

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Chapter 1

- **It is important to remember our historical background** notes as we begin this book, and chapter 1:
 - Nebuchadnezzar defeats Assyria and Egypt at Carchemish before entering Jerusalem
 - 3 sieges of Jerusalem, 1st in 606 BC, first wave of captives (included Daniel)
 - Nebuchadnezzar becomes king of Neo (New) Babylonian Empire
 - Last siege, 587/6 BC, Temple and city destroyed (9th of Av, important date)
 - Can verify facts of Daniel through secular history
 - The exile and captivity in Babylon for Jews was promised by God multiple times by the prophets
 - Reasons for exile and judgment of Judah: Sabbath for land abused 490 years (every 7th year land was to rest). The people owed God (and land) 70 years of inactivity. They were also judged for their disobedience and rebellion against God.
- We will spend a great deal of time looking at the many prophecies contained in this book, most of which have been precisely fulfilled. We will observe how God's word is to be recognized, **given the serious consideration it deserves**, and also how these words fit together into an incredible puzzle of the amazing plan of God. The Jews at Jesus' time had most of the pieces of the puzzle, and as Jesus chastised them, they should have been able to fit them together to see who He was. They should have been expecting Him.



¹In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

- The first verse of Daniel **reveals several important facts about the timing and historical conditions** during which this book took place. Through these facts, though simple as they may seem, we are able to verify events through records found in secular history.
- **Jehoiakim was the eldest son of King Josiah** and began ruling after his younger brother Jehoahaz had been king for a three month period. (An important note: Josiah was the godly king who restored God to the southern kingdom of Judah, and it was under these conditions that Daniel was raised)
- Nebuchadnezzar had just defeated the Assyrians and their allies, the Egyptians, at the Battle of Carchemish in 606 B.C. and was beginning to claim the territories formerly under their control. **The Neo-Babylonian Empire was just beginning.** While Nebuchadnezzar was away on military campaigns, his father (Nabopolassar) died, making Nebuchadnezzar king, and forcing his return to Babylon after the first siege of Jerusalem.

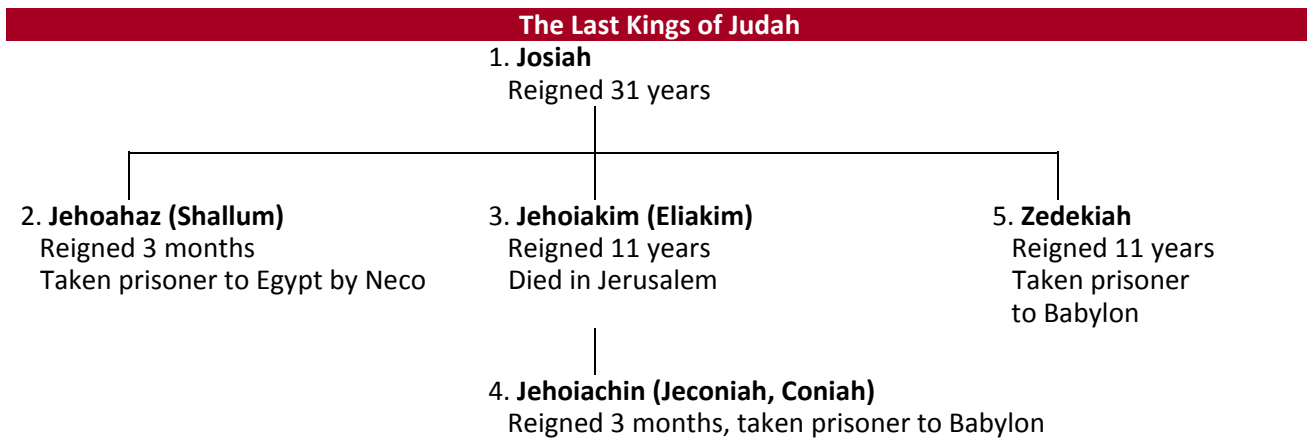


- This book begins by stating the fulfillment of previous prophecies. As early as Deuteronomy, God made it clear (through Moses) what would happen if the people were disobedient. He made a covenant with Israel just before the Jews entered the land promised to them (see Deuteronomy chapters 28-30). He told the people how He would deal with them, and what their behavior would get them. If they were obedient, they would have abundant blessings. However, if they were disobedient and rebellious, they would receive His discipline, which He called “cursings.” These last “sermons” of Moses are very specific about how God would execute His discipline and judgment. He said he would bring Gentile nations to subjugate them, and take them into captivity, removing them from the Promised Land. That is exactly what happened, and the book of Daniel opens with this statement of fulfillment. These prophecies in Deuteronomy were only the first of many such warnings and predictions of what was in store for the people of God, if they rebelled.



²And 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.

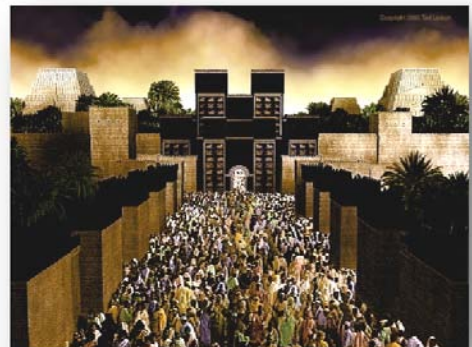
- Nebuchadnezzar may have thought he was solely responsible for his conquest but, in reality, God’s plan for His wayward children, the Jews, was simply being carried out by this man. It is important to note the words *“And the Lord gaveinto his hand”* (his hand being Nebuchadnezzar’s hand). God allowed this. All of history (HIS-story), is in His hands.
- **The last kings of Judah: Jehoahaz (3 mos), Jehoiakim (11 yrs), Jehoiachin (<4 mos), Zedekiah (11 yrs).** The king of Egypt deposed Jehoahaz and put his brother Eliakim on throne, and changed his name to Jehoiakim. This is the one mentioned in these first verses of Daniel, present when Nebuchadnezzar conducted his first siege of Jerusalem. The last 3 kings of the Southern Kingdom of Judah were “puppet” kings, figureheads that Nebuchadnezzar left in place to do his will. They did not rebel, and eventually Nebuchadnezzar came back twice, and the 3rd and final siege was the end of it. There have been no kings on the throne of David since.



- Again, this is a clear statement of the fulfillment of prophecy. **This judgment did not come without ample warning.** The end of 2 Chronicles gives explanation of why God did what He did (*some chilling words*): *“And the LORD God of their fathers sent warnings to them by His messengers, rising up early and sending them, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, till there was no remedy. Therefore He brought against them the king of the Chaldeans*

(Babylonians), who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or virgin, on the aged or the weak; He gave them all into his hand. And all the articles from the house of God, great and small, the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king and of his leaders, all these he took to Babylon. Then they burned the house of God, broke down the wall of Jerusalem, burned all its palaces with fire, and destroyed all its precious possessions (this was after the 3rd siege - final destruction was 587/6 BC). And those who escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon, where they became servants to him and his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths. As long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years." (2 Chronicles 36:15-21)

- God had already **promised judgment for Judah through Huldah** the prophetess (2 Chronicles 34:19–28) and many others. This prophecy came while Josiah was king of Judah, and there was revival in the land (which did not last long). Josiah was extremely distressed and repentant when he heard the words of the Torah, which had been long forgotten by the Jews. Josiah reinstated the traditions and practices of God. Huldah gave the following prophecy at the time: *"When the king heard the words of the Law, he tore his robes. He gave these orders to Hilkiah, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Abdon son of Micah, Shaphan the secretary and Asaiah the king's attendant: "Go and inquire of the LORD for me and for the remnant in Israel and Judah about what is written in this book that has been found. Great is the LORD's anger that is poured out on us because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD; they have not acted in accordance with all that is written in this book." Hilkiah and those the king had sent with him went to speak to the prophetess Huldah, who was the wife of Shallum son of Tokhath, the son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe. She lived in Jerusalem, in the Second District. She said to them, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Tell the man who sent you to me, `This is what the LORD says: I am going to bring disaster on this place and its people--all the curses written in the book that has been read in the presence of the king of Judah. Because they have forsaken me and burned incense to other gods and provoked me to anger by all that their hands have made, my anger will be poured out on this place and will not be quenched.' Tell the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, `This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says concerning the words you heard: Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before God when you heard what he spoke against this place and its people, and because you humbled yourself before me and tore your robes and wept in my presence, I have heard you, declares the LORD. Now I will gather you to your fathers, and you will be buried in peace. Your eyes will not see all the disaster I am going to bring on this place and on those who live here.' "*"So they took her answer back to the king."
- **Micah** predicted Judah's captivity in Babylon while Babylon was still a small power (not united into the empire it would become) over 100 years before it happened. *"Writhe in agony, O Daughter of Zion, like a woman in labor, for now you must leave the city to camp in the open field. You will go to Babylon; there you will be rescued. There the LORD will redeem you out of the hand of your enemies."* (Micah 4:10) Micah prophesied sometime between 750 and 686 B.C. during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. He was a contemporary of Isaiah and Hosea. Israel was disobedient and apostate at this time. Micah predicted the fall of her capital, Samaria (1:5-7), and also foretold the inevitable desolation of Judah (1:9-16).
- **Jeremiah also prophesied this calamity** (and warned against it many times) *"Therefore the LORD Almighty says this: "Because you have not listened to my words, I will summon all the peoples of the north and my servant Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon," declares the LORD, "and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants and against all the surrounding nations. I will completely destroy them and make them an object of horror and scorn, and an everlasting ruin. I will banish from them the sounds of joy and gladness, the voices of bride and bridegroom, the sound of millstones and the light of the lamp. This whole country will become a desolate wasteland, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years. "But when the seventy years are fulfilled, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation, the land of the Babylonians, for their guilt," declares the LORD, "and will make it desolate forever. I will bring upon that land all the things I have spoken against it, all that are written in this book and prophesied by Jeremiah against all the nations.*



They themselves will be enslaved by many nations and great kings; I will repay them according to their deeds and the work of their hands." (Jeremiah 25:8-14)

- Also in Jeremiah we see the word **Sheshach**. It is used only twice in scripture, both times in Jeremiah, once here in verse 26, and the other in chapter 51. *Sheshach* is a **cryptogram for Babylon**.
- **Habakkuk**, a contemporary of Jeremiah also predicted this, in a unique conversation with God who told him: *"Look at the nations and watch-- and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told. I am raising up the Babylonians, that ruthless and impetuous people, who sweep across the whole earth to seize dwelling places not their own. They are a feared and dreaded people; they are a law to themselves and promote their own honor. Their horses are swifter than leopards, fiercer than wolves at dusk. Their cavalry gallops headlong; their horsemen come from afar. They fly like a vulture swooping to devour; they all come bent on violence. Their hordes advance like a desert wind and gather prisoners like sand. They deride kings and scoff at rulers. They laugh at all fortified cities; they build earthen ramps and capture them. Then they sweep past like the wind and go on-- guilty men, whose own strength is their god."* (Hab 1:5–11).
- *"...with some of the articles of the house of God ..."* (from Solomon's temple) were carried away as prizes of this conquest to Babylon. This was a common practice in those days of conquering armies. They became treasures ("spoils") of war, often displayed proudly. This was **an additional insult to the Israelites**, and God allowed it. The Babylonians were a pagan culture which worshipped many gods (the chief god was Bel, also called Baal, Marduk, or Merodach. (Remember Ishtar, Astarte, etc.). To have the treasures of Israel displayed in a place of pagan gods was downright shameful.
- We should also note here that **the Temple is still standing at this point**. Nebuchadnezzar merely took some of the vast temple treasure back to Babylon with him. It was 19 years later, after much rebellion by the Jews and two more sieges of Jerusalem, that Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Solomon's Temple and took the remaining Jews captive to Babylon.
- This passage prompts **questions about the lost temple treasures**, particularly the Ark of the Covenant. There are hundreds of theories about where these treasures are today. Most do not think the Ark is in Babylon, or ever was there to begin with (*notice the verses above only indicate "some of the articles" of the house of God. If the Ark of the Covenant were included in these, most likely it would state that.*) We do not know what happened to the Temple furnishings or treasures after the Babylonian captivity. Nebuchadnezzar placed them in his storerooms, and we know **they were still there when Daniel read the handwriting on the wall in Daniel 5** (at the end of the Babylonian empire, beginning of Persia's rise to power). We do not know, however, if they were ALL there (including the Ark of the Covenant) or just some, and we don't know if they were returned. There is much speculation today about the Temple treasures, especially the Ark of the Covenant, which has been "lost to history" since the time of the Babylonian invasion. No one really knows where it is. (God does!)
- There is speculation about Aksum (or Axum), a small town in Ethiopia that is said to protect the real Ark of the Covenant. This was apparently the result of the union between the Queen of Sheba and Solomon which supposedly produced a male heir to the throne of both nations, and whom many think stole the Ark and returned it to Ethiopia, where even today a special hereditary group of priests make life time commitments to guard whatever is inside this place. Again, no one knows for certain. There is also **speculation that the Ark was hidden on Mt. Nebo by Jeremiah** before the Temple was destroyed (*there is an interesting reference in the Apocrypha about this*), or it could be somewhere else, such as hidden in the tunnels beneath Jerusalem, as many believe. We just don't know.



**The Treasury of the Ark of the Covenant
Axum, Ethiopia**

- Nearly 70 years **later these vessels were desecrated by Belshazzar** at his drunken feast (chapter 5), and God brought the Babylonian kingdom to a close. 100+ years earlier Isaiah had predicted that these vessels would be taken away by the king of Babylon. Isaiah discusses a very stupid act by King Hezekiah, which may have prompted Nebuchadnezzar's taking of temple treasure. Listen to this amazing prophecy: *"At that time Merodach-Baladan son of Baladan king of Babylon sent Hezekiah letters and a gift, because he had heard of his illness and recovery. Hezekiah received the envoys gladly and showed them what was in his storehouses--the silver, the gold, the spices, the fine oil, his entire armory and everything found among his treasures. There was nothing in his palace or in all his kingdom that Hezekiah did not show them. Then Isaiah the prophet went to King Hezekiah and asked, "What did those men say, and where did they come from?" "From a distant land," Hezekiah replied. "They came to me from Babylon." The prophet asked, "What did they see in your palace?" "They saw everything in my palace," Hezekiah said. "There is nothing among my treasures that I did not show them." Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD Almighty: The time will surely come when everything in your palace, and all that your fathers have stored up until this day, will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the LORD. And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood who will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon."* (Isaiah 39:1-7)
- **Notice reference to the "land of Shinar."** This is Babylon. It is common in scripture for places to have more than one reference name. For example, Jerusalem is also the City of David, Zion, etc. The opposing city of Babylon is also known by other names "Shinar," land of Shinar, Sheshach, etc.

³Then 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, ⁴young 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.

- *"...some of the king's descendants and some of the nobles ..."* **Nebuchadnezzar brought captives from many conquered lands** to train them for service in his government. He was accustomed to selecting the best for such training, as the scripture indicates. These young men were the best sons of the Hebrew nation. They were probably the families of the royal line of Judah. They would be taught the voluminous learning of the Chaldeans, as well as their language. Because Daniel was among the first hostages and captives taken to Babylon from Jerusalem, it is thought that perhaps he was from the royal family. This would have been the custom then. Taking the royal family was a way to keep the king left in place in Jerusalem under control. It was also a way of raising up the next generation to be Babylonians at heart, not Jews.
- **It is thought that Daniel was anywhere from the age of 13 to about 17.** At any rate, he was a young teenager. The intent of the Babylonians was to wipe out Jewish culture, religion and language by indoctrinating them into the Babylonian culture. We see the introduction to Daniel here, and learn that he is probably of Jewish nobility, smart, healthy, well-built and handsome. He is to be trained in the king's court, learning Babylonian ways, to serve the king.
- **NOTE:** The name "Ashpenaz" is translated as "Melzor" by some translations – different cultures, different names.

⁵And 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.

- "The king" here is Nebuchadnezzar himself. He **personally selected their diet**. These young men were not given prisoner food – they were treated as Babylonian royalty and given sumptuous food directly from the king's table. This was another brainwashing tactic, to illicit loyalty to the king of Babylon. They were treated well from the beginning.

- **Three years were required to teach these young men** a new language and other necessary skills. It should be noted that the greater majority of the captives were not given this kind of treatment. These young men were hand selected to become full-fledged, card-carrying Babylonians, who would be taught the administration of Babylon. They would serve as those Jews loyal to the king, who would keep the rest of the Jewish population and the kingdom in order, according to the king's wishes.

NOTE: Archaeologists have recently discovered, right next to the ruins of the palace, the very elaborate ruins of the special schools used for training the administrators and "wise men" of Babylon, including Daniel and his friends.
(Source: Grant Jeffrey, FINAL WARNING)

- Apparently Daniel and his friends were **most likely made eunuchs**, to fulfill the passage from Isaiah we just read above, especially, chapter 39, verse 7: *"And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood who will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon."*
- **A NOTE ABOUT EUNUCHS.** Our understanding today of a eunuch is a castrated male, because of their duties within the palace. However, it should be noted that the word eunuch does not always mean this. A eunuch was more commonly understood to be an officer of the king, or a master of palace servants. He may or may not have been castrated. Chances are if he worked around women, he might have been.

⁶Now from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. ⁷To 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, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah** are now introduced as some among the captives from Judah. Their names carried meaning. Their Hebrew names all contained a form of "God." "El" is the single form of God (Elohim plural). "Ah" is a form of Yahweh, the covenant name of God, the I AM. These Godly names were changed into compounds of the names of the Babylonian gods.

Daniel	God is my judge	Belteshazzar	Whom Bel favors, keeper of the treasures of the prince of Bel (the main god of Babylon)
Hananiah	God is gracious	Shadrach	Illumined by Shad (a sun god)
Mishael	Who is like God?	Meshach	Who is like Shach (a love goddess)
Azariah	God is my helper	Abednego	The servant of Nego (a fire god)

- The changing of Hebrew names to Babylonian names was **a big part of the brainwashing program.** All traces of their heritage and culture was to be erased. An attempt will be made to brainwash these young men, to make them Babylonians inwardly and outwardly. They were supposed to eat like Babylonians, dress like Babylonians, speak like Babylonians and think like Babylonians.
- These names are important for another reason. **The Hebrew names reveal the judgment, grace, greatness and provision of God Almighty, and monotheism – worship of the one true God.** The Babylonian names reveal polytheism, worship of several gods, as well as occultic and evil practices. Right away, just through these names, we are shown the classic struggle through all time – between God and the enemies of God.
- **These four young men are singled out** among thousands of captives for us to know. What can we expect when God does this? He has lessons for us to learn through these people. They are going to take a stand for God, and God is going to use them in His plan. Whenever we see anyone mentioned by name in Scripture, it is for a reason – it is to tell us something about God, or His plan. There is always a message to be understood, but also a real live person to know.

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.*

- During their preparation time, the young men in training were to eat from the king's personal menu of "specialty foods" and wine. The food on this table was very rich, the best in the kingdom. **Unfortunately, much of it had been sacrificed to idols, or was considered unclean for Jews.** Israelites considered food from Nebuchadnezzar's table to be contaminated because the first portion of it was offered to idols. Likewise a portion of the wine was poured out on a pagan altar. Ceremonially unclean animals were used and were not prepared according to the regulations of the law. These regulations are found in Leviticus: *"I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy. Do not make yourselves unclean by any creature that moves about on the ground. I am the LORD who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy. "These are the regulations concerning animals, birds, every living thing that moves in the water and every creature that moves about on the ground. You must distinguish between the unclean and the clean, between living creatures that may be eaten and those that may not be eaten."* (Leviticus 11:44-47)
- It was this quality of the food against which Daniel chose to protect himself – to keep from sinning. **He wished to be obedient to God's word.**
- *"But Daniel purposed in his heart..."* These are words we should engrave upon our minds and hearts, and in turn engrave them upon our children's minds and hearts. In these simple words, we have the power behind Daniel's incredible rise to authority in a godless kingdom. BEFORE his indoctrination, BEFORE his temptations, BEFORE the world could be laid at his feet, Daniel CHOSE to keep himself pure, he CHOSE to honor his God and be true to him. This was, perhaps, **Daniel's most important decision – and subsequent course of action.**
- **God calls us to lives of separation and holiness.** We are NOT part of this world, and therefore we also are to "purpose in our hearts" not to be like this world. It is amazing how easy it is, once you have made the commitment, and spoken the promise. There is no compromise, and for those who choose to keep themselves separate, the temptation to compromise is not in the picture. **THIS IS PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF THIS CHAPTER, AS IT RELATES TO OUR LIVES TODAY.**
- *"therefore he requested..."* Daniel no doubt used tact and a pleasant manner in making his request. He did not demand something foolhardily or arrogantly but was a gentleman and discreet, even as we should be in this world when situations may conflict with our conscience. God does not expect us to get ugly, make demands, and insult or offend those around us. There are proverbs that deal with this: *"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."* (Proverbs 15:1) and *"Through patience a ruler can be persuaded, and a gentle tongue can break a bone."* (Proverbs 25:15)

⁹*Now God had brought Daniel into the favor and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs. ¹⁰And 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."*

- Notice that it was GOD who brought Daniel into favor with Ashpenaz. God was honoring Daniel's decision to honor Him.
- **Ashpenaz was afraid of the king** – with good reason! It was the king himself who had decided their diet, and Ashpenaz was justifiably hesitant to give in to Daniel's request, for fear of losing his head. (Nebuchadnezzar was known to be ruthless at times) *That certainly justified his concern.* Ashpenaz could not think anything other than the fact that Daniel's suggested diet would not be the healthiest, and they would therefore show it in their bodies, putting his life in danger. (*"endanger my head"*)

¹¹So Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, ¹²“Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³“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.”¹⁴So he consented with them in this matter, and tested them ten days.

- **Daniel takes a real stand for God**, and he does it in a pagan land. Under normal circumstances, this would have been fatal. But Daniel had already made a commitment, and Daniel used good judgment by offering an alternative instead of rebelling. He didn’t argue, he made a suggestion for a solution. **What a lesson this should be for us! We need to remember that when we honor God, God will honor us.** Daniel showed remarkable faith and trust, especially at such an early age. Those who had trained Daniel as a child, instilling this kind of faith, should be commended. The role of parents in teaching children to live lives pleasing to God is so critical, and often unfortunately neglected.
- *“give us vegetables to eat...”* The word used for “vegetables” is sometimes translated as *“pulse.”* This word meant anything grown, so it could include grains, fruit, vegetables, etc. While some may argue that such a diet is healthier than the rich foods of the king’s table, this is really not relevant to the passage. This is about devotion and dedication to God, not necessarily about nutrition.
- This is just one of hundreds of examples of **Daniel as a role model**. Notice that Daniel is reasonable, creative, calm and congenial. He does not respond in anger, fear, or pride. He is diplomatic in the face of real danger. There are many such examples in this book. Watch for them.
- *“...ten days.”* The number **10 often had the symbolic significance of completeness**. Also, ten is frequently used in scripture to indicate a test, measurement, or testimony.



¹⁵And 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. ¹⁶Thus the steward took away their portion of delicacies and the wine that they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

- **God honored Daniel’s desire to keep himself “clean”** before God by not only maintaining their health, but making them seem healthier than the other wise men apprentices. This, along with the favor that Daniel had already established with the eunuchs, enabled them to continue their chosen diet, and not defile themselves.
- Don’t misunderstand this passage. It **is not to be taken as a mandate for becoming vegetarians**. It only means that Daniel and his friends were preserved by choosing not to eat food that was sacrificed to idols. God did not prohibit eating meat, but meat sacrificed to idols was considered unclean. Daniel was protecting himself from defilement by choosing vegetables (and most likely grains), none of which were considered unclean in God’s laws. We must remember, however, God is the one who preserved their health.
- **Daniel and his friends were under the law at that point. We are not.** Obviously we must consider nutrition, but we are not to be legalistic. Paul tells us: *“Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience, for, “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it.”* (1 Corinthians 10:25-26. See also Romans 14.)

¹⁷As 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.

- It is important to notice again the words that **“God gave them....”** God is doing all of these things. **God raised up** Nebuchadnezzar to judge the Jews. **God allowed** Daniel to find favor among the eunuchs. **God enabled** Daniel and His friends to eat foods that would not defile them. **God equipped** these young men with their knowledge and skill. These are deliberate references so we will understand that God is in control of everything. In the next chapter we will read that He raises up kings and brings them down. Again, all of history is HIS STORY. It is critical for our own faith to understand this fully. **GOD IS ALMIGHTY, SOVEREIGN, THE MOST HIGH GOD**, who holds everything in His hands.
- The rest of their training years apparently passed smoothly. **These four stood out in every aspect of knowledge** and in the application of that knowledge.
- **“...Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.”** Daniel was specially chosen of God to be entrusted with these gifts. He would use them properly and give God all the glory (*this is the supreme rule for use of all spiritual gifts*). Daniel had already **passed the critical test – to make God sovereign in all things** – even in his diet. For this reason, God chose to honor Daniel and give him gifts that God would use to His glory. This is an important lesson for us as well. When we allow God to have control of all areas of our lives, He will honor those choices, and use us to bring Him glory. It is a time-tested principle of God’s kingdom. It is all about HIM, not us.
- As we go through this study, try to look for the **parallels between Joseph in Egypt and Daniel in Babylon**. Both had been forcibly removed from their homelands, both made choices to honor God (*remember Joseph and Potiphar’s wife*), both were given the gift of understanding and interpreting dreams and visions, and both were raised to remarkable places of great power in the kingdoms to which they were subject. Watch for other likenesses – there are many.

¹⁸Now 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. ¹⁹Then the king interviewed them, and among them all none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they served before the king. ²⁰And 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.

- **“Final Exams and Graduation Day” have arrived for these young captives.** We have a presentation to the king, Nebuchadnezzar, and final reviews and tests. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah have distinguished themselves above all others in the class, not just somewhat, but ten times better (*ten used here as an idiom for “many times better”*). This comparison is made not just to classmates, but to all the others in that category in the king’s realm. God has truly gifted these young men, and will use all of them to His glory.
- Notice it was **not just Daniel**, but his friends also that had committed themselves to God, and were therefore blessed by Him with amazing wisdom. Their wisdom was completed by God and far surpassed that of the others – **God’s doing, and HIS only!**
- **“...therefore they served before the king.”** Daniel and friends passed their final exams and were then employed in the king’s court. We have a clue about their capacity of service in the next verse.



- **“...all the magicians and astrologers...”** In the book of Daniel we have references to several **kinds of “advisors” employed by Nebuchadnezzar**. This is what Daniel and his three friends were trained up to do for the king. These are variously translated as magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, astrologers and diviners. Some are just labeled as Chaldeans, which implies astrologers. All of them are associated with the occult. If Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah were faithful to God even in the food they ate, we can be sure that they may have been trained in these things, but would never practice them. God enabled them to advise the king without resorting to the occult. This obviously made them “ten times” better (far superior to the max!) than those who dabbled in practices forbidden by God. We will see evidence of this later. For the time being, it is important to know what these so-called “advisors” were really doing. This will have major implication in the next chapter.

1) **Magicians** (Hebrew *chartom*), always used in plural, eleven times in the Old Testament (Daniel 1:20, 2:2), generally means scribes, writers of hieroglyphics, circles and strange diagrams used in divination. Always associated with the occult.

2) **Enchanters** (Hebrew *ashshaph*) only used in Daniel (1:20, 2:21) means enchanter, astrologer, conjurer, always implies the occult. May refer to those who used incantations, exorcism.

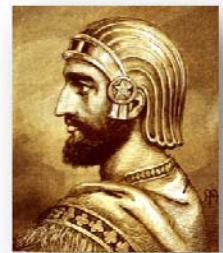
3) **Sorcerers** (Hebrew *kashaph*) probably from a verb meaning to bewitch, or cast a spell. Daniel 2:2, 2:4, and four other times in the Old Testament.)

4) **Astrologers/Chaldeans** (Hebrew *kasdiy* meaning from the “Kasdites” implying Chaldeans), used to mean an astrologer, since apparently the entire group of people are known for this activity (Daniel 2:2, 2:4, 2:5, 2:10, 3:8, 5:7, 5:11). It may also refer to priests within the Babylonian religion who used the stars (objects of worship) for revelation. This reminds us of Babylon’s origins at the Tower of Babel. Babylon was founded on rebellion from God, and has continued in this.

- **All of these “wise guys” had various functions, all connected to the occult.** Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah have now graduated to this elite group of advisors, but they will do their jobs with very different tools and results.

²¹*Thus Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus.*

- **“Daniel continued...”** At this point Daniel gives his readers a glimpse into the future. Seventy years would pass before Babylon was taken over by the Persian **King Cyrus**. (536-9 B.C., exact dates are still debated, but we can be sure that this empire lasted 70 years. It is important to know that God raised up not only kings, but entire empires to do His will. The neo-Babylonian empire lasted only as long as the pre-ordained captivity of the Israelites, as God had foretold.). Daniel was still living in the year 537 (10:1), so he most likely saw the exiles return to Judah from Babylonian captivity. It is doubtful that Daniel returned, however – he would have been in his 90’s.



- **“first year of King Cyrus...”** From this we can also determine approximately how long Daniel lived – at least 90 years. We don’t have exact dates. We know that he served the major kings of the Babylonian empire, and two of the Medo-Persian empire that followed. (Darius and Cyrus).

In 1 Samuel 2:30 God says **“...for those who honor Me I will honor.”** Here in Daniel, God has shown us that this is true...all of the time. Daniel and friends chose to honor God. And God chose to honor them. Daniel’s ability to interpret dreams and visions will enable him to find great favor with the king, above all the other “wise men” of Babylon, and also to serve God’s purpose to tell us the future well in advance of its perfect fulfillment in our historical time line. Nebuchadnezzar would come to depend on Daniel, by God’s design and by His provision. Samuel presents us one of the most basic of all Godly doctrines, and Daniel shows us the proof.

