

History of Daniel (Part 2)

"God's Protection"

Daniel 1:5-21

The first part of this dealt with the truth that God's prophecies will always be fulfilled and that His promises will always be kept. The third point of that first part will be dealt with in this message – God's protection will always be needed.

In the life of Daniel and his three friends the protection of God is found, and the fact that Daniel lived to be an old man goes to this point as well. These four young men (as well as the others that were taken captive for the same purpose) needed the protection from the hand of God or they would never have survived the ordeal they would be put through.

I. THEY WERE PROTECTED BECAUSE THEY WERE RIGHTEOUS – VS. 5-8

There have been many servants of God down through the ages that were faithful and righteous that did not seem to have the protection that these four had. And there have been many down through the ages that didn't live righteously yet they didn't seem to have many problems at all and seemed to live under the protection of God.

I believe in the case with Daniel and his three friends that if they had not followed the Word and will of God they would not have been protected as they were. Their particular protection was directly related to their righteousness.

There may be times that God chooses to allow us to suffer severe persecution and trials but, if we

are being faithful and godly through them, He will most assuredly give us the grace to know He is there with us all the time.

1 Corinthians 10:13

¹³ There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

Hebrews 13:5

⁵ Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

Joshua 1:5

⁵ There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

A. They were put to the test – vs. 5-7

This was a type of brainwashing that took place in the culture of the times in defeating an enemy – they would take the best of the young people and try and convert them to the conqueror's way of thinking. They also would incorporate the best that the conquered nation had and incorporate them into their culture as a means of supporting their brainwashing – it would give the conquered a measure of attachment and pride to their new life.

1. The first part of the test was whether they should eat "the king's meat" and drink "the wine which he drank" – vs. 5
 - a) "The king's meat" – this word "meat" is

only used in the Book of Daniel and is referring to not only literal meat but to "fine food, tasty gourmet cuisine served at the royal palace in the Middle East. To eat of it was the privilege of a few and indicated a special friendship with the king and his government." (Zodhiates)

- b) "The wine which he drank" – that is, that the king drank – the best of the wine

NOTE: There is some debate that has been had down through the ages on the issue of wine in the Bible and whether it is okay to drink wine or not. This is not the time to discuss that debate other than to say that I believe Daniel and his three friends took a stand, not only against the fancies of the king's table but also against drinking wine, in any form, if it would, in any way, compromise their faith. They gave God the benefit of the doubt, if you would.

Proverbs 20:1

¹ Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.

Genesis 9:20–23

²⁰ And Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard:

²¹ And he drank of the wine, and was drunken; and he was uncovered within his tent.

²² And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without.

²³ And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their

shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness.

Isaiah 28:7

⁷ But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment.

Hosea 4:11

¹¹ Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart.

Ephesians 5:18

¹⁸ And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;

2. Part of the test the children were put under was whether they would be seduced into wanting to live like a king or whether they would be content to let the Lord take care of them and prove that their God could do with the simplest of food far more than man can do with the best of food.
3. Vs. 6-7 – another part of the test, or the trial, was when they were given Babylonian names in place of their Jewish given names – this would have been done in a further attempt to sever all ties to their past and continue the immersion into the Babylonian culture.
 - a) There is nothing that would indicate why the three are found throughout the book of Daniel by their Babylonian names rather

than their Jewish names, as Daniel is – we can only speculate and even that is not easy.

- b) Whatever the reason, it is clear that these four did not forget who they were, and they never gave up their faith – they stayed righteous.
- c) Their name changes were significant, and the definitions of their old names and their new names show just what they had to endure.

(1) *"Hananiah" (the Lord is gracious) becomes "Shadrach" (illuminated by the sun-god).*

(2) *"Mishael" (who is the Lord) becomes "Meshach" (who is Ishtar).*

(3) *"Azariah" (the Lord is my help) becomes "Abednego" (the slave of Nabu). Nabu was the Babylonian god of wisdom and education.*

(4) *"Daniel" (God is Judge) becomes "Belteshazzar" (Bel's prince). Bel was ruling god of the Babylonian pantheon, equivalent to Zeus or Jupiter.*

B. They chose to do right, regardless of the potential danger – vs. 8

1. "But Daniel" – he was the leader among the four, and apparently he had been given a special position even at this time as the leader and spokesperson among all the children mentioned in this chapter by the prince of the eunuchs – it was up to him to set the tone of what was going to

happen.

2. "Purposed in his heart"

- a) He resolved in his mind, he settled it at the start, that he wasn't going to convert and conform.
- b) He did learn the Babylonian way and lived according to the laws of the land, no matter who was leading, but he never compromised his faith in the Lord, and his faithfulness to the Word of God.

3. "That he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank"

- a) There was no compromise in Daniel, and there should be no compromise in us today – no matter how tempting and "okay" it might look.
- b) To "defile" means to be polluted or unclean – an indication that there was something with the "meat" being offered that would have violated the Levitical Law.

Heathen nations not only ate unclean beasts, which were forbidden by Jewish law, but even the clean animals that were eaten were first offered as victims to their gods, and part of the wine was poured out as a libation on their altars. Hence Atheneus calls the beasts served up at the tables of the Persian kings "victims." Daniel was therefore resolved not to defile himself with their [foods]; yet he did not rudely refuse what was intended as a kindness, but mildly and modestly requested the

proper officers to indulge him in this respect. (TSK)

Leviticus 11:45-47

⁴⁵ For I am the LORD that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.

⁴⁶ This is the law of the beasts, and of the fowl, and of every living creature that moveth in the waters, and of every creature that creepeth upon the earth:

⁴⁷ To make a difference between the unclean and the clean, and between the beast that may be eaten and the beast that may not be eaten.

Psalm 141:4

⁴ Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practise wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties.

- c) "The wine that he drank" – again, would have been the best wine of the land

Although we may not be protected from every danger and trial that we will face physically, we can be absolutely assured that God will always keep His promises and that He will guide us through the trial and even if we perish here because of it, we have an eternal home in heaven awaiting us that NOTHING can take from us.

These four were definitely protected because of their righteousness and for God's glory.

II. THEY WERE PROTECTED FOR A REASON – VS. 9-15, 21

A. To show the plan of God – vs. 9-14

1. "Now God had brought"
 - a) "Now" – this points back to "purposed in his heart" in vs. 8 – it was because Daniel so purposed he would not compromise that God blessed him in the way that He did.
 - b) God used Daniel and his three friends later on in their lives to fulfill His plan for not only them, but for the nations they served, as well as His plan for the ages.
 - c) They were protected and used to fulfill the plan of God because of their righteousness.
2. Vs. 10-14 give us the description of the "deal" that Daniel proposed to Melzar in a challenge to prove that God's plan was better than Melzar's plan.
 - a) Vs. 12 gives the deal – let all the others eat the king's meat and drink his wine and the four would eat "pulse" (vegetable) and drink water.
 - b) After a given time they would be viewed and a determination would be made as to who looked better, and who was more physically fit.

B. To show the power of God – vs. 15

1. "And at the end of ten days their countenance appeared fairer and fatter in flesh" – the challenge was for the four (vs. 11) to eat the "pulse" and drink water – the result is given here – they were of far better health and appearance than the other children were.

2. "Than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat" – that is, the other children of Israel that were taken captive with Daniel
3. The protection shows the power of God – there was no special power in the vegetables and the water – the power came because of their no-compromise attitude and because God had a plan.
4. Vs. 21 gives us the ultimate conclusion of the power of God – "Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus" – more than 70 years later – Cyrus was the king who allowed the return of the Israelites to their land after the 70-year captivity.

III. THEIR PROTECTION PRODUCED RESULTS – VS. 16-20

A. It resulted in the other children following them – vs. 16

Faithfulness to the Lord and living righteously and not compromising has an effect on others around us. We need to continue to take a stand for Christ, no matter what happens in our lives, for others are watching.

B. It resulted in the four being greatly blessed of God with knowledge and skill – vs. 17

This points to the plan of God mentioned in the previous point.

C. It resulted in all the children finding favor with the king – vs. 18

D. It resulted in special favor being given to the four by Nebuchadnezzar because of their wisdom in understanding – vs. 19-20

Conclusion: Will we stand, as Daniel and his three friends did? Will we hold to the values taught in the Word of God as they did? Their protection came because they did and there may be a time in our life when we will be put to a test to see if we will compromise or not – and God's hand of protection on our lives may depend on how we respond.