

## DARE TO BE A DANIEL

James Baker, Madeline Albright, Warren Christopher, Colin Powell – these people are politicians – but not the kind of politician that kisses babies, and works the crowd, and runs for office. These people are more statesmen – diplomats – professionals who fill administrative posts in someone else's government.

Daniel was likewise a professional statesman and diplomat. *He was born a Jew*, but occupied powerful positions in both the Babylonian and Persian empires. *He was once a slave*, but became one of the most powerful men of his day.

Daniel lived an *amazing life*. Even more importantly, he was an *amazing man*.

Daniel would've made a great subject for the A&E channel's show "*Biography*".

Here's what I hope we all see in the life of Daniel. He lived among pagan people, worked in pagan institutions, was schooled in pagan philosophy, was surrounded by pagan practice – yet Daniel remained fiercely loyal to God.

Rather than be tainted by the world around him, he remained faithful to God.

Sometimes we Christians buy into the notion that if we're going to get involved with the world we have to be willing to accept some degree of compromise. If a Christian is going to participate

in business or politics he's got to be flexible and accommodating and open-minded. We can't be too unbending in our convictions.

But that's not what we learn from Daniel. Daniel remained a godly man with godly convictions even in an ungodly land surrounded by ungodly people. Were his convictions tested? – *you betcha*'. Did he draw fire from his enemies? – *you betcha*'. But did he prevail even in the face of this opposition? – *you betcha*'.

We need Daniels today – men and women – Mr. Daniels and Ms. Daniels – who aren't afraid to mix and mingle with the world, yet are determined to retain biblical convictions and a strong witness for Jesus. We need people who'll invade modern culture with the truth and love of Jesus, without being tainted by its sin.

We need men and women who are willing to be a Daniel in the lion's den.

Here's a poem by Philip Bliss that'll help us get started: "Dare to be a Daniel, Dare to stand alone! Dare to have a purpose firm! Dare to make it known!"

I hope to challenge us all tonight – will you and I *dare to be a Daniel*?

## BABYLONIAN BRAINWASHING

Imagine the trauma Daniel and his Hebrew pals had suffered... Uprooted from family and friends. Transported half-way around the world to a strange land, with strange people, who speak a strange language, and practice strange customs. And these were boys who'd never been away from home?

It's also interesting that they were given over to "the chief of the eunuchs." It was an oriental custom to castrate any young man who would serve in the king's court. This was the surest way to protect against him having an adulterous liaison with a member of the king's harem. It's possible Daniel and his pals were made eunuchs – adding the loss of sexual identity and a future family to their list of traumas. These young boys were *distraught and devastated*.

This was all part of *Babylonian brainwashing*. The goal was to strip these boys of their former identity – nationally and culturally – and indoctrinate them with Babylonian language, custom, and belief. The icing on the cake was the issuing of new names. The Babylonians even tried to replace their *personal identities*.

All three Hebrews had names that reflected their faith in Jehovah... "*Daniel*" means "*God is my judge*". "*Hananiah*" is "*Jehovah is gracious*". "*Mishael*" is "*Who is what God is?*". "*Azariah*"

means "*Jehovah has helped*". But their godly names were replaced with pagan names. *Daniel* becomes "*Beltshazzar*" or "*Bel protects*". Bel was the Babylonian's chief idol. "*Shadrach*" means "*command of Marduk*" (a Babylonian god). "*Meshach*" is "*Who is what Marduk is?*" to replace "*Mishael*" or "*Who is what God is?*" And "*Abednego*" means "*servant of Nebo*" (a third Babylonian idol).

With the trauma and turmoil and transition these boys experienced we're tempted to make excuses for Daniel and his pals. With all the pressure they've been under a compromise or two is understandable. We might concede that if they're going to survive they've got to go with the flow – give in a little – don't buck the system. But those aren't the thoughts swirling through Daniel's head.

Yes, his name, address, clothing, language, culture had all changed. But the one thing that did not change was Daniel's commitment to God! Verse 8 reveals the key, "But Daniel *purposed in his heart* that he would not defile himself ..." Being a Jew, Daniel was bound by the dietary laws. For Daniel, faithfulness to God meant keeping kosher. And he had *purposed in his heart* not to participate in anything that would disobey His God.

# Bible Scan - Daniel 1-6

Tape # SC53A

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## DANIEL'S PURPOSE AND PROPOSAL

Nebuchadnezzar had a prescribed diet for his future attaches that included items God's law considered unclean. For 3 years they were to eat the king's cuisine and study the king's curriculum. Call it "Pagan University."

Would Daniel buckle under to the king's command, or take a stand for God? Daniel's actions proved he knew where to draw the line. In many ways, Daniel had been assimilated into the culture. He spoke like a Babylonian, dressed like a Babylonian, learned Babylonian protocol, occupied a Babylonian post, answered to a Babylonian name – but Daniel never became a Babylonian at heart. Daniel lived in Babylon, but Babylon never lived in Daniel.

Daniel's life is a model for you and me.

As Christians we need to know where to draw the line. We're in the world. We can speak the lingo, dress in the fashions, enjoy aspects of custom and culture – just as long as we don't adopt values and appetites that are contrary to God's Word. We too live in Babylon, but it's wrong when we let Babylon live in us.

The key was Daniel's heart. In his heart he was a child of God, and he was true to that identity. He purposed in advance that there would be no compromise in his commitment to God. Guys, there's a point for all of us where cultural assimilation becomes spiritual compromise. You've got

to know where to draw the line.

Daniel *purposed* in his heart not to eat the king's food – then *proposed* an alternative to his superior. If we're to live in a pagan world and maintain a potent witness, we need to learn how to appeal to authority.

The chief eunuch was responsible for these young men. The diet the king prescribed was intended to make them stronger and healthier. If they failed to measure up to expectations it could cost the chief eunuch his head.

Daniel proposes a test. Let the Hebrews eat veggies and drink water for 10 days, then see if they're not stronger and healthier than the other young men.

Here's a modern day application. Say your sales manager tells you to lie about your product to increase sales. Why don't you propose a test? What he wants is a better bottom line. Ask for 10 days to do it your way – be honest and trust God for the increase – then see who's sold the most, you or the other salesmen? This is real faith in action. If God wants you to work there He'll make it happen.

Verse 15 tells us the results, "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 was faithful to God, and God was likewise faithful to Daniel.

## DREAMING OF THE LATTER DAYS

In 2:28, Daniel says that God "has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days."

Here's the interpretation of the king's dream...

This image represents the gentile nations that will rule the world – world-dominating empires. The head of gold is Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar, who reigned from 605-536 BC. The chest and arms of silver represents Babylon's successor, the Medo-Persia empire, who ruled from 536-333 BC. The Persians were conquered by the belly and thighs of bronze, or Alexander the Great and the Greeks, who ruled from 333-168 BC. They were succeeded by the legs of iron, or Rome – which eventually split into two empires east and west, represented by the two legs – and governed from 168 BC into the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD.

It's interesting, since the fall of Rome, there hasn't been a world-encompassing empire. Ambitious men have tried to rule the world: Charlemagne, Napoleon, even Hitler. But they all failed. Yet the Bible predicts a final world-dominating empire – *the feet of iron and clay* – during which a stone will strike and destroy the image.

Throughout Scripture the stone is symbolic of the Mes-

siah. He is "the stone... cut out without hands", or without human intervention. He's supernatural.

In the days of this last world-governing empire, Jesus the Messiah will return, destroy the kingdoms of man, and establish a great mountain, or God's kingdom.

Obviously, this final empire is still future, and Nebuchadnezzar sees it as a mixture of iron and clay. The iron speaks of a Roman revival – the clay, humanity in general – thus, this last empire reflects either the boundaries or demographics of ancient Rome, tied together in a loose alliance with the rest of the world.

It's amazing that just such a political configuration is forming in the modern era. Not since Roman times has Europe been unified. Yet today, the nations of Europe have joined together in a European Community – and that alliance of nations is growing into a global power. This could be the kingdom of iron mixed with clay.

The scope of the king's dream and Daniel's interpretation is mind-boggling. It traces the gentile nations from *Nebuchadnezzar's day to the last days*. Daniel 2 is one of the most amazing prophecies in all the Scripture.

## Devotion Box - Do You Attend Pagan University?

Daniel 1:17-20 records the outcome of Daniel's 3 years at "Pagan University".

Verse 17 tells us, "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." When the king interviewed them they were 10 times better than his other wise men.

If you attend a secular college, take heart. It's frustrating to go to school each day in a godless environment and study a worldly curriculum, but it was Daniel's years at Pagan U. that prepared and positioned him to be used mightily by God.

Guys, God wants Daniels who can invade pagan places with godly testimonies.

## FIERY FURNACE FAITH

Why would Nebuchadnezzar go to all the trouble of erecting a golden image 10 stories tall? In a word, *arrogance*.

Remember the king's dream in chapter 2- Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold. Here though, he builds his own image, and it's all gold from head to toe. The implication is that God is wrong. The Babylonian empire won't be succeeded by another. It will last forever. And let me give you one more insight into the king's pride and vanity. Notice the height to width ration of Nebuchadnezzar's image - it's 10 to 1. The normal human has about a 5 to 1 ratio, making the king's likeness abnormally skinny.

Nebuchadnezzar commands his subjects and officials to journey to the plain of Dura. And at the sound of an orchestra all the people are to fall on their faces and worship this golden image. And if you're tempted to resist, Nebuchadnezzar issues a warning - you'll be thrown into the fiery furnace. You'll become a crispy critter. Guys, this *trip* to the plain of Dura was what you would call a real *ego trip*.

Imagine a picture with your mind's-eye. There're 300,000 people stretched across the desert floor, when on cue they all bow their faces into the sand. You look across the plain, and all you see are 300,000 bowed backs, except... there are 3 Hebrews still on their feet. Talk about sticking out in the crowd!

Of course this scene has been repeated millions of times since. It's repeated every day at school, or in the office, or at the block party - 99% of people bow to the gods of convenience and comfort and conformity, except for the few brave folks who are more concerned with *pleasing God* than *pleasing man*. There are a few who'll dare to be different. People who'll *stick up* for God even if that means they'll *stick out* of the crowd. Are you among the crowd, with your face in the

sand - or are you one of the 3 who chose to stand for God?

It was the Babylonians who ratted on Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The tattle-tales inform the king that he has mutineers on his hands. Nebuchadnezzar blows a gasket - he becomes furious. He calls for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and reads them the riot act. He's got a fiery furnace, and he'll have barbecue Jew if they're not willing to get with the program!

I love their answer. It's a classic of faith. Verse 16, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter." It reminds me of Daniel in chapter 1, he "purposed in his heart not to defile himself". Courageous obedience makes up its mind ahead of time. If you wait to make commitments and convictions in the heat of battle you've waited too late. You'll buckle under to temptation.

They continue in verse 17, "...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," - notice that, "*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."

Guys, this is real faith in action. It's one thing to believe that God will deliver you *from* the fire - it's another thing to believe He'll deliver you *through* the fire.

Here's the key: these men weren't trusting in a specific outcome or expectation- they were trusting in God Himself. I'm sure they preferred a little fire insurance, but they were open to God's choice of deliverance - either *from or through*. The immediate priority for these men was not their deliverance, but their faithfulness.

### Devotion Box - Burning What Binds

In 3:27, when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego exit the furnace we're told, "the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them." The fire had no power over them.

The only item on these men that burned were the ropes that bound them. That's what fiery trials do - they burn off the impediments that hold us back and keep us down - that prevent us from growing and serving God more effectively.

## THE INSANITY CALLED PRIDE

Daniel 4:33 records the exact moment Nebuchadnezzar's dream became a real life nightmare. The king was walking on the roof of his palace admiring the city that he said he had built: "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."

The king of Babylon was stricken with a temporary insanity. Imagine standing on the White House lawn watching the President of the United States, George W. Bush, acting like a wild animal, a wolf ... hey, acting like our last president... but there was Nebuchadnezzar growling, and eating grass.

There are recognized psychological conditions that would fit Nebuchadnezzar's symptoms. *Boanthropy* is when a person thinks they're an ox. *Cyanthropy* is when a person thinks he's a dog. And *Lycanthropy* is when a

person thinks he's a wolf.

You've heard of werewolves. Nebuchadnezzar became a permanent Mr. Hide.

Jewish tradition says Daniel cared for Nebuchadnezzar during the time he was "*out to pasture*". God had told Daniel that after 7 years the king would return to the throne. Daniel probably used his political clout to secure the king's return.

The end of the story proves that Nebuchadnezzar became a repentant man. He closes his testimony with a wonderful expression of submission and surrender to God. I personally believe we're going to see King Nebuchadnezzar in heaven. The king of all the earth became a servant of the one, true God. Here's the voice of personal experience, verse 37, "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.*"

If you have questions on tonight's study email Pastor Sandy - [sandyadams@calvarychapel.org](mailto:sandyadams@calvarychapel.org)  
For back issues of Bible Scan study guides: [www.calvarychapelstonemountain.com/biblescan.htm](http://www.calvarychapelstonemountain.com/biblescan.htm)

Calvary Chapel Announcements - March 25, 2001 - CC Christian School (Grades K5-5th) is registering students for the 2001-2002 school year. .Monday, March 26th 7:00 PM—Annual Church Business Meeting...Tuesday, March 27th 7:30 PM—Ladies Night Out...April 2nd and 3rd—High School Youth Retreat at the FFA/FHA Camp in Covington, GA...April 4th and 5th—Middle School Youth Retreat at the FFA/FHA Camp.

Next Bible Scan - April 1 - Daniel 7-12

"But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself..." - Daniel 1:8

Memory Verse

## WHEN GOD CRASHES A PARTY

In chapter 5, King Belshazzar, throws a wild party - a drunken orgy. And just as the party gets *out of hand* it gets interrupted by the *hand of God*.

For 2 years Babylon has been under siege. You'd think Belshazzar would be in a panic, but to the contrary, he thought he was invincible. The city was huge - 15 square miles - with room to grow its own crops. The Euphrates River flowed under its walls, providing a constant water supply.

And speaking of its walls - they were impregnable - 311 feet high, 87 feet thick. Historians say Babylon had food reserves to last them 20 years. In fact, Belshazzar's party was a way to show-off his smug self-confidence.

It's bad enough that King Belshazzar was a playboy, a boozier, a party animal - but his undoing was his blasphemy. He's never learned *when to say when*. In the midst of his party Belshazzar calls for the sacred vessels his grandfather had plundered from the temple in Jerusalem. He makes mockery of the God of the Hebrews, and boasts in the idols of Babel. These were cups and saucers dedicated to the sacrifices of the one, true God. Belshazzar turns them into beer mugs.

Suddenly, the fingers of a man's hand appeared, writing

on the plastered wall behind the king's throne. King Belshazzar was scared to death. His knees knocked. Verse 6, "the king's countenance changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his hips were loosened..." In other words, it scared the stuffing out of him. The king's problem wasn't too many *party prunes*.

In verse 25 we're told the inscription God writes on the wall, "MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN." These were Aramaic words: "*mene*" means "*numbered*" - "*tekel*" means "*weighed*" - and "*upharsin*" means "*divided*". Belshazzar's number is up. He's been weighed, and God considers him a light-weight. And as a result, his kingdom will be divvied up and given to the Medes and Persians.

Historians tell us the night was October 12, 539 BC. While Belshazzar was partying inside the city, Persian general, Ugabaru, was outside plotting his attack. He sent a crew of engineers upstream. He knew he couldn't go over the walls, but why not under the walls? He diverted the Euphrates river, and his troops entered Babylon through the dried up riverbed. The Medes and Persians conquered the city of Babylon without a battle. That very night the mighty city fell to its enemy. As 5:30 tells us, "That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain. And Darius the Mede received the kingdom..."

## THE LIONS' DEN OF LIFE

The *den of lions* became a *den of miracles*.

We assume that God plagued the lions with a case of lockjaw, but even then they could've shredded him with their paws. Apparently, God altered the nature of the animals. According to Isaiah 11, "the wolf... shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat..." Daniel got to see a millennial miracle in advance.

It reminds me of the little girl who heard the story of Daniel in the lions' den in Sunday School. Her teacher asked how Daniel could've been so brave? She said, "Daniel wasn't afraid because he knew one of the lions was the Lion of the tribe of Judah!" Perhaps she was right. The angel

could've been the pre-incarnate Christ.

Guys, life in general is like a den of lions. 1 Peter 5:8 says the devil is "like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour." At times trouble stalks us like a hungry lion. Every Christian spends a night or two with the lions - and for a good reason - there's no better place to learn to trust God than in the lions' den. That's where you learn the truth of Jesus' promise - "I will never leave you or forsake you."

Verse 23 says Daniel was "taken up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in his God." You learn faith in the lions' den.