



THE BOOK OF **Daniel**

The Companion Book to Revelation



Chapter One



The beginning of
THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES

THE BEST YOUNG MEN

Daniel 1:1-4 (NASB), ¹ In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ² The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along 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 he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god. ³ Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his officials, to bring in some of the sons of Israel, including some of the royal family and of the nobles, ⁴ youths in whom was no defect, who were good-looking, showing intelligence in every branch of wisdom, endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge, and who had

ability for serving in the king's court; and *he ordered him* to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.

Daniel and three of his friends (Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah) were carried away to Babylon as part of the first of three times the Babylonian's would come to Jerusalem and carry away the spoils of war including the best of its people. Eventually all things of value including the golden vessels used in temple worship the best of all the skilled laborers, the men of science and understanding and those with wisdom and knowledge, the very elite, the princes, the sons and daughters of the King of Judah would now be made to serve a new king.

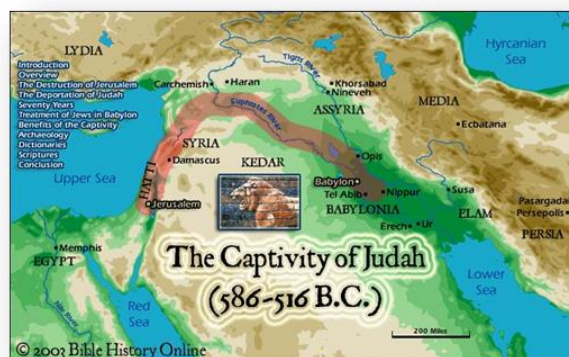
Not only was their nation conquered but now their will and purpose was to be conquered and bent towards the will of the king and the Babylonian gods. Here is this story of the destruction of a nation and a people. We see that the good will share the fate of the unrighteous. In this case, these people except the very young will die in their new home far away from the city they loved. They were to be transformed into that which was Chaldean.



Ashpenaz was told by the king to take the sons of Judah, primarily those of the royal house. They would be the ones who would be the most educated and healthiest, fairest to look at, showing the most intelligence. They would be the ones with promise and understanding and able to discern knowledge and would in time stand before the pagan king.



Daniel and his three friends were considered royalty being descendants of the good king Hezekiah. Nebuchadnezzar was intent on preparing these young men so that they would serve his purpose, and therefore he did not treat these young men as prisoners. Instead he treated them as though they were his princes, with the intent of them becoming Babylonians in body and spirit.



The four young men were handed over to Ashpenaz who was over all the eunuchs, and it was his duty to teach the Chaldean language and their customs. It is also possible that Ashpenaz made the boys eunuchs at this time, for we are never told of these four having wives or children. Now everything in the lives of these boys was to be transformed, every memory of their previous life had to be erased. These young men had to become totally committed to the worldly ways of the Chaldeans. They were subjected to 3 years of godless, man-centered education with no more instruction about God and no more worship of God. Ashpenaz dictated everything including what they were to study, what they were to believe, and how they were to eat, no detail was passed by. In three years these young men were to stand before the king and be ready to serve (Jeremiah 25:8-11).

As to their Names (v7):

Ashpenaz first gave these young men new names for a couple of reasons, first to wean them away from their land and religion, getting them to adopt the culture and religion of their new heathen nation. Second, there was the meaning of their names. Daniel's name meant "God is my judge," he was given the new name of **Belteshazzar** (meaning whom Bel favors). Hananiah's name meant "Jehovah is gracious," it was changed to "**Shadrach**" (meaning illumined by the Sun-god). Mishael's name meant "Who is as God is," it became "**Meshach**" (meaning who is like Venus). Azariah means "Jehovah is my Helper" and was changed to "**Abednego**" (The servant of Nego). Each of the new names had something to do with the heathen idol worship of Babylon. There was to be no mention of God's name in Babylon. The leader of the youth did not miss a trick in trying to root out forever the memory of Jehovah from the minds of the young men. He was confident that by taking them from their parents, changing their names, and subjecting them to a man-centered education, he would make them fit servants of Nebuchadnezzar, rather than of God.

Their Diet (v8-16)

The young Hebrew boys for the most part followed a strict diet laid out for them at Mt. Sinai under the Mosaic Law. The first challenge to their faith would be in their diet. They were to be fed food from the King's portion and for the most part the king's meat was consecrated to their idol god's. By this fact alone was unfit for the three Hebrew boys to eat according to Jewish law. When Daniel explained this to Ashpenaz he became fearful of the king's response and feared for his own life.



Daniel 1:8 But 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

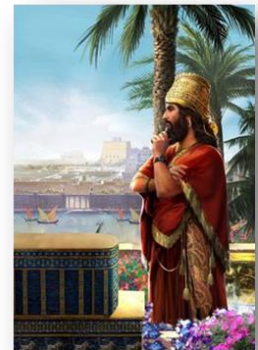
drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

Daniel asked for ten days to prove to Ashpenaz that they could get the same outcome by eating their own food. The ten days are important here, because the number **TEN** is the number of testing used in the scriptures. Therefore at the end of the ten days Daniel would prove that obedience to God is a better way than simply conforming to the world. At the end of the ten days all four young men had improved more so than all the others eating from the kings portion.

God was with them (v17-21)

The four young men honored God more than they feared the king. The result was that they grew and put on weight even more than the others who were being trained as they were. Not only did God bless them more than the others but He gave them knowledge and wisdom and the skill needed to learn. Daniel has given an extra gift of understanding visions and dreams (v17).

When it came time for the young men to stand before the king, the head of the eunuchs brought them before the king so that he might talk with the young men. As they talked the king found no one in all his kingdom that could compare with Daniel and his three friends. In matter of wisdom and understanding the king found them to be ten times better than all his magicians and astrologers anywhere in all the realm of the king.¹



¹ <https://www.blueletterbible.org/study/larkin/dt/10.cfm>