

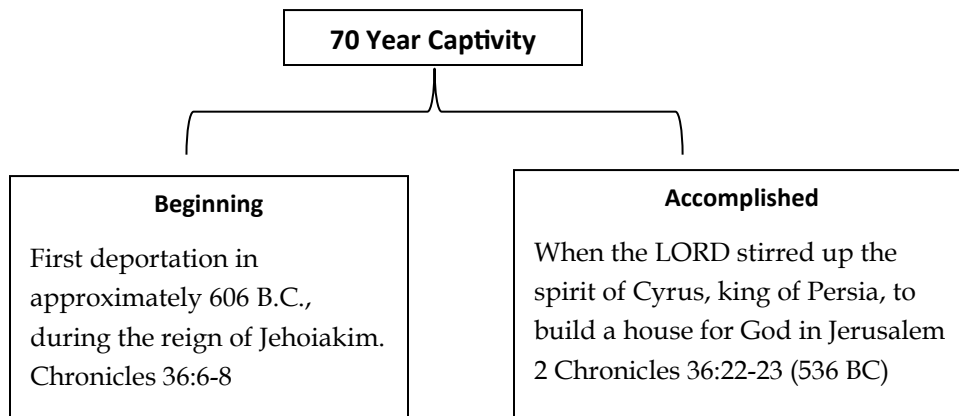
# The Book of Daniel

## CHAPTER ONE

**In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. (Daniel 1:1)**

This first siege does not mark the beginning of the 70-year captivity, however. That marker is explained in **2 Chronicles 36:11-21** to be at the time of Judah's final siege and deportation into Babylon under king Zedekiah (approximately 586 B.C.).

The "accomplishment" of the 70 years is given in **2 Chronicles 36:22**, when the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, to build God a house in Jerusalem (*see also Ezra 1:1-2*). This is all prophesied by Jeremiaiah 26:6.



**And 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. (Daniel 1:2)**

In the first siege of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar took not only Jehoiakim and some of the people but also took "part" of the vessels out of the house of God. During the first siege "part" of the vessels were taken (Daniel 1:2); upon the second siege they took "all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold" (II Kings 24:13). In the final siege **the remaining treasures are taken away**<sup>1</sup> (2 Kings 25:13-17). All these were taken and placed into the land of

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<sup>1</sup> It is interesting that there is no mention of the Ark of the Covenant being taken in any Nebuchadnezzar's three sieges.

Shinar<sup>2</sup> (Babylon) in the house of Nebuchadnezzar's god. It would be these "vessels" that king Belshazzar would later use to praise the heathen gods (Dan. 5:1-4).



*Artist's rendering of Babylon*

**Babylonian Excavations:** Serious investigation of the ruins of Babylon began in the late 1800's, first with industrial scale digging by the British Museum from 1879-1882, and then with systematic and scientific excavations led by Robert Koldewey of the German Oriental Society. Over the course of eighteen seasons, Koldewey excavated numerous parts of the city, including the Ishtar Gate, the Processional Way, which led to the Temple of Marduk, and the palaces of Nebuchadnezzar.

Nebuchadnezzar was a prolific builder and left numerous inscriptions about his building projects. In one inscription, he describes how he rebuilt the palace of his father:

**"I tore down its walls of dried brick, and laid its corner-stone bare and reached the depth of the waters. Facing the water, I laid its foundation firmly, and raised it mountain high with burnt brick. Mighty cedars I caused to be laid down at length for its roofing. Door leaves of cedar overlaid with copper, thresholds, and sockets of bronze I placed in its doorway. Silver and gold and precious stones, all that can be imagined of costliness, splendor, wealth, riches, all that**

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<sup>2</sup> The land of Shinar is Babylon (Genesis 10:10). Shinar, or Babylon, is most infamous in scripture (Gen. 11:1-9, Rev. 18).

**was highly esteemed I heaped up within it, I stored immense abundance of royal treasure within it."**

Two great structures dominated the center of the ancient city of Babylon: **The Temple of Marduk<sup>3</sup>**, and **the great Ziggurat**. When Koldewey excavated the temple of Marduk in the early 1900's, he discovered numerous inscriptions about the building of the Temple. Nebuchadnezzar, who called himself the "*promoter of Marduk*" claimed, "*My heart impels me to build the temple of Marduk... the chamber of Majesty, the chamber of the lordship of the wise one among the god, the exalted Marduk. Silver, gold, costly precious stones, bronze – and cedar wood, all conceivable valuables... I brought to my city ... and accumulated all in the palace of his lordship, an enormous abundance.*"

This description takes on interesting significance considering the passage here in Daniel where Nebuchadnezzar takes the vessels from the Temple in Jerusalem and brings them to the "house of his god" and places them in the "treasury of his god" (Dan. 1:2).

Scholar, John C. Lennox, writes, "It may well have been in the Temple of Marduk complex that Nebuchadnezzar had his treasure house. It was presumably much like a museum, with rooms containing innumerable beautiful and valuable artifacts – the very best of the "tribute." This would align with the account given in Ezra 1:11 when Cyrus, king of Persia, later gave the treasures from the house of God back to the Jewish people. A count revealed 5,400 objects of gold and silver:

**All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. All these did Sheshbazzar bring up with them of the captivity that were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem. (Ezra 1:11)**

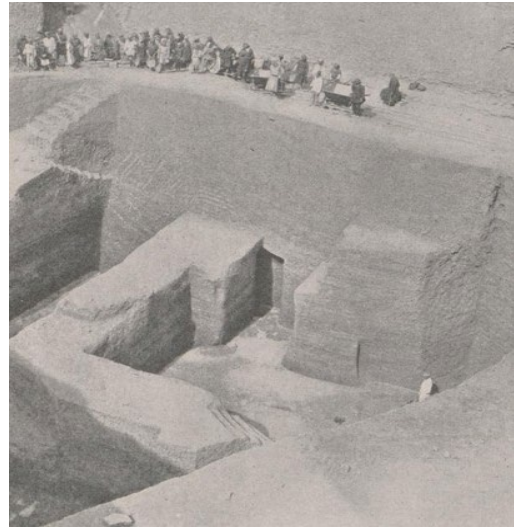
In Daniel 4:30, King Nebuchadnezzar boasts, "The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" The archaeological record affirms the massive building campaigns of Nebuchadnezzar. Literally, millions of bricks were unearthed with his name inscribed on them. The Nebuchadnezzar of the Bible and the Nebuchadnezzar of history are one and the same. Similarly, the biblical city of Babylon that Daniel lived in is consistent with the city Babylon uncovered in archaeology.

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<sup>3</sup> "Marduk or Merofach, also known as Bel or Lord. "Declare ye among the nations, and publish, and set up a standard; publish, and conceal not: say, Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, **Merodach** is broken in pieces; her idols are confounded, her images are broken in pieces." (Jer 50:2)



*A model of the Temple of Marduk, on display at a museum in Berlin*



*Excavations of the Temple of Marduk*



*Aerial view of the remains of Temple of Marduk*



*Rendering of Babylon with the Ziggurat and the Temple of Marduk*

**And 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; Children 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. (Daniel 1:3-4)**

**Babylonian School (vss. 3-4):** Under the first siege Nebuchadnezzar took the best of treasures and the best of the people, both of which would be beneficial to his kingdom, thus he took *“children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in all knowledge, and understanding science.”*

Daniel and his three friends were, therefore, skillful and wise children, cunning in all knowledge and understanding science. This is very telling, being that Daniel will be placed over all the “wisemen” of Babylon (Daniel 2:48). And these “wisemen” from Babylon would later use their knowledge of astronomy, along with the revelation of the time schedule for the promised Messiah’s first and second advents, to follow the stars and seek the young child Jesus (Matthew 2:1-2).

It is interesting that our text also says, **“that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes.”** It could very well be that Daniel and his three friends were chosen because they were of the seed royal, possibly descendants of the good king Hezekiah. They would become eunuchs of great authority, as was the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:27. Note what the prophet Isaiah says:

**Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD of hosts: Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. (Isa 39:5-7)**

Daniel and his three friends (*Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah*) were placed into language school for three years, so they might learn the tongue of the Chaldeans. Keep in mind that Daniel and his friends would have been around the age of seventeen.

The learning school was led by Ashpenaz, the master of the kings’ eunuchs. Those within the high court, as were Daniel and his friends, were made eunuchs. The most obvious reasoning for this group of men being made eunuchs is that they would be working around the king’s palace, and thereby the king’s many wives. As eunuchs, they would not be a threat to the king. Nor would they seek to have wives and children of their own,

so they could exclusively attend to the wishes of the king. Thus, Daniel did not marry or have children.

**And 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. (Daniel 1:5)**

**The Kings' Appointed Provisions (vs. 5):** The goal once again is to make these Hebrew children into Babylonians in every aspect, both externally and internally. The daily provision of the king's meat and wine would be given for three years, the length of their schooling (cf. vs. 18). The purpose of the meal was so the Hebrews might not look malnourished, but "fairer and fatter in flesh" (vs. 15).

An unstated purpose in the king choosing Daniel and his three friends was to place them over all the captivity of the Hebrew people. Daniel and his friends could speak both Hebrew and Aramaic<sup>4</sup> (the language of the Babylonians). Thus, "...at the end thereof they might stand before the king."

**Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: Unto 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. (Daniel 1:6-7)**

**A New Name (6-7):** As part of the Babylonian "finishing" school they were given Babylonian names. In most cultures names have meaning, and this is especially true in the Bible. Their Hebrew names reflect their upbringing, whereas their Babylonian names reflect the "gods" of the Babylonians.

**Daniel:** "God is my judge"

**Belteshazzar:** "A Prince of Bel"

**Hananiah:** "Jehovah is gracious"

**Shadrach:** "To the Sun"

**Michael:** "Helped of Jehovah"

**Meshach:** "Who is as Venus"

**Azariah:** "Helped of Jehovah"

**Abednego:** "Servant of the fire god"

\* The interpreting of the names varies widely but the overall truth is clear, by changing the Hebrew names the Babylonians would be minimizing the One True God, and exalting the gods of the Babylonians.

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<sup>4</sup> This is why the book of Daniel was written in Hebrew (1:1-2:3 & 8:1-12:13) and Aramaic (2:4-7:28).



**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 1:8)**

**The Heartful Purpose of Daniel (8):** The proverbial saying is, “when in Rome, do as the Romans.” This could be applied to how most of those Jewish men might have thought as they sat at the banqueting halls of Babylon. And yet four men would not allow their conscience to be defiled by eating the king’s meat. These men were not willing to dismiss their loyalty to the Lord, saying, “When in Babylon, do as the Babylonians do,” for Daniel had “purposed in his heart” he would not defile himself.

The refusal of the king’s meat was primarily because it was offered to idols, and or might have been one of the unclean beasts given in the Law. In either of these cases, Daniel and his friends were put to their first test to obey God rather than men.

The refusal of wine might have been the issue of the Nazarite vow, **“He shall separate himself from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink, neither shall he drink any liquor of grapes, nor eat moist grapes, or dried.” (Numbers 6:3).**

Daniel made a “request” to the prince of the eunuchs. The request, though simple, shows the resolve of Daniel’s character. Daniel and his friends were not going to be conformed to this world, but they were seeking to be transformed by the renewing of their minds and their submission to the will of God.

This first stand Daniel and his friends took by faith would be the first of many recorded in the Book of Daniel. As we take note of the trials Daniel encountered, one can only imagine the many instances he faced that are not recorded, for Daniel served under four kings and two world powers.

**When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him. (Proverbs 16:7)**

**Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. (Daniel 1:9)**

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**The Heart of the Prince of the Eunuchs (vs. 9):** Daniel had done his part; he spoke up. Now God is doing His part, moving Daniel into favor with Ashpenaz, prince of the

eunuchs. As God had done for Joseph: **“But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.”** (Genesis 39:21).

**And 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 faces worse liking than the children which *are* of your sort? then shall ye make *me* endanger my head to the king. Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. Then 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. So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days. And 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. Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse. (Daniel 1:10-16)**

**Daniel Put to the Test (vss. 9-16):** Ashpenaz was moved in heart at Daniel's request, but was hesitant to fulfill it, so Daniel proposed a test. Melzar, whom Ashpenaz has placed over Daniel and his friends, would give them a diet of nothing but pulse<sup>5</sup> and water for ten days. At the end of that testing period, Daniel and his friends would stand with those who ate the king's meat, and whatever results Melzar saw he could deal with accordingly. Daniel and his friend passed the test, for after ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than all the children who had eaten the king's meat. As a result, Daniel and his friends were allowed to continue their diet of pulse.

**As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. (Daniel 1:17)**

**Four Gifted Children (vs. 17):** While all the children taken were gifted by God in knowledge, skill, learning and wisdom, Daniel was given understanding in visions and dreams, which is seen throughout the remainder of the book.

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<sup>5</sup> Pulse would be a grain, seeds, beans and the like, according to 2 Samuel 17:28.



Now 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. And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king. And in all matters of wisdom *and* understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians *and* astrologers that *were* in all his realm. (Daniel 1:18-20)

**Standing before the King (18-20):** Following the three years of schooling (refining school) all those who graduated, including Daniel and his three friends, were brought by Ashpenaz to stand before King Nebuchadnezzar, and of them all there were none found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. When the king inquired of certain matters, these four Hebrew children were found ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.

**And Daniel continued *even* unto the first year of king Cyrus. (Daniel 1:21)**

**Daniel's Long Life (vs. 20):** Daniel was in captivity in Babylon from 606 B.C. to the time of King Cyrus, even to the first year of King Cyrus (536 B.C.). Daniel would minister in the higher court to four kings: Nebuchadnezzar, Darius, Belshazzar, and Cyrus and two world empires: Babylon and the Medo-Persian Empire.