

# Babylonian Indoctrination

Daniel 1:1-7

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## Who was the writer of the book of Daniel?

The Book of Daniel *claims* to be written by Daniel himself, and the fact that it is written mostly in the third person does not contradict that claim.

- It was customary for ancient writers to speak in the third person even when writing about themselves.
- The one Old Testament exception to this is the Book of Nehemiah, which is in the form of a personal diary.

## When did Daniel record his prophecies?

The prophet Daniel lived in the sixth century before the birth of Jesus. During this approximate period:

- Construction began on the Acropolis in Athens.
- Mayan civilization flourished in Mexico.
- Aesop wrote his fables.
- Confucius and Buddha lived.
- Greek art began to truly excel.
- The Greeks introduced the olive tree to Italy.
- The Phoenicians made the first known sea journey around Africa.

## Why do critics challenge the book of Daniel having been written in the sixth century?

The Book of Daniel predicts events of the second century before the coming of Jesus (especially the period 175-164 B.C.) with such precision that doubting critics believe it *had* to have been written *after* that period.

## Why might some of the Jewish Rabbis not respect Daniel as a prophet of the highest esteem?

- 1) They say Daniel did not live such a mortified life as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, or some of the other prophets
- 2) He lived like a prince, and was a prime-minister of a state in a foreign country... he collaborated with a conqueror of Israel
- 3) He wrote his book in a heathen country where he had his visions – and not in the land of Israel

## What makes the writings of Daniel important?

He speaks plainly of the time of the Messiah's coming & return. Jesus referred to Him when He spoke of His return in the Olivet Discourse.

## Daniel 1:1-2 – Nebuchadnezzar conquers Jerusalem.

*In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the articles of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the articles into the treasure house of his god.*

## v1-2 – What happened during the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah?

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in 586 BC carrying off articles of the temple along with many Jews into captivity.

- This was the beginning of the “Times of the Gentiles.”

## What do we know about Jehoiakim king of Judah?

This was a Judean king placed on the throne by the Pharaoh of Egypt. His name means “*Yahweh raises up*,” but the LORD did not raise him up at all, Pharaoh did.

## Who was Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon?

This was the mighty ruler of the Babylonian Empire. The name *Nebuchadnezzar* is a Hebrew transliteration of the Babylonian name which means “*Nebu protects the crown*.”

## What became of Jehoiakim king of Judah?

*And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand:* In this 597 B.C. deportation Jehoiakim, Ezekiel, and others were taken away. This deportation is described in 2 Kings 24:14-16.

*Isaiah 39:7 – And they shall take away some of your sons who will descend from you, whom you will beget; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.*

This prophecy leads some to think Daniel and his companions were made eunuchs. Certainly, the Hebrew term *saris* was used of literal eunuchs; but the word derives from a phrase that simply means to be a servant of the king. It wasn't exclusively applied to literal eunuchs.

## Why did God raise up Babylon to enslave Judah?

Two main reasons: Idolatry & Israel's failure to observe the sabbaths for the land.

Leviticus 25:2-4 – *“When you enter the land I am going to give you, the land itself must observe a sabbath to the Lord. For six years sow your vineyards and gather their crops. But in the seventh year the land is to have a sabbath of rest, a sabbath to the LORD. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards.”*

## What is idolatry and why was it a problem with God?

- Idolatry is compromising with the world in worshiping what is created instead of the Creator.
- Idolatry is like adultery... unfaithfulness to Whom faithfulness is due.

## Observing the sabbaths were part of the Law... why was obeying the Law important for Israel?

Israel was set apart as God's representatives to mankind on earth. Keeping the Law demonstrated faithfulness to God.

## So, did the Israelites earn salvation by being obedient to the Law?

- No, that would be salvation-by-works... what all human religions think earns them favor with God for life after death.
- They were saved the same way we are saved today... by grace, the unmerited favor of God, through faith in His provision for eternal life.

Ephesians 2:8-9 – *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”*

We have the advantage today of knowing the details of the provision God made for our salvation... Jesus dying on the cross to pay the penalty of our sin. God's faithful in Old Testament times knew they couldn't perfectly keep the Law so they had to trust in God's grace and knew His provision would have something to do with the promised Messiah but didn't know what.

## Daniel 1:3-4 – The best and the brightest

*“Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel and some of the king's descendants and some of the nobles, young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans.”*

## Why did King Nebuchadnezzar include young Israelites in the training with his descendants?

He not only destroyed Jerusalem but took the shining lights of Judah's future... the best and brightest of their children. Their indoctrination was intended to wipe out the culture of the Jews.

## What do we know of Ashpenaz?

Ashpenaz was Nebuchadnezzar's “master of the eunuchs” (v3) ...Eunuchs were in charge of royal harems; Daniel and his friends were probably emasculated

2 Kings 20:16-18 – *“Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, ‘Hear the word of the Lord: <sup>17</sup> ‘Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and what your fathers have accumulated until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left,’ says the Lord. <sup>18</sup> ‘And they shall take away some of your sons who will descend from you, whom you will beget; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.’”*

## Why do you think that Daniel and his friends were chosen to partake of royal Babylonian instruction?

- King Nebuchadnezzar recognized that the Hebrews were intelligent, ingenious, inspired and had great potential in supporting his kingdom.
- The children and young men were to be of the noble and royal extraction – handsome, aptitude for learning, well informed, quick to understand, no physical abnormalities (v4)
- As the Temple vessels, these young boys were also considered as “trophies” to make a show of Nebuchadnezzar's military and government success.
- These children were also hostages that insured the fidelity, loyalty, and control of their parents back in the land of the Hebrews – those left behind.
- He was bringing up a succession of people who would be fit for public service and have the ability to conduct the king's business.

## Daniel 1:5-7 – Groomed for the civil service.

*“And the king appointed for them a daily provision of the king's delicacies and of the wine which he drank, and three years of training for them, so that at the end of that time they might serve before the king. Now from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. To them the chief of the eunuchs gave names: he gave Daniel the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abed-Nego.”*

## **What kind of training did Daniel and his friends receive?**

- These young men were to be taught the language and literature of the Babylonians (Chaldeans)
- They were to be trained in the laws of the country, in history, philosophy, mathematics, the art of husbandry, war and navigation
- They were given three years to finish their study and learning and then be judged by the king himself for their competence and skills (v5)

## **Why did the trainees receive the king's delicacies?**

It was part of their indoctrination... King Nebuchadnezzar wanted to communicate to these young men his generosity and that they could look to him for everything they needed. Instead, they looked to God!

## **What was so important about a name change?**

The “prince of the eunuchs” changed their names to show authority over them and their subjection to him; they are going to be Chaldeans!

- Daniel: “God is my Judge” – Belteshazzer: signifies “the keeper of the hidden treasures of “Bel” (moon god)
- Hananiah: “The grace of the Lord” – Shadrach: means “the inspiration of the sun” (Sun god Re)
- Mishael: “He that is the strong God” – Meshach: means “the goddess Shach”, name which Venus was worshiped
- Azariah: “The Lord is my help” – Abednego: means “the servant of the shining fire” (they worshiped the god of fire)

## **What was the objective of the 3-year training?**

This was an effort at total indoctrination, with the goal of making these young Jewish men leave behind their Hebrew God and culture.

- Nebuchadnezzar wanted to communicate to these young men, “look to *me* for everything.”
- Daniel and his friends refused, insisting that they would look to God.

## **How does Satan use a similar strategy against believers today?**

He seeks to indoctrinate us into the world system:

- Identify (name) us in reference to the world.
- Feed us what the world offers.
- Educate us in the ways of the world.

## **What applications are there from this discussion?**

- People are made to worship, if not the Creator, then idols... don't go the way of the world.
- The world system is set up to make us compromise with it... resist!
- Trust God even in the midst of the most trying circumstances.