

STANDARDS & FOUNDATIONS

A GUIDE TO BABYLON



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1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. 2 And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the vessels of the house of God. And he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his god. 3 Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family[a] and of the nobility, 4 youths without blemish, of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to stand in the king's palace, and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans. 5 The king assigned them a daily portion of the food that the king ate, and of the wine that he drank. They were to be educated for three years, and at the end of that time they were to stand before the king. 6 Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah. 7 And the chief of the eunuchs gave them names: Daniel he called Belteshazzar, Hananiah he called Shadrach, Mishael he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego. 8 But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank. Therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself.

Daniel 1:1-8

Previously, we discussed the themes of spiritual compromise and what that looked like in the time of scripture and in contrast to what we must face in our current world.

We might not place as much emphasis on names as they did in the Hebrew culture; we usually pick a name because it sounds good. When you marry and start your own family you might you consider adopting the Bible culture of selecting a name that not only sounds good but also has a positive spiritual meaning as well. Perhaps you'll consider names because they honor someone that you loved and cherished.

When Israel was enslaved to Babylon their names were changed. The idea from the viewpoint of Babylon was to change the Hebrew young men's identities, altering their opinions of themselves. Then Babylon could use the men for its purpose instead of the purpose God had in mind when He created them.



Serving Captors

The world that they were thrust into was one that pushed them from their foundations and sought to repurpose their abilities to serve their captors. Now to an extent, Daniel went along with some of this.

- Daniel learned the language so that he could read, write, and communicate with Babylonians.
- He served the rulers that had control over him and his people.
- Daniel offered counsel to the king.
- His actions were necessary to help preserve his own life and the lives of the Israelites around him.

Daniel's actions were all about self-preservation, and just like Daniel, some of the things that we do in this life that we are given are done so that we can simply survive. Sometimes it is necessary to do something you don't want to in order to better serve the Kingdom of God even though the environment is uncomfortable and unhealthy.

Powered by Identity

The one thing that Daniel refused to budge on was his identity. When he was pushed to the limits of his relationship with God, Daniel refused to budge an inch. The decision to be true to his identity in God allowed the Lord to bless Daniel along with those we should call by their Hebrew names: Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego).



- That blessing was revealed in the physical when Daniel and his companions thrived when refusing the king's meat and caused all the princes to be given a holy diet.
- That blessing was revealed in the spiritual when the Lord granted Daniel the ability to interpret the dreams of a heathen ruler.
- Daniel was given the same ability and opportunity that Joseph had when he went before Pharaoh, but rather than simply predicting the major events of the next fourteen years as Joseph did, Daniel provided a prophetic outline that reached all the way to today and beyond.

Now, you might be wondering why Daniel serves as our main subject. It is because on the heels of discussing compromise, our natural progression should lead us to what Daniel was so gifted at: prayer. Like Daniel, we must be aware of the weapons God has given us as a means of destroying the works of the enemy.

Over the next few weeks I want our focus to fall on the subject of prayer, spiritual gifts, and what an ideal relationship with God looks like from the moment we wake up until we go to sleep. I want us to familiarize ourselves with the Word of God and the people that walked this path before us; both ancient and modern.

Daniel's first response was always prayer. So why should our response be any different?

Daniel didn't just occasionally visit the altar, he made his bed there. He lived in constant communion with God and every step that he took before the opposition, before the oppression, before the captivity, before the constant physical and mental abuse, he took with God leading him.

You see Daniel's faithfulness wasn't the product of his situation. He didn't turn his life around because it got hard and he needed a lifeline, no, Daniel made a decision early in his life that he was going to draw a line in the sand and no matter what happened, he would never find anything that would force him across that line even if it meant his very life.

At a young age, Daniel prayed and he simply never stopped.

