

iel means "my judge is God;" Hananiah means "gracious is Jehovah;" Mishael means "who is He that is God?" and Azariah means "Jehovah hath helped." When the Babylonians changed their names it meant they intended to honor their gods for victory over the Hebrews whose God the Babylonians believed they had vanquished. A parallel for such action is found in II Kings 23:34; 24:17; Esther 2:7.

Beltheshazzar means "protect his life;" Shadrach means "command of Aku (the moon god);" Mesach means "who is what Aku (the moon god) is?" and Abednego means "servant of Nebo." No doubt the purpose of the Babylonian king was to so assimilate these young men into the Babylonian culture they would become, for all practical purposes, Babylonians and dissociate themselves completely from the Hebrew ways; even from their God. Although these lads did accommodate themselves readily to new knowledge and new culture, they remained true to their knowledge of and daily walk with the Living God. The rest of their story is yet to be learned.

## QUIZ

1. What evidence is there that Daniel (606-536 B.C.) wrote this book and not some pseudo-Daniel of 200-1000 B.C.?
2. What is the purpose of the book of Daniel?
3. What is apocalyptic literature?
4. Describe the city of Babylon in Daniel's day—give its location, etc.
5. Show how the apparent discrepancy between Jeremiah's account of Jehoiakim and Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel's account do not contradict.
6. How extensive was the knowledge and wisdom of the Babylonians at this time?
7. Why did the king insist on these young men eating food from his table?

## II. PERSEVERANCE ACTUATED

TEXT: 1:8-16

- 8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's dainties, nor with the wine

- which he drank; therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.
- 9 Now God made Daniel to find kindness and compassion in the sight of the prince of the eunuchs.
- 10 And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your food and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse looking than the youths that are of your own age? so would ye endanger my head with the king.
- 11 Then said Daniel to the steward whom the prince of the eunuchs had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mithaiel, 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 youths that eat of the king's dainties; and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.
- 14 So he hearkened unto them in this matter, and proved them ten days.
- 15 And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer, and they were fatter in flesh, than all the youths that did eat of the king's dainties.
- 16 So the steward took away their dainties, and the wine they should drink, and gave them pulse.

### QUERIES

- a. What sort of "defilement" was Daniel anxious to avoid?
- b. Was the physical development natural or miraculous?
- c. What is "pulse?"

### PARAPHRASE

Daniel solemnly resolved that he would not deny the God of Israel by eating food and drinking wine from the king's table which had been dedicated to the worship of idols. He courteously requested from the king's chief servant that he not be forced to participate in the worship of idols by partaking of this food. Now Daniel allowed God to live in and through him to such an extent that the chief servant of the king was inclined toward Daniel with kindness and compassion. Yet, as kindly disposed as he was

to Daniel's regard for principle, he explained his own predicament, saying, I dare not grant your request because my king shows no mercy to those who disobey him. He has ordered this food for you, and if you do not eat it and your physical development deteriorates, he will execute me without mercy. Afterward Daniel politely asked the understeward assigned to serve them their food if he would be willing to perform a simple test which would involve no personal danger to himself—Give us a simple vegetable and water diet for just ten days. Then, at the end of this short period, compare our physical development with that of those young men who eat the king's rich delicacies and decide upon our request according to what you see. So the servant agreed to Daniel's proposition and fed them vegetables and water for ten days, and at the end of ten days he saw that their physical development was even more what the king desired than those who had been eating the king's food and the steward did not bring them food from the king's table any more but continued to give them vegetables to eat.

### COMMENT

v. 8 DANIEL PURPOSED IN HIS HEART THAT HE WOULD NOT DEFILE HIMSELF . . . The godly parents of this young Hebrew must have been of the same caliber as the parents of John the Baptist, "righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luke 1:6): They had done a superb job of rearing their son in the admonition and nurture of the Lord. Daniel was possessed of the great principles of righteousness and holiness and faith. He was not one who sought to be justified by a righteousness which is of law-keeping but by a righteousness which is by faith.

Leupold points out that there are three aspects of Daniel's heathen environment about which he had to make moral decisions as affecting his relationship to the Living God: (1) the acquisition of heathen wisdom; (2) the bearing of heathen names; (3) the eating of heathen food sacrificed to idols. Daniel knew that in studying heathen sciences he could not be compelled against his conscience to believe those elements of that science that were false. He may have taken

Moses and Joseph as his examples of guidance. Their exposure to heathen sciences and myths did not destroy their faith. Daniel's second experience, that of being given a heathen name, he simply had to endure as something he could do nothing about. It had no bearing on his relationship to God any more than children today who are given "heathen" names deliberately or unconsciously by their parents.

The matter of eating from the king's table was much more serious. It was a matter which would involve his relationship with God. All meals served at the king's table were of foods (especially wine and meats) which had been used in worship ceremonies dedicated to heathen idols. To share in such a feast was, according to an eternal principle, the same as worshipping the idol (cf. I Cor. 10:20ff). The significance of Daniel's act does not, as Lange comments, consist in a legalistic asceticism but in the proof of resolute faith and obedient devotion to the Living God rather than giving the slightest respect to a pagan idolatry.

But notice the courteous and amiable manner Daniel displayed in expressing his faith and devotion to righteous principle. He displays no fanaticism or rudeness, but honestly and frankly states his intention to the chief servant and asks his help.

v. 9 . . . GOD MADE DANIEL TO FIND KINDNESS AND COMPASSION . . . Most commentators speak as if God worked a miracle of "irresistible grace" upon the heart of the chief eunuch so that he could not help himself but to show kindness and compassion toward Daniel. We prefer to presume, in the light of biblical teaching that man is a free moral agent, that the Spirit of God working in the heart of Daniel and subsequently in his actions toward this chief eunuch moved the eunuch to kindness and compassion. All the glory is to be given to God. For it is God who works in Daniel to strengthen him that he should not yield in devotion to hold principle while at the same time being respectful and kind to the chief servant. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. 5:7). The chief eunuch recognized that Daniel's request was made upon the basis of principle and he respected the request. The response

of this pagan was, in the ultimate sense, to the grace of God manifested in the life of Daniel.

v. 10 . . . I FEAR MY LORD THE KING . . . SO WOULD YE ENDANGER MY HEAD WITH THE KING . . . The chief eunuch was under great psychological stress and, had not Daniel displayed the grace of God in his request, probably would have responded very inconsiderately with so unimportant a character as this Hebrew captive. He could very well have considered Daniel's request as insubordination and impudence. This chief steward was a trusted servant of an absolute monarch. Failure to carry out his emperor's wishes meant, if discovered, immediate death.

Yes, the chief steward sympathized with Daniel's principles, but it meant almost certain execution for him and so he was about to deny Daniel's request. Surely, he reasoned with Daniel, you young men would not want to be responsible for me losing my head to the king's executioner!

v. 11-13 . . . PROVE THY SERVANTS . . . TEN DAYS . . . GIVE US PULSE TO EAT . . . AND AS THOU SEEST, DEAL WITH THY SERVANTS . . . Daniel now proposes to one of the under-servants appointed by the chief servant to serve Daniel and the three lads their fare, a very simple, reasonable and relatively safe experiment. For ten days Daniel suggests, they be fed "pulse" and water. *Zero'im* literally means, "things sowed." Things sowed were not customarily offered by pagans as food to their gods. This Hebrew word could be translated in a general sense as *vegetables*. It involves more than legumes (peas and beans) and would include wheat and other grains so that bread would be in their diet. Wine was not, of course, foreign to the Hebrew diet, except in this case the wine would have been associated with pagan worship ritual.

Ten days is reasonably short enough not to arouse the suspicion of the king and yet long enough to test the merits of the case. There are probably two elements involved in Daniel's proposal—his faith that God will provide and his common sense that overrich fare such as the luxurious table of the king, offered in unlimited amounts, is not as conducive to good health as is plain, substantial food. The Mosaic

law implies this in its prohibition of eating fat (Lev. 7:22-24; 3:17; cf. also Titus 1:12-13).

Young argues that Daniel "received a special revelation from the Spirit of God and . . . in speaking he was acting in accord with that revelation." He says that if Daniel had made this offer merely upon his own initiative he would have been guilty of presumption. He asks, "What warrant could faith have that at the expiration of a short period of time such a change would be apparent in the physical appearance of the youths as is suggested here?" This in turn would imply that the resultant physiological excellence of the Hebrew youths over their contemporaries was miraculous. Such a miracle is not, of course, out of harmony with the historical record of the Old Testament—many such miracles are recorded, and did occur. We simply do not have a sufficient amount of testimony from Daniel to make a final decision in the matter of *how* it occurred. It would seem that a combination of three elements may be involved: (a) a direct revelation to Daniel plus (b) Daniel's common sense based on past experience and (c) faith in the directions of God as revealed in the Mosaic law concerning the eating of certain foods. Whatever the case, we consider Daniel's proposal a direct expression of his trust and devotion to the Living God.

v. 14-16 . . . AND AT THE END OF TEN DAYS THEIR COUNTENANCES APPEARED FAIRER . . . SO THE STEWARD TOOK AWAY THEIR DAINTIES . . . AND GAVE THEM PULSE . . . The remarks of Leupold are appropriate here: "It may seem that a disproportionate amount of emphasis is being given to a secondary matter. But the meticulous care exercised by these young men in doing the will of their God is perhaps the strongest indication that could be found of their complete allegiance to their God. Their determination shows how clearly they discerned what issues were at stake, and how correctly they were getting their bearings in the matter of making an adjustment in reference to daily contact with heathen life. The issues involved were not trifles. In this matter they had to take a stand."

For the believer in God there are three areas of morality: (a) that which is always right; (b) that which is

always wrong; (c) that which is a matter of opinion (which the believer is at liberty to choose, guided by love for God and fellow-man). Daniel was called upon to act in all three realms. It is always right to be kind and courteous to one's fellow man—Daniel did so. It is a matter of opinion about learning from the literature and culture of the world—Daniel did so and used it to serve God and man. It is always wrong to blaspheme God by worshipping idols—Daniel refused. The believer's liberty is bounded by Divine authority as revealed in a propositional revelation and is also bounded by the principle of love—love for God and His will first, and love for man second. The only way the believer knows a proper action or expression of love is by direction of the revealed will of God. A believer does not live by practising any ethic or moulding himself on any ideal, but by a faith in God which finally ascribes all good to Him and seeks His will as it has been revealed through His prophets and His Son and recorded inerrantly in the Bible.

### QUIZ

1. What were the three aspects of Daniel's heathen environment about which he had to make moral decisions?
2. Why was the matter of eating the king's dainties more serious than the other?
3. How does Daniel behave toward his captors in resisting defiling of himself?
4. How did Daniel find favor in the eyes of the chief eunuch?
5. What are the three areas of morality for the believer in God?
6. How did Daniel behave in these three areas?
7. What is the believer's ultimate source of knowing what is right and wrong?

### III. PROSPERITY AWARDED

TEXT: 1:17-21

- 17 Now as for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.