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Why Was Daniel So Special? (Part I)

Daniel 2:47: (NASB) *The king answered Daniel and said, surely your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery.*

Dare to be a Daniel!

We all want to be inspired. We all want to see or hear a story of someone who was so strong against sin, so courageous against captivity and so trustworthy against temptation that we ourselves become invigorated to follow that example.

Daniel the prophet was one such man who lived one such story. Stay with us as we open the book of Daniel and look upon his life to see why he was so beloved of God.

So, when did Daniel go to the Lion's Den? How old was he? Everyone knows something about that story and it seems as though it is the centerpiece of Daniel's life. It is not...or is it?

Daniel was from the tribe of Judah. He was favored of God and blessed with a heart for God. Without discussing yet the time he was thrown in the lion's den, we will look at other events in his life and see how metaphorically they also were "lion's dens."

The "Lion's Den Test" of CAPTIVITY:

Daniel 1:1-4: (NRSV) *¹In the third year of the reign of King Jehoiakim of Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ²The Lord let King Jehoiakim of Judah fall into his power, as well as some of the vessels of the house of God. These he brought to the land of Shinar, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his gods. ³Then the king commanded his palace master Ashpenaz to bring some of the Israelites of the royal family and of the nobility, ⁴young men without physical defect and handsome, versed in every branch of wisdom, endowed with knowledge and insight, and competent to serve in the king's palace; they were to be taught the literature and language of the Chaldeans.*

(Source: Biblical commentary by A. O. Hudson) It was probably not without design that Daniel used the ancient term "land of Shinar" to describe the country of his captors rather than "and of Babylon" by which it was more familiarly known in his own day. "Shinar" was the name it bore in those early days soon after the Flood when Nimrod established the first empire there, and impious men built a great tower "whose top should reach unto heaven." The tower was still there and Daniel probably saw it as he entered the city...



Imagine how overwhelming it must have been for young Daniel to have been taken captive!

Observations thus far:

- Sacred vessels of the Temple were taken and stored in a heathen treasury (that will come into play later!)
- The fear of being so young and being a captive - Daniel was probably about 17 years old at this time
- Being a LONG way from home - the journey to Babylon would have taken about 30 days
- Being educated, he knew the God-less history of Babylon
- Upon arrival - culture shock! Idolatrous gods ruled this land
- Upon arrival - awe at the amazing feats of architecture and the massiveness of the city
- Upon arrival - the sense of the permanence of his captivity

Captivity in summary was the young and impressionable taken to a foreign land to live, work and serve with no apparent hope of freedom. Although he was there with three named companions (their Babylonian names were Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego), Daniel was essentially alone.

The Christian is also called to great favor, the same as Daniel was born into.

2 Corinthians 5:17: (NASB) *Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

Daniel was under the old Law and upheld that to the best of his ability. What was "old" was good and what was "new" for Daniel (the Babylonian way of life) was not good. For the Christian, we are "new" and can't go back to our old ways of life! Same trick of Satan but in a different order. Satan will tempt us to put aside our new way of life and go back to a place we are not supposed to be.



What is our “Lion’s Den Test” of captivity we have to avoid?

1 John 2:16: (NASB) *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.*

We can be “captive” in a world full of sin and death.

The “Lion’s Den LESSON” of CAPTIVITY: Once we are engulfed in captivity (and we all are), our first decision must be to set our intention on fidelity to our spiritual heritage.

(Source: Biblical commentary by A. O. Hudson) Judged by modern standards, the palace of the king Nebuchadnezzar was colossal...The building, or rather range of buildings, was something like a quarter of a mile square, flanked on one side by the river Euphrates and surrounded on the three other sides by wide canals so that it was virtually a fortress. Here lived the king and his family, the officers of his court, many of the priests and wise men of Babylon, distinguished captives taken as hostages in similar fashion to Daniel and his companions, and a host of servants, guards and soldiers, anxious in abject obedience, to carry out the wishes of this great king who was rapidly making himself master of the world.

The “Lion’s Den Test” of CONSCIENCE: Daniel 1:5-7: (Please refer to the Bonus Material for more information about these names and their meaning.)

This hardly seemed like captivity...royal rations of food and wine? ...An education? What was this really? It was *the subtle indoctrination of idolatry* for the purpose of creating loyal subjects to the idolatrous king himself! It was the removal of their *identity and heritage* and a replacing with a *new name, a new language, and a new belief system - a new life!* This is a common tool of Satan.

Daniel 1:8: (NRSV) *But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the royal rations of food and wine; so he asked the palace master to allow him not to defile himself.*

Notice he *asked!*

All is well and good to take a stand - but what happens when that stand could cost someone else? Daniel 1:9-14: Daniel didn’t give up because of fear. Verses 12-13 display Daniel’s remarkable wisdom and his confidence in the Lord’s care as he offers a simple test to solve a potentially major dilemma. Daniel 1:15-17: Verses 15-16 give the results of the test, and the consequence of such results. Daniel the teenager in his wisdom and courage changed a portion of the “training program!”

How did Daniel and his companions fare through the three-year Babylonian education/indoctrination?

Now the three years of education are accomplished: Daniel 1:18-21: Excellence is the result of three years of faithfulness! They are now stationed in the king’s own court.

Our consciences are also tested in many ways. **With what do we allow ourselves to be fed?**

Luke 4:4: Daniel and his friends were living according to the word of God as they knew it through the Law, even when they were not being judged by others according to that Law.

They found a way to stand above the fray. Do we? **What is it that we drink?** John 4:10: Are we continually driven by our highest spiritual conscience even under poor circumstances?

Hebrews 10:22

The “Lion’s Den LESSON” of CONSCIENCE: We, like Daniel, are strangers. Do we meld into the “foreign country” and draw our nourishment from it, or do we draw our strength from the will of our Father based on principle and promise?

Quick side note: Could there be another lesson regarding the development of the true church while in Babylon? This is a good example of always staying separate from, standing apart from, the temptations of false Christianity, and in the end - after three years - (signifying a complete experience) proving faithful.



The “Lion’s Den Test” of FAITH: This would have been the fourth year that Daniel was in Babylon. The first two years King Nebuchadnezzar reigned alongside his father Nabopolassar, who was an invalid at the time and died after the second year of Daniel’s presence in Babylon.

Daniel 2:1-6: (NRSV) ¹*In the second year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed such dreams that his spirit was troubled and his sleep left him. ²So the king commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans be summoned to tell the king his dreams. When they came in and stood before the king, ³he said to them, I have had such a dream that my spirit is troubled by the desire to understand it. ⁴The Chaldeans said to the king (in Aramaic), O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will reveal the interpretation. It has been thought (because of translation) that the king forgot the dreams, but rather it seems to be that he simply did not reveal them, wanting to see the true value of his counselors. ⁵The king answered the Chaldeans, this is a public decree: if you do not tell me both the dream and its interpretation, you shall be torn limb from limb, and your houses shall be laid in ruins. ⁶But if you do tell me the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. Therefore tell me the dream and its interpretation.*

Courage is not the absence of fear; it is the judgment that something else is more important. -Ambrose Redmoon

That’s how Daniel lived. Do we stand up for what we believe in?

Back to the story, the wise men try reasoning with the king. But the king is now angry and stands firm accusing them of trying to buy time.

The wise men seeing the impossibility of their plight: Daniel 2:10-11 Next we see Daniel’s bold faith being tested in a new and difficult way: Daniel 2:12-16: Notice Daniel does not know the dream yet, *nor* does he even know if God will reveal it. He *does* know that God had already given him abilities along these lines.

Daniel 2:17-23:

- Daniel’s first impulse was to go to his brethren for their prayer and support.
- The king’s question came in a dream; Daniel received the answer in a dream.
- That Daniel’s response was spoken (verse 20) indicated a conversational kind of prayer.
- Daniel’s first impulse was to praise and thank the Almighty for the actual interpretation of the ages and ruling powers to come.
- Daniel’s second impulse was to praise and thank the Almighty for the wisdom and power needed.
- Daniel exhibited a BOLD HUMILITY and acknowledges a single Almighty God in the midst of a monarchy where there are gods for everything.

Daniel 2:25-30: Note Arioch was quick to take credit for “finding” Daniel. The king was direct in his request.

- Daniel’s first words revealed his humility, wisdom and GREAT faith in the One God.
- Daniel connected God’s gift of the interpretation of the end of days with the king and not himself. He made the king the centerpiece.

Remember, this is the God the king does not believe in! This takes great faith. Daniel began with the context that this dream reveals the future.

- Before revealing detail, Daniel restated his humility as being the Almighty’s conduit.
- Daniel restated the direct connection between God and the king.

This is a young man in his early 20’s!

The “Lion’s Den LESSON” of FAITH: To speak of faith and to live in faith when all things are in order is one thing - to publicly speak of faith in a hostile environment and to live in that faith in such an environment is faith in action.



The Apostle Paul showed us how to live such a faith by his own actions: Acts 17:22-24:

The “Lion’s Den Test” of PUBLICITY: The dream: Daniel 2:31-35

The interpretation: Daniel 2:36-45: (For more information on this dream and other prophecies of Daniel, please refer to the CQ Program from November 3, 2013 entitled, *Why Do Historians Hate Daniel So Much?*)

Now the interpretation went from merely human events to Godly events: So, Daniel dramatically revealed the dream, its source and its interpretation, which was more than asked for. He basically told the king: You are being given a look into the future, beginning with your kingdom and ending with the kingdom of God overspreading the earth forever and ever!

The “Lion’s Den LESSON” of PUBLICITY: Because deep and abiding faith stands on principle, publicity does not stroke the ego. It merely becomes a tool to draw all eyes to the source of its strength - the Almighty God and His plan.

Publicity is not to feed an ego; it is to feed the Gospel. All power and glory goes to God. We as Christians are just the conduit. Mark 5:30-33

The “Lion’s Den Test” of FAME AND FORTUNE: Daniel 2:46-49: So, Daniel is rewarded as the king recognizes that the God of Daniel is the God of all gods. It is important to remember the king is here expressing a great appreciation of the Almighty and His power, for over time Nebuchadnezzar is destined to forget.

Daniel’s heritage rings true! “Daniel” means “judge of God.” His Babylonian name, Belteshaz’zar, means “Bel’s prince,” meaning “whom Bel (the Babylonian god) favors.” Daniel truly was the judge of God and NOT Bel’s prince!

Daniel lived his life in “lion’s den experiences” and showed us how we in our Christian lives can be successful in living in accordance with the will of God and the sacrifice of Jesus. Dare to be a Daniel!

*So, why was Daniel so special?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*