

# **DANIEL**

**Ellet J. Waggoner and Alonzo T. Jones**



## Chapter 1

### **Daniel in Babylon (1886)**

Daniel was in Babylon in fulfillment of prophecy. More than a hundred years before this, a king of Babylon--Merodach-Baladan--had sent an embassy to Jerusalem to congratulate King Hezekiah on his recovery from his sickness, and to inquire about the going backward of the shadow on the sun-dial of Ahaz. Hezekiah was so elated over such a notice of himself that he showed them all his treasures: "There was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah showed them not." (2 Kings 20:13)

Then came Isaiah and said to Hezekiah: "Behold, the days come, that all that is in your house, and that which your fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon; nothing shall be left, says the Lord. And of your sons that shall issue from you, which you shall beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon." (2 Kings 20:17-18)

Accordingly, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came up and besieged Jerusalem, and took it. "And the king spoke unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; Children in whom was no blemish, but well favored, and skillful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and

whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans." (Daniel 1:3-4)

We know not how many there were chosen to be thus taught; we only know the names of four who were of the company selected to be taught the learning of the Chaldeans; and we would never have known the names of even these four, if they had not had the courage to stand upon principle and firm conviction of truth and duty.

They were to study three years, and then pass an examination for places in the king's favor, and it was to be at the king's expense. "The king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank. ... But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank." (Daniel 1:5,8)

It is evident that Daniel was the one who led out in this, and that the other three decided to stand by him. It was Daniel that purposed in his heart that he would not do as was expected by the king, nor as all the students, but his three brethren, were willing to do.

At this time Babylon was in the height of its glory. It contained between two and three million inhabitants, and all the Babylonian plain was teeming with population. Wealth and magnificence, with their inseparable accompaniments--luxury and intemperance--reigned on every hand, and this too, in heathen manners. It was in the midst of such scenes and such influences, that Daniel was placed when only a mere boy. But boy though he was, he purposed in his

heart that he would not defile himself by conformity in any way with any of their customs, nor allow himself to be defiled with any of the evil influences that were around him.

He refused the king's meat and wine, and asked the he might be given pulse to eat and water to drink. In the Revised Version, margin, we have "herbs" as the alternative reading for "pulse;" and "herbs" conveys the correct idea. It was what would be now called a vegetarian diet, the diet that was originally prescribed for man; (Genesis 1:29) and those who, even in this day, conform most closely to it, are in every way the better for it. It was not altogether a miracle, that their countenances were found. "Fairer and fatter ... than all the children which did eat of the portion of the king's meat." (Daniel 1:15)

True, it must have been miraculous that so marked a result was seen in so short a time--only ten days; but that result would not have been seen at all if they had not adopted the diet.

God works by means which He himself has appointed; and the closer men conform to the Lord's appointed ways, the more wondrously will He work in their behalf. If the church of God today would adopt the principles of Daniel, their power and efficiency would be increased manyfold.

Daniel was set there to study the learning of the Chaldeans, that he might successfully pass the appointed examination, and stand in the presence of the king. To accomplish this in the best way, he

adopted a vegetarian diet. Those who did so with him were approved of God, and succeeded so well that they were ten times better than all the wise men in the realm.

We are set in the school of Christ to study the word of God, that we may successfully pass the appointed examination and stand in the presence of the King of kings. If such a course would accomplish such results in the study of heathen learning, why would it not accomplish much more in the study of the wisdom of God, as given in His sacred word? Without hesitation we say that it would.

But where are the Daniels of today? Where are they today, even in the church, who will put themselves upon a strict regimen that they may have clearness and strength of mind to discern the precious wisdom of God. The clearer the brain, the clearer the thoughts; the purer the blood, the clearer the brain; the purer the food, the purer the blood; therefore the purer the food that we eat, the better will be our power to think, and the more clearly we can discern the truth on any point. How many ten thousands are singing, "Dare to be a Daniel!"

But alas! how many tens can be found who do really dare to be Daniels?

It is said of these four Hebrews, that by this course their countenances were "fairer" than all the others. In this lesson is a proved prescription which we commend to all young ladies who wish to have a fair complexion. It is better than all the paints and

powders in Christendom. We once heard the question asked Dr. Simms, in a large audience, "What is the best means of preserving a fair, beautiful complexion?"

He answered, "Avoid tea, coffee, pork, oysters, fish, etc. Use a vegetarian diet."

That is the truth, and it is a truth that is taught in this lesson from the 1st chapter of Daniel. This very lesson in Daniel 1:8-21, is of the first importance to all people in this our day. We say indeed, in every sense, "Dare to be a Daniel."

The following by Dr. Geo. P. Hayes, in Half Hours with the Lessons, is exactly to the point: When Daniel made up his mind not to defile himself with the king's meat, it was purely a question of principle. ... It seemed utterly foolish. King Nebuchadnezzar and Melzar both believed that the popular opinion of the day was all right in saying that wine and fat meat were necessary for a clear complexion and a quick brain.

The same false notion is widely held now about lager beer and tonics. Is it true? Ask the health records. ... Gout, liver complaint, and the hundred-faced dyspepsias are Nature's protest against mince-pies, fruit-cakes, brandy-puddings, and gluttony...You may not wish to obey Nature's health-laws, but you cannot defy them and escape.

Just now the papers are reviving the discussion of the value of the Mosaic law on food, as a law of health. The health and brain-power of the Jews would teach the Gentiles a lesson, if the Gentiles were not so heedless. Many will doubt this statement and stick to Melzar's notion, that if they restrict themselves to Daniel's diet they will soon become "worse-liking" than others which are "of their set." Well, why not take Daniel's way of settling it? Just try it.--Signs of the Times, January 21, 1886--Notes on the International Lesson, January 31--Daniel 1:8-21

A.T. Jones

## Chapter 2

### **Daniel in Babylon (1899)**

#### **Historical Background**

In order to enter fully into this lesson, we must understand the circumstances. The situation is this: Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had besieged Jerusalem, and had taken it. "The Lord gave Jehoiakim, king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God." (Daniel 1:2) "Surely at the commandment of the Lord came this upon Judah, to remove them out of His sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did; And also for the innocent blood that he shed: for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood." (2 Kings 24:3-4)

After naming over various nations, including Judah, God said: "Now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given unto him also to serve him." (Jeremiah 27:6)

Nebuchadnezzar therefore had the same right to rule that any of the kings of Judah ever had. Because of their sins, the people of Israel had been given over to the king of Babylon. Their captivity was only the outward manifestation of the bondage of sin, into which they had voluntarily gone. "Moreover, all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the Lord

which He had hallowed in Jerusalem. And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because He had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling place: But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy. Therefore, He brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: He gave them all into his hand. And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes; all these he brought to Babylon. And they burnt the house of God, and broke down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. And them that had escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: To fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfill threescore and ten years." (2 Chronicles 36:14-21)

### **A Royal School**

Nebuchadnezzar was a broad-minded man, and one who was zealous for the welfare of his kingdom. He could recognize merit wherever he saw it, and had a disposition to make use of it. Accordingly, he gave orders that the most promising of the captives

of Judah should be trained in the royal schools, to be fitted for responsible places in the kingdom. The chosen ones were "of the seed royal, and of the nobles; Youths in whom was no blemish, but well-favored, and skillful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability to stand in the king's palace." (Daniel 1:3-4,RV)

These were to be taught "the learning and tongue of the Chaldeans. And the king appointed for them a daily portion of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank, and that they should be nourished three years; that at the end thereof they might stand before the king." (Daniel 1:4-5)

Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. These four seemed to be special friends and companions, with Daniel as the leader among them.

From the record it is plain that the captives were obliged to pass an examination before they could have the benefit of this training; for otherwise it could not be known whether or not they had an understanding in science. At the time when this lesson begins, they had passed their examination and were ready to enter upon their three years' course of training.

But Daniel was not yet ready to go on with the work. Everything was not as it should be, and although he was a captive in Babylon, he was God's free man. All was not to his liking, and therefore it

was wrong, because his liking was God's will. He liked only that which God liked. What was the trouble?

He was not satisfied with the food. That is not so uncommon a thing. There are many young men who find fault with the food that is furnished them both at home and at school. But it is a rare thing to find a student making the complaint that Daniel made. He did not complain that he did not have enough to eat, or that he was used to much better fare at home, and could not live on such a diet; nothing of the kind. His complaint was that the food was, too fine. Verse 8 literally translated is: "But Daniel set (it) upon his heart that he would not defile himself with the king's delicacies." (Daniel 1:8)

He wanted plain food. Surely Daniel was a remarkable character. This incident at the beginning of his career stamps him as such.

There was nothing captious (Captious: marked by an often ill-natured inclination to stress faults and raise objections.) about Daniel. Although he had a fixed purpose in his heart as to what he would do, he did not make a scene. He did not parade his scruples, and protest that he would not violate them even for the king. People who have a fixed purpose, and one that is based upon a good foundation, do not need to bluster. People who do that, do it to make up for their lack of stability, and usually they give way when pressure is brought to bear upon them. Moreover, by their very course they make it sure that severe pressure will be brought to bear upon them.

## **Christian Courtesy**

But Daniel's purpose was too deep for bluster. He did not intend to eat the food that the king had appointed for him, yet he courteously asked the steward who had charge of their food to give them something else. "When a man's way, please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him." (Proverbs 16:7)

Daniel's ways and purposes pleased the Lord, and therefore He had "made Daniel to find favor and compassion in the sight of the prince of the eunuchs," (Daniel 1:9,RV) who was disposed to grant any request that Daniel might make, but who feared to do anything contrary to the king's commandment. He could not conceive how anyone could keep in health and strength if deprived of the rich variety provided by the king; and so radical a change as Daniel proposed would, he feared, make the young men so thin and weak that they could not carry out the work assigned them, and so the king's anger would be aroused.

But Daniel combined the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove, He did not argue the matter with the officer, but proposed a practical test. He said: "Prove your servants, I beseech you, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon before you, and the countenance of the youths that eat of the king's meat: and as you see, deal with your servants." (Daniel 1:12-13)

No objection could be made to so reasonable a request as that. All the king desired was that the youths should have such attention as would keep them in the best condition for study and work. Ten days could not make a great deal of difference, and if at the end of that time the experiment proved a failure, then the young men could soon pick up again under the king's generous provision. Still, the fact that the experiment was made, shows the hold that Daniel had on the king's officers.

### **God Honors a Simple Diet**

What was the result? "At the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat of the king's meat. So the steward took away their meat (delicate food), and the wine that they should drink, and gave them pulse." (Daniel 1:15-16)

Now the question arises, "Why was this written?"

The answer is that it was "written for our learning." (Romans 15:4)

And what can we learn from it? This, that a very simple diet is the best for man. That this is the chief reason why this incident is recorded, it very evident.

Some may say that the lesson we should learn is that God honors those who are moved by principle. That lesson is very

prominent, but it only enforces the other, for the principle for which Daniel was standing was that of plainness in diet. Daniel was not making a sacrifice in abstaining from the king's delicate food; he did not desire it, because he knew that it was not good for him, and he had been trained to prefer that which was best for him. The result showed that the simplest fare is the best for practical purposes.

Some may think that God wrought a miracle in behalf of the four Hebrews who chose the simple food. It may be that He did, but if so that only makes more emphatic the fact that a simple diet, with little variety, is the best for hard work, especially for mental labor. God would not work a miracle to enforce a wrong idea, therefore we have the testimony of the Lord in favor of simple food. The dealing of God with the children of Israel in the wilderness, when He fed them on manna, is a standing testimony. Daniel had read that history to profit.

The test of the value of food is what it will do for man. Food is for the purpose of renewing strength. "Blessed are you, O land, when your king is the son of nobles, and your princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness!" (Ecclesiastes 10:17)

People cannot always determine the goodness of any food by its taste, because almost everybody has a perverted taste. God, however, designs that food shall please the taste, and has given us the sense of taste, so that we may derive pleasure from eating. But the very best food will taste insipid to a perverted palate, and therefore we need to educate our taste.

Whatever will keep the body in the best health, and give muscular strength, and mental vigor, and will also enable one to endure privation, is the best food, and we should accustom ourselves to enjoy it. When the palate has been trained for a while in the right way, rich and fancy dishes and flesh meats will be distasteful, and simple but wholesome food will be eaten with a hearty relish.

The poor man, with simple fare, is not to be pitied. The rich, or any others, for that matter, who are slaves to an appetite that demands rich food, and who do not know the pleasure of perfect health and of abstinence, are the ones to be pitied. But there was a further result of Daniel's choice. "As for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. And at the end of the days which the king had appointed for bringing them in, the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they stood before the king. And in every matter of wisdom and understanding, concerning which the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm." (Daniel 1:17-20,RV)

Surely that was a result worth even making a sacrifice for; but as we have seen, Daniel had not made a sacrifice; he had been eating and enjoying that which was good. It is not a sacrifice to be in a state of constant enjoyment.

Was this a miracle? Most certainly, but only such a miracle as may be wrought at any time and for anybody. The attainment of wisdom is a miracle, "For the Lord gives wisdom: out of His mouth comes knowledge and understanding." (Proverbs 2:6)

Daniel and his companions had given themselves fully into the hands of the Lord, and He in turn gave them himself. God is willing and anxious to give every man wisdom and understanding. God's desire for men is expressed in the inspired words of the Apostle Paul, when he prayed, "that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment." (Philippians 1:9)

And also, "that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." (Colossians 1:9-10)

The trouble with the most of us is that we throw obstacles in the way of this result. We clog our systems with unwholesome food, and with too great a quantity, thus reversing the proper order of things; for whereas food ought to be only a support to the body, we impose on the body the task of trying to dispose of food that is utterly useless to it. Thus instead of eating to live, we actually live to eat.

It is very evident that while we are in that state, the Holy Spirit of God cannot control us, and enlighten us. How can we expect God

to give us clear perception, and strength of intellect, when we deliberately do that which benumbs the sensibilities? It is like putting our hands into the fire, and expecting that God will keep our fingers from being burned.

## **The Source of Wisdom**

Whence did Daniel and his fellows get their wisdom? Read the record, and see. God gave it to them. The amount of wisdom that God can give a man of what is called "ordinary ability" is not dreamed of, because He is so seldom given the opportunity to demonstrate it.

Those Hebrew youths were at school in Babylon, with the wisest men of the kingdom for instructors; but they did not derive their knowledge from those wise men. How do we know? From this fact, that at the end of three years they knew ten times more than all the wise men in the king's realm, and that of course included the men who were over the school which Daniel attended. They placed themselves in harmony with God's law, and He filled them. Thus they experienced what the psalmist said: "I have more understanding than all my teachers; for your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients; because I keep your precepts." (Psalm 119:99-100)

Here is something that ought to claim the earnest attention of everybody. In these days the idea that men can learn more from God and His Word than from man is almost unheard of. This is no

disparagement upon anything that anybody knows. Whatever wisdom any man has, whatever he really knows, is good, because it comes from God, from whom every good and perfect gift comes. And men may help their fellow-men in the way of knowledge.

Nevertheless the fact remains that no one is a teacher like unto God. "Behold, God exalts by His power: who teaches like Him?" (Job 36:22)

In obedience to all the commandments of God, and perfect submission to the perfect life of God, there are unlimited possibilities of wisdom. "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." (Job 28:28)

And this is not fanciful, visionary, intangible, wisdom. It is such wisdom as can be recognized as wisdom even by those who do not know the secret of it. "Behold I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do so in the land whither you go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and shall say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." (Deuteronomy 4:5-6)

See this verified in the case of Solomon. "In that night did God appear unto Solomon, and said unto him, Ask what I shall give you. And Solomon said unto God, You have showed great mercy unto David my father, and have made me to reign in his stead. Now, O

Lord God, let your promise unto David my father be established: for You have made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude. Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this your people, that is so great? And God said to Solomon, Because this was in your heart, and you have not asked riches, wealth, or honor, nor the life of your enemies, neither yet have asked long life; but have asked wisdom and knowledge for yourself, that you may judge my people, over whom I have made you king: Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto you; and I will give you riches, and wealth, and honor, such as none of the kings have had that have been before you, neither shall there any after you have the like." (2 Chronicles 1:7-12) "And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to prove Solomon with hard questions at Jerusalem, with a very great company, and camels that bore spices, and gold in abundance, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart. And Solomon told her all her questions: and there was nothing hid from Solomon which he told her not. And when the queen of Sheba had seen the wisdom of Solomon, and the house that he had built, And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel; his cupbearers also, and their apparel; and his ascent by which he went up into the house of the Lord; there was no more spirit in her. And she said to the king, It was a true report which I heard in my own land of your acts, and of your wisdom: Howbeit I believed not their words, until I came, and my eyes had seen it: and, behold, the one half of the

greatness of your wisdom was not told me: for you exceed the fame that I heard." (2 Chronicles 9:1-6)

But this wisdom does not come from God without any effort on the part of the man. In Proverbs 2:1-9 we may read the experience of Solomon, and find the royal road to learning. "My son, if you will receive my words, and hide my commandments with you; So that you incline your ear unto wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; Yea, if you cry after knowledge, and lift up your voice for understanding; If you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures; Then shall you understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom: out of His mouth comes knowledge and understanding. He lays up sound wisdom for the righteous: He is a buckler to them that walk uprightly. He keeps the paths of judgment, and preserves the way of His saints. Then shall you understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path." (Proverbs 2:1-9)

This chapter [Daniel 1] was not written for no purpose. We have no right to read it as an idle tale, as merely a curious item of history. It stands there to teach us the way of knowledge, yet how few of us think of it! It is a constant witness against our foolishness.

If we do not have knowledge, how can we excuse ourselves with that record before us? The God who is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34) will give us understanding, as well as He did to those youths, if we but place ourselves unreservedly in His hands, to do His will. "If any man wills to do His will, he shall know." (John 7:17)

This story ought to be committed to memory, and meditated upon daily. Shall we not give ourselves to the acquirement of true wisdom?

### **A Witness for God**

Two or three other lessons ought to be noted while we have the chapter before us. Daniel was a captive in Babylon, with the rest of the Jews, yet he was a pious youth. The Jews were sent into captivity because of their sins, yet Daniel is one of the few men without a shadow of wrong-doing charged against them in the Bible. Thus we see that good people may be brought into trouble in this life through the evil-doing of others.

But the fact that good men are brought into difficulties through the sins of others is no ground for complaint. A righteous man cannot be made a captive, even though he be bound with chains. Daniel in Babylon was a free man. When God allows His servants to suffer hardships through the evil-doing of others, it is always for a good purpose.

God had work for Daniel in Babylon, as He always has for His servants, wherever they are. Compare the case of Joseph in Egypt. Daniel was free from the Babylonian spirit, which was pride and the exaltation of self above God, and therefore he was free in Babylon. Jesus said, "If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed; And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you

free. ... If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." (John 8:31-32,36)

There is never any need for one to compromise his principles. Surely Daniel was in as close a place as anyone ever can be. Many think that if they are guests of some great man, courtesy demands that they should drink his wine, and partake of his dainty meats. So they will lay aside their principles for fear of giving offense. Perhaps they will go so far as to state that they do not believe in eating and drinking such things, but that they will do so "just on this occasion," thereby making the case worse than if they said nothing.

But Daniel was not merely a guest, free to go away if he chose; he was a captive, subject to the orders of an absolute monarch, whose word was law, and who could with an inclination of the head send one who displeased him to execution. If ever a youth had cause for compromising his principles, Daniel had; but he did not. He knew what was right, and what would please God: and that was what he purposed to do, no matter what the consequences might be.

Because of this loyalty to truth and right, God made the way clear for him. When God sends or allows one of His servants to get into a difficult place, where the truth is not regarded, it is in order that He may have a witness for the truth in that place.

Firmness of character, and loyalty to principle are esteemed even by the world. Daniel's course was such that he could not fail to

be noted, and his prominence was only the advancement of truth. The fact that he made the request that he did, would call attention to him, and when it was seen that there was sound wisdom in his choice, the truth was exalted.

The man who is recreant to the trust that God has placed in him in a critical time, is of no use. He is passed by as one of the common herd. And the man who feebly makes known what he calls his principles, but puts them aside "on this occasion," brings contempt on himself, and causes his associates to think that there is no power in truth.

May the God of Daniel make us all as faithful as he was! This He will do if we are willing that He should, and have enough confidence in Him.--Present Truth, June 29, 1899--Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons--Subtitle: Faithfulness to God, and Its Results--Daniel 1:8-21

E.J. Waggoner

## Chapter 3

### **The Mystery of God**

When Nebuchadnezzar dreamed and it passed from him so that he could not recall it, he demanded of the magicians, the astrologers, and soothsayers to declare to him the dream with the interpretation. But to them it was a secret that none could reveal, according to their own confession, "except the gods whose dwelling is not with flesh." (Daniel 2:11)

Because they were unable to do this, the king was angry and very furious, and commanded that all the wise men should be slain, because, as he said, "you have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me." (Daniel 2:9)

Then the captain of the king's guard brought Daniel and his companions to put them to death, as they were counted among the wise men. But Daniel confidently told him that if he would give him a little time he would make known the dream with the interpretation. Then with his companions he sought mercies of the God of heaven concerning the matter, and the simple record is, "Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision." (Daniel 2:19)

This secret that they desired to know was the secret of God. He only could reveal it, and they knew it. But their experience is simply the experience of finding out the Gospel secret. The knowledge of this secret is to every individual just as much a matter of life and

death, as was the knowledge of the king's secret to the wise men of Babylon. And just as only God could make known to Daniel and his fellows the secret they desired, so a knowledge of the Gospel can be revealed only by Him.

In the Gospel the word used to represent this secret is "mystery." Christ said, "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God," (Mark 4:11) "the mystery which was kept secret since the world began." (Romans 16:25)

This secret, according to the apostle is: "God manifest in the flesh," (1 Timothy 3:16) or, "Christ in you the hope of glory." (Colossians 1:27)

He is then the "mystery of godliness;" (1 Timothy 3:16) and anyone who knows what it is to have Jesus Christ dwelling within him, knows the Gospel secret, and in no other way can he know it. And yet it is a mystery after all. No one can explain it or reason it out, because the deep things of God are beyond human reason. It must simply be accepted as a fact.

There is something more to this secret than simply the abstract knowledge of it. To him who knows it, it is a "well of water springing up into everlasting life," (John 4:14) not alone to himself, but to others also. Christ will in him be manifest in the flesh, (2 Corinthians 4:11) and the works that the Master did for those around Him, he will do. (John 14:12) In his everyday life, the Saviour will be lifted up, and thus others will be, drawn to Him. "And I, if I be

lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." (John 12:32)--  
Present Truth, August 3, 1899--Daniel 2:9-19

E.J. Waggoner

## Chapter 4

### **God With Us**

When the Chaldeans protested to the king Nebuchadnezzar that he required too much of them, in demanding that they should declare his dream, they said that only the gods could tell such a thing, "whose dwelling is not with flesh." (Daniel 2:11)

But Daniel knew the true God, whose dwelling is with flesh, and he obtained the desired answer for the king. It is not enough to assent to the fact that Divinity is in the heavens. What we must know is that God is near at hand to help, and that "wisdom and might are His," (Daniel 2:20) as Daniel said. His name is "Emmanuel ... God with us." (Matthew 1:23)

If any lack wisdom--and who does not?--He will supply it, and as for strength, He will strengthen "according to the working of His mighty power." (Ephesians 1:19)--Present Truth, November 26, 1896--Daniel 2:11, 20

E.J. Waggoner

## Chapter 5

### **The Fiery Furnace**

At the end of the three years' schooling of the Hebrew children, referred to in last weeks' lesson, (See the first article in this section, "Daniel in Babylon (1886)," Signs of the Times, January 21, 1886) they were required to undergo an examination upon what they had learned. The king himself conducted the examination. "And among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they stood before the king. And in all matters of wisdom and understanding that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm." (Daniel 1:19-20)

Shortly afterward, king Nebuchadnezzar had his dream of the great image, in which was represented the course of empires from his day to the end of the world. The dream made a deep impression on his mind, but he could not possibly recall what he had seen. He was so exercised in mind over it, in trying to recall it, that he could not sleep, and he finally called for the magicians, astrologers, sorcerers, and Chaldeans, that they might tell him what he had dreamed.

Daniel and his three brethren, however, were not brought in among these, probably on account of their youth. None of all these that came could tell the king anything at all about what he wanted to

know, by which he discovered their imposture, and commanded that they should be killed.

Although Daniel and his brethren were by some means overlooked in the call to gather the wise men before the king, they were not missed when the officers went to execute the decree of death upon all such. They were found, and were about to be taken to execution when Daniel asked to be taken to the king. His request was granted, and he asked time and he would tell all the king's matter. Then God showed the thing to Daniel in a night vision, and so the whole matter with its meaning was shown to the king. "Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon. Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king." (Daniel 2:48-49)

These events occurred in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, about 603 BC. The event which is the subject of the lesson for today was about twenty-three years afterward. During this time, Nebuchadnezzar had made an expedition into Egypt and laid it waste. There he had opportunity to see a colossal image which had been set up by Rameses II, the "king ... who knew not Joseph." (Exodus 1:8)

This image with its pedestal was 115 feet high, and weighed 1,200 tons. It is supposed that it was in imitation of this image, that

Nebuchadnezzar erected his, in his ambition to excel in things great all surrounding kingdoms.--See Christian at Work, July 9, 1885, page 651.

When Nebuchadnezzar had set up his image, he "sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image." (Daniel 3:2)

When they had all come, and all was ready, "Then a herald cried aloud" (Daniel 3:4) the command that when the sound of all the music was heard, all the assembly should fall down and worship the great image. Of course Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, being principal officers, were there; and also of course they refused to obey the king's command.

It was told the king immediately, and he called them up and asked them about it. Thinking that perhaps it was inadvertence, and that they had not intentionally disobeyed, he asked them, "Is it true [margin: "is it of purpose"; Hebrew: "is it a laid plan"] O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not you serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?" (Daniel 3:14)

Then he repeated his command to them direct, and he received a direct answer in which he learned that it was "of purpose," that it was because of a "laid plan," that they refused to worship the image which he had set up. "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to

answer you in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hand O king. But if not, be it known unto you, O king, that we will not serve your gods nor worship the golden image which you have set up." (Daniel 3:16-18)

They were immediately bound, and were plunged into the midst of the furnace, with it already heated seven times hotter than it was usual to heat it. But they were no sooner fallen into the furnace than Nebuchadnezzar was almost petrified with astonishment. He cried to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. [But] he answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." (Daniel 3:24-25)

Then they were called forth. Thus God delivered those who trusted in Him. And thus He vindicated the principle that, we are bound to resist the laws of men, when they are against the law or word of God. Daniel's deliverance from the lion's den, and the deliverance of the apostles from prison more than once, are only additional assertions of the principle that, "We ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:20)

This lesson is of vital importance to every Sunday-school scholar in this Union. For the National Reform Party has set itself to make an image to the papal power, and to compel all men, under

pains and penalties, to worship both the papal power and its image, and this in direct violation of the plain commandment of God.

And each one who lives the natural course of life, will be called upon, and that soon, to decide for himself whether he will "worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters;" (Revelation 14:7) or whether he will renounce allegiance to God and worship the papal power and the National Reform image to it in the United States. The commandment of God says, "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God: in it you shall not do any work." (Exodus 20:10)

In defiance of this commandment, and upon the sole authority of the Catholic Church, the National Reformers are going to enact a law by which they can compel everybody to keep Sunday. But, "If any man worship the beast and his image, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation. ... Here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." (Revelation 14:9-10,12)--Signs of the Times, January 28, 1886--Notes on the International Lesson, February 7--Daniel 3:16-28

A.T. Jones

## Chapter 6

### **The Trial and the Victory**

When three Hebrew children were brought face to face with the fiery furnace, their reply to the king was, "We are not careful to answer you in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace. But if not, be it known unto you, O king, we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up." (Daniel 3:16-18)

Here is presented the principle that is to be followed by every one who would be loyal to God. We do not know whether God will deliver us from the trial, or in the trial, or whether the victory to the world will be apparent at all or not. No matter what the results, we are to stand faithful to principle. Victory will come some time, and we can afford to wait.

Trials are not pleasant; they are furnaces of affliction, and by them the child of God is purified. They are the means of perfecting character. But the hardest of all trials to bear is that where the world sees only defeat. When Christ was brought to the test of the cross, who of His followers thought that for Him it was a victory that day? There was but one who believed He was King, and that was the thief upon the cross by His side. "Remember me when You come into your kingdom." (Luke 23:42)

And yet there was no day in all the earthly experience of Christ when He was more of a victor than He was that day. By faith the Christian can see victory where the world sees only defeat. The earth belongs to the meek: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:5)

But they are not yet in possession of it, and present appearances do not indicate that they ever will be, but time will prove it. "God is not slack concerning His promises." (2 Peter 3:9)

His eternal purpose and the principles of the Gospel are bound to prevail. The question with each of us should be whether when they triumph,--and triumph gloriously they will,--we shall be there to triumph with them.--Present Truth, June 1, 1899--Daniel 3:16-18

E.J. Waggoner

## Chapter 7

### **A Case of Conscience**

It occurred nearly twenty-six hundred years ago, in the province of Babylon. The circumstances were the following: On account of the disobedience of the great mass of the children of Israel, the Lord had suffered the whole nation to be conquered by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and many of the people had been taken from Jerusalem to Babylon. This Nebuchadnezzar was a heathen king, and so some time after the conquest of Babylon, "[He] made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up." (Daniel 3:1-2) "When all these officers of the kingdom were gathered together before the image, A herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, That at what time you hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, you fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up: And whoso falls not down and worships, shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace." (Daniel 3:4-6)

The people knew that the king was in earnest, and so whatever their private scruples might have been against worshiping the image,

they concealed them, and in appearance, at least, did homage to the golden image.

Who that believes that the civil government has a right to make laws concerning matters of religion, dare say that they did wrong? Would they not be met with the statement that it is necessary to the peace and good order of the State that there should be uniformity in matters of religion? And if this is so, who but the chief ruler of the State can prescribe the forms of religion?

Doubtless there were some who would suggest that they ought not to bow down to the image, but they could speedily be silenced, by the inquiry,

"Who are you, that you should set yourself up to know more than all the wise men of this nation, and the king himself?"

Some might even recall a commandment to the effect that none shall bow down to graven or molten images, but they would be met with the statement,

"If it were wrong, do you suppose that all the nation would be doing it? Hasn't it been the custom of almost the whole world for centuries to worship images? Don't all our religious teachers say that it is right? Don't you suppose that they know more about these things than we common people do?"

Who could meet such an argument as that? And then others would say to the doubtful ones:

"You don't have to worship the image, in your heart; you need not feel any reverence for it, but you can bow down before it in obedience to the king's command. If you refuse, you will be cast into the fiery furnace, and your family will be deprived of your support. What is the use of virtually committing suicide?"

And thus the scruples of all would be silenced. But not of all, for there were three men in the vast assembly who did not bow down to the image. At that time certain Chaldeans came before the king, and, after repeating the decree, said, "There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded you: they serve not your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up." (Daniel 3:12)

What made the offense of these men the more odious, and magnified the contempt in which they held the king's decree, was the fact that they were foreigners. Such disobedience of a direct law could not be tolerated, and least of all in such men. So, "Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Then they brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar spoke and said unto them, Is it true ["is it of purpose"] O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, you do not serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?" (Daniel 3:13-14)

And then in the kindness of his heart, he offered them another chance to redeem themselves. He would not at once carry into effect the decree that they should be burned. But if on the second sounding of the music they did not bow down, then there should be no alternative, but they must be cast into the furnace.

Then what did those men do? Did they begin to apologize for their mistake, and promise obedience in the future? Did they plead that they had been very quiet in their disobedience to the law, so that no one could take offense at their disregard of the image? Not they. Listen to their brave words: "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer you in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up." (Daniel 3:16-18)

The consequence was that they were thrown into the furnace, which for their especial benefit was heated seven times hotter than usual. But before we notice the result, let us see what power these men were disregarding. If ever there was a king who ruled by Divine right, that king was Nebuchadnezzar. Hear what the Lord himself said through His prophet: "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Thus shall you say unto your masters: I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power, and by my stretched out arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me. And now have I given all these lands

into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son." (Jeremiah 27:4-7)

These three Jews knew this, for they were associated with Daniel on a previous occasion, when he received the interpretation to a dream which the king had, in which he said, "You, O king, are a king of kings; for the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven has He given into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all." (Daniel 2:37-38)

God himself, therefore, had given Nebuchadnezzar the right to rule. Moreover, He had commanded the Jews themselves to serve Nebuchadnezzar. The prophet Jeremiah, who remained in Jerusalem, in a letter which he wrote to his captive fellow-countrymen, at the command of the Lord, had said to them, "Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall you have peace." (Jeremiah 29:7)

Surely then God must have been very angry with these three Jews for thus refusing to obey the king's dream? Not by any means! Although the fire was so hot that it slew the men who threw the three Jews into the furnace, the Hebrews themselves were not affected by it in the least. The fire simply destroyed the bands which

held them, and they walked at liberty in the midst of the furnace, and the Lord himself came down and walked with them, to show His approval of their act. See the whole story in the 3rd chapter of Daniel. The point of this simple story is that, while "the powers that be are ordained of God,...there is no power but of God," (Romans 13:1) "[And] power belongs unto God," (Psalm 62:11) God has never ordained any power to be above Him. This He could not do, for "He cannot deny himself." (2 Timothy 2:13)

He has never constituted any authority to contravene His authority. We learn that while we are to seek the peace of whatever country we may dwell in, and are to pray for kings and for all that are in authority, the peace of any country is not found in disobedience to God, no matter what may be the laws of that country. While we are to be subject to the powers that be, it is to be for the Lord's sake.

No man on earth is warranted in resisting authority. On the contrary we are charged not to resist evil, that is, we are not to oppose force with force. But as we have learned from this story, submission and subjection to the powers that be does not consist in obeying laws that are contrary to God's laws. In the case before us, the king gave all their choice:

- They might worship his image, or
- They might go into the burning fiery furnace.

The most of the people showed their subjection by worshipping the image; but the three Hebrews showed their subjection by refusing to worship the image, and going into the furnace. They did not resist the power. They did not try to raise an insurrection. They served God by disobeying the king, and showed their regard for the king's authority by calmly accepting the alternative which he granted them.

The commandments of the Lord are very plain. A child may understand them. "If any man wills to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." (John 7:17)

All that is needed is a willing mind. It is self-interest that clouds the mind to the precepts of the Lord. But he who has no intention or desire but to do the will of the Lord, will not be confused as to his duty by conflicting human laws, but will say as did the apostles at a later time, "We ought to obey God rather than man." (Acts 5:29)

Only the man who is conscientiously resolute in serving God, can be rightly subject to the powers of earth.--Present Truth, May 4, 1893--Daniel 3:1-17

E.J. Waggoner

## Chapter 8

### **In the Fiery Furnace**

It seemed like a great thing for four young men, captives, to presume to know more about what was best for them than all the king's wise men, and a very bold thing for them to mark out a course for themselves, entirely different from the one that had been planned for them; but in the chapter before us we have a test of faith and loyalty that was much stronger.

It was, however, only the natural sequence of the first test. If these young men had not been true to principle in the first instance, they would not have stood in this trying time. The germ of all their faithfulness was in that question of eating and drinking. If any man will but eat and drink just as he ought to, and in the fear of God, he will not fail in anything else.

Nebuchadnezzar the king had made an image of gold, exceeding great and high, and set it up in the plain of Dura, where he assembled all the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, and the treasurers, the counselors, and the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, in fact, all the great men in his kingdom, which meant all the great men of the whole world, for that was the extent of his kingdom. (See Daniel 2:37-38)

Daniel's three companions were there, for the king had set them over the affairs of the province of Babylon. (Daniel 2:49) Where

Daniel himself was, we are not told, as he does not appear at all in this affair; but we may be sure that he was not present, for if he had been there he would have stood for the truth as sturdily as did his companions This we know from his record.

When all were assembled, the herald cried aloud, "To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, That at what time you hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, you fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up. And whoso falls not down and worships shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning, fiery furnace." (Daniel 3:4-6)

You may be sure that the people in general needed no second bidding, after that decree was announced. "At that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut psaltery, and all kinds of music, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshiped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up." (Daniel 3:7)

It was a gorgeous spectacle, and one calculated to dazzle the senses. Then the music must have been most ravishing and enchanting; people would almost involuntarily be bewitched by its charm into falling down and worshiping. It was so easy and natural to follow the crowd of great men, even if there had not been hanging over their heads that fearful threat to the disobedient.

But there were three men in that vast company who dared be peculiar, and who were not afraid to do differently from all the rest of the world. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, for so had Daniel's three companions been named by the king, stood upright while all the rest fell prostrate.

You may be sure that they did not like to be peculiar, that they did not stand up merely for the sake of attracting attention to themselves. It was very dangerous at that time for one to attract attention to himself. Brave men are never foolhardy. These men were not acting from a spirit of bravado, but from principle. They were not obstinate, but they could not do differently, because they knew the commandment of the God of heaven, "You shall have no other gods before me," (Exodus 20:3) and, "You shall not make unto you any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: You shall not bow down yourself to them nor serve them." (Exodus 20:4-5)

This command is from the King of kings, and takes precedence of any command made by any king on earth. Disregard of Nebuchadnezzar's decree was therefore not disobedience, but the most perfect obedience. Both the king and his Hebrew captives were subjects of the King of the universe, and the fact that the king was disloyal did not absolve them from their duty.

The king, however, had forgotten his obligation to his Maker, and assumed that he was absolute ruler over the souls as well as

over the bodies of men. Accordingly he was in a great rage and fury when the word was brought to him that three men, and captive Jews at that, had dared ignore his commandment.

Yet there were noble traits in Nebuchadnezzar's character, and even in his idolatrous pride and the rage of offended dignity, he would not act hastily. So he generously offered the Hebrews another trial. He might, according to the decree, have sent them at once to execution; but he did not. He would overlook this act of defiance to his authority if at the second sounding of the musical instruments they would fall down and worship the image. It is quite likely that the king also thought that there must have been some misunderstanding; for he could scarcely conceive that any one would deliberately disregard his decree, when such awful consequences of disobedience were staring them in the face.

But there was no misunderstanding. The three men had not acted without full knowledge of what they were doing, and they told the king that they did not need another trial. They could answer him now as well as later, that they would not worship his image. Listen to their bold language: "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer you in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning, fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up." (Daniel 3:16-18)

There was no doubt nor hesitancy in their answer. They were very prompt and bold, but calm and deliberate. They had confidence in God's power to deliver them; but even if He should not see fit to save them from the furnace of fire, that would make no difference. They were not serving the Lord for personal gain. They did not have the notion that God was under obligation to give them an easy time if they served Him, as so many have.

There are very many who would be willing to serve the Lord, if He would insure them against hardships; and there are very many professed ministers of the Gospel, and religious teachers, who are inculcating this notion, and teaching the people that they cannot be expected to do what they think is right unless the way is made so easy that there will be no possibility of their suffering.

We see this in the demand for Sunday laws, in order that men may be free to keep the day which they hold to be the Sabbath. They profess to believe that God's law demands Sunday observance; yet by making pleas for human laws restraining employers from requiring labor on that day, they virtually say that men do not need to serve the Lord unless everybody else does, or if men in high positions are against it.

There was no mistaking the answer of the Hebrews. Such a seeming defiance of his authority the king was not accustomed to, and he could not endure it. So he commanded that the rebellious men should forthwith be carried to execution. Such a flagrant disregard of authority must receive signal punishment, so that all

others might take warning, and orders were given that the furnace should be heated seven times hotter than usual.

Then the three men were bound in their mantles, their turbans, their hose, and all their other garments, just as they stood, and were cast into the super-heated furnace. So hot was the furnace that the men who were appointed to cast the captives in were killed in the act. What must have been the terrible fate of the men who were cast into it bound in all their inflammable clothing?

A wonder took place. The executioners were slain, and the condemned men were set at liberty, and that by the agent of death. Such a thing was never known before. Nebuchadnezzar himself was the first to notice it. He rose up in haste and amazement, and said unto his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" (Daniel 3:24)

He can hardly trust his own senses, and seeks confirmation of what he sees with his own eyes. "They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." (Daniel 3:24-25)

Only their bonds were loosed. Thus would God demonstrate to all the world that His servants are free men. In the face of this record, how weak and foolish sound the excuses sometimes made by men, for not serving the Lord. "I could not live, if I should keep the commandments."

Well, the three Hebrews lived, and no one will ever be placed in a more desperate situation than they were. Men sometimes shrink from going as missionaries to some heathen land, because it is so hot there, but no one can ever get into a hotter place on this earth than those men were in; yet they lived. Their experience demonstrates that there is no place where men cannot live and prosper if God is with them. They were better off after they went into the furnace than they were before. In their case we see the fulfillment of Christ's words, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matthew 28:20)

His name is I AM, therefore He says, "When you pass through the waters, I am with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you; when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you." (Isaiah 43:2)

There was not so much as the smell of fire on their garments. A fiery furnace can become a pleasure garden, where men can walk to and fro at their ease, if the Lord be with them. They who "walk righteously, and speak uprightly, ... [can] dwell with the devouring fire, [and even] with everlasting burnings." (Isaiah 33:15,14)

Although these three man were nominally captives, they were the most powerful men in the entire kingdom, not excepting the king himself; and the king was the first to acknowledge the fact. "Nebuchadnezzar spoke, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent His angel and delivered His

servants that trusted in Him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God." (Daniel 3:28)

Then compare that with the words of the Apostle Paul: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." (Romans 6:12-13)

There was not defiance of man, but yielding to God. In yielding was their strength, for they trusted in the Lord Jehovah, in whom is everlasting strength.

It would have been an easy matter for those men to compromise with their consciences, by saying,

"We can fall on our faces, so as not to attract attention to ourselves, and thus incur the penalty; but we need not worship the image. We can be calling on God in our hearts."

No, it would not have been an easy matter for those men to reason in that way, but it comes very natural to a great many. What a failure their whole lives would have been if they had. What a glorious opportunity they would have missed.

"Oh, yes; we could stand out for the truth as well as they did, if we were sure that God would interfere to save us."

Exactly; we could serve the Lord if we had confidence in Him, and could trust Him. The difficulty is that everything is so commonplace when we are called upon to witness for the Lord. The way looks so shut up, that we just dare not go ahead. But those men had no assurance that they would not be burned alive. To all appearances that was the last of them. But that made no difference; they would serve the Lord whatever happened, and God honored them in their honoring Him.

The same God lives today, and He has the same power to deliver. His law also is just as holy as it was then. Not one jot of its requirements has been relaxed. Men have set it at naught, and kings and rulers have enacted laws contrary to it, and even requiring its transgression, as, for instance, the laws requiring observance of Sunday instead of the Sabbath, and also laws requiring men to kill their fellow-men; and thousands of professed Christians think that these human laws absolve them from their duty to the law of God.

But since God has not changed, things are in exactly the same condition that they were when Nebuchadnezzar set up his image in the plain of Dura, and commanded all men to fall down before it. Where are the men who will be faithful even unto death?

Present Truth, July 6, 1899--Notes on the International Sunday-School Lessons--Daniel 3:14-28

E. J. Waggoner

## Chapter 9

### **Good and Bad Counsel**

The world is generally ready to give advice to Christians in matters pertaining to their religious life; but those who would lead the life that is pleasing to God would do well to remember that such advice comes from the poorest possible source. Here is an illustration: "Now if you be ready that at what time you hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, you fall down and worship the image which I have made, well; but if you worship not, you shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning, fiery furnace." (Daniel 3:15)

This was the counsel given by the government of Babylon to the three Hebrew officials who persisted in disregarding the law of the land by refusing to bow down to the king's image. Nebuchadnezzar seems to have been somewhat loath to use these three eminent men, so he offered them a second opportunity, and said if they would then fall down and worship, it would be well.

Well? Yes; there was no doubt about it from the government's point of view. But it would have been anything but well for them if they had followed this eminent advice. As it was, they were cast into the fiery furnace; and what was the result? A glorious meeting with the Son of God, their Redeemer, in which they walked and communed with Him face to face! The brightest and most rapturous

moments of their lives were those which they spent in that fiery furnace.

That was well for them--exceedingly well; but exactly contrary to all results calculated from a human standpoint. The worldly advice given them was friendly and well meant, but it did not come from a competent source. The world is never competent to give advice which will secure real and permanent success in anything. The deed dictated by worldly wisdom perishes; but that done in the counsel of God lives for ever.

If we hearken to the voice of the Lord and heed His counsel, well; but if not, we shall finally be cast into a furnace of fire from which there will be no escape. "The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 13:41-42)

The Lord has counseled us abundantly, for all His Word is counsel, written for our learning and admonition. Jesus says, "I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white raiment, that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness do not appear; and anoint your eyes with eyesalve, that you may see." (Revelation 3:18)

We want that which has been tried in the fire, because only that will endure in the fire; for we must be tried by fire; we have been

chosen in the furnace of affliction. "Behold, I have refined you, but not with silver; I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction." (Isaiah 48:10)

This experience is necessary to fit us to stand at the presence of God; for: "Our God is a consuming fire." (Hebrews 12:29)

The devil, who was behind Nebuchadnezzar's image-making and his decree for its compulsory worship, is still as interested and as active as ever in this line of work. There is still a fiery furnace for those who will not worship the god of gold. But the history of these three men of faith is set before us for our encouragement. They are "witnesses" about us, that we may run with patience the race before us. "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which does so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." (Hebrews 12:1)

Then let us not shrink from the furnace, for there we shall meet with the Son of God and be with Him as we could not be outside. "When you pass through the fire, I will be with you." (Isaiah 43:2)

And let us not take counsel of the world, which would point out some way by which we might escape. There is no way of escape but will require bowing down to the image. Let us not deliberate or parley with the power that suggests it. We shall be happy and free in the furnace, in the company of our Divine Redeemer.--Present Truth, June 6, 1895--Daniel 3:15

E. J. Waggoner

## Chapter 10

### **The Experience of Nebuchadnezzar**

#### **A Lesson for Princes and People**

Never was there a king who had a clearer title to his throne than Nebuchadnezzar had. God himself said: "I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me. And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him." (Jeremiah 27:5-6)

Yet, like most men, Nebuchadnezzar did not recognize the hand of the Lord in His gifts. He was a heathen. Nevertheless God gave him a dream which forms one of the simplest, most easily understood, and yet most comprehensive prophecies in the Bible. In connection with that dream, God gave Nebuchadnezzar his first lesson.

When all Nebuchadnezzar's magicians and astrologers were unable to tell him his forgotten dream, much less to interpret it, the faithful servant of God made the whole thing plain. This was Nebuchadnezzar's first lesson of God's power. He was told that the secret was not in Daniel, but that the God of heaven alone could reveal secrets; yet he seems not to have comprehended this. He saw

that Daniel was a valuable servant; but he evidently knew little more of God than the name.

## **The Second Lesson**

The record of the 3rd chapter of Daniel shows that although Nebuchadnezzar had been told that the God of heaven had given him a kingdom, and power, and strength, and glory, and although God's servant had revealed to him things to come, he did not yet have any practical knowledge of God. For we find him making a colossal image of gold, and commanding all men to worship it under penalty of death.

What hope for one who would still remain an idolater after having received such wonderful light from heaven? Who would not have left him to destruction? Anyone would, except the merciful God. He reveals himself to men, and if they are slow to learn, He is very patient with them, longsuffering, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

There were three of Nebuchadnezzar's officers who would not worship his golden image. They were very respectful, but Nebuchadnezzar considered their steadfast loyalty to God as a defiance to him, forgetting that since he himself was but a pensioner on God's bounty, he owed the same service to God that they did, and that their loyalty to God was the surest possible proof that they were the best subjects he had. So he said, "if you worship not, you shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and

who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" (Daniel 3:16)

Clearly, Nebuchadnezzar did not yet know God. He had heard of Him, but it was only as a name. So when the three firmly refused to worship his image, he had them bound and cast into the furnace. And then he learned something of the difference between the God of heaven and the false gods.

The furnace was so excessively hot that the idol-worshiping officers could not get near enough to it to throw the three Hebrews in without being themselves burned to death. Yet while the flames consumed those on the outside, it did not injure those who were in the midst of it. The king saw the three fall down bound in the midst of the furnace, and then saw four men loose, and walking about at their ease. The Lord himself came down to fulfill in person His promise, "When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you." (Isaiah 43:2)

At the king's command the three men came out of the furnace, "And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counselors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was a hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them. Then Nebuchadnezzar spoke, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent His angel, and delivered His servants that trusted in Him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god,

except their own God. Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort." (Daniel 3:27-29)

One excellent trait the king had, namely, that he was ready to acknowledge when he was wrong. He had a mind open to receive instruction. But his decree shows that he had not yet learned to know God. He knew that He was far greater than any gods of the nations, but he did not know Him as He is. If he had, he would never have made such a decree. Let us note a few points suggested by it.

In the first place, it shows that the king did not know the essential difference between the God of heaven and the idols of men. The latter cannot help themselves, and they have no attractiveness, and so men must needs be forced to worship them. But the Lord is a living God, and is altogether lovely, so that He is able to draw worshipers to himself. He needs nobody with a sword to secure homage to Him. Nebuchadnezzar did not know that the only acceptable service to God is love, and that such service cannot be bought or forced.

In the second place the decree was equal to saying that the king himself ought to have been cut in pieces, because he had spoken against God. Every decree of that nature is a condemnation of God's longsuffering. That law which says that those who do not render certain service to God shall be punished, virtually charges God with

laxness. It declares that His longsuffering is altogether wrong. They who issue such decrees thereby invite God's judgment upon themselves. They really say that God ought not to show mercy to anybody.

### **The Third Lesson**

But Nebuchadnezzar meant well, although he acted ill. He was yet ignorant of God, but his heart was open to instruction; and so God gave him the third lesson. This is narrated in the 4th chapter of Daniel. It is told by Nebuchadnezzar, and the contrast between this proclamation and the other is so marked that it shows that he had at last come to know God.

The story need not be repeated in detail. But we must read the introduction, which runs thus: "Nebuchadnezzar the king, unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied unto you. I thought it good to show the signs and wonders that the high God has wrought toward me. How great are His signs! and how mighty are His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion is from generation to generation." (Daniel 4:1-3)

And then the king, still in the glory of his kingdom, honored by lords and counselors, relates the story of his haughty pride, and his abasement by the God of heaven. David said, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray." (Psalm 119:67)

Job, after he had grievously suffered, said, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You." (Job 42:5)

So Nebuchadnezzar learned in adversity the lesson that he failed to learn in prosperity. When he had learned to know God indeed, he was again established in his kingdom. Then He said: "Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment; and those that walk in pride He is able to abase." (Daniel 4:37)

What a contrast with his previous decree! That was a threat of terrible death to all who spoke against God. This is simply personal experience--a public confession of sin and faith in God. It is unique among the State papers issued by kings. Before he knew God, he was ready to force people to worship Him; when he knew God, he was content to worship Him for himself, leaving his example and confession to influence others.

Can anyone be in doubt for a moment as to which one of Nebuchadnezzar's decrees had the most effect in inducing people to serve God? Men cannot be forced to serve God, for His service is love and love cannot be forced. But love wins. Christ says, "If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me." (John 12:32) "The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn you." (Jeremiah 31:3)

Tell of the goodness of God, and souls will be drawn to Him. When the song of praise unto our God is heard, many will trust in the Lord. "And he has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord." (Psalm 40:3)

The lesson for kings and rulers is that God has called them to their exalted position for a purpose. That purpose is that they may glorify Him, and make His name widely known, but not by decrees designed to compel other people to worship Him. They are to glorify Him by their personal obedience, and by their own personal confession of His goodness. In short, they are to serve Him as preachers of righteousness.

King Solomon had no higher title than that of "The Preacher." (Ecclesiastes 1:1) Who could preach the Gospel so effectively as a devoted King, who when he speaks can reach the ears of millions, where an ordinary preacher could reach only a few hundreds? But the preacher on the throne is no more called of God to try to force others to be godly than is the humble preacher who sits on a shoemaker's bench.

There are "not many mighty, not many noble" (1 Corinthians 1:26) in the ranks of the disciples; yet there will be some, for the promise is that when the church arises and shines in the light of God, kings shall come to the brightness of its rising. (Isaiah 60:1-3) Some will heed the message which God speaks to kings as to men with great opportunities for doing good, but yet as only men, "Be

wise now therefore, O you kings: be instructed, you judges of the earth. ... Kiss the Son." (Psalm 2:10,12)--Present Truth, May 23, 1895--Daniel 3 & 4

E.J. Waggoner

## Chapter 11

### **The Mind of the Natural Man**

Daniel tells how, just before Nebuchadnezzar was stricken and humbled, the proud king walked up the terraces of his palace, saying, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:30)

#### **Memorials of Vanity**

He not only spoke it, but engraved like sentiments in his inscriptions upon the royal tablets, now dug up and read. One of them says:

For the astonishment of men I built this house; all of the power of my majesty encompasses its walls. ... In Babylon alone I raise the seat of my dominion.

This vanity is the common frailty of the human mind.

#### **The Mind of Christ**

Contrast with this Christ's attitude as he came into the world to show men how to live for man. He had not built a pile of bricks and mortar, but the very earth and all living things upon it and the heavens were the work of His hands. Yet He said, "I can of my own

self do nothing." (John 5:30) "I came ... not to do my own will."  
(John 6:38) "I have glorified You on the earth." (John 17:4)

Nebuchadnezzar glorified himself as the builder of a great city now buried in the sands. Jesus, in whom all things consist, glorified God. "Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus: Who...emptied himself." (Philippians 2:5-6,RV)--Present Truth, August 13, 1896--Daniel 4:30

E.J. Waggoner

## Chapter 12

### **The Handwriting on the Wall (1886)**

Again the scene of our lesson is laid in Babylon, "the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency." (Isaiah 13:19) Still she sits, the "lady of kingdoms," (Isaiah 47:5) comforting herself with the thought, "I shall be a lady forever; I shall not sit a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children." (Isaiah 47:7-8)

But just then it was that she should no more be called the lady of kingdoms, and just then it was that there should come upon her that which had been spoken of her: "These two things shall come to you in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon you in their perfection for the multitude of your sorceries, and for the great abundance of your enchantments. ... Therefore shall evil come upon you; you shall not know from whence it rises: and mischief shall fall upon you; you shall not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon you suddenly, which you shall not know." (Isaiah 47:9,11)

The events noted in this lesson occurred about forty-four years after those of the lesson for last week.--See Article 5 in this section, "The Fiery Furnace," Signs of the Times, January 28, 1886. The great king Nebuchadnezzar had been dead about twenty-three years, and with him had departed the greatness and the real glory of the kingdom.

Nebuchadnezzar himself had finally been brought to a full acknowledgment of the true God, and had published a decree to that effect to all the nations of his dominion; (See Daniel 4) but it seems to have had no discernible impression on any that followed him in the kingdom, and iniquity culminated in his grandson, Belshazzar, the subject of the present lesson. Nebuchadnezzar was succeeded by his son, Evil-Merodach; but:

...his lusts, and his other wickedness, made him so intolerable, that at length even his own relations conspired against him and put him to death,--Humphrey Prideaux, DD, *The Old and New Testament Connected in the History of the Jews*, Book II. after his having reigned two years, and Neriglissar, his brother-in-law, reigned in his stead. Neriglissar reigned nearly four years, and was succeeded, but merely in name, by Laborosoarchod, "a mere boy," who was suffered to remain only a few months when Nabonadius, the father of Belshazzar, took the throne, 555 BC, and held it till the end of the empire, 538 BC. Nabonadius sometime, we know not just how long, before the ruin of the kingdom, had associated his son, Belshazzar, with himself in the rule of the kingdom.

In the year 539 BC, Cyrus, at the head of a heavy army of Medes and Persians, left Ecbatana in an expedition against Babylon. In the spring of 538 BC he crossed the Tigris, and came within sight of Babylon itself before he met any opposition. Nabonadius had drawn out an army to meet the invader a short distance from the city. The Babylonian forces were defeated, and King Nabonadius

took refuge in Borsippa about six miles from Babylon. Cyrus shut him up there, left enough soldiers to hold him, and he with the main army laid siege to the glorious capital. The defeat of Nabonadius, and his flight to Borshippa, left to the young Belshazzar the sole direction of affairs in Babylon.

Cyrus carried on the siege for some time with no prospect of success against its "mountain-high" walls, and its brazen, iron-barred gates, protected by an impassable moat. But midsummer coming on, and with it the grand Babylonian festival in honor of the god Tammuz, Cyrus determined on a stratagem. Knowing of the boundless license in which it was the wont of the Babylonians to indulge in that celebration, Cyrus went up the Euphrates a considerable distance, and dug channels by which to turn its waters from their course. As the Euphrates flowed through the city under the great walls, Cyrus's plan was to draw the water down so shallow that men could wade without difficulty, and have them march into the city by the river-bed.

But even that would have been of no avail, had not the Babylonians given themselves up to utter heedlessness in their wild orgies. For on each bank of the river, within the city, stood walls about a hundred and fifty feet high, with double gates of solid brass; and if only these gates had been shut or even watched, the Persians in the bed of the river would have been certainly caught in a trap. However, no such precaution was thought of in the proud, wicked city. "Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand." (Daniel 5:1)

Then he called for the sacred vessels of Jehovah, which his grandfather had brought from the house of God in Jerusalem, "and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. ... In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another. The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spoke, and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and show me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom." (Daniel 5:3,5-7)

But none of all these could tell him a word. Then his mother came in, and told him of Daniel's ability to interpret secrets. Daniel was immediately sent for; and he came, and told the king the writing and the meaning of it. "God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it. You are weighed in the balances and are found wanting. Your kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." (Daniel 5:26-28)

The drunkenness and lascivious carousals in the palace were copied to perfection in all parts of the city. Drunkenness was everywhere, and men and women mingled together in the awful

obscurity of that heathen revelry which was the most acceptable worship of Venus and Adonis.

Meanwhile, outside the city, in silence and darkness, the Persians watched at the two points where the Euphrates entered and left the walls. Anxiously they noted the gradual sinking of the water in the river-bed; still more anxiously they watched to see if those within the walls would observe the suspicious circumstance, and sound an alarm through the city. Should such an alarm be given, all their labors would be lost. ...

But as they watched, no sounds of alarm reached them--only a confused noise of revel and riot, which showed that the unhappy townsmen were quite unconscious of the approach of danger.

At last shadowy forms began to emerge from the obscurity of the deep river-bed, and on the landing-places opposite the river-gates clusters of men grew into solid columns. The undefended gateways were seized; a war-shout was raised; the alarm was spread; and swift runners started off to show the king of Babylon that his city was taken at one end. In the darkness and confusion of the night a terrible massacre ensued. The drunken revelers could make no resistance.

The king, paralyzed with fear at the awful handwriting upon the wall, which too late had warned him of his peril, could do nothing even to check the progress of the assailants, who carried all before them everywhere. Bursting into the palace, a band of Persians made

their way to the presence of the monarch, and slew him on the scene of his impious revelry.--Rawlinson, The Fourth Monarchy, chap. 8. "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old." (Daniel 5:30-31)

With this lesson read Rawlinson's Fourth Monarchy, chap. 8, par. 52-55. Jeremiah 50 and 51; Isaiah 21:1-9; 47:1-15; 45:1-4.

--Signs of the Times, February 4, 1886--Notes on the International Lesson, February 14--Daniel 5:1-12, 25-28

A.T. Jones

## Chapter 13

### **The Handwriting on the Wall (1899)**

The portion of Scripture covered by this lesson is but the closing part of a most interesting and instructive history, and therefore we must first give some attention to what precedes. Nebuchadnezzar, who had brought Babylon to the highest pitch of grandeur and greatness, was dead, and his son Nabonadius, who had associated with himself Belshazzar his son, was ruling in his stead.

The 3rd chapter of Daniel, which we have already studied, and also the 2nd, show us something of how God had dealt with Babylon, and how He had revealed himself to the king. The 4th chapter, which is passed by in these lessons, recounts Nebuchadnezzar's pride and its abasement, and gives his humble acknowledgment of his sin and of the goodness and greatness of God. The time of the 5th chapter is nearly seventy years later than that of the 1st.

#### **A Blasphemous Orgy**

At the time when the events of this chapter occurred, Babylon had been besieged by Cyrus, king of Persia, commanding the combined forces of Media and Persia, for about a year. As yet nothing decisive had been accomplished. The walls of Babylon were very thick and high, and a deep and wide moat surrounded the city.

The soldiers of Cyrus had been engaged in cutting a canal round one side of the city, extending from a point on the Euphrates River above the city to a point below, as it passed through the city; but the Babylonians, feeling secure in their stronghold, with provisions laid up for many years, laughed at this sort of warfare, and gave themselves no concern.

As if to emphasize their unconcern, the people were this night celebrating with unusual hilarity a heathen festival. The king made a special feast to a thousand of his lords, drinking himself drunk in their presence, while they all "praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone." (Daniel 5:4)

The vessels of the house of God were brought out, and the king's courtiers and courtesans drank wine out of them, thus wantonly insulting the God of heaven. It was a wild scene of licentious carousing, in which the king, who felt himself superior to the Majesty of the universe, allowed himself to be no true king, but a mere thing lower than the brutes.

### **Cowardice of Blasphemers**

"In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another." (Daniel 5:5-6)

The king's conscience made a coward of him. He could boldly blaspheme the God of heaven as long as He kept silence, but when God began to manifest himself in a special manner, he trembled like a leaf in the wind. He had fancied himself a king, and could boast of his power, believing all the flatteries of his princes; but now he was revealed before them as a miserable, shrinking, trembling thing. Where was now his confidence in the gods which he had been praising?

### **Vain Confidence**

"The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spoke, and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and show me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom. Then came in all the king's wise men; but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof. Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished." (Daniel 5:7-9)

But the king's wise men were not familiar with the handwriting of God. They had not studied in His school. They had so long worshiped the work of their own hands, (Isaiah 2:8) that the hand of God was to them a hidden mystery. "[God] frustrates the tokens of liars, and makes diviners mad; [He] turns wise men backward, and makes their knowledge foolish." (Isaiah 44:25)

When He speaks, His words are so deep that all human wisdom sinks into insignificance. It was with reference to this very time that these words were written more than a hundred years before. (See the remainder of Isaiah 44, and 45:1-4)

It was now the time of punishment for the wickedness of Babylon. Long before, God had sent its people warning, and had wrought wonderfully among them; but because judgment upon their evil works was not executed speedily, their hearts were fully set to do evil. (Ecclesiastes 8:11) This very time, and this very circumstance had been accurately foretold through the prophet, before any of the actors in the scene were born. God had said to Babylon and its rulers: "I was wroth with my people, I have polluted my inheritance, and given them into your hand: you did show them no mercy; upon the ancient have you very heavily laid your yoke. And you said, I shall be a lady for ever: so that you did not lay these things to your heart, neither did remember the latter end of it. Therefore hear now this, you that are given to pleasures, that dwell carelessly, that say in your heart, I am, and none else beside me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children: But these two things shall come to you in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon you in their perfection for the multitude of your sorceries, and for the great abundance of your enchantments. For you have trusted in your wickedness: you have said, None sees me. Your wisdom and your knowledge, it has perverted you; and you have said in your heart, I am, and none else beside me. Therefore shall evil come upon you;

you shall not know from whence it rises: and mischief shall fall upon you; you shall not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon you suddenly, which you shall not know. Stand now with your enchantments, and with the multitude of your sorceries, wherein you have labored from your youth; if so be you shall be able to profit, if so be you may prevail. You are wearied in the multitude of your counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save you from these things that shall come upon you. Behold, they shall be as stubble." (Isaiah 47:6-14)

### **A Faithful Witness**

The astrologers and necromancers could not prevail, and Daniel, the servant of the despised and blasphemed God of Israel, was called in to make known the mystery. To him the same rewards were offered that had tempted the astrologers to try their skill; but they were no inducement to him; yet he unhesitatingly promised to make know the writing and its interpretation.

Daniel had long been a student in the Lord's school, and he knew His handwriting, and had no trouble in deciphering it. It was a terrible message that he had to deliver, but he had no fear. He had so long been accustomed to stand before the God of heaven and earth, that he could not be abashed by the tinsel and gaudy splendor of a profligate court, nor elated by the promises of rewards offered by the ruler of a kingdom of a day.

Very plainly and forcibly he recounted to the king the history of God's dealings with his ancestors, and how the lesson had not been laid to heart. God had abased the haughty pride of Nebuchadnezzar, and the king, in a writing sent to all the world, had humbly acknowledged the God of heaven as supreme; "And you his son, O Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this; But have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before you, and you, and your lords, your wives, and your concubines, have drunk wine in them; and you have praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand your breath is, and whose are all your ways, you have not glorified." (Daniel 5:22-23)

What a striking arraignment this was! How insignificant Belshazzar's gods must have seemed to him at that moment! Talk about wise men, when they did not know any more than to praise senseless pieces of metal, and in the same breath belittle the name of Him who gave them breath!

## **Emptiness**

Then was the writing again placed on the wall, and these words appeared: "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin." (Daniel 5:25)

The words themselves were not difficult. Anybody present could have pronounced them. Literally translated, they are, "Numbered, Numbered, Weighed, Divided."

But what could they signify? "God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it." (Daniel 5:26)

Twice was this repeated, for emphasis. A most accurate account had been kept, and there was no mistake in the books. The end of the kingdom had come; it was about to fall to pieces by its own weakness. "You are weighed in the balances, and found wanting." (Daniel 5:27) "[God] weighs the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance," (Isaiah 40:12) yet "by Him actions are weighed." (1 Samuel 2:3)

His scales are wonderfully accurate, and are adapted to the greatest things as well as the least. Belshazzar had been placed in them, and had been found lighter than air. He weighed absolutely nothing. "Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie; to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity." (Psalm 62:9)

That which men call "gravitation" is but the power of the presence of God, to whom alone power belongs; outside of Him there is no weight whatever; Belshazzar had rejected the Lord, and therefore when laid in the balances he went up like the fine dust.

### **Sudden Destruction**

Only one thing remained to be said: "Your kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." (Daniel 5:28)

Even then the soldiers of Cyrus were marching into the city through the river bed, the waters of which had been drained off. Sudden retribution was about to fall upon the head of the blasphemous king of Babylon. "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom." (Daniel 5:30-31)

The judgment came as a thunderbolt, yet it was not sudden; for the warning had long been given. The destruction of Babylon was not only a representation of the judgment of the last day, but was in reality the beginning of it, for the punishment then will be finished when the Lord shall appear. Even as it was in Belshazzar's day, "When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." (1 Thessalonians 5:3)

And thus the story ends.

### **For Our Learning**

Yet it is not ended for us. It is written for our learning, and if we have not learned it, then we are as guilty as Belshazzar was. The pride and self-confidence of the Babylonians was the cause of their fall. The very feast in which they were congratulating themselves on their safety was used by Cyrus for their complete overthrow. Trusting in their strength, they relaxed their watchfulness, and there was nothing to hinder the conqueror from marching into the very

heart of the city; and even if he had been seen, the drunken lords and rulers were in no condition to repel him.

Now the same destruction that was prophesied upon Babylon is to come upon all the earth. (See Isaiah 14:24-27) Nations and kings may say, that they are well fortified against all invasion: but that is just what Belshazzar said. When God brings judgments, so that no one can know whence they come, who can be prepared against them? Only those who make the preparation of putting on Christ.

### **Vanity of Earthly Honors**

In the very hour of his death king Belshazzar commanded that the promised rewards should be conferred on Daniel. He was clothed in purple, the royal color, a chain of gold was placed about his neck, and a proclamation was issued that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom, next to Belshazzar himself.

Daniel knew the value, or rather, the worthlessness, of these honors. The kingdom was defunct, and with it all its honors would perish. He would not have cared for them, even if it had been in the beginning of the kingdom, instead of at the close, for he served a King who could give more real and lasting rewards.

But let it not be forgotten that the rewards and honors which Belshazzar conferred that night were just as valuable as any that are ever conferred by any earthly monarch. All the kingdoms of this

earth, like that of Belshazzar, are but for a day. In the sight of the Lord, all nations are "less than nothing, and vanity." (Isaiah 40:17)

Why then should anybody be elated at the thought of what kings can bestow? or seek worldly honor and preferment? The thing offered cannot be as great as the power offering it, and that is less than nothing! With what trifles men who are called wise amuse themselves? "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes." (Psalm 118:8-9)--Present Truth, July 13, 1899--Daniel 5:17-31

E.J. Waggoner

## Chapter 14

### **Daniel in the Den of Lions**

In the 3rd chapter of Daniel we have the record of a trial that came to the three companions of Daniel. In this chapter we have the account of a test to which Daniel himself was put. As in that one we read nothing of Daniel, so in this one we hear nothing of his three companions; but we may be sure that they were as loyal to the truth of God as was Daniel, and as they had previously showed themselves to be.

We need not take it for granted that Daniel was the only one in the whole kingdom who was faithful to God, but as the whole affair was worked up simply to entrap Daniel, any others would not be noticed.

Daniel's character and talents made a place for him. There is always work for those who are fitted for it. Daniel had held the position of greatest responsibility in the kingdom of Babylon, and when the kingdom passed into the hands of the Medes and Persians he was really indispensable, so he was first under Darius as he had been under Nebuchadnezzar. There were three presidents over the one hundred and twenty provinces of the empire, and of these three Daniel was one, and was preferred above the others.

All the accounts of the realm had to pass through the hands of these three presidents, and we may be sure that there was no

cheating as long as Daniel was one of the three. The princes who had to render account regularly to the presidents, could not bribe them, for Daniel would not suffer such a thing; and his two companions in the presidency were prevented by his sturdy integrity from filching from the public treasury. Such honesty in public affairs was an unprecedented thing, and was appreciated by the king, who thought to place Daniel over the whole realm.

The favor in which Daniel was held, together with his strictness in business, made the other presidents and the princes envious. Small minds are always envious at the success of others; but they were incensed against Daniel by the additional fact that he was a check upon their evil purposes. There was no opportunity for them to enrich themselves while he was at the head of affairs.

So they sought to find some occasion against him in his conduct of the affairs of the kingdom, but could not find anything whereof to accuse him, "forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him." (Daniel 6:4)

His adversaries were forced to acknowledge his integrity, saying, "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." (Daniel 6:5)

What a grand thing it is when that can be said of a man, and by those who are most anxious to find a fault in him! The good do not always have an easy time in this world. Jesus said to His disciples: "If the world hate you, you know that it hated me before it hated

you." (John 15:18) "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Timothy 3:12)

The reason for this is given in this exhortation: "This is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore did he slay him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you." (1 John 3:11-13)

From this text we are assured of the reason why the princes of Medo-Persia wished to have Daniel out of the way. It was because his works were righteous, while theirs were evil. With him removed, they could manipulate the funds as they pleased, and they would not be under the condemnation of his presence.

Accordingly a conspiracy was formed, and the king was made a party to it, without his knowledge. Indeed, nothing could be accomplished unless they had the king's consent, and they could not expect that the king would remove his most faithful officer. So they had to manufacture a new crime. Very subtly was their plan laid.

It was a very common thing for Eastern monarchs to receive divine honors, as though they were gods, and such homage was quite acceptable to them, since it was easy for them to persuade themselves that they really were what their flatterers called them. Therefore it was not at all surprising to Darius when a great company of the chief men in his kingdom came to him, and said,

"King Darius, live for ever! All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counselors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask any petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of you, O king, he shall be cast into a den of lions. Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which alters not. Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree." (Daniel 6:6-9)

He readily fell into the trap, never thinking of his favorite, Daniel. If they had not lied, in saying that all the presidents had been in consultation over this matter, his suspicions might possibly have been aroused; nevertheless when integrity and loyalty to principle are so rare as they are, it is not natural for kings to consider the few in whom such virtues are found, especially when they are persuaded that any measure will be "for the public good." It does not take long to persuade most officials or seekers after office that whatever contributes to their advancement and exaltation is for the good of the public.

The plot was fairly hatched, and the decree was published. How did it affect Daniel? It did not affect him in the least. When he knew that the writing was signed, "he went to his house; and his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as aforetime." (Daniel 6:10)

Think how much is conveyed in that statement. Daniel prayed to his God just as he had done before. Note that as he prayed he gave thanks. Not a word about the decree; no frantic request for protection; he acted as though there were no such thing. He saw no cause for fear, but only for thanksgiving, "as aforetime." In this he fulfilled the Divine injunction, "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." (Philippians 4:6)

Without thanksgiving there is no prayer. The peace of God which passes all understanding (Philippians 4:7) kept Daniel. He was the least perturbed man in the whole kingdom. How easy it would have been for most professed Christians to find "a way out of the difficulty;" only Daniel did not find himself in any difficulty. Some would say,

"There is no harm in complying with the law, since it does not demand the worship of any false god, or of any man; it merely says that we must not ask anything of any god or man except the king; and for the next thirty days we will not ask anything of anybody."

Very plausible, isn't it? Or they would say, "If you will pray, then do it so that no one will know it. You are not obliged to let anybody know when you pray."

Ah, what a movement in favor of secret prayer there would have been about that time, if any prayer at all. Daniel, however, was not seeking plausible excuses for not praying to his God. He was too

well acquainted with the Lord, and loved Him too well for that. He served the Lord, and that continually.

Suppose that Daniel had acted according to any of these or similar excuses; what would he have virtually been saying? Simply this, that he could not trust the Lord to take care of him when everything seemed to be against him.

- It would have been admitting all the claims to the heathen, that their gods were greater than the God of Israel.

- It would have been exalting the king and his decree above God and His law.

- It would have shown that all his previous prayers had been a mere form, a pretense, without heart or feeling.

- It would have shown that Daniel had no faith in God.

But he had faith, and therefore he could not act in any such way. His service of God was from the heart, and he had prayed because he believed in God; and just because he believed in God, he could not act as though he did not believe in Him. It is such times as that, that determine whether or not a man really loves and serves the Lord. Daniel would not bear false witness against God. When men were banded together against God, in the person of His servant, then was the time for faithfulness.

Yet Daniel was not the man to flaunt his religion in the faces of men; no vain boaster; his religion was a part of his life; the same every day, and therefore he did just as he had been in the habit of doing. When he went to his room his windows were open, and he did not take the trouble to shut them. Why should he? He had not done so before, and there was no more reason now than there ever was, since his God had not changed.

He went about his devotions as quietly and regularly as in former days. That he was not in the habit of making noisy demonstrations when he prayed is evident from the fact that his enemies had to assemble to find him praying. But it is worth noting that they were quite sure of finding him at prayer. In that heathen kingdom Daniel was not ashamed to have it known that he worshiped Jehovah. And why should he be? is not Jehovah King over all? He is not One to be ashamed of.

Only one step now remained to fasten Daniel in the trap that was set for him. The grave counselors of State, whose minds were supposed to be absorbed in considerations of public interest, had plotted against an innocent, upright man, had acted the part of sneaking spies, and now they had only to be informers. But it would not do to go at once and denounce Daniel to the king, for they knew that he was Daniel's friend. So they took the precaution to get the king committed to the enforcement of the law. They said to him: "Have you not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any god or man within thirty days, save of you, O King, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The

thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which alters not." (Daniel 6:12)

That was just what they wanted. The king could not escape now. Having admitted that the law could not be changed, he could not possibly make an exception in favor of Daniel. "Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regards not you, O king, nor the decree that you have signed, but makes his petition three times a day." (Daniel 6:13)

How artfully they sought to prejudice the king against Daniel. "Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him, and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him." (Daniel 6:14)

But all was in vain. The princes were inexorable. They had framed the law for the express purpose of catching Daniel, and they did not propose to allow him to escape; so they held the king to the decree, reminding him that the honor of the kingdom was at stake, since a law once passed could not be revoked or changed. "Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now king spoke and said unto Daniel, Your God whom you serve continually, He will deliver you." (Daniel 6:16)

What a wonderful influence there is in a steadfast Christian life! The king well knew that there was a power with Daniel that was with none of his other officers, and not even with himself, king though he was. He knew that Daniel had more than human power

with him, and therefore he believed that the power that had made Daniel what he was, and that had kept him amid all temptations, would still keep him, even in the den of lions.

And he was right; for there was no greater miracle wrought for Daniel when he was in the lions' den than when he was in the king's court. The same power that will keep a man upright in the midst of temptation will keep him from the jaws of wild beasts. "Our adversary the devil goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour;" (1 Peter 5:8) and when a man is kept safe from his attacks, it is but a light thing to keep him from the beasts of the forest.

After passing a sorrowful night, the king went to the den very early in the morning. Although he had expressed the belief that Daniel would be delivered, he was not absolutely sure of it. The king evidently had a far worse night than Daniel had. A man may be far happier and more at ease in a den of lions than others are in a palace. The king's grief showed itself in his voice; as he came to the den and called, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, is your God, whom you serve continually, able to deliver you?" (Daniel 6:20)

We can see that the king was quite convinced that his gods were nothing in comparison to the God of Daniel; but here was a test question:

"Is your God able to deliver you?"

Yes, He was. "The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them." (Psalm 34:7)

This had been fulfilled in the case of Daniel, who replied, not forgetting the respect due the king: "O king, live for ever. My God has sent His angel, and has shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me." (Daniel 6:21-22)

The penalty had been executed, and therefore Daniel could be taken out of the den without any violence to the majesty of the law. "So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God." (Daniel 6:23)

His faith saved him. Faith has wondrous power; by it men have "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong." (Hebrews 11:33-34) "Perhaps the lions were not hungry?"

You may be sure that some of the enemies suggested that thought, and contended that Daniel should be left in the den until they recovered their appetite. Well, if they were not hungry, then there certainly could be no objection to putting these informers in for a little holiday from the cares of business; and whether they were hungry or not the king was disposed to deal very summarily with the malignant crowd. "The king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the

mastery of them, and broke all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den." (Daniel 6:24)

That settled the question. Those men who had been under the control of the great roaring lion who walks about seeking to devour, had no protection against these lions. The result of the whole affair was that Daniel was prospered more than ever, and the knowledge of the true God was published by the king to all people, and in all languages on earth. Thus even the wrath of man is made to praise God. (Psalm 76:10)--Present Truth, July 20, 1899--Daniel 6:10-23

E.J. Waggoner

## Chapter 15

### How To Find Strength

"And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened." (Daniel 10:19)

So wrote the prophet Daniel in describing a vision given him by the side of one of the rivers of Babylonia. For three weeks Daniel had been mourning, having eaten no "pleasant bread" nor tasted meat or wine. (Daniel 10:3) He was mourning and praying on account of the sins of his people and the captivity into which they had been brought.

He felt not only for himself but for the multitude of his nation in the land of their captivity, and for the temple of his God, which was lying in ruins in a far-off land. The weight of so much trouble pressed heavily upon him, and in his sorrow he turned for help to the Lord. He talked with the Lord, and the Lord, by His angel, talked with him; and the prophet received strength and light.

The course of Daniel and his trouble is the course for us. Human sympathy is comforting and helpful, but the tale of sorrow is rarely lightened by being poured into human ears, and the burden of each is a heavy one of itself; but only tell the trouble to the Lord, tell it in faith, and the burden lightens at once. Talk to God as to a Father, and He will talk to you. The Lord is no respecter of persons. (Acts

10:34) He is as willing to talk with any one of us as He was to talk with Daniel.

Although Daniel was "greatly beloved" (Daniel 9:23; 10:11,19) by the Lord, the words which were spoken to him did not relate only to him, but were spoken in reality to us who live long after his day, when the prophecies he wrote were to be fulfilled. The favors which were seemingly bestowed upon Daniel and upon all the prophets, in the communications given them from God, were in reality bestowed upon us. This is what Peter tells us in his first epistle, when speaking of the prophets and holy men of old, he says, "Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into." (1 Peter 1:12)

The Lord had us in mind when He sent mighty angels from heaven with communications to His chosen prophets and apostles. Can we say, then, that we are not "greatly beloved" as well as they? Has God not given to us as much as He gave to them, and will He not do for us what He did for them? We are assured that having given us His Son He will "with Him also freely give us all things," (Romans 8:32) and that: "He gives to all life and breath and all things." (Acts 17:25)

In talking to the holy men of old, God was also talking to us; for: "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our

learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." (Romans 15:4)

God was so anxious to talk with us, for our learning and comfort, He spoke to us long before we were born. And upon our entrance into the world, we find His words waiting for us, to give us the hope and strength and comfort with which they are filled.

When we come to the Scriptures, we come to God, and in them He talks with us, as truly as He ever talked with human flesh; and, unlike the words of man, His words are ever fresh, applying always to the present hour and our present circumstances.

God courts an audience with us, and His time and place are always ready. He knows all our weakness and our sorrow, and so has invited us to come to Him, that we may find hope and comfort, and say as did Daniel, "When He had spoken unto me, I was strengthened." (Daniel 10:19)--Present Truth, January 10, 1895--  
Daniel 10:19

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