

August 6, 2023

God's Good News Story

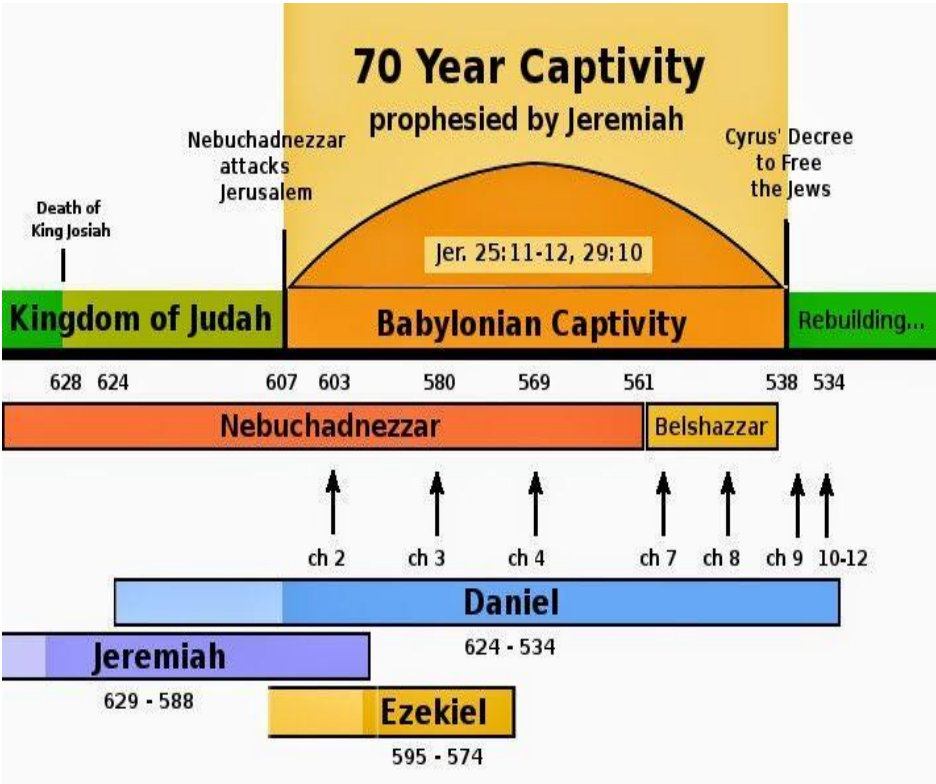
Daniel & The 3 Amigos

Portraits of Character, Integrity & Faithfulness

Standing Strong When the Heat is On

God's Good News Story continues today with a look at the Book of Daniel.

Last week I showed this image to give you an overview of the events of this time.



Also this image of the exile and captivity time frames:

Babylonian Captivity		
Date	Deportation	Captives Taken
605 (first year)*	First	Nobles, Daniel (2 K. 24:1; Dan. 1:1-2)
597 (seventh year)*	Second	Jehoiachin, Ezekiel (2 K. 24:12; Jer. 52:28; Ezk. 1:1-2)
586 (nineteenth year)*	Third	Jerusalem (2 K. 25:8; Jer. 52:29)
582 (twenty-third year)*	Fourth (Minor)	Small Group of 745 Jews (Jer. 52:30)

* Years of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar

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- 27th Book of the Bible
- 12 Chapters, 357 Verses
- Location: Babylon (Iraq)
- Time Frame: 605-530BC
- Key Characters:
Daniel, Shadrach,
Meschach, &
Abednego

Overview
Of
Daniel

Our Key Characters in God's Good News Story are:

1. Daniel – Hebrew דַּנְיֵאֵל (Daniyyel) meaning “*God is My Judge*”. Occurs 29 times in OT. His name was changed to Belteshazzar in Babylon meaning ‘Bel’s Prince’) Bel was an ancient false god in the area of Mesopotamia. He was also known as Marduk in Babylonia, and was associated with worship of calves and the sun. He was considered the ‘bull-calf’ of the Sun god Utu. He was born around 620bc. His parents are not mentioned but he is considered to be of royal blood. He was about 15 years old when he was taken away from Jerusalem to Babylon.
2. Hananiah/Shadrach – Hananiah means “*The Lord is gracious*” in Hebrew. His name was changed to Shadrach when he was taken to Babylon in exile in 605bc. Shadrach which in the Chaldean language gives honor to one of their gods.
3. Mishael/Meshach – Mishael means “*Who is the Lord*” in Hebrew. His name was changed in 605bc at his exile to Babylon to ‘Meshach’, which also gives honor to one of the Chaldean gods.
4. Azariah/Abednego – Azariah means ‘*The Lord is my Help*’ in Hebrew. In 605 bc at his exile his name was changed to Abednego, lossely meaning ‘servant of Nego’ one of the Babylonian gods.

Let’s take a quick overview at the **Book Of DANIEL**

Outline of Daniel

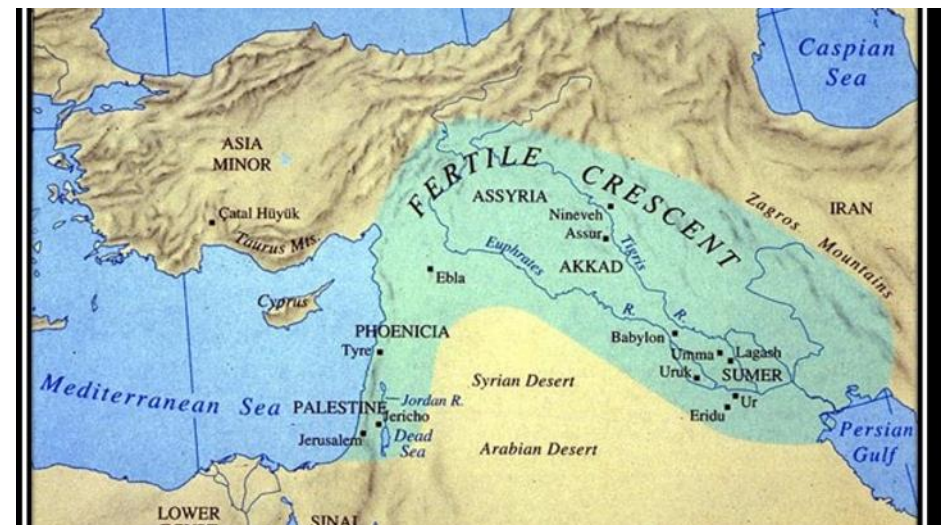
1. God's Providence In History - 1:1-6:28

- a. Daniel and his determination to be pure - 1:1-21
- b. Nebuchadnezzar's dream & Daniel's promotion - 2:1-49
- c. Faith in the face of fire by Daniel's friends - 3:1-30
- d. Nebuchadnezzar's 2nd dream & insanity - 4:1-37
- e. The writing on the wall and fall of Belshazzar - 5:1-31
- f. Darius and his den of lions - 6:1-28

2. God's Purpose In History - 7:1-12:13

- a. Daniel's dream of the four beasts - 7:1-28
- b. Daniel's dream of the ram and the goat - 8:1-27
- c. Daniel's prayer, & the vision of the 70 weeks - 9:1-27
- d. Daniel's vision of the time of the end - 10:1-12:13

Adapted from Mark Copeland http://executableoutlines.com/pdf/dan_so.pdf





With that historical context in place, let's look at the real 'human' side of this story. Daniel and his three friends were real life people just like you and I. They lived in Jerusalem thru their childhood and teen years. They were obviously well educated and had been taught the ways of Yahweh and were very faithful young men. They were the 'cream of the crop' the 'elite' of their time. As mentioned earlier they were part of the 1st wave of exiles from Jerusalem to Babylon around 605bc.

So let's look at what we can learn from these guys about **God's Guidelines for Protection** or **"Surviving & Thriving in Babylon"**!

Listen to these verses in Chapter 1 of Daniel that sets the stage:

Point 1: Choose Godly Character Over Worldly Conformity

Daniel 1:1-7... ¹ *In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and laid siege to it.* ² *The Lord handed Jehoiakim king of Judah over to him, along with some of the vessels from the house of God. Nebuchadnezzar carried them to the land of Babylon, to the house of his god, and put the vessels in the treasury of his god.* ³ *The king ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his court officials, to bring some of the Israelites from the royal family and from the nobility—* ⁴ *young men without any physical defect, good-looking, suitable for instruction in all wisdom, knowledgeable, perceptive, and capable of serving in the king's palace—and to teach them the Chaldean language and literature.*

⁵ *The king assigned them daily provisions from the royal food and from the wine that he drank. They were to be trained for three years, and at the end of that time they were to serve in the king's court.* ⁶ *Among them, from the descendants of Judah, were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.* ⁷ *The chief official gave them [different] names: to Daniel, he gave the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.*

Purity in ...Physical, Mental & Social (vs. 4.. the 3rd aspect capable of serving in the king's palace carried the connotation of ability and "refers to a proper manner, poise, confidence, and knowledge of social proprieties" (Wood, Daniel, 33 in NAC, Vol 18, Miller, p. 61)

In this next section we see where the Physical, Mental and Social purity or excellence was connected to the Spiritual.

⁸ *Daniel determined that he would not defile himself with the king's food or with the wine he drank. So he asked permission from the chief official not to defile himself.* ⁹ *God had granted Daniel favor and compassion from the chief official,* ¹⁰ *yet he said to Daniel, "My lord the king assigned your food and drink. I'm afraid [of what would happen] if he saw your faces looking thinner than those of the other young men your age. You would endanger my life with the king."*

¹¹ *So Daniel said to the guard whom the chief official had assigned to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,* ¹² *"Please test your servants for 10 days. Let us*

be given vegetables to eat and water to drink.

¹³ *Then examine our appearance and the appearance of the young men who are eating the king's food, and deal with your servants based on what you see."* ¹⁴ *He agreed with them in this matter and tested them for 10 days.* ¹⁵ *At the end of 10 days they looked better and healthier than all the young men who were eating the king's food.*

¹⁶ *So the guard continued to remove their food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables.*

In these next few verses we see their Faithfulness Rewarded

¹⁷ *God gave these four young men knowledge and understanding in every kind of literature and wisdom. Daniel also understood visions and dreams of every kind.*

¹⁸ *At the end of the time that the king had said to present them, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar.*

¹⁹ *The king interviewed them, and among all of them, no one was found equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. So they began to serve in the king's court.*

²⁰ *In every matter of wisdom and understanding that the king consulted them about, he found them 10 times better than all the diviner-priests and mediums in his entire kingdom.*

²¹ *Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.*

Point 2: Determine to Serve God No Matter The Consequences

Let's look at two true stories, the 1st about Shadrach, Meshach & Abednego and the 2nd Daniel...

Daniel 3:16-23 (NIV)

¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter.

¹⁷ If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king.

¹⁸ But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."

¹⁹ Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual

²⁰ and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace.

²¹ So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace.

²² The king's command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego,

²³ and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace.

Daniel 6:10-18...

¹⁰ When Daniel learned that the document had been signed, he went into his house. The windows in its upper room opened toward Jerusalem, and three times a day he got down on his knees, prayed, and gave thanks to his God, just as he had done before. ¹¹ Then these men went as a group and found Daniel petitioning and imploring his God. ¹² So they approached the king and asked about his edict: "Didn't you sign an edict that for 30 days any man who petitions any god or man except you, the king, will be thrown into the lions' den?" The king answered, "As a law of the Medes and Persians, the order stands and is irrevocable." ¹³ Then they replied to the king, "Daniel, one of the Judean exiles, has ignored you, the king, and the edict you signed, for he prays three times a day." ¹⁴ As soon as the king heard this, he was very displeased; he set his mind on rescuing Daniel with full effort until sundown to deliver him. ¹⁵ Then these men went to the king and said to him, "You as king know it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no edict or ordinance the king establishes can be changed."

¹⁶ So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!" ¹⁷ A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den. The king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signet rings of his nobles, so that nothing in regard to Daniel could be changed.

¹⁸ Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting. No diversions were brought to him, and he could not sleep.

All four of these young men may have remembered these great words from a previous prophet Isaiah...

Isaiah 43:2...¹ Now this is what the LORD says— the One who created you, Jacob, and the One who formed you, Israel— “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine. ² I will be with you when you pass through the waters, and [when you pass]through the rivers, they will not overwhelm you. You will not be scorched when you walk through the fire, and the flame will not burn you.

So we saw the difficult situation that each of them were in and how they stood firm, let's see the result of that faith. Sometimes it can seem as if the circumstances are too dire and there is no hope, but God has a way of working in ways that seem to us maybe as strange, but we must TRUST... That's our next guideline...

Point 3 : Trust in God For The Outcome & His Protection

God and the Spider

During World War II, a US marine was separated from his unit on a Pacific island. The fighting had been intense, and in the smoke and the crossfire he had lost touch with his comrades. Alone in the jungle, he could hear enemy soldiers coming in his direction. Scrambling for cover, he found his way up a high ridge to several small caves in the rock. Quickly he crawled inside one of the caves. Although safe for the moment, he realized that once the enemy soldiers looking for him swept up the ridge, they would quickly search all the caves and he

would be killed. As he waited, he prayed, "Lord, if it be your will, please protect me. Whatever your will though, I love you and trust you. Amen." After praying, he lay quietly listening to the enemy begin to draw close. He thought, "Well, I guess the Lord isn't going to help me out of this one." Then he saw a spider begin to build a web over the front of his cave. As he watched, listening to the enemy searching for him all the while, the spider layered strand after strand of web across the opening of the cave. "Hah, he thought. "What I need is a brick wall and what the Lord has sent me is a spider web. God does have a sense of humor." As the enemy drew closer he watched from the darkness of his hideout and could see them searching one cave after another. As they came to his, he got ready to make his last stand. To his amazement, however, after glancing in the direction of his cave, they moved on. Suddenly, he realized that with the spider web over the entrance, his cave looked as if no one had entered for quite a while. "Lord, forgive me," prayed the young man. "I had forgotten that in you a spider's web is stronger than a brick wall."

We all face times of great trouble. When we do, it is so easy to forget the victories that God would work in our lives, sometimes in the most surprising ways.

Remember: Whatever is happening in your life, with God, a mere spider's web can become a brick wall of protection. Believe He is with you always.

Let's look at what happened 1st to the 3 Young Men, and then to Daniel after they had **Determined to Serve God No Matter The Consequences. They Trusted God for the Outcome**

Daniel 3:24-30...

²⁴ Then King Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in alarm. He said to his advisers, “Didn’t we throw three men, bound, into the fire?” “Yes, of course, Your Majesty,” they replied to the king. ²⁵ He exclaimed, “Look! I see four men, not tied, walking around in the fire unharmed; and the fourth looks like a son of the gods”

²⁶ Nebuchadnezzar then approached the door of the furnace of blazing fire and called: “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, you servants of the Most High God—come out!” So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the fire. ²⁷ When the satraps, prefects, governors, and the king’s advisers gathered around, they saw that the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men: not a hair of their heads was singed, their robes were unaffected, and there was no smell of fire on them.

²⁸ Nebuchadnezzar exclaimed, “Praise to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! He sent His angel and rescued His servants who trusted in Him. They violated the king’s command and risked their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.

²⁹ Therefore I issue a decree that anyone of any people, nation, or language who says anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego will be torn limb from limb and his house made a garbage dump. For there is no other god who is able to deliver like this.” ³⁰ Then the king rewarded Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

Faith Applied, Trust Given, God Provided...

Daniel 6:19-28... ¹⁹ At the first light of dawn the king got up and hurried to the lions’ den. ²⁰ When he reached the den, he cried out in anguish to Daniel. “Daniel, servant of the living God,” the king said, “has your God whom you serve continually been able to rescue you from the lions?” ²¹ Then Daniel spoke with the king: “May the king live forever. ²² My God sent His angel and shut the lions’ mouths. They haven’t hurt me, for I was found innocent before Him. Also, I have not committed a crime against you my king.” ²³ The king was overjoyed and gave orders to take Daniel out of the den. So Daniel was taken out of the den, uninjured, for he trusted in his God. ²⁴ The king then gave the command, and those men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and thrown into the lions’ den—they, their children, and their wives. They had not reached the bottom of the den before the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones. ²⁵ Then King Darius wrote to those of every people, nation, and language who live in all the earth: “May your prosperity abound. ²⁶ I issue a decree that in all my royal dominion, people must tremble in fear before the God of Daniel: For He is the living God, and He endures forever; His kingdom will never be destroyed, and His dominion has no end. ²⁷ He rescues and delivers; He performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth, for He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions.” ²⁸ So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

**Faith Applied, Trust Given, God Provided again...
We see these specific blessings from Trusting God...**

Blessings For Trusting God

1. A new sense of freedom!

- a. They entered bound, but were soon seen “loose, walking” –
- b. The very thing presumed to destroy them, enabled them to walk freely!
- c. So our own trials can be used to set us truly free!

2. A new source of fellowship!

- a. Note: There was a **fourth** person in the fire! -
- b. The identity of this fourth person is not certain
- c. A closer communion and fellowship with God!
- d. So our trials can bring us closer to God

3. A new opportunity for service!

- a. They were promoted to even higher positions! - Dan 3:30
- b. So our faithfulness in trials will lead to greater things!
- cf. Mt 25:21; Re 2:25-27

http://executableoutlines.com/pdf/dan_so.pdf

Daniel and his three faithful friends

- **Chose Godly Character Over Worldly Conformity**
- **Determined to Serve God No Matter The Consequences &**
- **Trusted in God For The Outcome & His Protection**

With that foundation of faith and security of God working in their lives they also could have confidence that God will continue to work and reign in the future and so can WE! That brings us to our final point...

Daniel & His Three Friends Were Determined to Live a Life of Character, Integrity & Faithfulness even in the Pagan Cesspool known as Babylon. What about you? Will you choose to live like Daniel in a world that has chosen to live outside of God's way?

If You Want Stand Strong When the Heat is On

Choose Godly Character Over Worldly Conformity
Determine to Serve God No Matter The Consequences
Trust In God For The Outcome
Believe That God Has The Future Securely Under Control

SermonCentral Video

Another In The Fire

<https://www.sermoncentral.com/church-media-preaching-sermons/sermon-video-illustrations/another-in-the-fire-spoken-word-18229-detail>

Read with me this verse as a Prayer of Commitment

**Joshua 24:15...Choose You This Day Whom Ye Will Serve;
But As For Me And My House.... We Will Serve The Lord.**