

Intro; Last week we began walking through Daniel 1, which begins the story of the Jewish nation of Judah being taken captive by the Babylonian Empire in 605 BC, some 120 years after God sent Assyria to take the 10 northern tribes into captivity.

* In Vs 1-7 Daniel records several details about the nation's capture.

* So far we have seen that -

1ST- King Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Jewish ruler- Jehoiakim (1a)
who was the most wicked king Judah ever had.

2ND- The Babylonian armies laid siege to Jerusalem (1b) which was a common way to attack another nation, so the people would surrender before starvation set in.

3rd- As God orchestrated this capture, the king confiscated many of the worship articles
from God's temple, to offer to his own pagan gods, and to humiliate the God of the Jews. **(2b)**

4th- Continuing in his overthrow, King Nebuchadnezzar used another common tactic which was -
to take captive some of the children from the royal and noble families. (3-4a)

* They had to be mid-teen boys, who were sharp looking, smart, intelligent, decisive, with outgoing, firm personalities, so they would be useful in helping the king lead the people.

* They were not only taken as hostages so the Jews would comply with the takeover, but they would become influential leaders and culture destroyers among their own people, to sway the Jews to turn from their God-given culture, and become good Babylonians.

LAST- v3, 4-7 shows that Once taken- THE KING SOUGHT TO REFORM THEM INTO BABYLONS
with 5 significant changes the king made in these teen's lives.

1. He changed their locality. (3) He took them to Babylon, away from their parent's, and God's priests, prophets, and temple, and put them in fully pagan godless surroundings, so they would be pressured to conform to that lifestyle.

2. He changed their authority. (3)

- Vs 3 shows that after removing them from the authority of their parents and Israel's priests, he put them under the authority of **Ashpenaz**, his chief of staff over the king's officials.

(This man was a professional pagan leader, well versed in all things Babylonian, and just as sharp and as he could be, and easily admired for his greatness.

APP- This is what Satan wants to do to us,

- He seeks to separate believers from the authority of God, His Word, and His leaders, and especially wants to remove children from the authority of their parents----,
- as he seeks to replace the influence of those right authorities by placing “professional pagans” before us, who are sharp, well known, popular, and well versed in wicked living. (((movie stars, music stars, sports figures, or just popular locals who are godless)))
- Once we're separated from Godly authority, our fallen nature kicks in, and we can easily admire and become loyal and submissive to the sinful influence of professional pagans.

3. He changed their theology. (4b, 5b- read)

- These boys were trained for 3 years in Chaldean languages, and Babylonian literature.
- Babylon was the oldest organized culture in the world, started by Nimrod, Noah's great-grandson.
- Babylon had 2000 years of history, pagan philosophy, and religious practice.
- Historians say they would be taught astronomy (wise men), math, agriculture and architecture. (secular things).
- But they were also taught all their paganism and religious practice, pagan astrology and mythology, and how to connect with the gods, interpret dreams, and foretell the future.
- These boys were removed from the truth about the origin of life and God's morals and priorities, (all from God's Law) and were brainwashed with wicked, satanic, pagan spiritual falsehood.

App- This is exactly what Satan tries to do with children, especially those in a Christian oriented society. Look at America. Satan has worked hard to infiltrate our nation's education system.

- * Secular educators have long since rejected the bible and its truth, and sought to fill young people's minds with evolution, humanism, immorality, and anything that is opposite God's truth.
- * Many if not most of America's secular colleges, are breeding grounds for godlessness and the destruction of any kind of biblical thinking, as they promote all kinds of falsehood. (CRT, LGBTQ)
- * In the same way, these Jewish teens were exposed to the most extensive education that Babylon had to give, all to clear their minds and hearts of what they had learned from God's Word.

Notice- As this story progresses, Daniel and his 3 friends, kept their godly, righteous beliefs.

- * Why? They had apparently been taught that everything was to be filtered through God's Word.
- * Whatever education a believer is exposed to- whether its philosophy, psychology, science, politics, religion, morals, leadership, management, relationships, etc.
we are to judge the validity of all we hear by filtering it through the truth of God's Word.

- * **We are to live by God's Word.** And in Rom 3:4- God spoke about anything unbiblical that mankind may come up when He said--- **“Let God be true and every man a liar”.**

4. He changed their morality. (5a- read) He gave them pagan food. 4 reasons.

a. **This encouraged devotion to the king.** This was bribery to gain loyalty.

- , Instead of the harsh treatment slaves would normally get, the king “killed them with kindness”.
- , And remember, these boys had been living in a nation of **SIN**, where God promised want and hunger as judgment on Israel’s sin. And they also came out of a **SIEGE** that produced hunger.
- , So because of Judah’s sin, and Babylon’s siege, they had suffered hunger.
- , Now they’re given the best food ever, which would breed great appreciation and loyalty to the king.

b. **This encouraged the worship of pagan gods.**

- , When believers eat, we usually say “the blessing” and thank God for the food He provided.
(My Dad- “bless this food to the nourishment of our bodies, and our bodies to your service”)
- , In much the same way, the pagans always dedicated their food to one of their gods,
so every time these boys ate that pagan food from the king,
it was to remind them to be loyal to Babylon’s pagan gods.

c. This encouraged an appetite for the high life. (This is partly about the lust of the flesh)

, In Judah, even though these were royal and noble children,
the nation's wealth had suffered greatly overtime, because of God's judgment on their sin.

, The king raised these boy's standard of living to receive nothing by the best, so they would fall in
love with this high, rich life, and never desire to return to the struggle of their old lifestyles.

, He tempted them with the lust of the flesh, rich surroundings, good food, great clothes,
wealth, and all the things that their human nature desired.

, And the goal was-- as their human lusts were fulfilled in this pagan culture,
this would endear them to fully embrace it, and obey so they could receive more of it.

d. This encouraged constant disobedience to God's Law.

, The Babylonians knew Jewish dietary laws. It was well known since Moses received the Law
that the Jews were forbidden to eat certain things, to keep them separate from the pagans.

, So, the king fed them pagan foods, so they would have to disobey God 3 or 4 times a day.

, Soon, disobeying God's Law would become easy and normal.

Sum: This is what Satan seeks to do to believers, especially our kids, to place before them,
things that are pleasing to the flesh, that make us comfortable and fulfill our lusts.

* So instead of seeking God's kingdom, walking in the Spirit, and following the spiritual disciplines of
the Word, prayer, self-examination, confessing sin, and fighting the spiritual battle to be holy---

--- we become consumed with fulfilling our human desires, and we forget about God.

5. He changed their identity. (5b-7- read)

- These Jewish boys had Hebrew names with definitions that exalted God and His truth.
- The king removed those identities with their godly heritage, by changing their names.

a. **Daniel means “God is Judge”**. His name was changed to Beltshazzar meaning-
“Bel provides” or “Bel’s prince”. (Bel and variation of Baal)

b. **Hananiah means “The Lord is gracious”**. His name was changed to Shadrach meaning-
“the command of Aku” -- the Babylonian moon god.

c. **Mishael means “who is what God is”**. His name was changed to Meshach meaning-
“Who is like Aku is”

d. **Azariah means “the Lord is my helper”**. His name was changed to Abednego meaning-
“The servant of Nebo” (the son of the Babylonian god- Baal)

* As these boys heard their new names called several times a day, it would remind them they were no longer Jews to be loyal to Jehovah, but Babylonians to be loyal pagan gods.

* Satan wants to do the same to our young people. He tries to lead them into sin, so that’s what identifies them, and so the world can praise them for their sinful identification.

* Look at society. Your proper name can be replaced. Rather than submit to your parent’s authority, and the name they gave you, you can be called and identified any way you want.

* You can pick your pronouns, and have an identity that throws off the old practice of being named after a beloved relative, a past hero, or a bible character, so you can escape the old morals.

* Renaming these boys was an effort to influence them to ditch the past and embrace a new pagan future. This is exactly what’s happening in western culture.

Conc: The king changed their **locality, authority, theology, morality, and identity**,
“all to de-nationalize them”, stripping their minds and hearts of their past heritage with God.

Note- The story only identifies 4 boys out of several dozen teens, that held to their godly past.

* This revealed how far God’s people and Judah’s families had drifted from God and His truth.

* But it also shows there was a **remnant** that continued to be faithful to God, and raise Godly children who were fully committed to God, believed the truth, and would not disobey it.

* The rest willingly compromised to enjoy the world; And rather than stand true and enjoy the blessing of God and being honored by God, they lost their soul to Satan.

* Christians, and especially young people, how has this world influenced us?

* Will we compromise to be accepted and well-liked by those who will end up in hell, or will we stand with God regardless the cost?