

Daniel and His Times (Part 3)

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[0 : 00] The introduction is something we want to finish tonight and I have called it Daniel and his times.

! We have made our way through two of the main points that I wanted to make the captivity and! Captives and now we're ready for the crisis. The crisis and this is still kind of in the area of introduction, all right? Because it is introducing us to Daniel and introducing us to his times and the captivity that is very shortly, that is taking place at the beginning of this book and why the captivity and all that, we've covered all that ground. And so this is kind of introduction and now we're going to really talk a little bit more about not only Daniel but also his friends and who were they? Anybody remember? And Abednego. Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego. And we'll kind of let them come into our discussion a little bit tonight and more about them when we get into verse 8 and following next Wednesday night.

All right, so third, the crisis. Ladder part of verse 4 all the way to verse 7. And so what I want to do is, instead of reading the ground that we've already covered, let me begin.

Actually, just with verse 4. Well, I really have to start with verse 3. Then 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, young 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. 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. You remember we studied about these guys and the fact that they were very likely of noble birth, and in fact, probably in line, maybe even Daniel at some point in line to be king.

[2 : 57] And so Nebuchadnezzar's been pretty shrewd in bringing these guys into his kingdom and teaching them in his ways and in the ways of the Babylonians so that they could be leaders for him.

He's getting kind of the cream of the crop. Now, from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

To them the chief of the eunuchs gave names. He gave Daniel the name Belteshazzar, Hananiah Shadrach, to Mishael, Meshach, and to Azariah Abednego.

All right? So, that gets us up to as far as we're going to want to go tonight or need to go tonight. And so we're talking about the crisis. That's the third point in this three-point introduction to the book of Daniel.

The crisis. Captivity, the captives, now the crisis. And Romans chapter 12 and verses 1 to 2, very familiar passage, where Paul writes, Present your bodies a what?

[4 : 13] A living sacrifice. Holy. Acceptable. Acceptable unto God. He says, be not conformed to this world, but be transformed.

Transformed by the renewing of your mind. And I know I skipped a little bit in there. And I kind of used that to begin with because there are just two outcomes, really, that are possible or probable for any person.

Two outcomes. One is to be transformed in Christ. The other one is to be conformed to the world. I mean, they're just the two outcomes. Transformed or conformed.

And so this, I think, identifies what was at stake for Daniel and his friends. Because, you know, really, you can think of it this way. They're now in the University of Babylon.

They've been enrolled, forced enrolled, forced enrollment. And now they're students of this pagan university. So forced enrollment for three years is kind of like seminary.

[5 : 28] You know, three-year seminary. Though for most guys I know, it took a little longer, including the guy you know up here. It took a little longer than three years. But it's a forced enrollment for three years.

That's what it says in verse 5. To be basically, what? Brainwashed. Brainwashed with the godlessness of the Babylonians. That's what's going on here.

So don't take this too lightly. Think, well, you know, all it's really saying is, you know, eat his food and drink his wine. I mean, what's the big deal about that? Well, there's a whole lot more to it than that.

They were going to be taught in the ways of the Babylonians. And, all right, so, you know, what's it going to be for Daniel and his friends?

Conformed or transformed? And Babylonians and Nebuchadnezzar, as their king, wants to conform them to their ways.

[6 : 29] Now, the crisis is threefold. First, there was an authority crisis. An authority crisis. The latter part of verse 4.

Whom they might teach the language and literature. You have to kind of look behind these words because, well, all right, it's a big deal.

Teach their language. What's wrong with that? And literature. You know, there's some good literature out there. It hasn't been written by Christians, necessarily.

What's wrong with reading some good classics or, you know, some good literature? You know, just on the face of it doesn't sound too bad. But really, it comes down to an authority crisis.

They're going to be taught for three years. It's taught not just the language. The language actually also includes the culture. You can't teach language without also incorporating culture.

[7 : 35] And so really, it's a culture that they're going to be taught. And the literature, that obviously would include the things that have been written by the greatest minds, or what they would consider the greatest minds and scholars of the Babylonians.

All right. So they would then be subjected to the academic, philosophical, religious, I would even add cultural ideas of a godless, really even an anti-god culture.

That's what's at stake here. And the authority of God's word, then, is going to be what? Naturally challenged. It is even in our culture.

If, you know, a young person enrolls in a secular academic institution, especially, you know, let's say one of the Ivy League schools or, you know, a big school somewhere, then they're going to be subjected to a culture.

They're going to be subjected to a certain kind of philosophical perspective and religious perspective that is going to challenge the authority of God's word in their life.

[9 : 01] And, you know, some of you in this room, you know, your alma mater perhaps was a secular school. And you could give testimony to the challenge, some of the challenge that has come your way, a challenge to against the authority of God's word.

And yet in this room, most of us are of a certain age where when that happened, that was a while back, and things have changed.

They've gotten a lot worse. Where in many of our educational institutions where Christianity is openly challenged and determinately challenged.

And so our young people sometimes have a hard way to go, our young believers. I'm not saying that a believer shouldn't be enrolled in a school that is non-Christian or secular.

I'm not saying that at all. But you can be sure that their view of Scripture, the authority of Scripture, the sufficiency of Scripture is going to be challenged at that academic level.

[10 : 12] And that's what's at stake here. So there's a crisis about to take place here with Daniel and his friends. And God's word is going to be challenged and it's going to be attacked.

And again, that's what's happening in our day's day in colleges and universities. You know, I really could add, even in our grade schools, as low as grade school, high school, even in those schools, Christianity is more and more being challenged and really is more and more being put in the light of something that's fable or myth or cast in a bad light that it's intolerant and angry and hateful and needs to be stamped out.

And that's just where we're going in our culture. All right. So an authority crisis. Second, a morality crisis. A morality crisis.

Verse 5. And the king appointed for them a daily provision of the king's delicacies. Doesn't go into any detail about what those delicacies are or were.

And of the wine which he drank. And three years of training for them so that at the end of that time they might, what? Serve before the king.

[11:39] Now what king is this? Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar. All right. So now we'll discuss the substance of this next week when we get into verse 8 and following.

But this is symbolic, really, of the question concerning the source and substance of morality. What is the standard of morality? What is to be the standard of morality?

The devil's theories. Or God's truth. What is to be the standard of morality? Well, obviously God's truth. Now we have strayed so far from that in our society.

We're almost used to it, quite frankly. We've almost accepted it. In fact, it doesn't even seem strange to us. It doesn't even upset us as much as it should anymore.

We've gotten so far from it. But most of us have lived a long enough time that we can remember back in the day when, you know, the standard of morality was God's word.

[12:42] Even for those who weren't necessarily professing Christians. And that's why I have said a number of times that we have, for a number of years, we have enjoyed what really is a culture of Christianity.

Now, I say a number of years. I'm saying back in the day we enjoyed what we could characterize as a culture of Christianity. Not necessarily that everyone was a believer, a true Christian.

But at least the morality and the view of morality and the standards of morality were based upon Judeo-Christian principles that we get right from the Bible.

Now we're living in a day where that's just not the case anymore. And it's not that we have reached a place where now there's no morality. It's a new morality.

And it's not based upon God's word. And this is the same kind of crisis that Daniel and his friends were facing. Taking captive from their nation, their country, their Jewish nation.

[13:57] And brought suddenly into, remember, the capital city of idolatry. Where idolatry was born there in Babylon.

And so the standard of morality is about to change. Or they've been immersed in a dramatic change. A standard of morality that's based upon the devil's theories rather than upon God's word. God's truth. Now, the devil, see, what does he want to do? He wants to change our appetites from the things of God to the things of the world.

The devil wants us to crave gold rather than God. The devil wants us to enjoy the material rather than the spiritual.

I mean, to some extent, we need to be honest with ourselves. To some measure, we all get caught up in this. Even God's people.

[15:02] The devil wants us to be more focused on earth rather than on heaven. And on and on, I could go with that list. So the ultimate goal of Nebuchadnezzar highlights the morality of crisis.

What's that ultimate goal? Last part of verse 5. So that at the end of that time, they might serve or stand really is the idea behind this word. To stand before the king.

Now, the problem is what? He's the wrong king. He's the wrong king. And so there's a morality crisis. And then one more.

An identity crisis. Verse 6 and 7. Verses 6 and 7. Now, from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

And to them the chief of the eunuchs gave names. I read this a moment ago. He gave Daniel the name of Belshazzar, to Hananiah, Shadrach, to Mishael, Meshach, and to Azariah, Abednego.

[16:05] Now, the purpose. What was the purpose of this? Well, you know, I guess we could just say they just, you know, he just wanted them to have some good old Babylonian names, you know, so that everybody would know them.

I mean, they're being taught their language, the language of the Chaldeans. And so they might as well have some good, good, strong Babylonian names.

And so what's so wrong with that? Well, the purpose was to remove from these young men of Judah any vestige of devotion to the Lord.

I mean, this is kind of the last vestige of it. Their names. A good name is rather to be chosen, but of great riches, the Bible says. And so he's teaching them, changing their diet, changing what they drink, changing their reading material, changing their education, adding to their education, the

education of the Babylonians and on and on, changing their culture, all of that. And now kind of the last vestige of their devotion to the Lord or their identity with Yahweh God is their name. Because each of their Hebrew names is the form of a name of Yahweh God.

[17 : 29] Either El for Elohim or Yah, Yah for Yahweh. Yahweh.

All right. So we can we see that. Daniel. Daniel means what? God is my judge. That's what his name means. God or Elohim.

Elohim. By the way, Elohim is not a sacred name for God. It's more a descriptive title for God, a unique title as creator, as mighty, as strong.

He's Elohim. And so Daniel means God is my judge. Hananiah ends with Ah, Yah, means Yahweh is gracious.

Mishael means who is he that is God. Elohim. Azariah.

[18 : 30] See, all their Hebrew names have a portion of the name of God in them. Azariah means Yahweh is help. All right.

So Nebuchadnezzar, not satisfied to just bring these Hebrew boys to his palace and into his country, into his culture and into the leadership of Babylon.

He must remove their names. Names, by the way, that remind them of their faith in Yahweh God.

That would remind them every day. Every time someone would use the name, remind them of their connection with Yahweh God.

And he's going to remove that. That's his desire. And so he gives them some good old Babylonian names. Belshazzar means, and Bel, God Bel, it's a pagan god, means Bel, protect my life.

All right. So now, you know, Daniel's name was God is my judge, my supreme judge. Now my name means Bel, the pagan god, protect me.

[19 : 32] It's almost my name is now prayer to a pagan god. Shadrach, the A-C-H on the end of it, means I am fearful of God.

And it may be difficult to see, especially in the English transliteration, but the ending of the name is really A-K-U, Aku, Aku is a Babylonian god.

I don't believe I put that in your notes. You can write that down if you want to. That's the ending of Shadrach. It's the name for Aku, Aku, A-K-U, a Babylonian god.

Meshach also has that same ending on it. It means I am despised before my god. And then Abednego means servant of Nebo.

Nebo was another pagan god, Babylonian god of wisdom. All right, so see the crisis here. Not just a crisis that would, you know, of their morality.

[20 : 42] They're now being immersed in a new culture and being forced to be immersed in it and to learn of it. And to hopefully, of course, Nebuchadnezzar's idea is to, that they would incorporate that pagan culture in their life.

And they would be strong Babylonian leaders for him. And so they're going through a crisis here.

And then finally, just even changing their name. So that kind of is the introduction.

That tells us about the captivity, specifically about the captives. And the crisis that they are about to go into or being faced with.

And then when we get to chapter 1, verse 8, on to 21. Then we're going to see Daniel and his test. Because there's going to be a test here.

A test of who he's going to follow. And so we'll get into that next week when we start with verse 8. We'll see you next week.