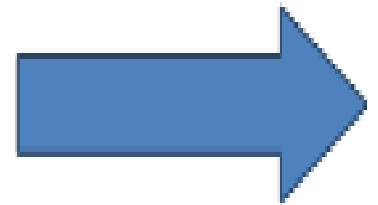


Important facts about the Book of Daniel

These events came about as the result of fulfilled prophecy given by Moses and the pre-exilic prophets eg .Isaiah, Jeremiah etc.

Because of Israel's rebellion and idolatry they would be sent into exile from the land of Israel.

REBELLION LED TO EXILE



Exile

“And the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known. Deuteronomy 28:64

To Babylon

Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, “Hear the word of the LORD of hosts: Behold, the days are coming, when all that is in your house, and that which your fathers have stored up till this day, shall be carried to Babylon. Nothing shall be left, says the LORD. And some of your own sons, who will come from you, whom you will father, shall be taken away, and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.” Isaiah 39:5-7

For 70 years

This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. Jeremiah 25:11

Important facts about the Book of Daniel



Daniel was a young man in his teens when in 605 BC Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem and deported some of the nobility (as hostages to guarantee no more rebellion?)

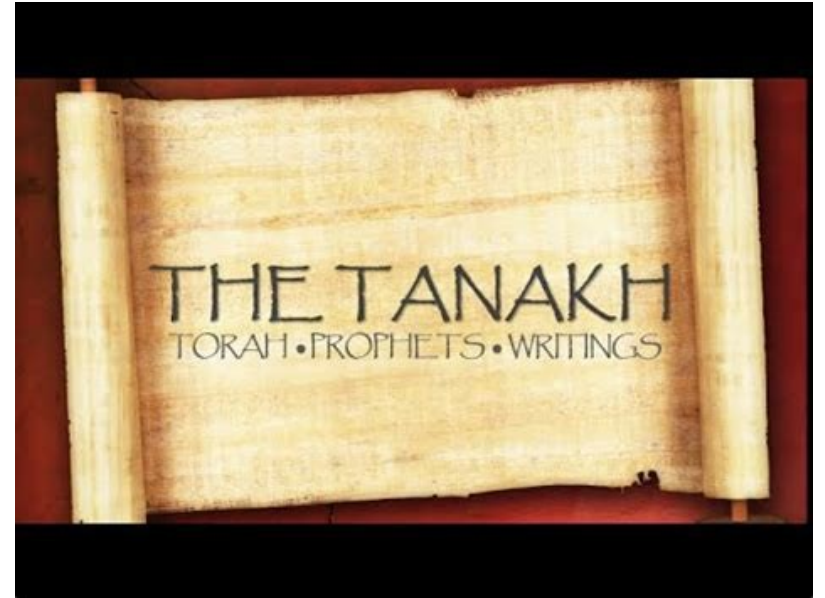
He left all that was familiar, to go into a completely foreign and pagan culture.

The Book is an example of how a believer can survive with his faith intact in a hostile culture (an important lesson that is increasingly needed in today's world!)

Important facts about the Book of Daniel

The prophecy of Daniel is unusual :-

- 1, In the Hebrew bible, it is arranged not with the 'Prophets' but with the third group – the Writings. Perhaps this is because it contains a large amount of narrative as well as prophecy.
- 2, Parts of the book (2:4 to 7:28) are written in the 'international' language of that time – Aramaic, while the rest is in Hebrew.



Important facts about the Book of Daniel



The Book of Daniel has been severely criticised by liberal 'scholars' because the prophetic details of the later chapters accurately refer to events long after Daniel's day. However, we have it on Jesus' authority that it was Daniel who gave the prophecy (eg Matthew 24:15).

Isaiah 46:9-10 remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,'

Important facts about the Book of Daniel

The Book can be divided into 2 halves:

1. The narrative accounts of events in Babylon (Chapters 1-6)
2. Prophetic visions (Chapters 7-12)

Isaiah 44:6-47 Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: “I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god. Who is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and set it before me, since I appointed an ancient people. Let them declare what is to come, and what will happen.

The prophecies cover the future history of the world up to the end times, and so the message of the book is that God is the Lord of all history. His purposes will come to pass – even in a fallen and rebellious world.

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah,

This was the year 605 BC. Nebuchadnezzar had just defeated the alliance of the Assyrian and Egyptian armies at the battle of Carchemish. Babylon was on the rise!



In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah,

Daniel writing from the Babylonian perspective calls it the 3rd year of Jehoiakim, while Jeremiah writing from a Judean perspective calls it the 4th year of his reign.(Jeremiah 25:1). It depends on whether one counts the first few months of his reign as a year or not.



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

He then came to Jerusalem!
The Israelites had picked the wrong side – again.



And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God.



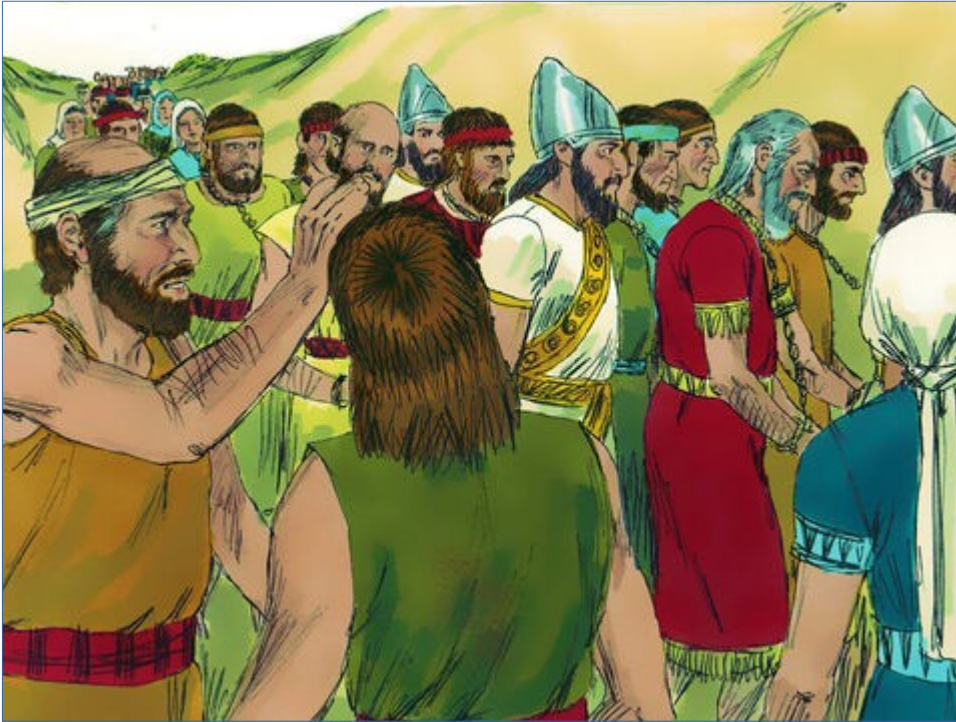
Daniel calls it the temple of God

These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god.



“My god is better than your God!” -says Nebuchadnezzar.

Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring in some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility--



‘court officials’ translates the word ‘eunuchs’.

The elite (possible rebel leaders) were taken away.

But Nebuchadnezzar had a plan to use them as administrators also.

young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace.



They were looking to find the best available trainees.

Physically and mentally fit.

God had prepared these young men – their previous godly lifestyle would have had some bearing on this.

He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians.

Babylonians translates the word Chaldeans.



The intention was to get them to 'assimilate' into Babylonian culture and make them leave behind their Hebrew culture.

The Babylonians no doubt also thought that theirs was a superior culture.

The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table.



This would have been considered a great privilege when compared to the ordinary persons' diet.

They were to be trained for three years,
and after that they were to enter the king's service.

This was to be an extensive and intensive 'degree' course.

“enter the king's service” translates to ‘stand before the king’.
This would have involved personal service and access.



Among these were some from Judah..
Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.

There were others, certainly from Judah, but perhaps also other territories of the empire ...

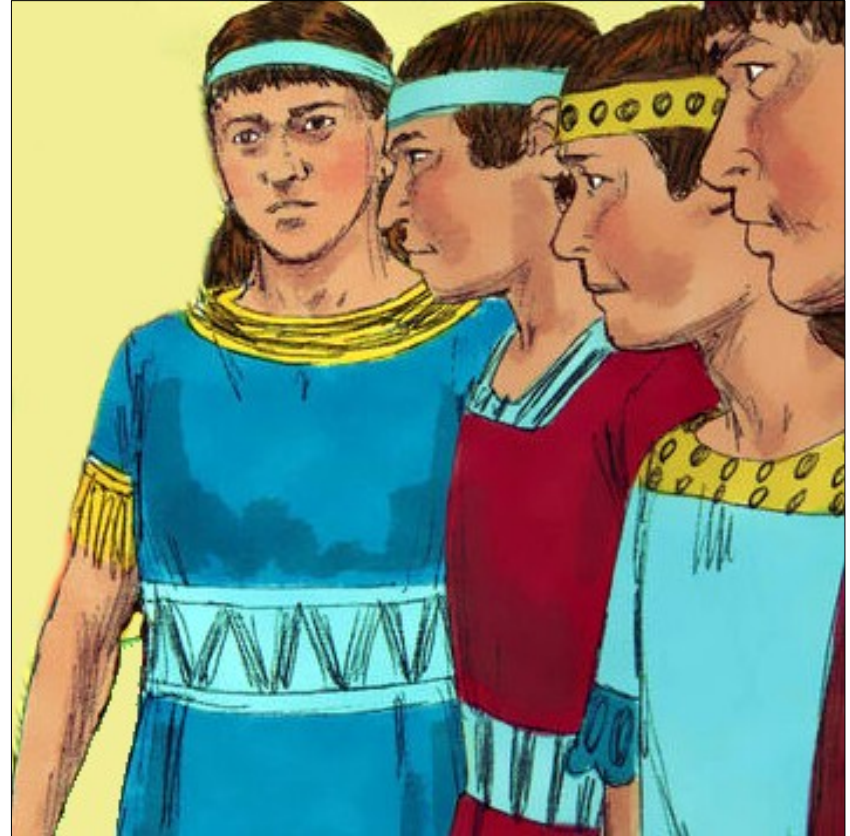
Their Hebrew names have meaning:-

Daniel = God is my judge

Hananiah = Yahweh is gracious

Mishael = Who is what God is?

Azariah = Yahweh helps



The chief official gave them new names..
to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach;
to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

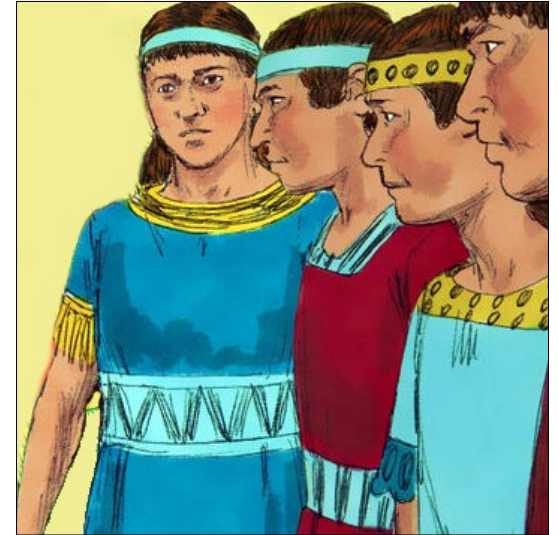
The renaming is a further
attempt to separate them from
their Hebrew culture.

Belteshazzar = May Bel's wife protect the king

Shadrach = Command of Aku (the moon god)

Meshach = Who is like Aku?

Abednego = Servant of the shining one (Nebo)



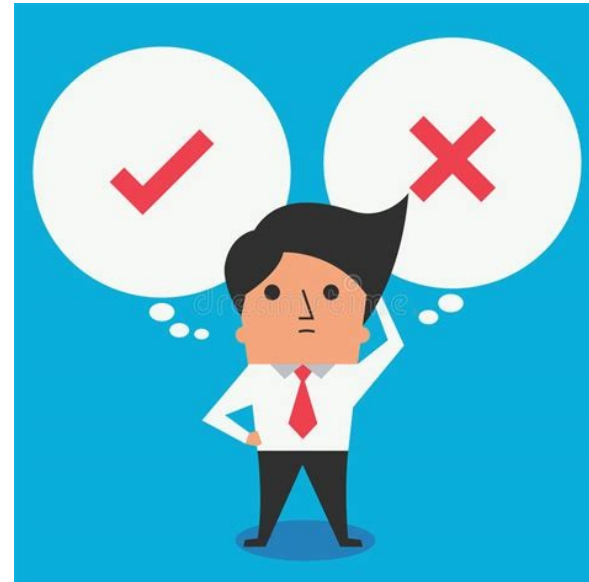
But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine,

But **Daniel** He holds on to his Hebrew name

Resolved ... 'he set his heart' He made a conscious decision not to **defile himself** He knew what God had said about foods.

The foods had probably been dedicated to the Babylonian gods.

As his name (God is my Judge) says, he chose to stay true to God's word.



and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.



Although he held to his strong convictions, he still behaved in a gracious, respectful way.

Now God had caused the official to show favour and sympathy to Daniel,

This was an example of God's supernatural intervention. The chief official had no real reason to comply with their request.



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



Rather than favour them, the official says that his own life is in danger if he disobeys the king's orders and the results make them worse.

And yet God works to help him cooperate with them.

Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah,
"Please test your servants for ten days.."

Daniel sees the risk that the guard would be taking, and so politely requests an experiment, trusting by faith that God would help them to do what they knew was God's will for them.

Why did they choose ten days?



Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see."

It was a short experiment for the guard, but enough time to see if there was any adverse effect that could be rectified.



So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.



Here was God graciously working on their behalf.

What would the boys have done during this time as well as their lessons?

What might others have thought and said?

At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food.
So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.



Success!

The diet may have helped.
The others may not have been used to such rich food.
But behind it all was God's blessing their faithfulness.

With the experiment over, they were allowed to continue their diet.

To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning.

Notice that these are described as God-given abilities. Whatever skills you may be blessed with, we should use and develop them wisely, but ultimately is God who enables. There was no room for selfish pride.



And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.

This gift was going to be needed later.

The Babylonians believed in the significance of dreams. Certainly God used them at times in the Bible history. cf. Jacob. Joseph. He also speaks of these during the age of the Holy Spirit's outpouring (Acts 2)

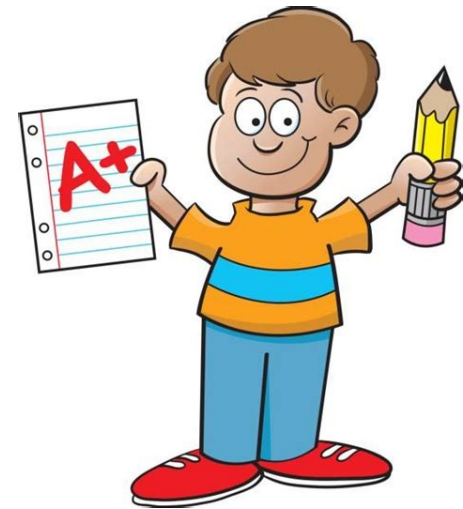


At the end of the time set by the king to bring them in, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar.

The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah;



The 'Finals' Examination



so they entered the king's service.

Their faithfulness to God placed them in a position to be a blessing to the society in which they lived.

Cf Jeremiah's instruction:-

Jeremiah 29:7 But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.



In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.



They surpassed the abilities of the ‘professionals’!

God’s word gives wisdom.

Psalm 119:97-100 Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day. Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts.

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

This is 539 BC – ie. during the entire time of the Babylonian rule. 605 to 539 is 66 years! He worked and served and honoured the Lord throughout all that time.

And He wasn't finished yet! There was more for him to do.





Chapter one shows us how these young men started as they meant to go on.

‘Small’ decisions made at the start had big effects later on, and enabled them to remain true to the Lord.

It also shows us that God works in less than ideal circumstances. He placed these strategic young men in influential positions in order for them to be a guide to those who were ignorant of God and a blessing in their generation.