



LIVING IN BABYLON
PART ONE- A LOOK AT DANIEL CHAPTER ONE

PETER BELLINGHAM

05 NOVEMBER 2006

Daniel Chapter 1: *In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. 2And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god.* Due to the incredible rebelliousness of His people, God judged them by allowing the king of Babylon to overthrow Jerusalem and take the survivors away captive.

3And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; 4Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. The king of Babylon wanted some of the young men of Israel to be brought to him; intelligent, skilful young men, so he could use them in his court. But although they were captives in Babylon, being groomed for the service of the king, these men were still children of Israel; they were still children of God.

5And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king. The king wanted to give them his own royal food. When a king sits down to dine, he doesn't just eat bread and water. He eats well. And here the king of Babylon wanted these Israelite men, these chosen slaves, to eat his own food; the best food and wine available. Why? So that when they'd completed these three years of preparation they'd have grown physically and mentally strong and be ready to stand before him and serve him.

As we read in verse 1, the Babylonian king had besieged Jerusalem. What did that mean for the people inside the city? It meant nothing was allowed to come in and nothing was allowed to go out. After a while there was no food and the people became desperately hungry. The prophet Jeremiah tells us that mothers began to boil their own children and eat them (Lamentations 4:10.) So having recently suffered through that terrible starvation, these young men were now being offered the best of the king's food in Babylon. What would they do? What would these children of Israel, these children of God, do?

6Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: 7Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego. 8But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. Daniel and his friends were given new names in Babylon, but they were still children of Israel. And Daniel decided, "I'm not going to eat this food. I'm not going to contaminate myself with the food of the Babylonians." It could be that some of the food had been offered to idols, and we're not supposed to eat food offered to idols, or it could be that some of it was meat that was prohibited under the law of God. But for whatever reason, by eating this food Daniel would have contaminated himself. And he would not agree to this.

9Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. 10And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your

**ALTHOUGH THEY
WERE CAPTIVES
IN BABYLON,
THESE MEN WERE
STILL CHILDREN
OF ISRAEL**

faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king. The man responsible for them was afraid of Daniel's stance. He feared that if they didn't eat the king's food, then at the end of the three years they'd be weaker and paler than everyone else, and he would be blamed and executed for this.

11Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, 12Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. 13Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants. 14So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days. 15And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat. 16Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse. Having only eaten vegetables for ten days, these four young men looked stronger and healthier than those who'd eaten the king's best meats. Why? They had honored God, so He honored them, giving them strength and energy.

17As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. Young people, it is very important to study, to learn to manage information in order to make a living as an adult. But by honoring God in your life you will gain even more learning and understanding and wisdom, of a kind that can't be found in books or learnt in classes.

18Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. 19And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king. 20And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm. God didn't just give these men energy and strength; he gave them favor in every aspect of their lives.

Now let's look more closely at what happened here. Daniel had purposed in his heart that he would not contaminate himself with the king's food, but instead he would honor God. **We can see in Daniel a heart that was very steadfast and faithful in his commitment to the Lord.** Despite the hunger he'd experienced in Jerusalem, despite being offered this rich food, he had decided "No, I'm going to honor God." So we have Daniel, with his faithful constant heart; and we have God, who responds to Daniel's faithfulness by involving himself in Daniel's life in a powerful, sovereign way, giving him favor and elevating him.

Daniel lived in relationship with his Father God in the middle of a completely wicked nation. Everything in his life revolved around that Father-son relationship. **He brought everything that happened to him back to his relationship with his Father, and to what his Father said.** And two vital elements in that relationship were Daniel's faithfulness and God's sovereign and proactive involvement in his life.

Instead of eating the king's rich food, Daniel ate from the relationship that he had with his Father God, and from doing His will. That's how Daniel lived, and that's what sustained him. Jesus lived the same way. *In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. 32But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. 33Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat? 34Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work* (John 4:31-34.) Jesus' food was being in relationship with His Father and doing His Father's will. That's how Jesus lived and that's what sustained Him. Just like Daniel.

What about us? Biblically, Babylon symbolizes the whole world, fallen and full of evil. So we also live in Babylon. *And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.* (1 John 5:19) Just as Daniel knew that he was of God, that he was an Israelite, of the people of God, living in a fallen kingdom, so as this verse says, we know that we are of God, living in a wicked world. **We must always remember that although we live in a fallen world, we are of God, we are His children, we are different.**

Just as the king offered Daniel his food, the world offers us its finest food. It comes in many forms, but let's get to the root

ALL THAT
MATTERS IS THE
OPINION OF OUR
FATHER GOD.

of what the world offers us: its value system; its way of seeing and judging things.

The world's value system says the most important thing is to be successful and to win other people's approval. The world judges everything based on those two standards; your 'success' and how well liked you are by certain people.

But we are children of God. So we are not to judge things that way. All that matters is the opinion of our Father God. **We must understand the difference between the world's value system and what God says.**

He says that if we're in Christ, then regardless of our successes and failures, we're completely accepted by the Father and pleasing to Him. Why? Because He hasn't only forgiven our sin, He's given us the righteousness of Christ. We are righteous in Christ and therefore pleasing to God (2 Corinthians 5:21.)

What does God say about living for other people's approval? He says that at one time we were separated from Him but now we've been forgiven and placed in an intimate relationship with our Father. So we're totally accepted by God (Ephesians 2:12-13.) Totally and utterly apart from whether we have other people's approval or not.

It's nice to have others' approval, to have friends and so on. But we don't base our life on that. We base it on one thing; I already have God's approval.

What about needing to be successful? God says that in Christ we're already completely pleasing to the Father and accepted by Him as His children, totally and utterly independently of our success and failures. *And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. 18And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. 19Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. 20Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.* (Luke 10:17-20) Here the disciples are rejoicing because they had success in ministry, casting demons out; but Jesus says, "You know, that's all great. You cast demons out? I saw Satan fall from heaven so I'm always ahead of you in terms of achievement. But what's important isn't the fact that spirits are subjecting themselves to you. What's important is this simple fact: that your name is written in heaven, that you're my child."

So the world, and a great deal of the church that has been influenced by the world's value system, says that the things that matter are getting a great job with a great salary and everyone liking you, or casting out demons and healing people and preaching to thousands and having a 'successful' ministry.. But Jesus says the opposite, "What matters is that you're my child and you're in Me and therefore I accept you and you're pleasing to Me." Can we humbly agree with what Jesus says?

It's good to succeed in the things we put our hands to. But again, we don't base our life on that. We base it on one thing: I am already pleasing to my Father God.

Beware lest any man spoil you [lead you astray] through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. (Colossians 2:8) In other words, be careful not to eat the good food that the king of Babylon offers you, having to live for success and for other people's approval. Be careful to only eat from Christ, in whom you are already a success because you're His child.

But we've all, to one degree or another, eaten of that food, from that table, following the standards of the world and judging things based on what the world says instead of what our Father God says. *Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. 9But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?* (Galatians 4:8-9) We don't even realize some ways in which we've been eating the food of the king of Babylon, ways in which we've been ordering our lives according to what the world says, living for success (even if it's Christian success) or living for the approval of others. We don't even realize. God has to dig deep to show us those things at times.

MUCH OF THE
CHURCH HAS
BEEN
INFLUENCED BY
THE WORLD'S
VALUE SYSTEM.

But in Christ we've been set free from having to live by those standards, those philosophies. And just like Daniel we need to say "No!" to that food from the world, and instead eat of the truth and will of God. **We must learn to identify those philosophies of the world and the lies of Satan and reject them, instead building our lives on Jesus.** At times it's a long process, but each time God shows us something and we line ourselves up with what He says, we get freer and freer in Him.

And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. 20And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. 21Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen. (1 John 5:19-21) We know that live in Babylon but that we're children of God, and what's more, the Son of God has come and given us understanding to know Him who is the Truth, who sets us free. So let's keep ourselves from idols.

Perhaps we don't bow down before a wooden statue, but we do bow down at times before the idols of success, before the idols of having to have other people's approval, rather than acknowledging the truth of what God says about us.

So, will you be like Daniel, steadfastly rejecting the rich food of the world and the devil and their perspectives, and simply trusting in what your Father God says? If you do, you'll be being true to the Truth. God will honor you for honoring Him. You'll experience more and more the abundant life that God promised, and your life will glorify Him increasingly.

Please take this simple question away with you and dwell on it. In fact, feast on it! "What does your Father God say about you?" Because His is the opinion that matters. Amen.

© 2006 Ministerio La Fuente, All Rights Reserved



thewellhonduras.org

We want to serve you in your walk with Christ. Feel free to contact us!

"IF ANYONE THIRST, LET THEM COME TO ME AND DRINK"- JESUS
(JOHN 7:37)