

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.

- 18 And at the end of the days which the king had appointed for bringing them in, the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar.
- 19 And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king.
- 20 And in every matter of wisdom and understanding, concerning which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his realm.
- 21 And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus.

### QUERIES

- a. How did God give these youths knowledge, learning and wisdom?
- b. Who were the magicians and enchanters in Babylon?
- c. Who is king Cyrus?

### PARAPHRASE

God gave these four youths supernatural ability to learn and they soon mastered all the literature and science of the time; and God gave to Daniel special ability in understanding the meanings of dreams and visions when they are given as divine messages. And when the three-year training period was completed, the chief of the eunuchs brought all the young men in this training program to the king for interview and examination. King Nebuchadnezzar interviewed each one at length and found that none of them impressed him as much as Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. So they were appointed to his regular staff of advisors. And in all matters requiring information and reasoned judgment the king found these young men's advice ten times better than that of all the skilled wise men and prognosticators in his realm. And Daniel held this appointment as the king's counsellor for some twenty-four years and through five or six emperors, until sometime in the first year of the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

## COMMENT

v. 17 . . . GOD GAVE THEM KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL IN ALL LEARNING AND WISDOM . . . The only conclusion to reach from the statement in verse 17 is that the ability to gain knowledge and have learning and wisdom was a direct and supernatural gift of God to the four young lads. The gift of God was received, of course, willingly and we may safely presume they applied themselves diligently to their task. The phrase "skill in all learning and wisdom" indicates God gave them a power to perceive, distinguish and judge everything they learned whether it was to be accepted and practiced and taught as truth or to be rejected as false. They had inerrant insight into all the knowledge and learning of Babylonians. Leupold says, ". . . a discernment that enabled these four to sit in judgment on all secular learning that was offered them and to evaluate it according to the estimate of all-wise God." They were also given "wisdom" which is the ability to rightly apply the knowledge acquired as God would have it applied. Daniel was given an additional gift that the other three did not have—understanding in all visions and dreams.

Visions and dreams were often used by God in the Old Testament to reveal special missions or messages to certain men (cf. Jacob, Joseph, etc.). Inasmuch as these dreams and visions were usually in extended symbolism they required special, divine interpretation, directly from God or through one of God's appointed messengers. This would be especially necessary when such dreams and visions were given to pagan rulers. Daniel's gift was extraordinary. See our introductory study entitled "Interpreting The Prophets," in *The Minor Prophets*, by Paul T. Butler, pub. College Press, for information on dreams and visions. Daniel was not unique in this gift of interpreting dreams and visions (Joseph had the gift and exercised it extensively).

v. 18-19 . . . AND AMONG THEM ALL WAS FOUND NONE LIKE DANIEL, ETC. . . . It is still amazing to some people, but true in most cases, that firm but courteous propagation of principle and truth will be appreciated and rewarded even by pagans who themselves are prone to follow false-

hood and myth. Joseph, Moses, Peter and John and Paul are prime examples as they stood before pagan rulers and princes. This is true because truth is always wise! What is true may not be immediately and physically pleasurable, but it is always wise. And only the degraded reprobate will fail to recognize that. It did not take Nebuchadnezzar long to recognize the contrast between the wisdom of these four youths and the foolishness of the mythology and mysticism of the enchanters and magicians.

v. 20-21 . . . HE FOUND THEM TEN TIMES BETTER THAN ALL THE MAGICIANS AND ENCHANTERS . . . The word "ten" is, of course, hyperbolic and simply means Daniel and his three companions were found exceedingly wise and perceptive. They were much more learned and discerning than the young men who had been born and reared in Babylon—in fact more than all the trained wise men of Babylon!

It would be well to give a brief resume of Babylonian religion here. The religion which the Jews of the Exile found in Babylon had roots which went back over two thousand years. The ancient Sumerian religion was highly polytheistic and made a practice of absorbing or incorporating every religion or god it contacted. The god of a victorious state was considered to be the most powerful deity, for warfare was always waged on two levels. The earthly states were championed by their celestial deities, and the battles in the sky were accounted as real as the battles on earth (cf. Daniel chap. 10). In very ancient Sumerian times (2000 years before the Jewish captivity) the chief god was known as Anu, the sky god who was regarded as father of the great gods. The second great god was Bel (the Semitic Baal) which means "Lord," and he was ruler of earth. The third of the great Sumerian gods was known as Enki who ruled the waters upon which the Babylonians believed the terrestrial world floated. Then there was a pantheon of some 4000 gods which included Sin the moon-god, Shamash, the sun-god, and Adad the storm god. Fertility and reproduction in the Tigris-Euphrates valley were associated with Ishtar also the goddess of war. There was Ninurta, fertility god who was responsible for the annual flooding of the rivers; Gibil the god of fire who was invoked

by magicians in their tasks of exorcism—he was called upon to burn to death evil spirits and sorcerers; Nergal, destroyer of life, the god of pestilence and death, god of the land of no return; Nabu (Nebo) god of the scribes who was keeper of the Table of Fate with power to prolong or shorten life (Nebuchadnezzar's name expresses faith in Nebo).

During the First Dynasty of Neo-Babylon an important revolution took place in the religion of the country. A minor deity named *Marduk* was chosen as the principal god of the whole of Babylonia and was placed at the head of the pantheon. The mythological story of how he rescued all the gods and goddesses from the monster Tiamat and was acknowledged by all he rescued as chief god is too long to recount here. Tammuz, son of Ishtar, was a god of vegetation who disappeared each year in the late summer and returned (i.e. was resurrected) the following spring (cf. Ezek. 8:14). In the Greco-Roman world Tammuz was worshiped as Adonis (a name which is a variant of the Semitic *Adon*, lord, or master).

The Babylonians of Daniel's day had an elaborate system of good genies or spirits and evil genies. Evil genies were believed to enter houses even when doors were bolted and if they found men or women in sin without the protection of their personal god they entered that man or woman and possessed them. The Babylonian felt himself surrounded by ghosts, or spirits of men whose lives had proved unhappy on earth. The ghosts had been cheated out of happiness in this life and, nursing their grief, they were determined to torment the living.

This is the kind of "learning and wisdom" Daniel and his three friends, and especially Daniel, would later renounce in favor of being true to Jehovah God and would, indirectly at least, expose as mythological and false. We shall deal with the magicians and enchanters in chapter two.

## QUIZ

1. What was the knowledge and skill in learning and wisdom given these youths?
2. Why did God use visions and dreams to communicate to man?

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3. Why is truth usually rewarded with respect even by heathen?
4. What was the character of Babylonian religion?
5. Who was the chief god of the Babylonians in Daniel's day?

## SERMON NUMBER ONE

### DARE TO BE A DANIEL . . .

Text: Daniel 1:8

#### INTRODUCTION

#### I. WHY WAS DANIEL IN BABYLON?

- A. He was one of the first groups of captives carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon during the period of Judah's downfall and the Captivity of the entire nation of Judah

The captivity of the Jews was prophesied by Jeremiah

- B. Daniel's subsequent life indicates that he could not have been one of the many reprobates who brought God's wrath upon the nation of Judah causing the captivity

We assume therefore that God had special need of Daniel and allowed him to be taken to Babylon to serve Him and those who would repent while in captivity

- C. John Noble came to this conclusion concerning his imprisonment in Communist Russian prison camps for some 12-13 years

" . . . there were those cynics and skeptics among my fellow prisoners who asked how anyone could give thanks to a God who was permitting us to suffer as we did . . . I always answered to such criticism that while I did not know what purpose was being served by the suffering we were enduring, I was sure that there was a reason. I felt that God would deal in due time with the atheists of Russia and that meanwhile the world must see by the suffering of

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the victims of communist tyranny what an evil system it is."

### II. WHAT WAS BABYLON LIKE?

- A. The city was surrounded by 60 miles of wall, 300 ft. high, 80 ft. thick, submerged underground 35 ft. (in order to keep enemies from tunnelling under). The Euphrates river split the city in the middle. The temple of Bel contained a golden image and golden table which weighed more than 25 tons. It had 53 temples and 180 altars and some 4000 gods.
- B. The king's palace was perhaps the most magnificent building ever erected in antiquity. It was protected itself by 4 succeeding walls plus moats and other defense mechanisms.
- C. The hanging gardens, built by Nebuchadnezzar for one of his homesick queens, consisted of several tiers of arches, each holding up a solid platform 400 ft. sq. upon which would be planted trees, shrubs, flowers, gardens of all kinds. These platform gardens were watered by hydraulic pumps pumping water upward from one level to another.
- D. Their society and culture was what would be expected from a pagan empire—sensual, luxurious, indulgent, cruel, proud and powerful.
- E. In such a land and amongst such a people was the young man Daniel.

## DISCUSSION

### I. DARE TO BE A DANIEL, DARE TO STAND ALONE

- A. He had his friends with him; he was not all alone
  - 1. They stood many of the tests of loyalty to God with Daniel
  - 2. What a blessing believing and faithful friends can be
  - 3. The great apostle Paul was blessed with a few faithful friends Luke, Barnabas, John Mark, Silas, Titus

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4. It is a great consolation to a believer who has to suffer to know there are other believers sharing in the same experiences and remaining faithful
  5. As Christians we are one body of believers and when one member suffers we all suffer (cf. Rom. 12:15; I Cor. 12:25-26)
  6. Yet, each believer must ultimately stand alone when his faith is tested
- B. He had his God; he was not all alone
1. He undoubtedly was reared in a God-fearing, God-worshipping Jewish home and knew by the experience of faith that God was with him
  2. He knew by God's supernatural manifestation of Himself in miraculous deeds that God was with him; physical development on a diet of vegetables; supernatural learning and wisdom and ability to interpret dreams
  3. His providential reception by this pagan court should indicate to him that God was protecting him
  4. Yet, God could not make Daniel's choices for him  
... SO DANIEL WAS, IN A VERY REAL SENSE, STANDING ALONE
  5. Daniel, all alone, had to CHOOSE whether to self-righteously refuse training in the wisdom of the Chaldeans or to recognize there was nothing basically immoral in studying in a selective way and making the most of every opportunity to glorify God among the heathen.
- C. Daniel had choices to make and so he was all alone
1. His friends could not decide for him; HE MUST STAND ALONE
  2. God will not choose for him; HE MUST DECIDE FOR HIMSELF
  3. Daniel and his three friends STOOD PRACTICALLY ALL ALONE AS THEY CHOSE TO REFUSE PARTICIPATION IN IDOL WORSHIP
  4. Every believer must make personal choices which no one else can make for him
  5. Every believer must realize that those who truly trust the Lord are in the minority and often times



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it will appear as if no one but themselves are standing up for righteousness and truth

6. The Bible teaches that believers are to be set apart from the world (II Cor. 6:14—7:1; Jn. 17:14-17; Matt. 7:13-14, etc.)
- D. Examples of those who have stood alone (except that God was with them):
1. Noah (preached 120 years only 8 were saved)
  2. Abraham (left his own country and wandered)
  3. Moses (stood against Egypt and Pharaoh)
  4. David (stood alone against Goliath, then against Saul)
  5. Paul (stood against the heathen world; against Judaizers)
  6. Martin Luther (stood against powerful world church)
  7. Alexander Campbell (stood against denomination-ism)
  8. PERFECT EXAMPLE: JESUS CHRIST, even His friends deserted Him; was forsaken by God in order to suffer our eternal punishment for us
  9. John Noble, "I was increasingly certain that many of these Russians respected the courage with which prisoners held to their faith in God and that they would have liked to join us if they could."

## II. DARE TO HAVE A PURPOSE FIRM

A. Definition of Dare: "resolution; bravery, courage; backbone; venturous; challenging; unflinching."

1. Standing alone without a godly purpose is vanity and pride; such are rebels without causes for any cause that is not godly is a losing cause!
2. Daniel had purpose because he had conviction. He was fully persuaded that God exists and that He is a jealous and loving God

B. Daniel's Purpose

1. To glorify God. This was Daniel's target—his main concern in every experience that life brought him.
2. He refused to eat from the king's table because in so doing he would be participating in the wor-

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ship of idols. Practically all the rich and luxurious food and wine the king and his court ate had been devoted as sacrifices to pagan idols. To eat this food Daniel would give the king the impression that he was willing to worship idols. Daniel's purpose was just the opposite.

3. It may also be that some of the food from the king's table was "unclean" according to Mosaic law. Daniel's purpose was to uphold the law of God in every instance possible.
  4. Daniel knew that if he trusted God, God would manifest His power and it was Daniel's purpose to let his life and his mouth be a testimony to the True and Living God.
  5. In doing this Daniel would become a source of light to the darkened pagan society dwelling in ignorance and sin. He would at the same time become a source of encouragement and strength to his Jewish brethren in captivity.
- C. Every believer needs to have a purpose firm
1. I have a sermon entitled "A Life Worth Living" with three main points: (a) Have a Belief Worth Trusting; (b) Have a Job Worth Doing; (c) Get a Reward Worth Having.
  2. Daniel could have rationalized like so many of us do today and said, "When in Babylon, do as the Babylonians do." BUT HE KNEW HOW TO SAY "NO!" AND MEAN IT! It was not easy for him. Consider all the pressures he had to endure.
  3. Self-control is the mark of real man-hood. Strong men, cruel men, shrewd men may control nations and empires but if they cannot control self they are the weakest of all men; cf. Alexander the Great; Hitler, etc.
  4. The world, for the most part, respects purity, courage, honesty, conviction.
  5. The people who have done the most for mankind and in a lasting nature are men who have had the one purpose which counts the most—TO GLORIFY GOD! Think of Joseph, Esther, Francis

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Bacon, Micheangelo, Handel, Lincoln, David Lloyd George, Pascal, Michael Faraday, etc.

6. Such a purpose will come only with persuasion that God is, that Jesus Christ is the living, reigning, returning Lord, and that the Bible is the Word of the Spirit. SUCH A PURPOSE WILL COME ONLY WITH DAILY, SWEET COMMUNION WITH GOD THROUGH HIS WORD AND PRAYER! This is where Daniel's purpose came from.
7. John Noble, "This I found that honesty paid even in a Russian concentration camp where it might seem that only a fool would try to hold to a conventional moral standard. I had resolved to try to show . . . by example, what the faith of a Christian could do. Many times thereafter I discovered that no matter where I was, honesty got me further."

### III. DARE TO MAKE IT KNOWN

- A. Daniel had conviction and purpose and was not afraid to make it known
  1. There were plenty of excuses Daniel might have had to keep silent about his faith in God
  2. To the contrary, Daniel took every opportunity to testify concerning the True and Living God
  3. There was the time he prayed to Jehovah with his windows open in defiance to the king's edict
  4. There was the time he delivered the true message of God to Nebuchadnezzar about his insanity
  5. There was the time he delivered the true message of God to Belshazzar
  6. And, of course, there were many other occasions
- B. This world needs people, Christian people, who will dare to make their purpose known—to glorify God.
  1. Our heathen world needs believers with conviction. About the only conviction most people have today is that it's wrong to have convictions.
  2. Dare to proclaim the counsel of God—the *whole* counsel of God
  3. Dare to make the most for God of every situation

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4. Dare to be honest with self, with God, with associates in every situation—Daniel did not give up, but neither did he cause undue alarm or antagonism in the heart of his pagan ruler. Joseph and Moses and Paul are prime examples.
  5. Believers will never be encouraged and strengthened unless there be those who have purpose who will dare to make it known
  6. Unbelievers will never become believers unless believers dare to make the gospel known (Rom. 10:17)
- C. Examples of those who dared to make it known
1. All the Old Testament prophets; Isaiah (ch. 6); Jeremiah (ch. 1 and 20:9); Jonah, Ezekiel, Amos, Hosea, etc.
  2. John the Baptist: one of the loneliest men who ever walked the earth was fearless in making the glory of God known
  3. Paul the apostle—preached from house to house, night and day, with tears; preached to kings and authorities
  4. Jesus Christ—this was His “food” (Jn. 4); Zeal for the house of God consumed Him (Jn. 2). Jesus dared to “tell it like it is” (cf. Jn. 7-8-9; Matt. 23, etc.)
- D. How may every believer “dare” to make his purpose known?
1. By personal evangelism with his neighbors, friends and relatives
  2. By teaching a Bible School class (elders are to be “apt to teach”)
  3. By supporting various arms of evangelism with financial means: Bible Colleges; T.V. Programs; Missionaries; Printing Efforts
  4. By writing letters to unconverted friends and relatives
  5. By living lives that do not compromise with worldliness but yet do not withdraw into a monastic life and dissociate from the daily affairs of needy men.

CONCLUSION

I. HERE IN THE FIRST REAL TEST OF DANIEL'S FAITH WE SEE VICTORY

- A. God providentially cared for them in the matter of food and they developed physically to a state more to be desired than their heathen contemporaries
- B. God providentially supplied greater knowledge, learning, wisdom than all their contemporaries
- C. Notice: these providential blessings were not afforded for Daniel to indulge himself but to give him greater opportunity to serve the Lord
- D. God has promised to give every believer such an abundance of *opportunity* to serve the Lord (cf. Eph. 3:20; II Cor. 9:6-15) Joseph recognized this, Gen. 50:20

II. AT THE END OF DANIEL'S LIFE AND BOOK (ch. 12 WE SEE VICTORY

- A. It is significant that of all the Old Testament books, Daniel is the one which deals most of moral courage and faith—and it is the one which deals the most with the resurrection
- B. Daniel is given a vision of victory like the aged John in Revelation. Daniel's curiosity almost gets the best of him—he wants to know the why and wherefore of all that he had seen in vision but God knows that what he needs most is assurance of victory.
- C. "They that be wise, shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever."
- D. "But go your way till the end; and you shall rest, and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days."
- E. DANIEL, WHO HAD WITNESSED SO COURAGEOUSLY AND FAITHFULLY TO HIS LAST DAYS IS TOLD, "YOU SHALL REST."

DANIEL, WHO DARED TO STAND ALONE, DARED TO HAVE A PURPOSE FIRM, DARED TO MAKE IT KNOWN . . . SHINES AS THE BRIGHTNESS OF THE FIRMAMENT, ONE

## DANIEL

OF THE BRIGHTEST OF THOSE STARS WHICH HAVE  
TURNED MANY TO GOD AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

### III. WILL YOU DARE TO BE A DANIEL . . . A JOSEPH . . . A MOSES . . . A PAUL?

## EXAMINATION ONE

### REFUTATIONS

(Answer the following by giving the argument which will  
correct the statement)

1. The Book of Daniel was written in the 2nd century B.C. by an unknown author. Refute!
2. We know very little about the Babylon of Daniel's time. Refute!
3. There is a contradiction between Daniel and Jeremiah about the dates of Nebuchadnezzar's attack upon Jerusalem. Refute!

### ASSOCIATIONS

(Associate the persons or events of column one with the  
correct person or event of column two.)

1	2
Jehoiakim	king of Persia
Beltshazzar	king of Babylon
Cyrus	river in Babylon
steward	mountain in Palestine
Ashpenaz	king of Judah
Nebuchadnezzar	Daniel
Babylon	Meshach
Abednego	Mesopotamia
Hananiah	Shadrach
Chaldeans	chief of eunuchs
Jerusalem	servant
Shinar	capitol of Judah
Mishael	Babylonian people
	Azariah
	Euphrates
	territory in Babylon
	Mishael

EXAMINATION ONE

MEMORIZATIONS

(Fill in the blanks:)

But Daniel \_\_\_\_\_ in his heart that he would not \_\_\_\_\_ himself with the king's \_\_\_\_\_, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the prince of the \_\_\_\_\_ that he might not \_\_\_\_\_ himself. Now God made Daniel to find \_\_\_\_\_ and compassion in the sight of the prince of the \_\_\_\_\_.

EXPLANATIONS

1. Explain why the king of Babylon took these young men and fed them and trained them in Chaldean wisdom.
2. Explain why Daniel could permit himself to be trained in Chaldean (pagan) sciences, literature, etc., and still be faithful to God.
3. Explain how the Hebrew youths could subsist in this meager diet and still be healthier than their contemporaries.
4. Explain how Daniel and the other three could be ten times wiser than other Babylonian enchanters.