The name "Jehoiakim" is not a large departure from that. Jehoiakim means "Jehovah/YHWH will establish or raise up." So Pharaoh or King Necho is identifying which "God" in Necho's opinion Eliakim will be serving.

Some scholars have deciphered that to Necho, "El/Elohim" may have been considered very powerful and may have been recognized as the true Supreme Deity whereas culturally, Necho's polytheism accepted a "lower deity" known as "Jehovah" or "YHWH." Necho "thought" he was diminishing Eliakim's name, but as Christian believers we know that Elohim is YHWH and that we serve one true God.

Jehoiakim's son, Jehoiachin

After Jehoiakim, his son Jehoiachin reigned for three months. Jehoiachin's name is a variation of Jehoiakim.

2 Chronicles 36:9 "Jehoiachin was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months and ten

days. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD.”

Jehoiakim’s brother, Zedekiah

The succession of poor leadership continued. After Jehoiachin’s 3 month reign, King Nebuchadnezzar made his uncle Zedekiah the king of Judah:

2 Chronicles 36:10-12 “At the turn of the year King Nebuchadnezzar summoned him and took him to Babylon, with the costly articles from the house of the LORD, and made Zedekiah, Jehoiakim’s brother, king over Judah and Jerusalem. Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. He did evil in the sight of the LORD his God, and did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke from the mouth of the LORD.”

Leaders must be responsible for their actions. Jehoiakim established a pattern that continued producing bad fruit. In 2 Chronicles, nothing is recorded regarding Jehoiakim’s manner or time of death – we are informed only that he was replaced.

Jeremiah 22:18-19 fills us in. **Jehoiakim did not receive a special kingly burial:**

Therefore thus says the LORD concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah:

“They shall not lament for him,
Saying, ‘Alas, my brother!’ or ‘Alas, my sister!’
They shall not lament for him,
Saying, ‘Alas, master!’ or ‘Alas, his glory!’

He shall be buried with the burial of a donkey,
Dragged and cast out beyond the gates of Jerusalem.” Jeremiah 22:18-19 *(emphasis added)*

Not a great legacy to leave.

But Jehoiakim had had his chance. God had sent Jeremiah to

prophecy and to warn him that if he didn't change, his kingdom would be scattered and destroyed. Similarly, we must preach to the lost the Gospel of repentance because only then can we be saved from sin and eternal destruction.

Zedekiah is the last known king of Judah. According to Josephus (the first century Jewish historian), Daniel and his friends were each related to Zedekiah's royal family. Despite Zedekiah's poor leadership, Daniel and others managed to remain faithful to the One True God.

Now, back to the book of Daniel!

[Daniel 1:2](#)

[Daniel 1:2](#) reiterates what we just saw in [2 Chronicles](#).

["And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the articles of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the articles into the treasure house of his god."](#)
[Daniel 1:2](#)

See how [Daniel 1:2](#) begins with ["And the Lord gave. . ."](#)?

Throughout the Book of Daniel, you will see an emphasis on God's sovereignty and His role in the unfolding of history.

Nebuchadnezzar symbolically thought he could control the deity of the Judean Israelites. He stole the Temple's sacred items which was a way that Near Eastern empires of that time demonstrated victory over another group. These cultures believed that by taking religious artifacts, the deity attributed to them lost its powers. Nebuchadnezzar didn't know Who he was taking on: our God does not live in things made with human hands!

[". . . the Most High does not live in houses made by human hands."](#) [Acts 7:48](#)



"... the Most High does not live in houses made by human hands."

Acts 7:48

[Daniel 1:3-4](#)

["Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel and some of the king's descendants and some of the nobles, young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans."](#) [Daniel 1:3-4](#)

Young, handsome Daniel of Judah with all sorts of good prospects and abilities was suddenly taken away from his home.

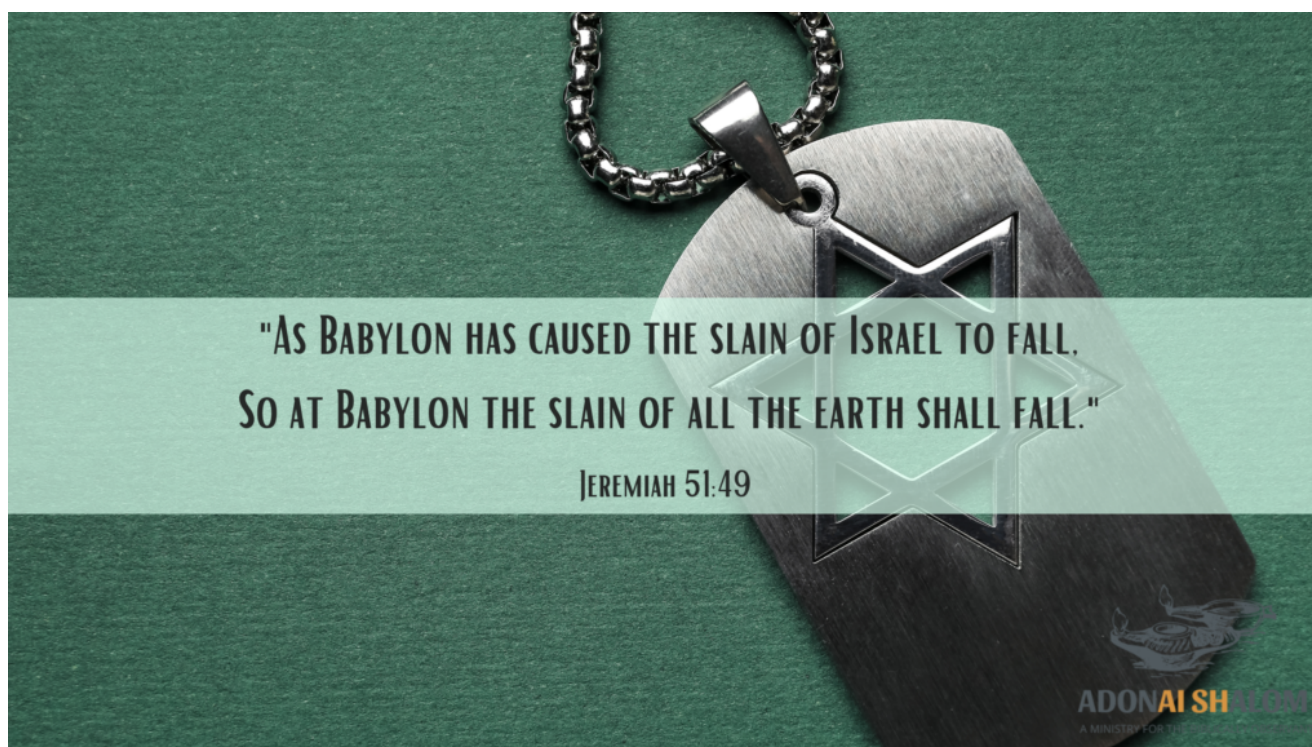
I can't help but think of the Israelis who were taken hostage into Gaza on [October 7, 2023.](#)

That type of experience can break a person.

But Daniel's gifting and trust in God enabled him to grow from that experience. By seeking God's wisdom, Daniel was able to allow his experiences to *form him* into a truly righteous servant of God Most High.

And if you are looking for a word of hope in this troubled time, the spirit of Babylon will **not** win in the end. While none of us like to hear of more judgment, death, or destruction, we may at least rest knowing that God is handling it:

["As Babylon has caused the slain of Israel to fall, So at Babylon the slain of all the earth shall fall." Jeremiah 51:49](#)



Weaponizing Education

Nebuchadnezzar had a strategy to weaponize education. He re-trained the Judean noble youth in Babylonian customs with the idea that once they grew up, they would be very capable of governing in Babylon.

Sadly, we see similar tactics used today. Hamas and other jihadists enroll children in their terrorist training camps, Russia attacks Ukrainian schools, and our own public school system has been hijacked by secularists. If a conquering nation can control that narrative of the educational system, the weaker nation will cease to exist.

King Nebuchadnezzar thought that by selecting the youth who were fast learners, he would be able to indoctrinate them with Chaldean ideologies.

Truly, King Nebuchadnezzar underestimated just how astute Daniel and his friends really were.

[Daniel 1:5-7](#)

[“And the king appointed for them a daily provision of the king’s delicacies and of the wine which he drank, and three years of training for them, so that at the end of that time they might serve before the king. Now from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. To them the chief of the eunuchs gave names: he gave Daniel the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abed-Nego.” Daniel 1:5-7](#)

Daniel’s name □□□□□□□□□□

The name □□□□□□□□□□ Daniel is often briskly translated as “*God is my Judge.*”

And that isn’t *incorrect*, but there is a nuance that we shouldn’t miss:

The verb from the Hebrew word □□ , means “to judge” or additionally, “to govern.”

So Daniel’s very name means “El/Elohim/God is my Governor” or “Governed by God.” “God rules over me.” “God governs.”

Daniel served as governor, but he never forgot that he himself was governed by God.

Names and Identity

[Daniel 1:6](#) records that Daniel’s friends were Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

Hananiah's name means "God is gracious."

Mishael means "Who is what God is?"

Azariah means "The Lord has helped me."

In the Hebrew world, a person's name was very much associated with their identity. Even today, some of us have names that perhaps we don't know the clear meaning of, but if someone gives us a degrading nickname or uses our name in an offensive manner, it rightly bothers us.

The ruling regime of the day did everything it could do to strip Daniel and his friends of their Judean world. Nebuchadnezzar hoped these youth would internalize the new names that the Babylonians forced upon them.

The chief eunuch began to call Daniel, Belteshazzar. This name refers to a goddess named Sarpanitu, the wife of the famed Babylonian deity, Marduk. Belteshazzar translates to "Lady Protect the King." It has been posited that Belteshazzar appears to be a girl's name. Gender confusion was a thing back then, too. The Babylonians wanted to offend and confuse Daniel so that he would lose his godly values and godly identity.

Hananiah became Shadrach which means "I am fearful of the God." This is psychological warfare! Babylon wanted fear to be instilled in young Hananiah, to cause him to forget that the One True God is gracious and to cause him anxiety. The spirit of Babylon wants us to lose our faith and trust in God. If we begin to internalize fear, we will not turn to God in prayer as we should. We will either attempt to trust in ourselves or, worse yet, turn to false gods.

Mishael was renamed Meshach, meaning, "I am of little account." Again, Babylon sought to diminish the confidence of the Hebrew youth. The world always seeks to make people feel worthless and of no value.

Lastly, Azariah was given the name Abed-Nego meaning, “Servant of (the god) Nebo.” Babylon tried with all its might to convince Azariah that he was no longer servant of the Most High God of Israel. How often the devil tries to convince us that God has abandoned us.

When there is a situation like this, and the world wants to put something on you that isn't yours to own, you have the power in Christ to reject that. The Babylonians could call Daniel and his friends anything they wanted to, but these faithful servants of the True God did not internalize and accept what the world was imposing upon them.

Three-year training program

Daniel and his friends were forcibly enrolled in a three year Babylonian training program. [Daniel 1:5](#) says the end-goal of this training was that these special youth could serve in the king's government.

Nebuchadnezzar appointed them to be given the king's “delicacies” and the royal wine.

But here we arrive at a key memory verse:

[Daniel 1:8](#)

[“But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.” Daniel 1:8,](#)
emphasis added

[Daniel 1:9](#)

Favor in all seasons

[“Now God had brought Daniel into the favor and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs.” Daniel 1:9](#)

Always seek the favor of God. Just as we are to be ready to preach in season and out of season ([2 Timothy 4:2](#)), we must be ready at any time to serve God in any situation. When we have diligently prayed and fasted, He gives us the favor we need:

[“You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.” Matthew 10:18](#)



[Daniel 1:10](#)

[“And the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, “I fear my lord the king, who has appointed your food and drink. For why should he see your faces looking worse than the young men who are your age? Then you would endanger my head before the king.” Daniel 1:10](#)

Daniel was not alone in requesting to abstain from the king’s food and drink. “Your food” is plural in Hebrew. Daniel’s

friends agreed with him in refusing to eat the prescribed meals.

What was the issue with the food?

The Scriptures do not tell us exactly what was on King Nebuchadnezzar's standard menu, but we do know that Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were observant Jews.

Babylon's food would have included

1. nonKosher/unclean/forbidden food – food not prepared according to the Torah's regulations
2. meat dedicated to Babylonian idols

It would have been a violation of conscience for these Hebrew youth to eat nonKosher meals.

The chief of eunuchs, while kind to Daniel, expressed concern that he would get beheaded over this!

So Daniel turns to a steward, rather than the chief. Did you ever notice that before?

[Daniel 1:11-15](#)

God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever

["So Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, "Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then let our appearance be examined before you, and the appearance of the young men who eat the portion of the king's delicacies; and as you see fit, so deal with your servants." So he consented with them in this matter, and tested them ten days." And at the end of ten](#)

days their features appeared better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king's delicacies. Daniel 1:11-15

Daniel trusted in God. He had the confidence that despite not eating any meat of any kind, he and his friends would be able to maintain their health and strength because God would be their portion.

Psalm 73:26 "My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."



Daniel 1:16-17

The "wisdom" of Babylon

"Thus the steward took away their portion of delicacies and the wine that they were to drink, and gave them vegetables. As for these four young men, God gave them knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams." Daniel 1:16-17

Like Moses before them, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah

were educated in the literature of the culture they found themselves in: [“And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds.” Acts 7:22.](#) With God’s help, the four captive Judeans learned the Chaldean language and were educated in literature, science, and astrology: the “wisdom” of Babylon.

Daniel stood out – he could understand visions and dreams.

Being knowledgeable has its place. How valuable it is when a God-fearing, God-loving person uses their God-given gifts to acquire knowledge and to serve, even in secular roles. But even more valuable than that is a pure and contrite spirit, a Spirit-filled person who God entrusts with revelation through visions, dreams, and interpretations thereof. Daniel had this anointed combination and it granted him great favor.

[Daniel 1:18-21](#)

Results of the Interview

[“Now at the end of the days, when the king had said that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. Then the king interviewed them, and among them all none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they served before the king. And in all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king examined them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm. Thus Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus.” Daniel 1:18-21](#)

The Bible says that King Nebuchadnezzar interviewed the young men. They had to prove themselves prepared to serve him, and he surely was curious to know how they were faring on their vegetarian diet.

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah proved themselves worthy of the tasks ahead, for “none was found like [them].” They served before King Nebuchadnezzar and the Hebrew youths were 10 times more accurate in their wisdom and understanding than Babylon’s own magicians and astrologers.

God is our Governor!

As Daniel’s name declares, God is our Governor. He rules over all of us in fairness, righteousness, and love.

We do not have to “prove” ourselves worthy. In fact, that would never be possible.

We are formidably unworthy of all that God has done for us. He has spoken throughout history and used faithful servants like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. He has made a way for our salvation from sin and death by sending His Son, Jesus, (Yeshua) to save us.

Allow the LORD Most High to rule and reign over your life today! Be inspired by Daniel’s great favor and seek the LORD with all your heart! Have confidence and faith, that no matter where life takes you or what is set before you, God will provide, intervene, bless, and help you if you will trust in Him today.