

RUSSELL SANDERS

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DANIEL THE MAN – LESSON 2

HIS CHOICE

When the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar laid siege in Judah upon Jerusalem in 605 B.C., he took some (not all yet) of the precious vessels of the Temple. He also took (Daniel 1:3-4), ***“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 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 (language) of the Chaldeans.”*** Nebuchadnezzar took “the cream of the crop” of the youth of Israel’s elite and royal families to train them for his own purposes in his court. Daniel and his friends were included in this.

Daniel and his friends were already well educated as Hebrews. They also knew the scriptures well, the Pentateuch (Torah) the historical and political books and the earlier books of the prophets. Nebuchadnezzar wished to add to their education all the learning of his empire, especially that of the Chaldeans. (We will speak of the Chaldeans later.)

Since they were being groomed for service in the king’s court, he wanted the finest of everything to be provided for their “re-education.” This included not only the “learning” but also of the “physical” excellence. He therefore appointed for them (v. 5) daily provision of the finest of food and wine from the King’s table.

This presented a problem for these teenaged Hebrew boys. They knew the strict dietary laws of Judaism. The king’s table included foods forbidden by scripture. Furthermore, the “cleaning” of their (kosher) foods would not have been done. How would they deal with this? Daniel, the spokesman, (v. 8) ***“purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with...the king’s meat, nor with the wine...”*** How would he deal with this so as to “keep clean before the Lord?”

These young men, together with many others were taken care of by “eunuchs” dedicated solely to service of the king. Daniel 1:9 says, ***“Now God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.”*** Daniel entreated the prince to allow them a different diet, but the prince feared for his own life if a “poor” diet caused them to appear inferior.

The prince put Melzar(a eunuch) in charge of the boys. Daniel made a proposal to Melzar to give them only “pulse” to eat (vegetables and/or legumes) and water to drink for ten days. Melzar agreed to this “test.” At the end of the ten days (ten is a number of completion), their ***“countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh”*** than all the others (vs. 15). Melzar then permanently took away the “king’s portion” and let them continue their vegetarian diet for the full three years of their training.

Tomorrow we will see how God honored these four young Jews for their faith and faithfulness.