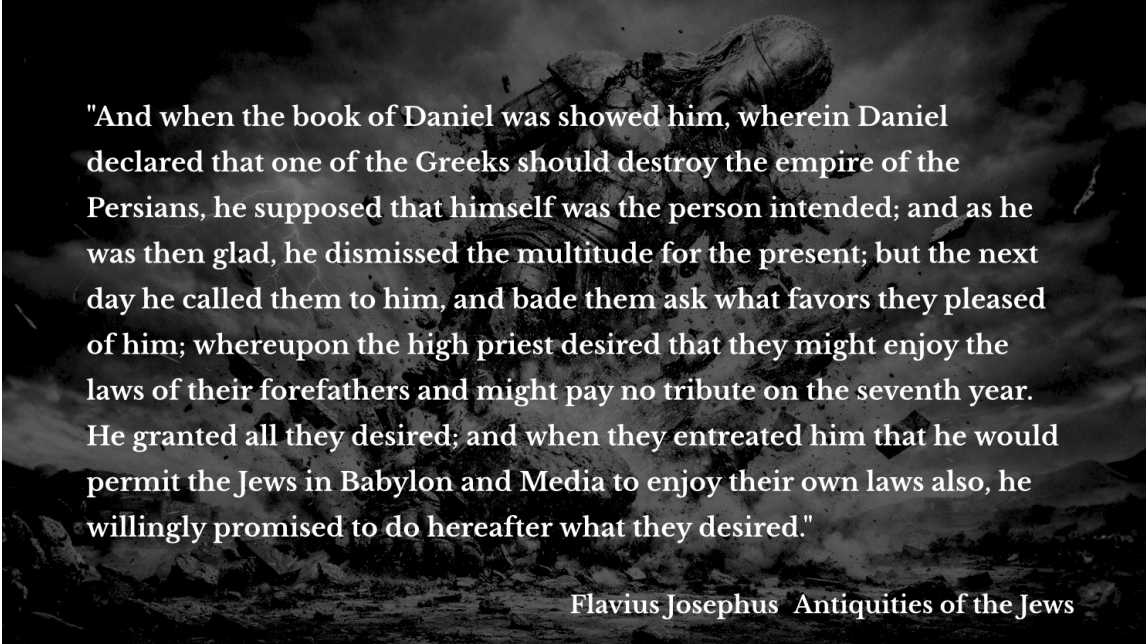




Good evening, Arising Church. We have embarked on a collective adventure together. As a community we are discovering the treasures within the book of Daniel. Perhaps no other book in the Bible has played a more pivotal role in the Gentile world. The work itself foretells Gentile history in advance, and the records of its impact on the empires of the world are extensive.

Consider that Alexander the Great encountered this book and it shaped the way that he saw Jews in Judea. From Josephus's *Antiquities of the Jews*:

(DO NOT READ)



"And when the book of Daniel was showed him, wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that himself was the person intended; and as he was then glad, he dismissed the multitude for the present; but the next day he called them to him, and bade them ask what favors they pleased of him; whereupon the high priest desired that they might enjoy the laws of their forefathers and might pay no tribute on the seventh year. He granted all they desired; and when they entreated him that he would permit the Jews in Babylon and Media to enjoy their own laws also, he willingly promised to do hereafter what they desired."

Flavius Josephus Antiquities of the Jews

"And when the book of Daniel was showed him, wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that himself was the person intended; and as he was then glad, he dismissed the multitude for the present; but the next day he called them to him, and bade them ask what favors they pleased of him; whereupon the high priest desired that they might enjoy the laws of their forefathers and might pay no tribute on the seventh year. He granted all they desired; and when they entreated him that he would permit the Jews in Babylon and Media to enjoy their own laws also, he willingly promised to do hereafter what they desired."

When you hear Josephus's account of Alexander the Great and his interaction with the book of Daniel, what stands out to you most? Was it that Alexander was presented with the book of Daniel? Was it that Alexander apparently understood himself to be the subject of one of

Daniel's prophecies?

Or was it that when the Jews were given the opportunity to ask a favor from one of the most powerful Gentile rulers in the world, their primary request was simply that they be permitted to faithfully follow the laws of their forefathers?

It is remarkable that Alexander the Great was shown the book of Daniel and that this prophetic book apparently altered the way he viewed the Jewish people. But perhaps even more remarkable is what the Jews did with that moment. They did not ask first for wealth, power, political advantage, or revenge against their enemies. They asked to live faithfully before God according to the Torah. Their deepest concern was not merely survival under Gentile dominion. Their deepest concern was covenant faithfulness. That brings us back to the words of Moses:

○ **Deuteronomy 4:8 (ESV)**

“And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law

that I set before you today?”

Now, as interesting as this account is, our intention tonight is to experience the book of Daniel as belonging to the Ketuvim. In other words, we want to understand how this particular book instructed the Jewish people to live

faithfully within the historical context of their own time. Once we understand that principle, we will be better equipped to make faithful and practical application for believers living within our own historical setting.

This is part of what we must keep in mind as we enter the book of Daniel. Daniel is not merely a book about kingdoms, beasts, empires, dreams, and prophetic timelines. It is also a book about how the people of God remain faithful when they are living under the rule of foreign powers.

Daniel teaches us how to live when we are not in control of the empire, but we are still called to be faithful to God.

Before we begin let's go over our table of contents:

(SLIDE)

Daniel 1: Table of Contents

1. Opening / Introduction to the Series
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3. Verses 2–3: The Weight of What Was Lost
4. Verse 4: The Seven Attributes (What Babylon Wanted With Them)
5. Verses 5–8: Names, Indoctrination, and the Decision Not to Defile
6. Verses 9–10: God Moves the Heart of the Official
7. Verses 11–16: The Ten-Day Test
8. Verses 17–20: Ten Times Better
9. Verse 21: Faith that Outlasts Empires

- **Opening / Introduction to the Series**
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- **Verses 17–20: Ten Times Better**
- **Verse 21: Faith that Outlasts Empires**

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Section 1: Verse 1 - Chronology and Context

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

We want to begin by highlighting a problem you didn't know existed and solving it for you, in the hopes that one day when you suddenly deeply care about seeming contradictions in the chronology of Daniel, you will consult this study and be able to clear up any confusion.

Some prominent commentators have greatly confused the timeline of Daniel by using Jeremiah 25:1 as a proof text for their arguments.

Jeremiah 25:1 (ESV)

25 The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah (that was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon),

This passage states that Jehoiakim's fourth year coincides with Nebuchadnezzar's first year. However, Daniel 1:1 states that Nebuchadnezzar is king in the third year of Jehoiakim. How can this be?

This is because of a Babylonian concept called the “accession year.” The accession year principle shows that “year one” of a king’s reign would not officially begin until the month of Nisan in the year following the time he became king.

You might think of it as the “zero year” of his reign. It is similar to how a baby is alive and fully born, but we do not call that baby one year old until he has completed his first year. Until that point, he is in year zero. In the same way, Nebuchadnezzar could be truly king during his accession year, even though the official first year of his reign had not yet begun according to the Babylonian dating system. During this accession year, the monarch would be fully king, but he would still need to go back to Babylon to be officially crowned.

(Do Not Read)



The timeline difficulty in Daniel 1 becomes abundantly clear when you understand that Daniel 1:1 takes place during Nebuchadnezzar's accession year, which is also the third year of Jehoiakim. The following year,

Nebuchadnezzar's first year according to the Babylonian dating method, would be Jehoiakim's fourth year, as Jeremiah correctly states. Then Daniel and his friends' three-year training in Babylon would be completed in Nebuchadnezzar's second year.

This is confirmed by the following slide:

(Do Not Read)

Timing of Nebuchadnezzar's Accession Year

The Battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C. established Babylon as the dominant power all the way to the border of Egypt (the Wadi el-Arish). In 604 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar campaigned in Palestine and conquered Ashkelon. **Jehoiakim quickly gave allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar, who had recently been crowned king of Babylon after his father's death shortly after the Battle of Carchemish.** Perhaps during this campaign Nebuchadnezzar took hostages, including Daniel and his three companions Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, and carried them captive to Babylon (Dan. 1:1–7).

Thomas V. Brisco, Holman Bible Atlas, Holman Reference (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 155–156.

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been crowned king of Babylon after his father's death shortly after the Battle of Carchemish. Perhaps during this campaign Nebuchadnezzar took hostages, including Daniel and his three companions Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, and carried them captive to Babylon (Dan. 1:1–7).

Thomas V. Brisco, *Holman Bible Atlas, Holman Reference* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 155–156.

Here we see confirmation that Nebuchadnezzar's father died shortly before the Battle of Carchemish, right around the time he was taking the Jewish youths into captivity. This confirms our above timeline, where Daniel 1 takes place in the accession year, when Nebuchadnezzar is a fresh new king of Babylon.


We took the time to go through this because many commentators distort the timeline due to their own biases. With any commentator, whether Jew or Gentile, it is important to understand the varying beliefs and biases they hold, and how those affect their conclusions.

For example, you may love what a cessationist commentator has to say on the Gospels; however, his views on 1 Corinthians 12 will no doubt be problematic.




All that to say, when considering dates and timelines in the book of Daniel, as always, test everything.

Before moving on to verse two, it is worth taking time to establish the historical background of Nebuchadnezzar, who will be a central figure in the first four chapters of Daniel. To understand him properly, we need to begin one empire earlier — with Assyria.

(SLIDE)



Sennacherib


-  The Assyrian kings during this period were of Aramaean descent, and while Akkadian was still spoken in Assyria and Babylonia, the Aramaic language had become the international language of trade, commerce, and foreign relations.
-  For many years, Assyria had been content with simply annexing Babylon and appointing a puppet king there who would be loyal to Assyria, but during Sennacherib's reign, one of these puppets, Mardukapla-iddina II, rebelled against Assyria and seized the throne of Babylon.
-  Over a period lasting 15 years or so Sennacherib struggled desperately to maintain control of Babylon, and in 689 B.C. he laid siege to Babylon. When the city finally surrendered after being cut off for 15 months, Sennacherib carried off the wealth of the city and **destroyed every major structure the Assyrians could find, from government palaces and religious temples to residential buildings.**

 *Legends of the Ancient World: The Life and Legacy of King Nebuchadnezzar II*

Sennacherib, king of Assyria, is a familiar name to readers of Isaiah 36–37 and 2 Kings 18–19 as the king who attacked Jerusalem in Hezekiah's day. What is less commonly known is what Sennacherib did to Babylon. Though Babylon had been a dominant power in the days of Hammurabi — roughly contemporary with Moses — by Sennacherib's time it had been reduced to


a vassal state, humiliated and left in ruin. After a 15-month siege in 689 BC, Sennacherib carried off the city's wealth and destroyed every major structure he could find. It was also under Assyrian dominance that Aramaic became the international language of trade across the region — which is why several chapters of Daniel are written in Aramaic, and why Nebuchadnezzar's letter to the known world in chapter 4 is addressed in Aramaic.

(SLIDE)



Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, and Nabopolassar


- Nevertheless, Babylon remained important both culturally and strategically to the Assyrians, so Esarhaddon, Sennacherib's son, began rebuilding Babylon in the very first year of his reign, **681 B.C.** He even returned and restored the statues of the Babylonian gods that had been carried off or destroyed by his father.
- That generosity was repaid about 50 years later, in **626 B.C.**, when one of the Assyrian officials in Babylon, **Nabopolassar, led a revolt against the Assyrians.**
- Nabopolassar was a member of one of the tribes of Kaldu, and he won out over Aššuretil-ilani, the Assyrian king, who had proclaimed himself the ruler of Babylon only a year before. Nabopolassar identified with the people **and in his inscriptions claimed for himself the title "son of a nobody."**

 *Legends of the Ancient World: The Life and Legacy of King Nebuchadnezzar II*




Sennacherib's son Esarhaddon began rebuilding Babylon in 681 BC, restoring temples and returning statues his father had destroyed — but that generosity was repaid about 50 years later when Nabopolassar, a Babylonian official from the tribe of Kaldu, led a successful revolt against


Assyria in 626 BC. Nabopolassar is to Babylonian history what George Washington is to American history — the founder of what historians call the Neo-Babylonian Kingdom. He claimed the title "son of nobody," presenting himself as an underdog who rose from obscurity to liberate and rebuild a demoralized people. The tribal name Kaidu is a likely origin of the term "Chaldeans." It is worth noting that the entire book of Nahum is dedicated to the fall of Assyria, and the instrument God used to bring it about was Nabopolassar. To understand Nebuchadnezzar is to understand the shoes he was trying to fill.

(SLIDE)



Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar


-  Nabopolassar's first son, **Nebuchadnezzar**, was probably a fairly young child when his father took the throne, and the boy grew up in the palace watching him build what would become the Neo-Babylonian Empire. Nebuchadnezzar also grew up alongside at least two brothers that we know about: **Nabu-šuma-lišir, was the second born son and probably closest to Nebuchadnezzar** while Nabu-zer-usabsi was a much younger brother (or possibly step-brother) of Nebuchadnezzar and may not have played much of a role in Nebuchadnezzar's formative years.
-  To make sure that there was no question about which of his sons should inherit the throne, before he was a young man **Nabopolassar declared Nebuchadnezzar "the chief son, the crown prince" in 607 B.C.**
-  Nabopolassar named his first-born son, *Nabû-kudurri-ušur*, which is an Akkadian phrase meaning 'Nabu, protect my lineage'

 *Legends of the Ancient World: The Life and Legacy of King Nebuchadnezzar II*

Nabopolassar's firstborn son was Nebuchadnezzar — whose full Akkadian name, *Nabû-kudurri-ušur*, means "Nabu, protect my lineage." He grew up in the palace watching his father build the Neo-Babylonian Empire. He had at







least two brothers; the closest to him was Nabu-šuma-lišir. To remove any question of succession, Nabopolassar formally declared Nebuchadnezzar "the chief son, the crown prince" in 607 BC. In some respects Nabopolassar may be thought of as a Gentile David and Nebuchadnezzar as a Gentile Solomon — the one who conquered, and the one who built.


(SLIDE)



Nebuchadnezzar's Age

Dates are difficult to authenticate for his birth, but Encyclopedia Britannica says **Nebuchadnezzar was born in 630 B.C.**

-  **Nebuchadnezzar joined his father on the battlefield in Harran, Assyria** at only 20 years old. His father left the battle in his hands to return to Babylon and settle political unrest in 610 B.C. (Eph 'al Israel "Nebuchadnezzar, the Warrior: Remarks on his Military Achievements." Israel Exploration Journal 53 (2003) 178-91. (179))
-  Nebuchadnezzar was only 25 when he proved himself a master strategist in the victory over Egypt at Carchemish in 605 B.C.
 -  Nabopolassar died the same year and Nebuchadnezzar began his ascension year. This is Daniel 1.
-  Nebuchadnezzar is 27 or 28 in Daniel 2 as he is prophesied to rule the world
-  Nebuchadnezzar is 32 or 33 when Jehoiakim rebels and the second siege of Jerusalem occurs
-  Nebuchadnezzar is probably around 35 in the events of Daniel 3

 *Legends of the Ancient World: The Life and Legacy of King Nebuchadnezzar II*

Encyclopedia Britannica places Nebuchadnezzar's birth around 630 BC. By age 20 he was already fighting alongside his father on the battlefield at Harran. At 25 he proved himself a master strategist at the victory over Egypt at Carchemish in 605 BC — the same year Nabopolassar died and Nebuchadnezzar began his ascension year, which is Daniel 1. He was approximately 27 or 28 during the events of Daniel 2, age 32 or 33 when Jehoiakim rebelled and the second siege of Jerusalem occurred, and around

age 35 during the events of Daniel 3.

(SLIDE)




Married in 614 B.C. (16 Years Old)

-  Nabopolassar made a treaty with the Medes and obtained the Median princess, **Amytis**, as a wife for his first-born son, Nebuchadnezzar.
-  Nebuchadnezzar was well known among ancient historians and contemporary writers because of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, one of the ancient wonders of the world. According to ancient accounts, Nebuchadnezzar constructed **the Hanging Gardens for his homesick wife.**
-  They were created...after the model of Egyptian pleasure gardens. Many ancient writers discussed the Hanging Gardens, including Strabo, Diodorus Siculus, and Quintus Curtius Rufus. Moreover, Diodorus Siculus and Philo of Byzantium both described the mechanisms of the Gardens at length. According to their accounts, the Hanging Gardens were terraced and cultivated orchards that were built over a series of buildings made of glazed ceramic and perhaps **watered by some kind of pulley or pump system of irrigation. Water was drawn from a reservoir through a network of reeds and bricks, held together by asphalt and cement, with lead used as a sealant.** The Gardens were built on a citadel 80 feet high with walls 22 feet thick.

 *Legends of the Ancient World: The Life and Legacy of King Nebuchadnezzar II*

Nebuchadnezzar married the Median princess Amytis in 614 BC at around 16 years old, the result of a treaty his father made with the Medes. He is well known to ancient historians in part because of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon — one of the seven wonders of the ancient world — which ancient accounts say he constructed for his homesick wife. The Gardens were terraced cultivated orchards built over glazed ceramic structures, watered by an elaborate pulley and irrigation system, built on a citadel 80 feet high with walls 22 feet thick.

(SLIDE)




News of Father's Death

It was while Nebuchadnezzar was cleaning up the situation in the west with Egypt that the sad news of his father's death reached him. Upon hearing the news, he made arrangements for his army, along with all of their booty and captives, to return to Babylon on their own, likely under the command of one of his trusted military commanders, while he made great haste for Babylon with only a few of his closest companions. **He made it to Babylon in record time by covering nearly 600 miles in 12–15 days** [He then left immediately to collect tribute in Hatti-land and gain allegiances]

Nebuchadnezzar returned to Babylon with the massive amounts of tribute that he had received from the region just in time to celebrate the Babylonian New Year's festival, the akītu. Nebuchadnezzar would have entered the temple of Marduk, only to be **stripped** by his own attendants of his symbols of kingship he had so recently acquired, and an Urigallu priest then **slapped** him across the face attempting to bring tears to Nebuchadnezzar's eyes, which would be a good omen.

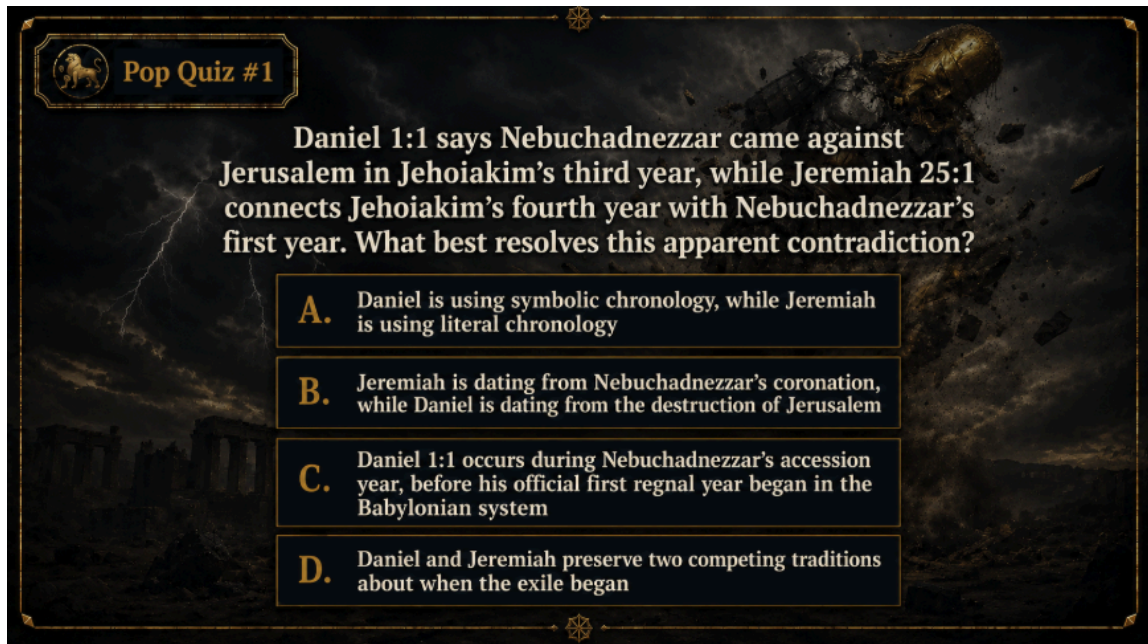
The priest then **pulled his ears**, making him bow down to Marduk, and demanded that the king swear that he had governed justly and had not sinned. After this humiliating experience, Nebuchadnezzar received back the symbols of his kingship from the priest, only to be **slapped** across the face a second time.

 *Legends of the Ancient World: The Life and Legacy of King Nebuchadnezzar II*

News of his father's death reached Nebuchadnezzar while he was managing affairs in the west. He covered nearly 600 miles in 12–15 days to return to Babylon, then immediately departed again to secure tribute and allegiances. When he finally returned for the New Year festival, the akītu, his first official act as king was to enter the temple of Marduk — where his own attendants stripped him of his symbols of kingship, a priest slapped him across the face to make him cry as a good omen, his ears were pulled while he bowed to Marduk, and he was slapped a second time after swearing he had governed justly.

This is the Nebuchadnezzar you should have in mind as you read Daniel — not a blood-crazed tyrant, but a young man carrying his father's legacy, navigating rebellion and humiliation, and being slowly, sovereignly worked

on by the God of Israel.



Pop Quiz #1

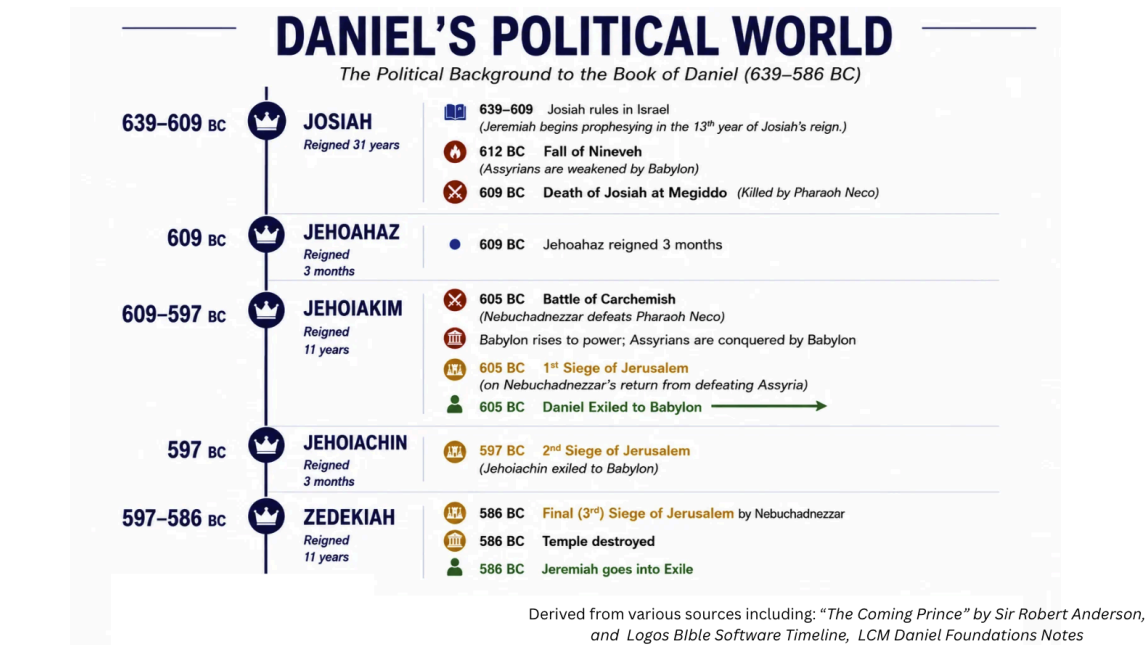
Daniel 1:1 says Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem in Jehoiakim's third year, while Jeremiah 25:1 connects Jehoiakim's fourth year with Nebuchadnezzar's first year. What best resolves this apparent contradiction?

- A. Daniel is using symbolic chronology, while Jeremiah is using literal chronology
- B. Jeremiah is dating from Nebuchadnezzar's coronation, while Daniel is dating from the destruction of Jerusalem
- C. Daniel 1:1 occurs during Nebuchadnezzar's accession year, before his official first regnal year began in the Babylonian system
- D. Daniel and Jeremiah preserve two competing traditions about when the exile began

² And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia^a and put in the treasure house of his god. ³ Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring in some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility—

It is easy to hear about Daniel being taken captive and feel somewhat removed from the story, so we wanted to bring you into some current events happening at this time.

(Do Not Read)



You will remember from our intro that Daniel was born during the reign of Josiah, which was also the time Babylon began expanding its territory and becoming a multi-ethnic empire. After Josiah's death, Jehoahaz reigned for 3 months before being ousted and replaced by Jehoiakim. During Jehoiakim's reign, Nebuchadnezzar took some youths from the royal family into captivity, thus the first wave of Babylonian captivity began. This also marked Babylon's great rise to power as it was on the backs of their defeat of Assyria.

After Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin reigned three months before being taken captive to Babylon along with 10,000 other captives. This was the second wave of captivity. After Jehoiakim, Zedekiah reigned for 11 years. During Zedekiah's reign, Nebuchadnezzar completely destroyed the temple burning whatever remained.

Our chapter tonight only covers the first wave of destruction, but it is

important to understand the way this would have felt to Daniel and the entire nation. They had once been a world superpower, they had promises from God that if they would obey they would always been on top of the world. Now they are descending into deepening levels of captivity.

- **Deuteronomy 28:12-13 (NIV)**
- 12 The Lord will open the heavens, the storehouse of his bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands. You will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. 13 **The Lord will make you the head, not the tail. If you pay attention to the commands of the Lord your God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top, never at the bottom.**

The Israelites taken captive likely had the promise of Deuteronomy, which expresses God's desire for the nation, top of mind. They also had to wrestle with the truth that the nation had not "paid attention to the commands of the Lord" and they had not "carefully followed them"

Remember the heights that the Judean House of David had enjoyed under the days of Solomon:

(Do Not Read)



Through the entire chapter of 1 Kings 10 we see the greatness of Israel's former kingdom and king displayed.

- *Kings sought the wisdom of Solomon*
- *Kings brought tribute to Solomon*
- *Solomon received about 50,000 pounds of gold per year*
- *Nothing like Solomon's throne had ever been made*
- *Solomon was richer than all other kings*
- *The whole world sought to hear Solomon's wisdom*
- *Silver was made as common as stones*
- *Cedars, a sought-after/luxurious building material, were abundant!*
- *The best breeds of horses where abundant!*

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Under the leadership of the Davidic house — the son of David — Israel had become the most influential and powerful nation on earth. Think about that title: son of David. Just as the crowds cried out to Yeshua "Hosanna, Son of

David, save us!" — so Israel under Solomon's reign had been the most powerful nation on earth. The temple to the God of Israel had no equal on earth. The articles of the temple were exquisite and unique on earth, the holy priesthood didn't even drink from them. And in a few chapters we are going to see a Babylonian beast drinking from them like they were common things.

Kings from other nations had come to Jerusalem to witness its grandeur, majesty, and the wisdom of the king who was the son of David. Now his descendants are in captivity in Babylon.

In Solomon's day there was no such thing as a Babylonian empire — and yet Israel went from being the chief among the nations of the world to being conquered by a nation that had not even risen up in the day that your power was at its height. There couldn't be a modern parallel. It would be something like if Lithuania invaded and conquered the United States — it's that implausible.

Remember what Psalm 89 says:

- **Psalm 89:35–40 (NIV)**
- 35 Once for all, I have sworn by my holiness— and I will not lie to David—

36 that his line will continue forever and his throne endure before me like the sun;

37 it will be established forever like the moon, the faithful witness in the sky.”

38 **But you have rejected**, you have spurned, you have been very angry with your anointed one.

39 You have renounced the covenant with your servant and have defiled his crown in the dust.

40 You have broken through all his walls and reduced his strongholds to ruins.

This Psalm was written by Ethan the Ezrahite, and he is expressing the lament of enduring the Lord's discipline. He is grappling with the feelings of rejection, spurning, and anger that he is experiencing in contrast with the everlasting promise given to the descendants of David. We know that God did not renounce that covenant — we have learned that from studying the covenants — but how did this man feel in his historical context, seeing what he was seeing? Engage with this book for a moment, because it is not just a story — it is truth — and you will admire these noble, royal Jewish youths even more.

- **Psalm 137:1–6 (NIV)**
- 1 By the rivers of Babylon **we sat and wept** when we remembered Zion.

2 There on the poplars we hung our harps,

3 for there our captors asked us for songs, **our tormentors** demanded

songs of joy; they said, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion!”

4 How can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a foreign land?

5 If I forget you, Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill.

6 May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy.

This psalm is a song written down for all Israel to sing. It is a memorial of just how challenging this time period really was. The Israelites sat and wept as their tormentors made demands of them! And yet there was a resolve to remember Jerusalem which is the throne of God. This resolve did not mean that things were easy or going to get any easier.

Consider also that the book of Lamentations was written during the time of Daniel. Consider that fact alone, an entire book of the bible, just lamenting Jerusalem's destruction was written concerning this time period!

- **Lamentations 4:11–12 (ESV)**
- 11 The LORD gave full vent to his wrath; he poured out his hot anger, and he kindled a fire in Zion that consumed its foundations.

12 The kings of the earth did not believe, nor any of the inhabitants of the world, that foe or enemy could enter the gates of Jerusalem.

The events that take place in the book of Daniel were shocking not just to the people of Israel, but to the whole world.

The death and destruction that was poured out on Jerusalem by the Babylonians is difficult to imagine in today's setting. Given this setting, consider the nobility of Daniel and his three friends. Truly the book of Daniel is an exemplary book for us to shape our lives after.

As we move into the situation and treatment of the young, royal, nobles of Israel... it seems fitting to remind you of something Jeremiah said in:

- **Jeremiah 24:4–7 (NIV)**
- 4 Then the word of the LORD came to me: 5 “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘Like these good figs, **I regard as good the exiles from Judah**, whom I sent away from this place to the land of the Babylonians. 6 My eyes will watch over them for their good, and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up and not tear them down; I will plant them and not uproot them. 7 **I will give them a heart to know me**, that I am the LORD. They will be my people, and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart.

This chapter of Jeremiah is a prophecy about two baskets of figs, one basket of really good figs, and one of really bad figs. The point is that in the generation of exiles, there will be those who have exceedingly terrible character and will receive only discipline and punishment from the LORD. However the good figs are exiles with exceedingly good character whom God will favor and bless.

The book of Daniel is the story of four "Good Figs". Good figs that can not be made into victims. Good figs that will not assimilate and go along so that they get along well. Good figs that are good precisely because in the face of insurmountable odds they maintain the Law of God! These sons of God not

only survive the discipline, they thrive in the discipline of God and show themselves to be exactly what God was aiming at in the creation of Israel.

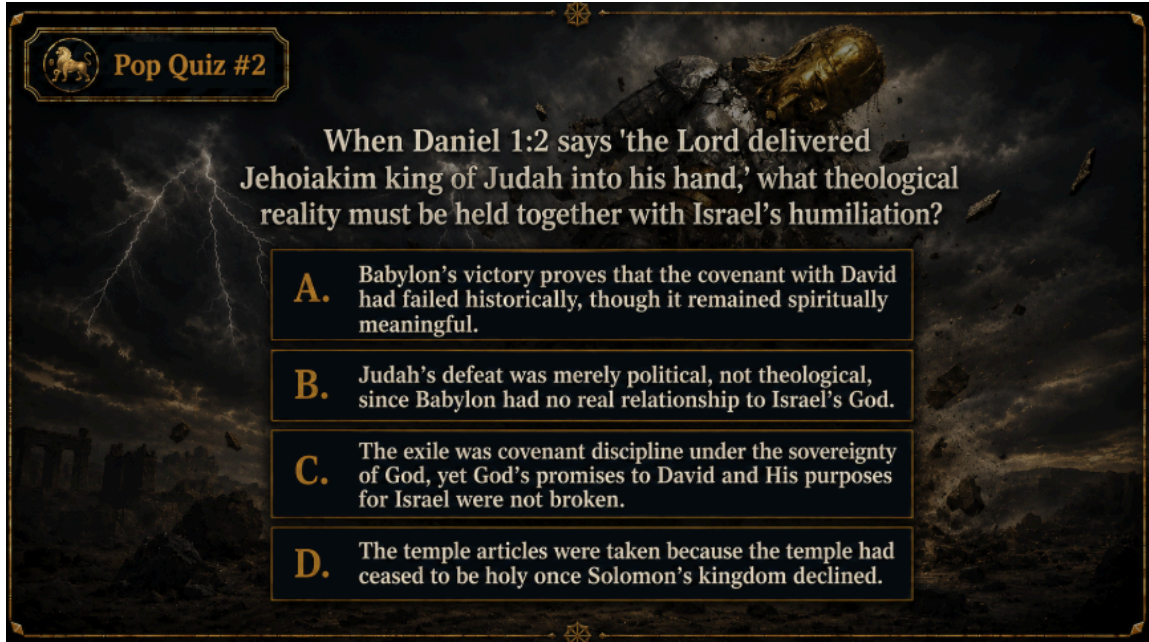
We also want to state that when it says these youths were taken to Babylonia, the Hebrew word is Shinar. This may not seem important at face value, but we will dive more into its significance later in the night.

We want to emphasize one more point about these for youths:

- **Daniel 1:3 (ESV)**
- 3 Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the **royal family and of the nobility,**

Daniel 1 three makes it clear that these youths of the royal family and nobility. Consider what this means... these were not just any Israelite, they were of the tribe of Judah, descendants of King David! God was faithful to David's line even through the captivity. God never broke His promises, David's descendants were destined to rule, and when through discipline they didn't rule Israel, they took part in the ruling class of Babylon!

We know the ultimate outcome for Israel, that they will rule and reign as a kingdom of priests. The book of Daniel teaches that God will always stay faithful to his covenant, no matter how dark the circumstance looks.



Pop Quiz #2

When Daniel 1:2 says 'the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand,' what theological reality must be held together with Israel's humiliation?

- A.** Babylon's victory proves that the covenant with David had failed historically, though it remained spiritually meaningful.
- B.** Judah's defeat was merely political, not theological, since Babylon had no real relationship to Israel's God.
- C.** The exile was covenant discipline under the sovereignty of God, yet God's promises to David and His purposes for Israel were not broken.
- D.** The temple articles were taken because the temple had ceased to be holy once Solomon's kingdom declined.

Verse 4 — The Seven Attributes (and What Babylon Wanted With Them).

4 young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians. **b**

Now, that we have a third clue as to what the Israelites are dealing with here, take a look at this slide.



Daniel does not merely tell us Judah was taken to Babylon. Daniel says the holy vessels were taken to **Shinar in verse 2**. That word drags us back to Genesis 11 — back to Babel, back to the place where humanity gathered in rebellion, built a name for itself, and was scattered by God.

In English, “Babel” and “Babylon” may seem like two different words. But in Hebrew it is the same word: **Bavel**. The city of Genesis 11 and the empire of Daniel 1 are tied together by the very language of Scripture.

Abram is called out of, not just Ur of the Chaldeans but in Hebrew **Ur Kasdim**. Daniel’s generation is carried into Shinar/Bavel and trained in the language and literature of the **Kasdim**. The covenant story begins with God calling Abram out from the Chaldean world, and Daniel begins with Abraham’s children being taken back into the Chaldean world.

And remember, all of this is happening as a result of God's discipline on the nation for their rebellion.

(DO NOT READ)



FIVE ROUNDS OF DISCIPLINE

Leviticus 26:14–33 (ESV)

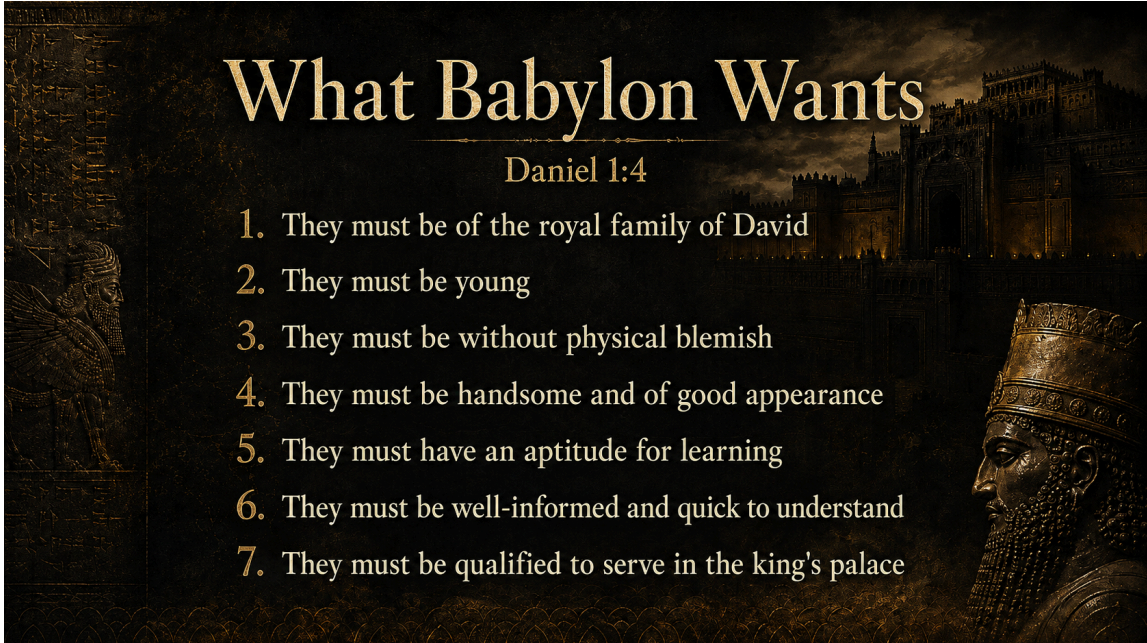
- 1.** Initial Discipline — Panic, disease, fever, futile labor, military defeat (Lev. 26:16–17)
- 2.** Land becomes hostile — heavens like iron, earth like bronze (Lev. 26:18–20)
- 3.** Wild Beasts — Animals kill children, destroy livestock, empty the roads (Lev. 26:21–22)
- 4.** Sword and Siege — Pestilence, famine, ten women baking bread in one oven (Lev. 26:23–26)
- 5.** Scattered among the nations — Cannibalism, destroyed sanctuaries, desolated land (Lev. 26:27–33)

The sword and siege of Babylon led to the scattering of the children of Israel among the nations. But not just any nation.

All signs point to the sons of Israel headed back to the place the father was brought out of.

And they want the best of the sons of Abraham.

(READ SLIDE)



What Babylon Wants

Daniel 1:4

1. They must be of the royal family of David
2. They must be young
3. They must be without physical blemish
4. They must be handsome and of good appearance
5. They must have an aptitude for learning
6. They must be well-informed and quick to understand
7. They must be qualified to serve in the king's palace

They brought them in and they wanted to train them for 3 years. Take a moment to remember how old these young men are...14 years old.

This roughly equates to High School age in our society. Consider that although High School is typically spread out over 4 years, each school year is really only nine months and nine months, four times equals three years.

Discipline on the nation is leading the sons to have to face what father Abraham had to face, and Babylon wants to take the best of these high

school aged boys and train them for 3 years to learn the ways of the world so that they can serve the kings interests and build his kingdom.

Ashpenaz was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians. This is an overt attempt to assimilate the young Jewish nobles into the Babylonian system.

To appreciate the situation this put these teenagers in, consider:

- **Deuteronomy 12:3–5 (NIV)**
- 3 Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones and burn their Asherah poles in the fire; cut down the idols of their gods and wipe out their names from those places.

4 You must not worship the LORD your God in their way. 5 But you are to seek the place the LORD your God will choose from among all your tribes to put his Name there for his dwelling. To that place you must go;

The Law is not a dispensation to be dispensed of when the circumstances are no longer convenient. Rather, it is your life (Deuteronomy 32:47 — "They are not just idle words for you — they are your life"). Jews were not allowed to worship in the ways of the nations around them. Jews were not allowed to become homogeneous with the neighboring peoples. There was only one God that they could serve. There was only one place they could offer sacrifices. There was only one right way. These youths are now being

indoctrinated with deviant thinking, deviant ways, and deviant religion — and they are teenagers when this is happening to them.

- **Deuteronomy 18:9–13 (NIV)**
- 9 When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. 10 Let no one be found among you who sacrifices their son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, 11 or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. 12 Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD; because of these same detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you. 13 You must be blameless before the LORD your God.

Jews were specifically not to imitate the detestable ways of the nations. These Jewish youths were chosen by Ashpenaz precisely because they were royal, noble, physically without defect, handsome, smart, and able to learn — in other words, able to imitate the ways of Babylon.

- **2 Kings 17:15 (NIV)**
- 15 They rejected his decrees and the covenant he had made with their ancestors and the statutes he had warned them to keep. They followed worthless idols and themselves became worthless. They imitated the nations around them although the LORD had ordered them, “Do not do as they do.”

These Jewish youths undoubtedly remembered the reason Samaria fell under the reign of Hoshea: it was because Samaria imitated the nations around them. Essentially they assassinated their character when they assimilated to the culture around them. It was because the Samaritans did not listen to the words "Do not do as they do."

- **2 Chronicles 33:1–2 (NIV)**
- 33 Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-five years. 2 He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, following the detestable practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites.

Did you catch the age of Manasseh? He was twelve years old when he became king. These Jewish youths undoubtedly remembered the indictment against Manasseh king of Judah — he was 12 and they understood what he did at the time he was accountable to the word of God and responsible for what he did with it.

King Manasseh ruled just a few generations before Daniel and his friends and they undoubtedly recognized the effects of his lawless living.

But let us help you understand an even greater degree of tension these young men were living in. Listen to the admonition of the prophet Jeremiah

to Daniel and the people of Judah.

- **Jeremiah 29:4–7 (NIV)**

- 4 This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 “Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. 6 Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. 7 Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.”

Do you appreciate the inherent tension? These Jewish youths are not able to segregate themselves away from the assimilating influences, or cloister themselves in monasteries. They have to hold fast to the commands while also seeking the good of Babylon. Most Christians have no real concept of having a different diet, different dress, a different daily habit of every kind than the world around you. For the most part, our differences tend to be inward — not seen outwardly. But this was not so with Israel. Their differences were immediately externally perceivable in every area of their lives. The basis for Israel's formation was their own distinctness from the nations:

- **Deuteronomy 14:2 (KJV 1900)**

- 2 For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth.

That word "holy" means separate. Whether it was not cutting the hair on the side of your head, or circumcision, or the Levitical diet — the nation God chose, He chose to be discernibly distinct from other peoples. This conspicuousness served as a fluorescent vest of kinds, identifying them everywhere they went. God wanted this attention drawn to them based on the Law, because of the second thing that was supposed to be conspicuous about them:

- **Deuteronomy 4:6–8 (NIV)**
- 6 Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.” 7 What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him? 8 And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?

These Jewish youths literally stand out — like an Ethiopian in Moscow — but the thing that their conspicuousness is supposed to do is draw attention to the unique relationship that they have with the King of the Universe. As we move through the book of Daniel, you should take note that that is exactly what happens — again and again, these Jews are different than everyone around them, and yet their God is close to them in a way that no Babylonian has ever experienced.

Unfortunately, this loyalty to God — expressed as loyalty to His Law — is the very thing that makes some people hate them. Esther captures the sentiment perfectly:

- **Esther 3:8 (NIV)**
- 8 Then Haman said to King Xerxes, “There is a certain people dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom who keep themselves separate. Their customs are different from those of all other people, and they do not obey the king’s laws; it is not in the king’s best interest to tolerate them.

Notice the heart of Haman's accusation: *“whose customs are different from those of all other people.”* Rarely do we as believers get the opportunity to stand out for following God's law over man's — but every so often, we are handed exactly that gift.

A few years ago, we were given one. During the COVID lockdown, we chose to keep meeting. There was real risk in it: maybe you get sick, maybe the police show up, maybe the neighbors get angry and you end up in the newspaper or on the evening news. (By the way — all of those things, and more, happened.) But for that season there was a visible line between us and the kingdom of this world, and it was drawn for one reason: we were following the instructions of our God. Yet that was a single issue, and it lasted only a few years. What if you had to be that distinct in *every* area of life — your whole life — and were hated for it the entire time? That is exactly where we find these young men.

Notice as we go through the book of Daniel that Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah are never called into account by the government for anything other than their observance of the Law of God. The only issue that you find conflict between them and the government is when the government forbids things that God requires — or requires things that God forbids. Then and only then do they say no to the king of their locality, so that they can say yes to the God of the universe. This is a good model for all believers. They were not late for work claiming to be persecuted for it — there was no area of misconduct in the things entrusted to them. Whether those things were entrusted to them by a physical Gentile king or not, they treated their responsibilities as if they were working unto their King.

- **John 17:15–18 (NIV)**
- 15 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. 17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

There is no meaningful distinction between older and newer testament believers. In fact, most people are unaware that historians refer to this Babylon that Daniel and the family of Israel are in is actually referred to as "Neo-Babylon" which simply means "new" Babylon. It's the Babylon that has already existed in a slightly different form in a slightly different location, but it's basically the same.

With that in mind could there be a better example of what Jesus is describing here about being in this world or worldly system but not of it, than the man Daniel? We are still called to the same level of devotion and distinction from the world around us. In fact, it is what Jesus has missioned us to do. At the same time consider these words from the Apostle Paul:

- **2 Corinthians 6:17 (NIV)**
- 17 Therefore,

“Come out from them

and be separate,

says the Lord.

Touch no unclean thing,

and I will receive you.”

Jesus says, don't take them out of the world and Paul quoting Isaiah says come out and be separate! They cannot physically leave the Babylonian empire, but they can transcend by obeying the laws of God and living according to His ways. This will create the distinction that draws attention and differentiates the people of God from the people of Babylon.

We want to show you just a few more connections to strengthen this point since we have covered the first mention of Babylon in our text.

- **1 Peter 5:13 (NIV)**
- 13 She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark.

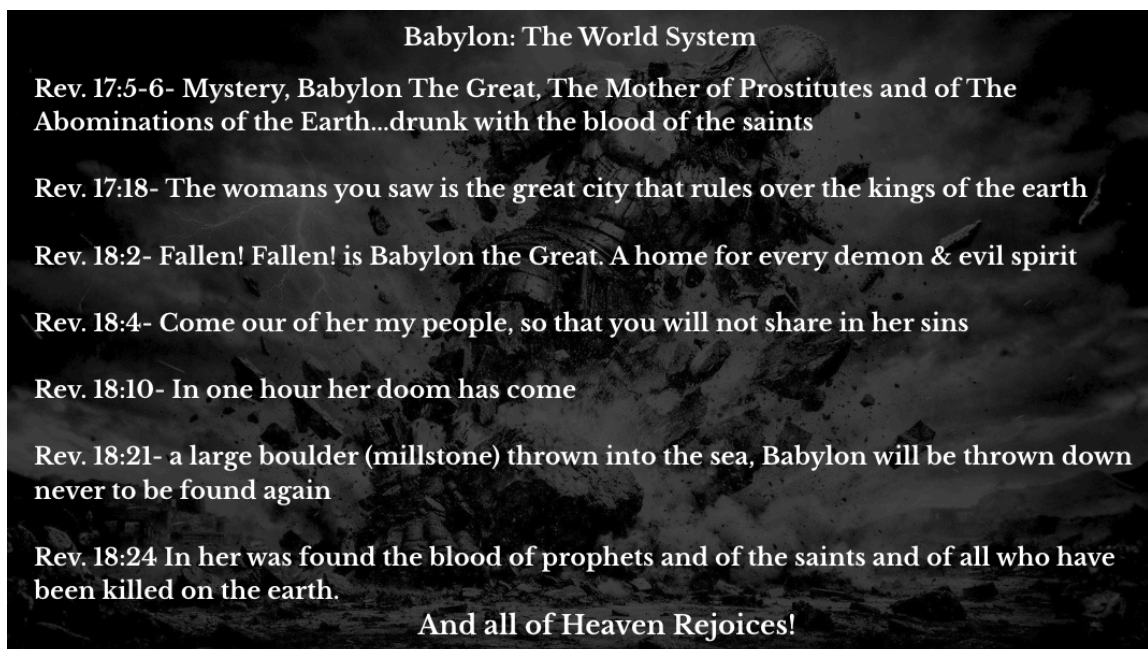
Whether Peter means literal Babylon, or as Eusebius and most scholars believe, Rome under the name “Babylon,” the point remains: by the time of Jesus, “Babylon” has become a biblical way of describing the world-system in which God’s people live as exiles.

If Israel becomes homogeneous with Babylon — with no discernible distinction — then Israel ceases to be visibly identifiable as the covenant people of God. And if Israel loses that distinction, then the promises given to Israel become impossible to trace. How would we recognize the line through which Messiah would come? How would we see the faithfulness of God to His covenant promises? That is why distinction matters.

But by the time we reach the end of Scripture, Babylon is no longer presented merely as a region, a city, or even a physical empire. In Revelation, Babylon becomes the name of the world-system itself — seductive, idolatrous, violent, wealthy, and drunk with the blood of the saints.

So before we return to Daniel, we want to briefly walk through several highlights from Revelation 17 and 18 so that we can see the larger biblical picture of Babylon.

(READ SLIDE)



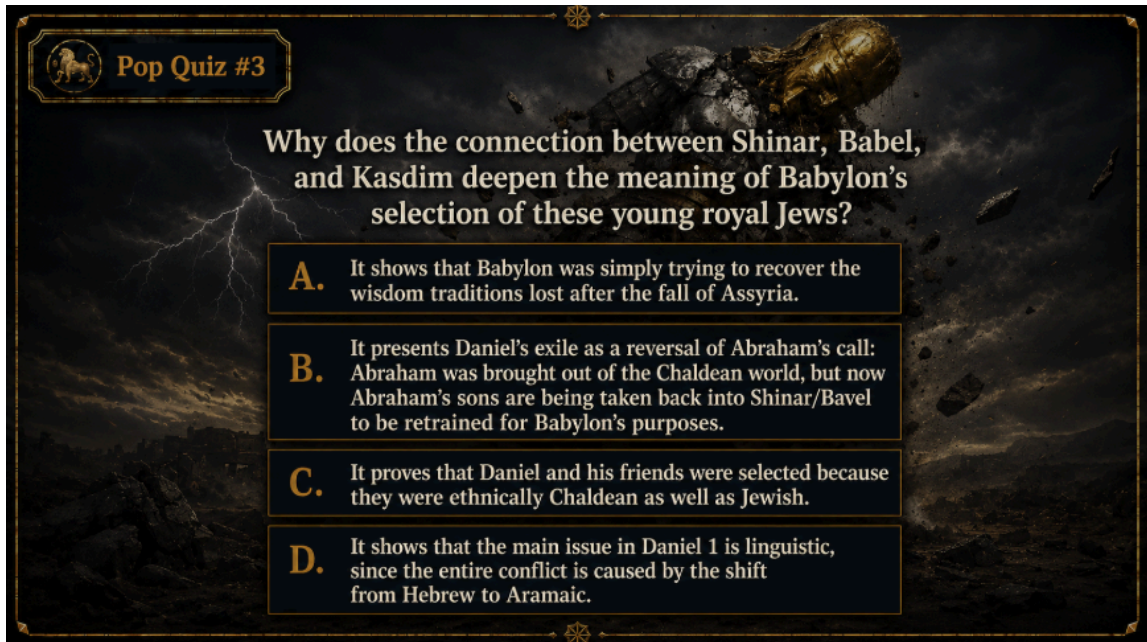
When we read about Babylon in Daniel, and when we see the stand that these young men take, we need to understand it in two ways. First, we need to see it in its immediate historical context: Jewish youths living in the seventh century BC, carried into exile under the power of Neo-Babylon. But second, we also need to see Babylon in its larger biblical context. Babylon is more than one ancient empire. From Genesis to Revelation, Babylon represents the world organized in rebellion against God — a system that

seeks to absorb, rename, retrain, and assimilate the people of God. That is why Daniel 1 matters so much. These young men are not merely trying to survive exile. They are standing as covenant witnesses inside the very system that wants to erase their distinction.

Most of us in this room are Gentiles; we do not stand in the same covenantal location as Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. We are not Israelites living under Torah in the exile of the seventh century BC. And yet, the moral responsibility before us is no less serious.

These four youths stand before us as witnesses of covenant faithfulness under pressure. Their historical setting is not identical to ours, but their devotion exposes the question every generation of God's people must answer: Will we remain faithful when the dominant culture seeks to rename us, retrain us, and absorb us into its own system?

As we continue, I want to suggest that believers today are no less responsible for courageous fidelity in our own historical context than these Jewish youths were in theirs. They displayed moral heroism in Babylon; we are called to display the same kind of holy resolve in the world in which God has placed us.



Pop Quiz #3

Why does the connection between Shinar, Babel, and Kasdim deepen the meaning of Babylon's selection of these young royal Jews?

- A.** It shows that Babylon was simply trying to recover the wisdom traditions lost after the fall of Assyria.
- B.** It presents Daniel's exile as a reversal of Abraham's call: Abraham was brought out of the Chaldean world, but now Abraham's sons are being taken back into Shinar/Bavel to be retrained for Babylon's purposes.
- C.** It proves that Daniel and his friends were selected because they were ethnically Chaldean as well as Jewish.
- D.** It shows that the main issue in Daniel 1 is linguistic, since the entire conflict is caused by the shift from Hebrew to Aramaic.

Section 5: Verses 5–8 — Names, Indoctrination, and the Decision Not to Defile - PETER



The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service. Among these were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego. But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.

First, here the names of the Jewish youths in Hebrew and their Chaldean

counterparts:

TRYING TO CHANGE YOUR IDENTITY

An attempt to replace their God-given identity with Babylonian identity

REAL NAMES	MEANING		NEW NAMES GIVEN	MEANING
 DANIEL	<i>"God is my Judge"</i> – Easton's Bible Dictionary	➔	BELTESHAZZAR	<i>"Bel's Prince"</i> – McClintock and Strong Encyclopedia 
 HANANIAH	<i>"Gracious Gift of the Lord"</i> – Nelson's Bible Dictionary	➔	SHADRACH	<i>"Command of [the moon god] Aku"</i> – Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible 
 MISHAEL	<i>"Who is like God?"</i> – Easton's Bible Dictionary	➔	MESHACH	<i>"Who is what Aku is?"</i> – Holman Bible Dictionary 
 AZARIAH	<i>"Yahweh has helped"</i> – Holman Bible Dictionary	➔	ABEDNEGO	<i>"Servant of Nego"</i> – New Unger's Bible Dictionary 

The renaming of Daniel and his three friends is one of the first acts of cultural assimilation Babylon attempts. Each Hebrew name carried theological weight— names that rooted these young men in the identity and character of Israel's God. Babylon replaced them with names honoring its own gods: Bel, Aku, Nego. It was an ancient form of identity replacement. When you change what a man is called, perhaps you can begin to change who he believes he is. But as the story shows, the attempts of Babylon to assimilate them were futile.

Daniel which means "God is my judge" was changed to **Belteshazzar** ("Bel's

prince"). **Hananiah** ("The gracious gift of the Lord") was changed to **Shadrach** ("Command of the moon god"). **Mishael** ("Who is like God?") was given **Meshach** ("Who is what Aku is?")—do you notice the slight similarity? Lastly, **Azariah** ("Yahweh has helped") was changed to **Abednego** ("Servant of Nego").

This gives you an idea of what Babylon was trying to produce in these young men. The lawless culture looks at your God-given function and wants to pervert it into something functional for the world's purposes. This is discipleship in reverse. Since we all live in a time when the government wants to educate your child from cradle to grave precisely for the purpose of indoctrination — it is more pertinent than ever to understand Daniel's purpose as a *Writing* to direct our strength.

While Babylon attempted to rob their distinctness, Jewish identity and their allegiance to the God of Israel—Adonai does the opposite, he reinforces it and gives his sons a name that brings them closer to himself.

- **Numbers 13:16 (NIV)**
- These are the names of the men Moses sent to explore the land. (Moses gave Hoshea son of Nun the name Joshua.)

If our names and functions are changed, let it be because our function is expanding in Godliness, not decreasing in it.

- **Mark 3:16 (NIV)**
- These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter).

If our names and functions are changed, let it be because we had a revelation that expanded our holiness and our usefulness to King Jesus.

- **Revelation 2:17 (NIV)**
- Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it.

If our names and functions are changed, let it be because Jesus Himself gave us the function in response to victory over Babylon — and not because we bowed to Babylon.

The language of verse 8 is striking. Daniel does not merely decline the royal food on grounds of preference or appetite — he resolves not to *defile* himself with it. The Hebrew word used here, *ga'al* (גָּאֵל), carries the weight of ritual and covenantal contamination. This is not simply a dietary preference; it is a declaration of allegiance. To eat from the king's table was to participate in the cultic and covenantal world of Babylon — and Daniel

understood that such participation constituted a violation of the Law he was bound to uphold.

Many understand this stand as merely related to the food being non-kosher, perhaps containing pork or some other restricted food. To be sure, this is at play. But, if that alone were the case then it is worth wondering why Daniel and his comrades refused *all* meats instead of just some?

We would like to present that the primary concern was likely not that the food was simply not on the kosher list, but instead that the food was almost certainly sacrificed to idols. For those who have been through our study of Exodus you should remember this verse:

- **Exodus 34:15–16 (NIV)**
- ¹⁵ “Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land; for when they prostitute themselves to their gods and sacrifice to them, they will invite you and you will eat their sacrifices. ¹⁶ And when you choose some of their daughters as wives for your sons and those daughters prostitute themselves to their gods, they will lead your sons to do the same.

Here is a commentary that shares our position.

(SLIDE)

DANIEL 1:8 — COMMENTARY

Daniel decided that the royal food and wine carried defilement. Readers of this text should not assume that the alcoholic content of the wine was at issue here.

Actually, the boys faced **double defilement**. First, the food was not kosher (Lev. 3:17; 7:26; 17:10–14; 19:26). Second, this food might have been offered to idols — a problem encountered in the New Testament as well. Commonly in ancient pagan religion, portions of food and wine were first offered to household deities. The eating and drinking of that food implied some recognition of those deities.

Exodus 34:15 clearly forbids this, and Hosea predicted that citizens of the kingdom of Israel would face this problem (Hos. 9:3–4) — a prophecy Ezekiel himself experienced (Ezek. 4:13–14).

Kenneth Gangel, *Daniel*, ed. Max Anders, vol. 18, Holman Old Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 21–22.

1:8. Daniel decided that **the royal food and wine** carried defilement. Readers of this text should not assume that the alcoholic content of the wine was at issue here. Actually, the boys faced double defilement. First, the food was not kosher (Lev. 3:17; 7:26; 17:10–14; 19:26). Second, this food might have been offered to idols, a problem that we encounter in the New Testament as well. Commonly in ancient pagan religion, portions of food and wine were first offered to household deities. The eating and drinking of that food implied some recognition of those deities. Exodus 34:15 clearly forbids this, and Hosea predicted that citizens of the kingdom of Israel would face this problem (Hos. 9:3–4), a prophesy Ezekiel himself experienced (Ezek. 4:13–14).

The courage this required should not be minimized. The young man making this request is a captive, a deportee, entirely subject to the will of the king whose generosity he is now declining. The offer of food from the royal table was not merely provision — it was an act of incorporation, a signal that these youths were being brought underneath the Empire of Babylonian and its patronage and power. To refuse it was to risk being read as insubordination, ungrateful, or worse.

What could motivate one to take such a risk? The text, read in light of the Law these men had been formed by, makes the answer clear: **it was not mere personal reverence but a covenantal reckoning**—this refusal of Babylonian food was also a refusal of the Babylonian gods. They understood that the very exile they now suffered had come as the consequence of Israel's failure to keep the Law of their God. To now compound that failure — to assimilate at the table of the conquering power would be to repeat the error that had brought them to Babylon in the first place. Their refusal of the king's food was therefore not a small act of private conscience. It was a holy statement: the Law of God remains binding even in captivity.

- **Deuteronomy 11:22–24 (NIV)**
- If you carefully observe all these commands I am giving you to follow — to love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways and to hold fast to him — then the Lord will drive out all these nations before you, and you will dispossess nations larger and stronger than you.

The only reason Israel ever rose to the prominence we read about in

Solomon's day was due to holding fast to the Law of the Lord. The reason they suffered loss — the reason they fell from that great height — was that they let go of the Law of the Lord. These Jewish youths show us that holding fast to the Law of the Lord is the only way to regain the royal position.

And to put it another way—national Israel didn't fall — they just stumbled temporarily. And Daniel and his three brothers proved that.

- **Deuteronomy 13:4 (NIV)**
- It is the Lord your God you must follow, and him you must revere. Keep his commands and obey him; serve him and hold fast to him.

Righteousness is all that matters. The command in Romans 13 to honor the government still rings true—but not at the expense of disobeying the Lord's direct commands. Believers of today must never use Romans 13 as a fulcrum to expect less of Christians, but instead rest on Moses' words in Deuteronomy 30. (which is what Paul would have done).

- **Deuteronomy 30:19–20 (NIV)**
- This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac

and Jacob.

You cannot hold fast to the Lord in an abstract fashion—we must hold fast to his commands with tangible action. His voice is recorded in His word. All Scripture is God-breathed. It is His voice on the page. To hold fast to the word of God is to hold fast to the Lord's voice — not waiting for a new interpretation or a new prophecy, but holding fast to what is written. These Jewish youths were committed to this right down to the food that went into their mouths.

- **Joshua 22:5 (NIV)**
- But be very careful to keep the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the Lord gave you: to love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to obey his commands, to hold fast to him and to serve him with all your heart and all your soul.

The practical application of Joshua 22:5 in Daniel's situation was straightforward, if costly: walking in the ways of the Lord meant not eating what the Babylonians ate. The Law was not an abstract theological principle to be honored in worship and set aside in daily life — it was a claim on the whole of existence, including the dinner table. Are you beginning to see why Daniel must be seen in its proper place as a Writing?

This has direct bearing on how believers in every age relate to the governing authorities under which they live. Romans 13 rightly establishes

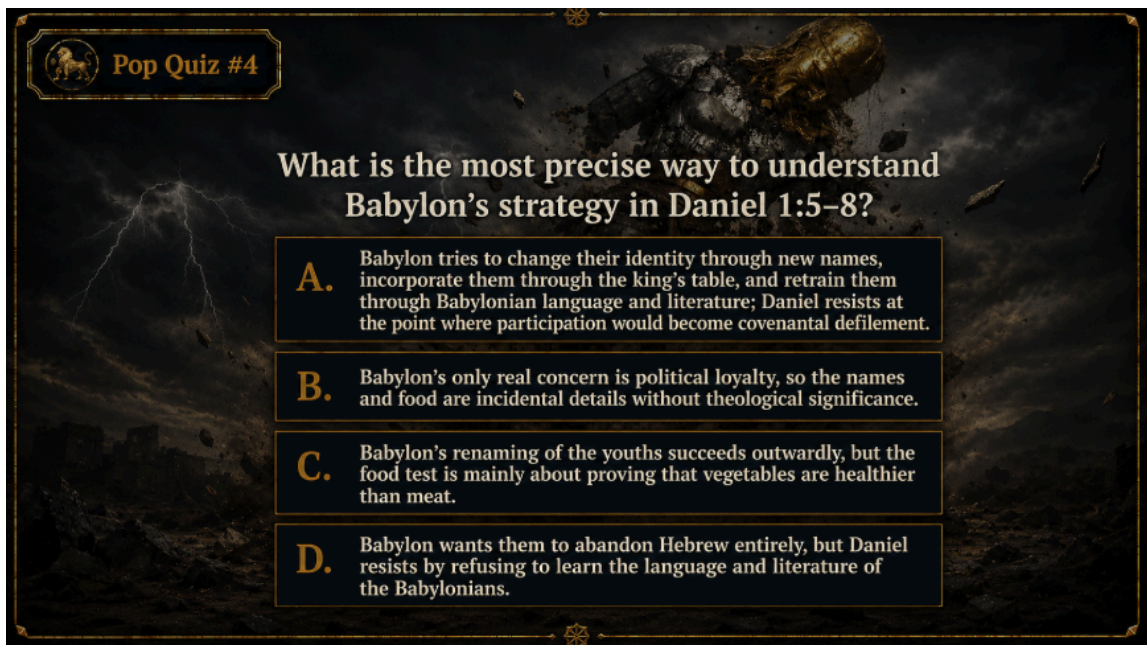
the general posture of submission to governing powers as an expression of submission to God, who ordains them. But Romans 13 was never intended to function as a hermeneutical trump card for the whole of Scripture. When compliance with the demands of a governing power requires participation in what God has forbidden, or letting go of what God has required, submission to that power ceases to be an act of obedience to God and becomes the opposite. Daniel's refusal of the king's food was the highest expression of true submission, because it recognized that ultimate allegiance belongs to the King whose law stands above every earthly throne.

The deeper issue here is one of covenantal integrity. Yesterdays battle was COVID-19—western Christians cannot boast about their stance on the pandemic forever and neglect the next much more deadly global issue that is rising—the west's change of heart towards Israel.

Today's culture presents another opportunity for distinctness—bold love and support for Israel and Zionism in every climate. What Daniel models is a reverence for the word of God so deep that it governs even those areas of life that others might regard as inconsequential. It is precisely in the small, daily, seemingly minor points of obedience that covenantal faithfulness is either formed or forfeited. And if it is forfeited in the daily practice of Christian's lives—bold stances at the risk of loss or worse will crumble.

- **Psalm 119:31 (NIV)**
- I hold fast to your statutes, O Lord; do not let me be put to shame.

These true Israelite youths held fast to the statutes of the Lord, and we hold them in high honor for it. If the world tries to subject them to shame and scorn, they still hold fast. Those holding fast to the word of God need not fear the test — they will come out ten times better for it.



Pop Quiz #4

What is the most precise way to understand Babylon's strategy in Daniel 1:5–8?

- A.** Babylon tries to change their identity through new names, incorporate them through the king's table, and retrain them through Babylonian language and literature; Daniel resists at the point where participation would become covenantal defilement.
- B.** Babylon's only real concern is political loyalty, so the names and food are incidental details without theological significance.
- C.** Babylon's renaming of the youths succeeds outwardly, but the food test is mainly about proving that vegetables are healthier than meat.
- D.** Babylon wants them to abandon Hebrew entirely, but Daniel resists by refusing to learn the language and literature of the Babylonians.

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Section 6: Verses 9–10 — God Moves the Heart of the Official

Now God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel, but the official told Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you."

The official's concerns might seem dramatic, but when you keep reading in Daniel they are actually quite reasonable. Next week we will see every wise man in Babylon be lined up for execution because they were unable to read the mind and dream of the King. This same Empire will throw three men into a furnace for not bowing the knee, and in a successive Empire a ruler

will throw Daniel into a den of Lions for praying. This Babylonian was most likely correct, this could get him killed!

Then why did he allow it? Verse 9 tells us with "*God had caused the official to show sympathy.*" Despite the peril of their situation and their distance from Jerusalem—Adonai was still with them.

- **Psalm 33:10–11 (NIV)**
- The Lord foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples. But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.

The difficulty believers face in accepting dangerous situations is not primarily a theological problem — it is a human one. It is the love of one's own life that makes the cost of obedience feel too high. Daniel and his companions did not appear to share this hesitation, and the text offers an implicit reason: they were operating from a settled confidence that God holds sovereignty over life and death.

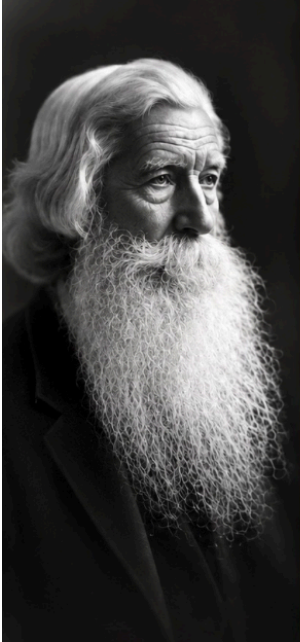
Scripture is consistent here. The life of the believer is not ultimately in the hands of any earthly power. Nebuchadnezzar could threaten, Ashpenaz could fear, and the furnace could be heated seven times hotter — but none of these could cut short a life before the time appointed by the One who holds all times in His hands. This is not fatalism; it is faith — and it frees the believer from the paralysis of self-protection, enabling obedience regardless

of the apparent cost.

God's sovereignty over these outcomes does not guarantee a single result. The faithful are not promised deliverance from punishment — they are promised that whatever befalls them will serve God's purposes. Some are brought through the fire unharmed and the threatening power is compelled to acknowledge the God of Israel. Others suffer, and that suffering itself becomes the testimony. Both glorify God. As Peter frames it, suffering that comes from living according to the word of God is not a defeat — it is participation in the pattern established by the Messiah Himself.

A powerful more modern example of this quality of faith in Gentiles is shown in the man John G. Paton who said this when confronted with cannibals on the field.

(SLIDE)



JOHN G. PATON

“ Mr. Dickson, you are advanced in years now, and your own prospect is soon to be laid in the grave, there to be eaten by worms; I confess to you, that if I can but live and die serving and honoring the Lord Jesus, it will make no difference to me whether I am eaten by Cannibals or by worms; and in the Great Day my Resurrection body will rise as fair as yours in the likeness of our risen Redeemer. ”

John G. Paton, *The Autobiography of the Pioneer Missionary to the New Hebrides* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2013), 56.

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This is the kind of faith that rises to the command of scripture to carry ones cross daily for the King of Israel. The Apostle John summarizes this sentiment perfectly:

- **Revelation 13:9–10 (NIV)** Whoever has ears, let them hear. "If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity they will go. If anyone is

to be killed with the sword, with the sword they will be killed." This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of God's people.

-

To pair with the resolve and conviction necessary to stand within the Gentile Nations, we can have confidence from the scripture that our God is able to move on any man—regardless of his worldly status.

- **Proverbs 21:1 (ESV)**

- The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will.

It is not just Israeli kings whose hearts are in the hand of God. The King in tonight's chapter and the majority of this book is one of the most prominent Gentiles who proclaim the name of Adonai in the whole canon of Scripture. Despite being the one who exiled the Jewish heroes, he is actually described as a servant of God.

- **Jeremiah 27:6 (ESV)**

- ⁶ Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant, and I have given him also the beasts of the field to serve him.

This is only one instance—take a look at the list we compiled of Kings being directed at the hand of Adonai. You can go back and read all the details later for now we will just give an overview.

(DO NOT READ)

GOD'S SOVEREIGN HAND ON THE NATIONS		
Gentile rulers moved by God — Old Testament		
RULER	PASSAGE	WHAT GOD DID
Abimelech King of Gerar	Gen. 20	God spoke to him in a dream, warned him from sin against Sarah, and acknowledged his integrity of heart
Pharaoh King of Egypt	Gen. 41:38–40	Recognized the Spirit of God in Joseph and elevated him to second-in-command over all Egypt
Pharaoh's Court Egyptian officials	Ex. 11:3	God gave Moses favor in the eyes of Pharaoh's servants and the Egyptian people
Hiram King of Tyre	1 Kgs. 5:1–7	Blessed the LORD upon hearing Solomon's request; supplied cedar and craftsmen to build the Temple
Naaman Commander of Syria	2 Kgs. 5:1–17	Humbled from pride, healed in the Jordan, and declared: "There is no God in all the earth except in Israel"
Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon	Dan. 2; 3; 4	Three progressive encounters — fell on his face before Daniel, decreed protection of Israel's God after the furnace, then issued the greatest Gentile doxology in Scripture after seven years of madness
Darius the Mede King of Media	Dan. 6:25–27	After the lion's den, decreed that all in his kingdom must fear the God of Daniel — "the living God, enduring forever"
Cyrus the Great King of Persia	Is. 44–45; Ezra 1	Called by name 150 years before his birth; God's "shepherd" and "anointed one"; issued the decree returning the exiles and rebuilding the Temple

From the patriarchs to the Babylonian exile, God moved through the courts of the most powerful Gentile rulers on earth. He spoke to Abimelech in a dream, displayed his power through Joseph before Pharaoh, and gave Moses favor in Egypt's own court. He stirred Hiram of Tyre to help build the Temple, brought the Syrian commander Naaman to faith in the Jordan River, and spent three encounters breaking and remaking Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. He then ended the exile entirely through Cyrus of Persia — a king he had named by prophecy 150 years before his birth. No throne was beyond his reach.

(DO NOT READ)

GOD'S SOVEREIGN HAND ON THE NATIONS		
Gentile rulers moved by God — New Testament		
RULER / AUTHORITY	PASSAGE	WHAT GOD DID
The Magi Eastern ruler-sages	Matt. 2:1-12	Followed the star, worshiped the infant King of Israel, brought royal gifts, and were warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod
Roman Centurion Military commander	Matt. 8:5-13	Yeshua marveled — the only recorded instance in the Gospels — and declared: "I have not found such great faith in all Israel"
Cornelius Roman centurion, Caesarea	Acts 10	A God-fearer and generous man; God sent an angel directly to him, then sent Peter; his household became the first Gentile Pentecost — a watershed moment in the mission of God to the nations
Sergius Paulus Roman proconsul, Cyprus	Acts 13:7-12	Summoned Paul and Barnabas because he desired to hear the word of God; believed upon witnessing the judgment that fell on Elymas the sorcerer
Philippian Jailer Roman civic authority	Acts 16:27-34	After the earthquake shook the prison, he fell trembling before Paul and Silas: "What must I do to be saved?" — his entire household was baptized that same night

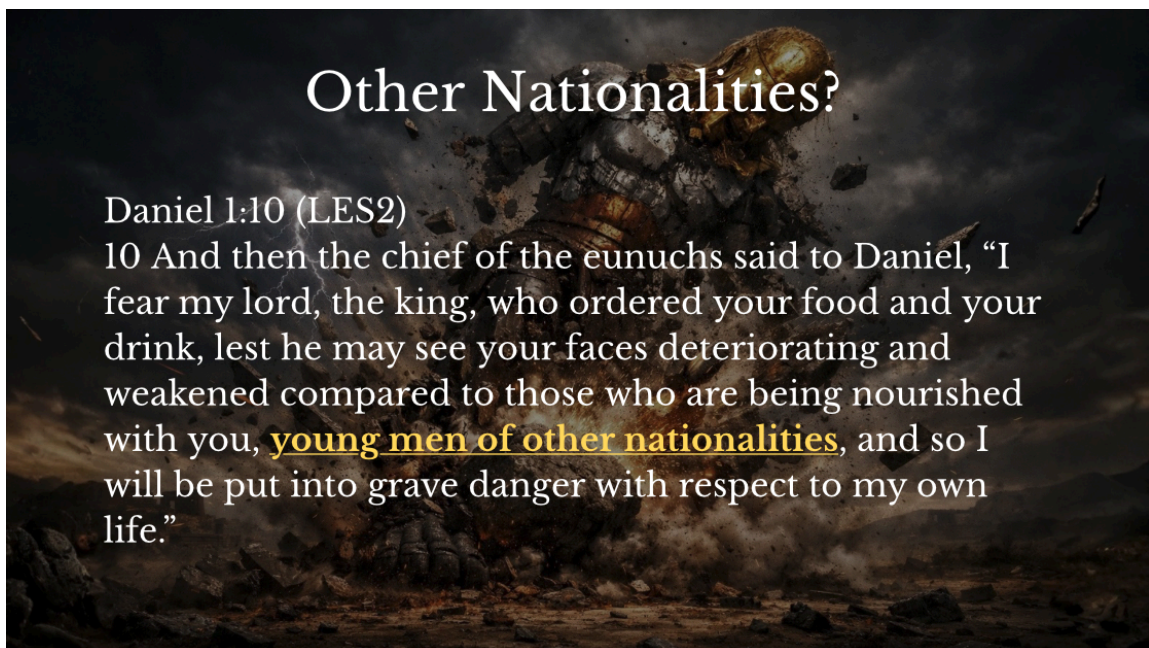
The same pattern continued when Yeshua arrived. Eastern Magi followed a star to worship Israel's King and were warned home by God in a dream. A Roman centurion drew the only recorded expression of amazement from Yeshua himself. Cornelius, a God-fearing Roman officer, received an angel and became the first named Gentile Pentecost. Sergius Paulus, the Roman proconsul of Cyprus, sought out the word of God and believed. And a Philippian jailer, shaken to his foundations by an earthquake, fell before Paul and Silas with the question that defines the whole thread: what must I do to be saved?

Before we move on let's read from another Writings.

- **Psalm 47:7–9 (NIV)**
- For God is the King of all the earth; sing to him a psalm of praise. God reigns over the nations; God is seated on his holy throne. The nobles of the nations assemble as the people of the God of Abraham, for the kings of the earth belong to God; he is greatly exalted.

Simply put: Adonai is King over all the Earth and his people are greatest among men. Take a look at the LXX translation of verse 10.

(SLIDE)



Other Nationalities?

Daniel 1:10 (LES2)
10 And then the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, “I fear my lord, the king, who ordered your food and your drink, lest he may see your faces deteriorating and weakened compared to those who are being nourished with you, **young men of other nationalities**, and so I will be put into grave danger with respect to my own life.”

- **Daniel 1:10 (LES2)**
- ¹⁰ And then the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, “I fear my lord, the king, who ordered your food and your drink, lest he may see your faces deteriorating and weakened compared to those who are being nourished with you, young men of other nationalities, and so I will be put into grave danger with respect to my own life.”

The LXX renders additional information not present in the Hebrew. It seems as though the young men in training for the King's service included Hebrews—yes, but also youths from other nations. Here is an academic source on this topic:

(Do Not Read)

“ Ration lists from Nebuchadnezzar’s palace in Babylon feature groups of deportees from the peripheries of the empire. Most of them were skilled professionals, such as Elamite guards, Tyrian sailors, and Judean courtiers, who worked in the city. ”

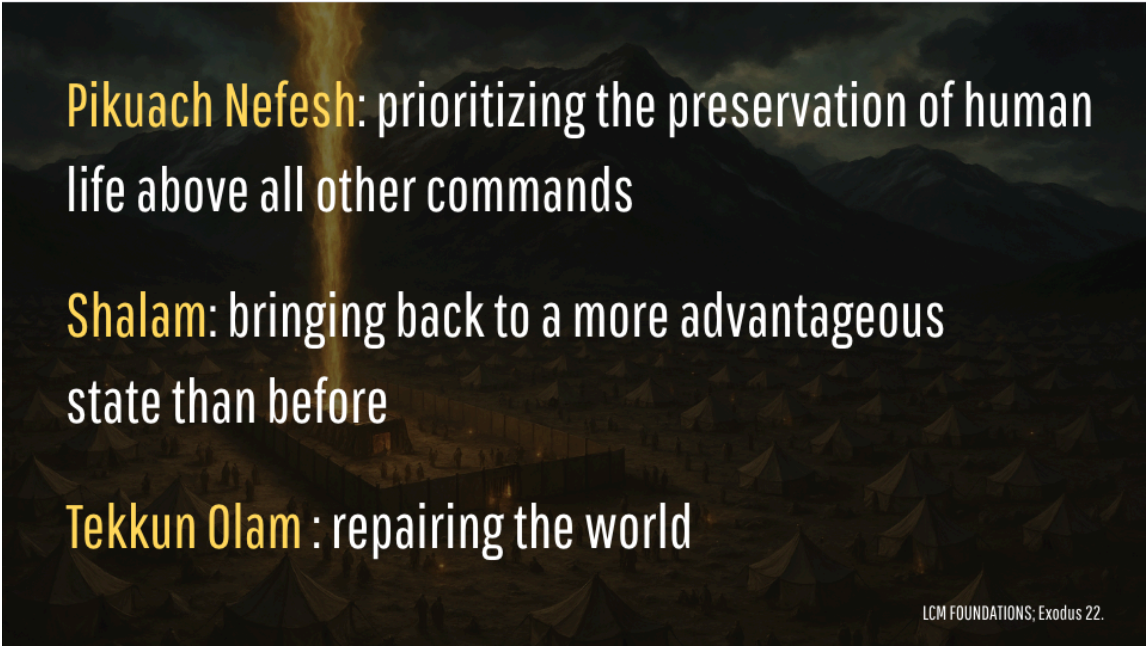
— **TERO ALSTOLA**, *The Ancient Near East Today*, Vol. 10.6 (June 2022), published by the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR). Available at: <https://anetoday.org/alstola-exile-babylon/>

"Ration lists from Nebuchadnezzar's palace in Babylon feature groups of deportees from the peripheries of the empire. Most of them were skilled professionals, such as Elamite guards, Tyrian sailors, and Judean courtiers, who worked in the city."

So what are the implications of this? Consider this passage we have read before:

- **Deuteronomy 28:12–14 (NIV)**
- ¹² The Lord will open the heavens, the storehouse of his bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands. You will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. ¹³ The Lord will make you the head, not the tail. If you pay attention to the commands of the Lord your God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top, never at the bottom. ¹⁴ Do not turn aside from any of the commands I give you today, to the right or to the left, following other gods and serving them.

Adonai does not place burdens on his people to follow for no reason, the commands of God are a blessing and when obeyed—lead to righteousness and favor.



Pikuach Nefesh: prioritizing the preservation of human life above all other commands

Shalam: bringing back to a more advantageous state than before

Tekkun Olam : repairing the world

LCM FOUNDATIONS, Exodus 22.

Embedded in the Torah are three principles that reveal the heart of God toward human flourishing. *Pikuach Nefesh* — the preservation of human life above all other commands — establishes that life itself is the first priority of covenant obedience. *Shalam* goes further, describing a restoration that doesn't merely return someone to where they were, but brings them back to a more advantageous state than before. And *Tikkun Olam* holds it all together under a single redemptive vision: the repairing of the world. Taken together, these are not abstract ideals — they are the operating logic of a God who saves, restores, and renews.

These truths ring true in all contexts and all generations—it is no wonder the Hebrew youth's are better off than the other nations—their Law brings life in every circumstance.



Pop Quiz #5

In Daniel 1:9–10, what makes the official's fear theologically and politically significant?

- A.** His fear shows that Daniel was wrong to make the request, because godly obedience should never endanger another person.
- B.** His fear shows that Babylonian officials were secretly sympathetic to Torah observance and only needed Daniel to educate them.
- C.** His fear shows that Daniel's faithfulness unfolded inside a real chain of imperial accountability, where God's favor did not remove danger but operated within it.
- D.** His fear shows that Daniel should have appealed directly to Nebuchadnezzar rather than working through lower officials.

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Verses 11–16 — The Ten-Day Test

Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see." So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days. At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.

It is no mistake that the testing phase is ten days. The number ten can represent the commands, but also, the number ten or a period of ten frequently shows whether or not you are approved by God. Consider the pattern across Scripture:

EXAMPLES OF TEN IN SCRIPTURE

- Genesis 16:3 — Abraham had been living in Canaan for **ten years** when he slept with Hagar — tested and disapproved (though he got a lot of others right)
- God settled on **ten righteous** in Sodom to not destroy the city — a testing of where His justice lay
- Laban changed Jacob's wages **ten times**
- **Ten generations** from Adam to Noah; Shem to Abraham; Isaac to Boaz — the first begins to be tested, the tenth shows himself approved
- **Ten plagues** against the gods of Egypt
- **Ten Commandments**
- The tithe is a **tenth** — testing where your heart is
- Israel tested God **ten times** (Numbers 14:22)
- Jesse sent **ten loaves** and **ten cheeses** and told David to bring back assurance that they were alright
- David sent **ten young men** to Nabal
- Nabal struck dead **ten days** after the incident with David
- Boaz took **ten elders** to marry Ruth
- An abundant supply of wine for Nehemiah's household every **ten days**
- **Ten lepers** — some respond, some don't; the hermeneutic carries throughout the word
- Pentecost just **ten days** after Jesus ascended — 500 saw him raised from the dead, but only 120 were waiting for the spirit; what happened to the other 380 during that ten-day test?
- **Ten horns** of the beast of Daniel and Revelation, representing **ten kings**
- Smyrna in Revelation called to suffer persecution for **ten days** to see if they would remain faithful

- Abraham had been living in Canaan for ten years when he slept with Hagar — tested and disapproved (though he got a lot of others right) (Genesis 16:3)
- God settled on ten righteous in Sodom to not destroy the city — a testing of where His justice lay (Genesis 18:32)
- Laban changed Jacob's wages ten times (Genesis 31:7)
- Ten generations from Adam to Noah; Shem to Abraham; Isaac to Boaz — the first begins to be tested, the tenth shows himself approved (Genesis 5; 11; Ruth 4)
- Ten plagues against the gods of Egypt (Exodus 7–12)
- Ten Commandments (Exodus 20)
- The tithe is a tenth — testing where your heart is (Leviticus 27:30; Malachi 3:10)
- Israel tested God ten times (Numbers 14:22)
- Jesse sent ten loaves and ten cheeses and told David to bring back assurance that they were alright (1 Samuel 17:17–18)
- David sent ten young men to Nabal (1 Samuel 25:5)

- Nabal struck dead ten days after the incident with David (1 Samuel 25:38)
- Boaz took ten elders to marry Ruth (Ruth 4:2)
- An abundant supply of wine for Nehemiah's household every ten days (Nehemiah 5:18)
- Ten lepers — some respond, some don't; the hermeneutic carries throughout the word (Luke 17:11–19)
- Pentecost just ten days after Jesus ascended — 500 saw him raised from the dead, but only 120 were waiting for the Spirit; what happened to the other 380 during that ten-day test? (Acts 1–2; 1 Corinthians 15:6)
- Ten horns of the beast of Daniel and Revelation, representing ten kings (Daniel 7:7; Revelation 17:12)
- Smyrna in Revelation called to suffer persecution for ten days to see if they would remain faithful (Revelation 2:10)

•

The very Law these Jewish youths are holding fast to is summarized in ten commands that represent the whole. Each man is tested by the extent to which he holds fast to those commands — not one lentil left in the field. As we learn in this story: you come out ten times better if you hold fast to what God has said.

Notice that these Jewish youths do not ask the official to take their word for it—they asked to be tested by the results. They demonstrate faith by action, and trust that the God of Heaven will Himself show Ashpenaz by the results. This is the same faith carried along in the people of Israel all the way until Messiah.

- **John 10:38 (NIV)**
- "But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father."

The Apostle Paul had the same practice in his ministry.

- **1 Corinthians 2:4–5 (NIV)**
- My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.

In our current setting there is an every increasing need for men and women to demonstrate faith by the power of the Spirit, not by words or mere thoughts.

The account of Daniel and his companions carries a pointed challenge for believers in every generation: faith must be demonstrated by action, not merely declared by words. Paul captures this principle in 1 Thessalonians 2:4

- **1 Thessalonians 2:4 (NIV)**
- On the contrary, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our

hearts.

The ten-day test Daniel proposes is precisely this kind of proving ground. It does not establish faith by words— it establishes faith by outcome, and the outcome is left entirely in God's hands. Paul describes this same kind of witness in 1 Thessalonians 1:5–6

- **1 Thessalonians 1:5–6 (NIV)**
- because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.

Again we see a message that came not in words alone, but in power, in the Holy Spirit, and in deep conviction, received in the midst of suffering with joy. These words describe the lives of Daniel and his companions as well as anything could. Their testimony was not built on argument or persuasion. It was built on a life that God Himself was visibly sustaining.

The result of the ten-day test in verse 15 makes this plain. Four young men eating only vegetables and water came out looking healthier and better nourished than those eating from the king's table. This is not a nutritional argument, and it is not a before-and-after fitness story. The point is simpler and greater than that: God supernaturally sustained those who staked

everything on His word. The outcome was not the product of their discipline. It was the product of His faithfulness. And when we look more closely at the Hebrew text, that faithfulness turns out to be even more specific — and more striking — than most English translations suggest.

Let's consult the NASB.

(SLIDE)

Daniel 1:15 – The Meaning of בָּרִיאַ (bā·rî('));

1374 בָּרִיאַ (bā·rî(')); adj.
≡ Str 1277; TWOT 279a

1. LN 23.129–23.141
healthy, formally, fat, i.e., pertaining to being physically healthy, implying a desirability for trade or consumption, whether human, plant, or animal (Ge 41:2, 4, 5, 7, 18, 20; Ps 73:4; Eze 34:3, 20; Da 1:15; Zec 11:16+), note: in some cultures fat has a negative implication, so use other positive adjectives
2. LN 44
stall-fed, formally, fat, i.e., pertaining to being physically grain-fed and so heavier than a comparable animal that grazes (1Ki 5:3 [EB 4:23]+)
3. LN 5 unit: מֵאֲכָל בָּרִיאַ (mā·'ākāl bā·rî('))
the best food (Hab 1:16+)
4. LN 86.1–86.3

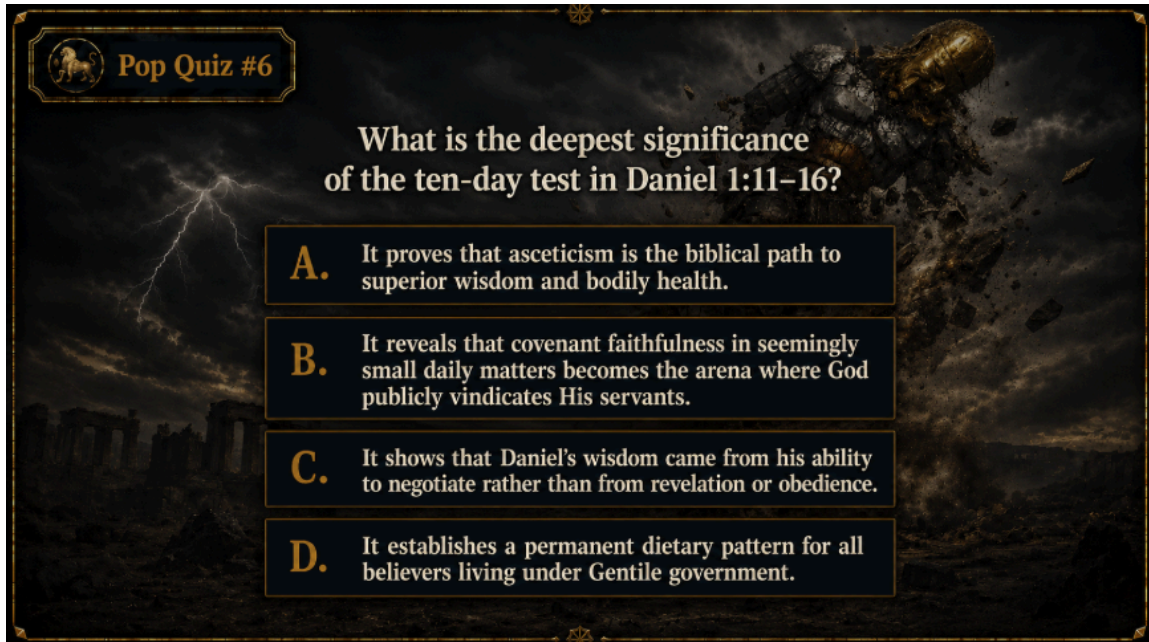
Daniel 1:15 (NASB95)

15 At the end of ten days their **appearance** seemed **better** and they were **fatter** than all the youths who had been eating the king's choice food.

- Daniel 1:15 (NASB95)
- At the end of ten days their appearance seemed better and they were fatter than all the youths who had been eating the king's choice food.

The Hebrew word translated "fatter" in verse 15 is *bari* (H1277). According to the *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains*, *bari* means "healthy, formally fat, pertaining to being physically healthy, implying a desirability for trade or consumption" — the same word used in Genesis 41 to describe Pharaoh's fat, healthy cows representing years of abundance. The dictionary notes that in some cultures fat carries a negative implication, which is why some translations soften it — but in the ancient Near Eastern world, to be *bari* was to be visibly, undeniably flourishing. It is the language of blessing.

The irony the text is pressing is therefore deliberate: the young men who refused the king's rich food came out looking more abundantly provided for than those who ate it. This is not a story about diet. It is a story about source. The question the ten-day test answers is not which food is healthier — it is which king actually provides.



Pop Quiz #6

What is the deepest significance of the ten-day test in Daniel 1:11–16?

- A.** It proves that asceticism is the biblical path to superior wisdom and bodily health.
- B.** It reveals that covenant faithfulness in seemingly small daily matters becomes the arena where God publicly vindicates His servants.
- C.** It shows that Daniel's wisdom came from his ability to negotiate rather than from revelation or obedience.
- D.** It establishes a permanent dietary pattern for all believers living under Gentile government.

Verse 17–20 — Ten Times Better

17 To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds. **18** At the end of the time set by the king to bring them in, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. **19** The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. **20** In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.

This is an intentional leading to the subject matter of chapter two, placed there by the Holy Spirit. The author did not do this haphazardly. It was inspired. Daniel receiving the ability to understand visions and dreams is the very first signpost pointing forward to what chapter two will require of him.

The testing period is 10 days and they are 10 times better for it. This incredible fact should not be a major shock this is what Psalm 119 clearly states.

- **Psalm 119:99 (ESV)**
- 99 I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation.

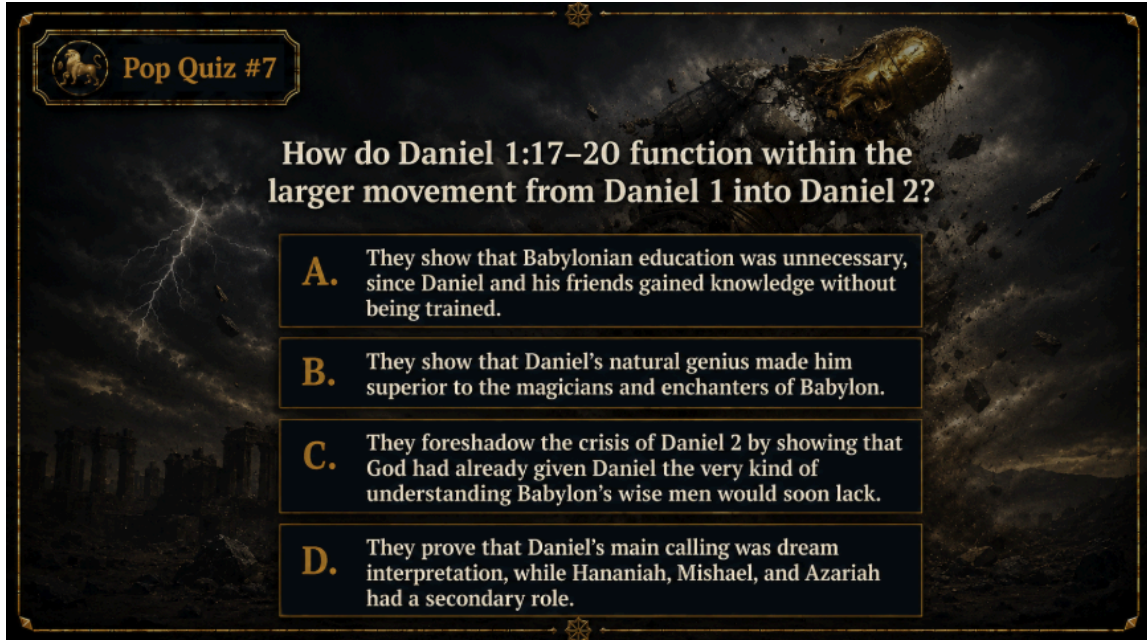
The enemy will try to assimilate you into this world's corruption by either seduction or destruction. But the man who meditates on the testimonies of God will always prevail and surpass the expectations of even his teachers.

Those who study the scripture are promised to be given great understanding, even greater than their teachers! The understanding these youths had should be the goal for our own lives. Consider what Daniel calls exemplary for the last days, the times we are living in:

- **Daniel 11:33 (ESV)**
- 33 And the wise among the people shall make many understand, though for some days they shall stumble by sword and flame, by captivity and plunder.

Just as Daniel and his three friends were found to have understanding, and made many understand, so too, must we know the times we live in, have great understanding, and give that understanding to others! Knowing live in cannot be left to some scholar in a seminary, it is the task of all who love the LORD and his word.

In our chapter tonight it would appear the Jewish youths seem to be the stars, but if any of you are ever privileged enough to meet them, we believe they will say that it was the Law of God that was the star of the chapter and the point of emphasis in this text.



Pop Quiz #7

How do Daniel 1:17–20 function within the larger movement from Daniel 1 into Daniel 2?

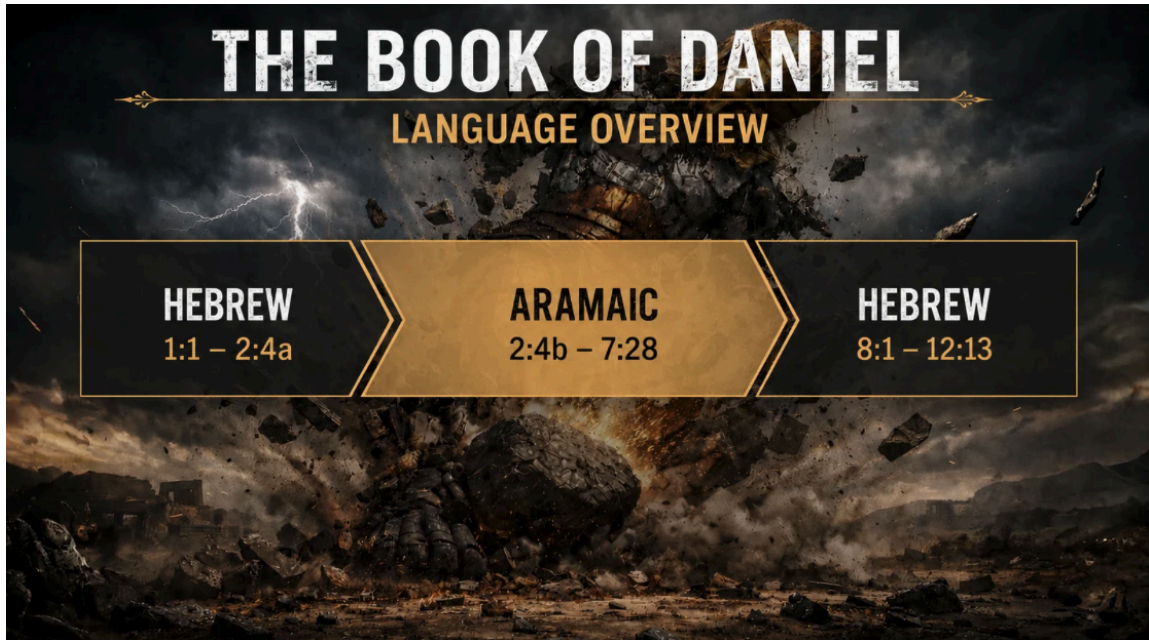
- A.** They show that Babylonian education was unnecessary, since Daniel and his friends gained knowledge without being trained.
- B.** They show that Daniel's natural genius made him superior to the magicians and enchanters of Babylon.
- C.** They foreshadow the crisis of Daniel 2 by showing that God had already given Daniel the very kind of understanding Babylon's wise men would soon lack.
- D.** They prove that Daniel's main calling was dream interpretation, while Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah had a secondary role.

Section 9: Verse 21 — Faith that Outlasts Empires

And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.

Verse 21 gives us the span of Daniel's ministry in the first chapter to emphasize this: a man who with faith love for God's Law will endure beyond every Gentile Empire.

(SLIDE)



When we pick up next week, remember the structure of the languages of Daniel. Chapter 1 is in Hebrew. Chapters 2:4b–7 are in Aramaic. Chapters 8–12 return to Hebrew. Like the plan of salvation, the book of Daniel begins in Hebrew and ends in Hebrew. The man who honors the Law of God will survive the Aramaic portions between the beginning and the end. In our closing thoughts, consider:

- **Isaiah 39:3–7**
- 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."

We have not attempted to answer the question of whether Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were made eunuchs. We can tell you that it was a relatively common practice in the ancient world. Whether or not they were spared is a detail the text does not explicitly cover, and thus it must be for good reason. There is no record of any offspring that came from these men—but in reading this book we hope their example does produce sons who would follow in their faith.

- **Deuteronomy 32:45–47 (NIV)** When Moses finished reciting all these words to all Israel, he said to them, "Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you — they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess."

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These four brave men took the commands of Moses seriously. The Law of God was passed down from fathers and mothers to sons and daughters from the time of Moses to Daniel, and the result is the faith we read about tonight.

- **2 Peter 1:3–4 (NIV)**

His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

Israel is the one called to be the prince with God. But through these great and precious promises, we have been allowed to participate in their promise — grafted in with that new divine nature, having escaped the corruption of the world caused by evil desires. It is time that we learned to hold fast to the word of God in our homes, in our workplaces, as one collective body — in whatever government, world, or life we find ourselves — standing together, following the model set before us in our own historical context by these four young men—may us and our sons be as they were!