Daniel 1 **Introduction to the Book** 19th January 2023

The prophecy of Daniel is one of the three main symbolic books of the Bible. Having looked at the book of Zechariah previously it was decided to continue this study we are looking at this prophecy next, chapter by chapter, rather than thematically.

The first chapter sets the scene by considering the early years of the prophet Daniel and the significant part he would come to play in outlining prophecy with particular reference to the gentiles and their times. For this reason, it should be noted but the book of Daniel as well as being written in Hebrew, also contains sections written in Chaldee. Hebrew is of course the language of the Jewish people whereas Chaldee emanates from Babylon the metropolis and capital of the Empire which bears that name which at this time ruled over most of the known world, with particular reference to the Near East on the eastern side of the Mediterranean Sea.

The prophet Daniel was one of the original captives in the first wave going back to the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah. In the second book of Kings chapter 24 it is stated that Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon came up and made Jehoiakim his vassal for three years after which he rebelled and turned against him. Jehoiakim reigned for 11 years, and he was followed by his son Jehoiachin who reigned for three months. He also rebelled against his Overlord and Jerusalem was captured for the second time some eight years after the first captivity. Verse 12 of chapter 24 details that this was the 8th year of king Nebuchadnezzar and therefore the first captivity during the reign of king Jehoiakim was at the very beginning of the reign of this new monarch. In 2 Kings 25 verse 27 we are informed that the next king of Babylon Evil-merodak began to reign in the 37th year of Jehoiachin's captivity thus Nebuchadnezzar's reign was 45 years.

The first chapter ends with the statement that Daniel continued even until the first year of king Cyrus. Thus, he was a prophet for many, many, decades. Cyrus was a Persian king who replaced Darius the Mede who captured the city of Babylon from the Chaldeans after seventy years and took it into the Empire of the Medes & Persians. Babylon was a long-established city, the ownership of which changed hands many times and had been for a period destroyed before being resettled by the Chaldeans who emerged from the southern desert area. Their language is very similar to Hebrew, and it should be remembered that Abraham came out of Ur a city of the Chaldeans, so originally, there were close connexions between the Hebrews and the Chaldee people.

Daniel and his three friends we were given into the care of Ashpenaz the master of the eunuchs. Certain of the king's seed and of the princes were therefore made eunuchs in the court of this new Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar. Capable people were made eunuchs in the ancient world often to prevent them from seeking to establish a new dynasty in opposition to the existing rulers because they were still valuable alive rather than dead. It was felt that a childless but capable individual would see the value in serving the existing regime rather than seeking to rebel. It should therefore be no surprise that the candidates for castration were those skilled in "all wisdom knowledge and understanding science" having various sought-after abilities. These candidates once gelded would be taught the learning and tongue of the Chaldean's. See 2 Kings 20 verse 18 and Isaiah 39 verse 7 where these things were prophesied many years before.

Perhaps this makes Daniel of the royal line but of a minor branch. Daniel was the name of one of David's sons, see 1 Chronicles 3v1. Alternatively, he could have been the son of a powerful prince in Judah, either way it seems likely that he had grown up close to the Jewish court and was also influenced by faithful men there, few though they would have been at that time. Perhaps his parents set his course off well being raised in the "nurture and admonition of the truth". His faith must have come from somewhere.

When Daniel was taken the dynasty of David still ruled in Jerusalem will be it under the sufferance of their new overlord the king of Babylon. The temple still stood and although the worship was far from pure the Aaronic priesthood still officiated in the daily sacrifices and the maintenance of the Mosaic system of worship based on Solomon's temple. As a young man Daniel would have known the prophet Jeremiah who is the prophet who stood at the shoulder of the faithful king Josiah. However, when the King died, and his sons reigned in his stead, things took a turn for the worse. The prophet Ezekiel was carried away captive in the second captivity but as a serving priest and a faithful worshipper of the true God Yahweh, Daniel would have known him before he was carried away to Babylon in the first wave of captivity. Although separated physically from these bastions of the Truth in that era, God did permit him to be accompanied by three friends Hananiah Mishael and Azariah who shared his fate and were his spiritual companions in adversity.

It is not good for man to be alone. Denied intimate female company, he would nevertheless had interacted with various members of the fairer sex, see 1 Corinthians 11v11. It should be remembered that even in a harem (that was not Daniel's role) it was possible to find a spiritual woman, think Esther. It seems more likely that he would have been able to converse with Jehoiachin once he joined Daniel in the captivity. He had a wife, (his line continued) and perhaps daughters who would need spiritual guidance, which this prophet could have been able to provide. Both of Christ's lines came through this branch as Salathiel and Zerubbabel are common to both an interesting point in itself. The line of Christ seems to have been a line of ultimately faithful people therefore the Luke genealogy which bypasses the line of Kings in Matthew (Joseph's line) seems to be reinforced as correct as several of hose sinners are even excluded from the 14 generation count. Did Daniel assist is preserving the faith of that blood line of destiny through his actions in witnessing both to men and women who would ultimately sire the Christ?

All four of them had their Hebrew names changed and they were given new names more in keeping with the new situation under which they were now to live. Dani-el was to become Belteshazzar Hanani-ah was renamed Shadrack Misha-el became Meshach and Azari-ah was renamed Abednego all references to El and Yah were removed from their names in a deliberate attempt to indoctrinate them into a completely different religious climate. However, this was to famously fail as we see in more detail in subsequent chapters, but which began here in their refusal to be defiled by compromising the dietary requirements of the law of Moses.

This chapter shows the value of making an early stance in upholding your religious principles. Rather than wait for something dramatic to challenge them, these four went on the spiritual attack refusing to compromise even in matters of meat and drink. They were prepared to stand out and stood up for the Truth right from the very beginning. A good example to keep in mind when we feel that it might be better to keep quiet and

keep our heads down when we enter into a new situation. There was no fear here, perfect love casts out fear and these four were valiant soldiers in the war against the flesh.

Some have referred this chapter to the first record of a scientific experiment in the whole of human literature. This is not however human literature but is the inspired word of the living God. It does set out an experiment in keeping with the laws of scientific empiricism which includes the setting out of a hypothesis and its testing with appropriate variables and with the addition of a control group, whereby any effects could be cross checked to ensure their validity. An appropriate time limit for the conducting of this experiment was also set. This experiment mattered. Ashpenaz as the master of the eunuchs set a steward Melzar directly over these four and he allowed them this indulgence. He was all too aware that if he diverted them from the official diet which was abhorrent to them then he himself might be compromised because he was responsible for their physical welfare. It is a known biological fact that those who are castrated can easily put on excessive weight if their diet is not strictly controlled and this seems to be one of the underlying reasons why the prince of the eunuchs was so concerned.

The time chosen for this dietary experiment was 10 days. 10 days does seem to be an adequate time for at least the establishment of the possibility of the beneficial or adverse effects of a new diet to be manifested. After the first few days it is not possible to ascertain any proper effects, but this longer does allow the body's metabolism to be reset and it would be an interesting experiment with regard to our own diets to see if this period for change proves significant when it is necessary for us to consider more closely what we are eating for various health reasons. Does ten days work elsewhere?

This is not a story with vague information given to merely spice the narrative but a factual endeavour recorded and preserved for posterity to underline the divine nature of this work of inspiration. Whilst it is possible at these events could be miraculously overruled as a specific intervention of the Holy Spirit it seems in keeping with the transformational purpose of Divine revelation in an individual's life, that this incident would have a wider bearing for the advantage of other individuals who wish to avoid the defilement of excessive gluttony and alcohol use. Pulses contain more protein than other vegetarian foods and would have been part of any diet seeking to avoid inappropriate meats. Daniel and his three friends were not in a position to demand a kosher diet with only clean animals or killed in a specific way together with the avoidance of other Mosaic dietary requirements, so a vegetarian replacement makes perfect sense. While the effects seem not to have been miraculous, the revelation of the relevance of the appropriate information, does underline an aspect of divine intervention on their behalf. God told them it would be so, and it was.

Daniel is also primed as a man of dreams and it will be interesting to see how many dreams he had, there is only one other person in scripture who had more divine dreams than he did, and it is an unexpected protagonist! In subsequent chapters there will be a lot more emphasis on that part of his ministry. He was a man of the spirit, having both the spirit of the Christ and also possession of the spirit gifts. He is held out as a major example to others in Ezekiel 28v3 & Ezekiel 14v14 & 20.

A Voice from the Altar Russel Noonan