

The Personal History of Daniel



DANIEL 1:1-21

**TEXT, EXPOSITION AND PRACTICAL
HELPS**

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DIVISION I

The Personal History of Daniel, [Daniel 1:1-21](#)

[\(Daniel 1:1-21\)](#) **Introduction:** seldom in history has there been a more urgent need for heroes—for young men and women of strong righteous character—than today.

We live in a time of rank immorality, wickedness, injustice, oppression, and greed, a time when few individuals step forth to take a stand for justice and righteousness. Daniel was born into such an environment, an age of terrible immorality, lawlessness, and violence when there was little justice or righteousness on earth. Yet he rose above it all. Despite the temptations and the enticements of a vastly different culture, Daniel stood strong for the LORD, even in the face of death.

This is, *The Personal History of Daniel*, [Daniel 1:1-21](#).

1. **Daniel's captivity and education in Babylon: Tempted to compromise his commitment to the LORD (vv.1-7).**
2. **Daniel's faithfulness to the LORD: Determined to trust and be steadfast in the LORD (vv.8-21).**

1. [\(Daniel 1:1-7\)](#) Training, of Daniel, in Babylon—Daniel, Education of, in Babylon—Compromise, Temptation to, Daniel; Shadrach; Meshach; Abednego—Daniel, Name Change, to Belteshazzar—Commitment, Tempted to Compromise, Daniel—Nebuchadnezzar, Deported Daniel—Daniel, Exiled, to Babylon: this great book opens with the dramatic scene of war, with King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon besieging Jerusalem and taking her people captive.

It was in this war that Daniel was taken captive and deported to Babylon where he would be educated. In just a few verses, Scripture shows how Daniel was deported to Babylon and immediately tempted to compromise his loyalty to the LORD and the **Promised Land**.

a. Note exactly what [verse 2](#) says: the LORD delivered King Jehoiakim into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar actually invaded Jerusalem three times. (See [DEEPER STUDY # 1—Daniel 1:1](#) page # 8 for further discussion.)

On this occasion, he was acting as God's *agent of judgment* against Judah. For more than 200 years the LORD had used His prophets to warn the people to repent of their horrible sins and wicked lifestyles. But the people refused to heed the LORD and His prophets. Nevertheless, the LORD continued to show compassion by sending one prophet after another to declare the mercy of God.

On the other hand, the LORD warned the people that His mercy could not continue forever, that a day would come when justice would have to be executed. Still, the people continued to shut their ears to the prophets. They never genuinely repented nor did they ever truly live for the LORD. As a result, a day came when the people were beyond repentance, no matter how much compassion neither the LORD showed nor how many appeals He made to them. Consequently, justice had to be executed. Wrongs had to be dealt with. The time for judgment to fall had arrived.

Scripture says that in this particular invasion and capture of Jerusalem (**605 B.C.**), Nebuchadnezzar **did two things**.

First, he deported Jehoiakim ([Daniel 1:2](#)). Another Scripture tells us that he also deported 10,000 leaders, which included the commanders of Jehoiakim's army, business leaders, skilled craftsman, politicians, and priests—all the leaders who might stir an uprising against the Babylonian empire ([2 Kings 24:14-16](#)). Remember that Daniel and his three friends were included in this deportation to Babylon.

[2 Kings 24:14-16 \(NASB\)](#)

“¹⁴ Then he led away into exile all Jerusalem and all the captains and all the mighty men of valor, ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and the smiths. None remained except the poorest people of the land.

¹⁵ So he led Jehoiachin away into exile to Babylon; also the king's mother and the king's wives and his officials and the leading men of the land, he led away into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.

¹⁶ All the men of valor, seven thousand, and the craftsmen and the smiths, one thousand, all strong and fit for war, and these the king of Babylon brought into exile to Babylon.”

Second, Nebuchadnezzar plundered the temple of its sacred articles and carried them back to Babylon. There, he put them in the temple of his so-called god. Some 100 years earlier, King Hezekiah had shown several Babylonian ambassadors the treasury and wealth of Judah despite the prophet Isaiah's warnings against such an action. Isaiah predicted that one day, because of Hezekiah's unwise prideful behavior, Babylon would conquer Judah and carry off all the wealth of the nation (see [Deeper Study # 2—Isaiah 39:1-8](#) [page # 13 for more discussion](#)).

Each time Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah, he fulfilled the prophecy by plundering more and more of the wealth of the LORD's temple. As will be seen later in the book of Daniel, King Belshazzar would desecrate the sacred cups and utensils by using them in the immoral and drunken feast he held for his nobles, wives, and concubines (see [Deeper Study # 3—Daniel 5:1-4](#) [page # 16 for more discussion](#)).

Also note this fact: Daniel says that Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem in the third year of King Jehoiakim's reign ([Daniel 1:1](#)). However, Jeremiah says that Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah in the fourth year, not the third ([Jer. 25:1](#)).

Jeremiah 25:1 (NASB)

“¹The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah (that was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon)”

Daniel was simply using the Babylonian method of counting the years of a king's rule rather than the Jewish method. Babylon counted a king's first full year as the beginning of his reign, which was the first *reginal* or *nonascension* year that followed his crowning. Although Jehoiakim took the throne in the middle of the year, Daniel did not count the beginning of his reign until the following full year. Thus, according to Babylon's reckoning of a king's reign, Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem in the third year of King Jehoiakim's reign. But Jeremiah followed the *ascension year* in counting the reign of Jehoiakim, which meant that he dated Nebuchadnezzar's invasion in the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign (see [Daniel 2:1-13](#)).

b. Nebuchadnezzar adopted the very wise policy of preparing leaders to serve in his government and to help manage his vast empire. When he conquered a nation, he made sure their youth were deported to Babylon's capital where they were educated and molded in Babylonian ways and culture. The ambition of the king was to mold the youth of conquered nations into full-fledged Babylonian citizens. Youth who showed leadership potential were given special attention and training.

To achieve his purpose of preparing young leaders, Nebuchadnezzar established a program that included five major policies:

1) He separated the youth from their families ([Daniel 1:3-4](#)). When Nebuchadnezzar conquered Judah, he instructed Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to separate the young men of royalty or nobility from the others and to bring them into the king's palace.

But the young men had to meet three qualifications:

- a.** They had to be strong and healthy, without any defect whatsoever.
- b.** They had to be handsome.
- c.** They had to be intelligent and quick to learn, demonstrating the ability to learn every subject and to develop the poise that would be needed to serve as leaders in government service.

It should be noted that some translations of the Hebrew refer to Ashpenaz as a eunuch and that some commentators suggest that the young men enrolled in Babylon's royal academy were castrated. Of course, this would mean that Daniel and his three friends were made eunuchs. However, this translation and suggestion are most likely inaccurate for several reasons. As the excellent commentator **Gleason L. Archer** points out, the Hebrew word *saris* comes from the Akkadian *sa resi sarri*, which means "he who is of the king's head."

Therefore, originally, the word simply referred to an official who served the king and not to sexual impotence. This fact is clearly seen in the story of Joseph, who was placed in the custody of Potiphar, Pharaoh's body guard. Potiphar is described as one of Pharaoh's officials (*Seris Par'oh*, [Genesis 39:1](#)). Potiphar had a wife; therefore, he was most likely not castrated, not a eunuch. Also note that the present Scripture actually says that the young men had to be without defect, which suggests they were not mutilated by being castrated ([Daniel 1:4](#)).

2) He indoctrinated the young men in the language and literature of the Babylonians ([Daniel 1:4](#)).

Most likely this included.....

- a. math
- b. law
- c. administration and organization
- d. business, finance, and economic principles
- e. architecture and engineering
- f. astronomy and astrology
- g. various languages

3) He gave them preferential treatment ([Daniel 1:5](#)). The young men were given royal housing, food, and wine, apparently at Babylon's royal academy located right within the palace complex. They were enticed to become loyal citizens of Babylon through the special treatment they received. Such treatment was bound to appeal to most of the young men, who could not imagine any greater privilege.

4) He ensured their security and prosperity in government service ([Daniel 1:5](#)). The students were trained for a period of three years and then assigned a secure position in government service.

5) He changed their names ([Daniel 1:6-7](#)). The purpose of changing the young men's names was to help erase their attachment to their own nation and religion. Thus, Daniel and his three friends were given Babylonian names. **Note how each Hebrew name includes a reference to the only true and living God**, whereas the **Babylonian name points to a false god** worshipped by the Babylonians.

- a. **Daniel**, whose name meant “**God is my judge**” received the name **Beltshazzar** (“**Bel** protects his life”).
- b. **Hananiah**, whose name meant “**YAHWEH (the LORD) is gracious**” received the name **Shadrach** (“**command of Aku**” or “**I am fearful of a god**”).
- c. **Mishael**, whose name meant “**who is what God is,**” received the name **Meshach** (“**who is what Aku is,**” which is simply the Babylonian equivalent to his Hebrew name).
- d. **Azariah**, whose name meant “**the LORD has helped,**” received the name **Abednego** (“**servant of Nebo,**” another god worshiped by the Babylonians).

Through education and immersing the young captives in Babylonian customs and ways, Nebuchadnezzar sought to erase his future leaders’ attachment to their own nation and religion. He hoped to mold them into full-fledged citizens and leaders of Babylon and its vast empire.

In the palace of Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel and his three friends faced the trial of their young lives. Separated from their families and immersed in the pagan ways and customs of an unbelieving nation, they received every imaginable privilege. Their circumstances tempted them to compromise their commitment to the LORD. *Either they would remain faithful to the LORD, or they would betray Him by compromising with the world and participating in its wicked ways.*

Thought 1. Daniel was only a boy when he was uprooted from everything he was familiar with—his homeland of Judah, his family, his friends, his home, his school, his church. Even worse, he was deported to a heathen nation and subjected to the authority and influence of a heathen king. Yet despite the fact that he could do nothing about his environment or his circumstances, Daniel could control himself; that is, he had the liberty to control his thoughts, his words, his actions, his motives, and his heart. And this he did. Against overwhelming odds, Daniel was firm in his beliefs and in his commitment to the LORD, gaining the respect of many a heathen and many in authority in the process. Daniel knew who he was, and he knew *whose* he was.

Like Daniel, believers are living in a predominately heathen world. And even though most of us have not been snatched out of familiar surroundings, we still find ourselves in circumstances and environments over which we have no control. Governments, organizations, businesses, schools, and even some churches pass laws that go against what we believe in. The media promotes and provokes every type of sin imaginable, and Christianity as a whole is under attack worldwide. As believers, we will face the temptation to compromise our commitment to the LORD every day. But we must not compromise with the world nor participate in its wicked ways.

Listen to what God's Holy Word says about compromise:

Matthew 23:2-3 (NASB)

² Saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses;

³ therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say *things* and do not do *them*."

Luke 21:34 (NASB)

³⁴ Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap."

Romans 12:1-2 (NASB)

¹ Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship.

² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

Ephesians 5:11-12 (NASB)

¹¹ Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them;

¹² for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret."

2 Timothy 2:4 (NASB)

⁴ No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier."

2 Timothy 2:19 (NASB)

¹⁹ Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, 'The Lord knows those who are His,' and, 'Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness'."

1 John 2:15-16 (NASB)

¹⁵ Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world."

Exodus 23:2 (NASB)

² You shall not follow the masses in doing evil, nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after a multitude in order to pervert *justice*."

2 Kings 17:15 (NASB)

¹⁵ They rejected His statutes and His covenant which He made with their fathers and His warnings with which He warned them. And they followed vanity and became vain, and *went* after the nations which

surrounded them, concerning which the Lord had commanded them not to do like them.”

DEEPER STUDY # 1

(Daniel 1:1) Jerusalem—Nebuchadnezzar: Nebuchadnezzar conquered Jerusalem for the **first time** in **605 B.C.** Babylon's mammoth war machine and mighty army left Judah's King Jehoiakim with no choice but to surrender or else face annihilation. Wisely, Jehoiakim surrendered and Judah became a vassal state to Babylon. Because of his surrender, Nebuchadnezzar allowed Jehoiakim to remain in power as a puppet king. It was in this conquest of Judah that Nebuchadnezzar deported 10,000 leaders back to Babylon. Daniel and his three friends were among these exiles. But there were to be two more invasions of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar, three altogether.

After Nebuchadnezzar withdrew his army, Jehoiakim willingly paid the annual tribute. But then he foolishly rebelled and refused to pay. Before Nebuchadnezzar could retaliate, Jehoiakim died, and his son Jehoiachin took the throne of Judah. Soon thereafter, Jehoiachin faced the terrifying threat of Babylon's advancing army. Being helpless against such a massive force, Jehoiachin and his mother, servants, nobles, and royal officials went out to surrender personally to King Nebuchadnezzar. **This second** invasion and deportation took place in **597 B.C.**

The third and final siege took place in **586 B.C.** This time Nebuchadnezzar utterly destroyed Jerusalem and sent the rest of Judah's citizens into captivity. Only a few Jews remained behind. They included those left to care for the land and those who had joined guerilla bands to fight the Babylonians.

2. (Daniel 1:8-21) Faithfulness, Example of, Daniel—Trust, Example of, Daniel—Steadfast, Example of, Daniel—Shadrach, Faithfulness, Refused to Compromise—Meshach, Faithfulness, Refused to Compromise—Abednego, Faithfulness, Refused to Compromise—Faithfulness, Examples of, Daniel and His Friends: Daniel remained faithful to the LORD despite the strong temptation to compromise.

He was determined to trust and be steadfast in the LORD no matter how much pressure was put upon him. Therefore, when Daniel confronted a crisis after only a short time at the king's palace, he took a stand that could have led to his execution or, at the very least, enslavement or imprisonment.

Scripture paints a suspenseful, dramatic scene of the crisis:

a. Daniel made a decision not to defile himself with food and wine from the king's table ([Daniel 1:8-16](#)). This was not a trivial matter to Daniel. According to God's Word, the food was *unclean* (see [Leviticus 11:1-47](#); [Deuteronomy 14:1-21](#)).

Furthermore, God's Word warned against partaking of *strong drink* ([Proverbs 20:1](#); [Proverbs 23:29-30](#); [Proverbs 23:32](#); [Isaiah 5:11-12, 22](#); [Nahum 1:10](#); [Habakkuk 2:16](#)).

[Proverbs 20:1 \(NASB\)](#)

“¹ Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, And whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise.”

[Proverbs 23:29-30 \(NASB\)](#)

“²⁹ Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes?

³⁰ Those who linger long over wine, Those who go to taste mixed wine.”

[Proverbs 23:32 \(NASB\)](#)

“³² At the last it bites like a serpent And stings like a viper.”

[Isaiah 5:11-12 \(NASB\)](#)

“¹¹ Woe to those who rise early in the morning that they may pursue strong drink, Who stay up late in the evening that wine may inflame them!

¹² Their banquets are *accompanied* by lyre and harp, by tambourine and flute, and by wine; But they do not pay attention to the deeds of the Lord, Nor do they consider the work of His hands.”

[Isaiah 5:22 \(NASB\)](#)

“²² Woe to those who are heroes in drinking wine And valiant men in mixing strong drink.”

[Nahum 1:10 \(NASB\)](#)

“¹⁰ Like tangled thorns, And like those who are drunken with their drink, They are consumed As stubble completely withered.”

[Habakkuk 2:16 \(NASB\)](#)

“¹⁶ You will be filled with disgrace rather than honor. Now you yourself drink and expose your *own* nakedness. The cup in the Lord's right hand will come around to you, And utter disgrace *will come* upon your glory.”

This is why believing Jews usually added somewhere between three to six parts of water to one part of wine. Finally, the king's food and wine had most likely been sacrificed to false gods before it was served.

When Daniel and his three friends had to choose between obeying God's Word and compromising with the world, they chose to obey God's Word. They were determined to be faithful to the LORD, steadfast in their commitment to His Holy

Word. Thus Daniel approached Ashpanaz, Nebuchadnezzar's chief official, and requested permission to eat other foods that would not defile him. Daniel had already gained the favor of the chief official. Scripture actually says that the LORD caused Ashpanaz to respect and show favor to Daniel.

But in this particular case, the official was reluctant to grant Daniel's request for three reasons:

1. the king had ordered *this very food and drink* to be given to the young students.
2. Daniel and his three friends might become pale and look sickly if they ate only a vegetable diet.
3. the king would then execute Ashpanaz for disobeying the royal command.

b. Although Daniel's request was denied by the chief officer, Daniel later discussed the matter with Melzar, a guard who had been placed over him and his three friends. Daniel's request was for a ten day trial test ([Daniel 1:11-13](#)). He pleaded with the guard to allow them to eat nothing but vegetables and to drink nothing but water ([Daniel 1:12](#)). Then the guard could compare their appearance to those who ate the king's rich food ([Daniel 1:13](#)). If their appearance was healthy, Daniel requested that they be allowed to continue the diet of vegetables and water.

c. The request for a ten day test was accepted by the guard ([Daniel 1:14-16](#)). Surprisingly, at the end of the ten days, the four friends looked healthier and better nourished than the other young students. Consequently, the official granted Daniel's request for a permanent diet of vegetables and water.

d. Daniel and his friends' faithfulness was richly rewarded by God ([Daniel 1:17-21](#)). God gave the four young students a special *intellectual ability*. As they studied, they were given special understanding and knowledge. And Daniel himself was given the ability to understand visions and dreams, which will be demonstrated time and again throughout the coming chapters of this book. *It is interesting to note that Daniel's education in Babylonian literature, astrology, and sorcery was of no help when he was called upon to interpret dreams. To the contrary, all the education of Babylon proved worthless in the understanding of dreams.* God Himself gave Daniel insight into the dreams and revealed their explanation to him ([Daniel 2:3-11, 17-28; Daniel 4:7](#)).

When the three years of training ended, the graduating students were brought before the king himself ([Daniel 1:18-19](#)). Nebuchadnezzar interviewed all the graduates, apparently giving them oral exams. Daniel and his three friends proved far superior to the other brilliant students. In fact, Nebuchadnezzar considered their answers ten times better than all the other royal advisers in his kingdom. He was so impressed with Daniel's answers and those of his three friends that he immediately assigned them to leadership positions in his government.

Note the reference to the king's consulting *magicians* and *astrologers* or *enchanters* ([Daniel 1:20](#)). *Magicians* ([hartom](#)) can refer either to an *engraver* or *writer* or to a *diviner*, *astrologer*, or one who actually uses magic. Thus the magicians were educated men who used a pen or stylus to record and preserve the royal records of Babylon. This included both political and religious records. Sometimes they were considered diviners, people who used written charts or magical designs of the stars to interpret dreams and questions asked of them.

Enchanters or *astrologers* ([assap](#)) refer to those who use incantations to communicate with the spirit world or the dead. Other names for this type of individual are **conjurer**, **necromancer**, or **soothsayer**.

The LORD gave Daniel the gift of a long life and of royal service in Babylon and Persia. As pointed out earlier, Daniel was exiled as a young boy to Babylon in **605 B.C.**, probably when he was approximately 14-16 years of age. He served as a high-ranking official in both Babylon and Persia until the first year of King Cyrus's reign (**539 B.C.**). Assuming he graduated from Nebuchadnezzar's royal academy in the year **601 B.C.**, he was a high-ranking official serving foreign governments for about **65 years (601–536 B.C.)**. Thus Daniel lived to be over 80 years old, a wonderful gift from the LORD. It should be noted that he was still living in the third year of King Cyrus's reign ([Daniel 10:1](#)).

Thought 1. What an example Daniel is for us! Think how often we are tempted to compromise our commitment to the Lord. Each of us needs to think through the following questions:

1. How often has the culture around us enticed to commit some sin?
2. How often have the luxuries of the world tempted us to disobey God?
3. How often have we allowed our desire for position, power, and fame to consume us?
4. How often have we put achieving our personal ambition before serving God?

Every day we face the temptation to compromise our commitment to the Lord. Listen to what God's Holy Word says about compromise:

Thought 2. We must be faithful in living for the LORD. No matter how much pressure people may put upon us to compromise, we must stand fast and not give in to the seduction of sin. No matter how appealing, attractive or enticing the urge may be, we must take a strong stand for the LORD. We must purpose in our hearts that we will not defile ourselves. Listen to what God's Holy Word says about *persevering* and *being faithful* to the LORD, *standing fast* for Him.

Matthew 10:22 (NASB)

“²² You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.”

1 Corinthians 15:58 (NASB)

“⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in vain* in the Lord.”

Galatians 5:1 (NASB)

“¹ It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.”

Galatians 6:9 (NASB)

“⁹ Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.”

Philippians 1:27 (NASB)

“²⁷ Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.”

Hebrews 12:1-4 (NASB)

“¹ Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

³ For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

⁴ You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin.”

1 Peter 5:8-9 (NASB)

“⁸ Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

⁹ But resist him, firm in *your* faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.”

2 Peter 3:17-18 (NASB)

“¹⁷ You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness,

¹⁸ but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.”

Revelation 3:11 (NASB)

“¹¹ I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.”

Joshua 23:8 (NASB)

“⁸ But you are to cling to the Lord your God, as you have done to this day.”

Job 17:9 (NASB)

“⁹ Nevertheless the righteous will hold to his way, And he who has clean hands will grow stronger and stronger.”

DEEPER STUDY # 2

(Isaiah 39:1-8) Pride, Example of—Arrogance, Example of—Self-Exaltation, Example of—Hezekiah, Pride of: although Hezekiah was righteous and totally committed to the LORD, he was not perfect. Soon after his illness, he unwisely entertained some ambassadors from Babylon, and in his entertaining he exposed a heart of pride and self-exaltation. Because of his pride, the judgment of God was pronounced upon him and a prediction made concerning the future destiny of the nation.

In a very straightforward manner, Scripture shares the story of the king’s pride.

1. Hearing about Hezekiah’s deathly illness, the crown prince of Babylon, Merodach-Baladan, sent a letter and some gifts to Hezekiah as an expression of his concern (**Isaiah 39:1**). Why would the crown prince of Babylon, the soon to be superpower of the world, want to express his concern for Hezekiah? *Second Chronicles* tells us that his curiosity was aroused when he heard about the miraculous healing of Hezekiah and the movement of the sundial (**2 Chron.32:31**). But additional information is supplied by the Jewish historian Josephus. He says that the king of Babylon sought Hezekiah as a friend and ally.

2. Whatever Merodach-Baladan’s purpose, Hezekiah gave the ambassadors a warm reception (**Isaiah 39:2**). With pride swelling up in his heart, Hezekiah entertained the envoys by sharing the story of his healing and then foolishly, showing them his vast wealth. There was nothing in his palace or throughout the kingdom that he failed to show them. Obviously, this included the strength of his military as well as the wealth found in the palace and temple treasuries.

3. As would be expected, the LORD immediately rebuked Hezekiah through the prophet Isaiah (**Isaiah 39:3-4**). Isaiah confronted the king and questioned him about his entertainment of the ambassadors. Making no attempt to hide his actions, Hezekiah freely shared what he had done. He had shown them the wealth, the treasuries of the nation.

4. No doubt heavy-hearted, but with the authority of God Himself, the prophet Isaiah pronounced God's judgment upon Hezekiah and Judah. Due to Hezekiah's pride and the sins of the nation down through the centuries, Judah would face God's condemnation ([Isaiah 39:5-7](#)). One day in the near future, Babylon would conquer Judah and carry off all the wealth of the nation. What the Babylonian ambassadors had seen—all the treasures of the king as well as those of the nation—would not be forgotten. Future leaders of Babylon would covet the wealth shown by Hezekiah in his moment of self-exaltation and pride. Moreover, some of Hezekiah's descendents would be exiled to Babylon and be forced to serve as eunuchs (**devoted slaves**) in the palace of Babylon's king.

5. In a spirit of repentance, Hezekiah humbly accepted God's judgment ([Isaiah 39:8](#)). But in his private thoughts, he was wondering and asking himself if he would finish out his days in peace and security.

Thought 1. Pride is a terrible evil. When a person begins to look upon himself as being superior to or better than others, he.....

1. exalts himself over others, applauding his own efforts
2. feels that he should be preferred over others
3. considers himself to be more valuable than others

A person who is full of pride and self-exaltation is often arrogant, overbearing, and disrespectful. He frequently puts other people down, degrades, shames, embarrasses, stifles, harms, subjects, and in some cases even enslaves others. For this reason, God strongly condemns pride and the exalting of ourselves above others:

Matthew 23:12 (NASB)

“¹² Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.”

Romans 12:16 (NASB)

“¹⁶ Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.”

1 Corinthians 8:2 (NASB)

“² If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know.”

Galatians 6:3 (NASB)

“³ For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.”

James 4:6 (NASB)

“⁶ But He gives a greater grace. Therefore *it* says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

1 John 2:16 (NASB)

“¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.”

Psalms 10:2 (NASB)

“² In pride the wicked hotly pursue the afflicted; Let them be caught in the plots which they have devised.”

Psalms 49:6-7 (NASB)

“⁶ Even those who trust in their wealth And boast in the abundance of their riches?

⁷ No man can by any means redeem *his* brother Or give to God a ransom for him.”

Psalms 119:21 (NASB)

“²¹ You rebuke the arrogant, the cursed, Who wander from Your commandments.”

Proverbs 3:7 (NASB)

“⁷ Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and turn away from evil.”

Proverbs 6:16-19 (NASB)

“¹⁶ There are six things which the Lord hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him:

¹⁷ Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, And hands that shed innocent blood,

¹⁸ A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that run rapidly to evil,

¹⁹ A false witness *who* utters lies, And one who spreads strife among brothers.”

Proverbs 11:2 (NASB)

“² When pride comes, then comes dishonor, But with the humble is wisdom.”

Proverbs 21:4 (NASB)

“⁴ Haughty eyes and a proud heart, The lamp of the wicked, is sin.”

Proverbs 26:12 (NASB)

“¹² Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.”

Proverbs 28:25 (NASB)

“²⁵ An arrogant man stirs up strife, But he who trusts in the Lord will prosper.”

Proverbs 29:23 (NASB)

“²³ A man's pride will bring him low, But a humble spirit will obtain honor.”

Isaiah 5:21 (NASB)

“²¹ Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes And clever in their own sight!”

Isaiah 14:13-15 (NASB)

“¹³ But you said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north.

¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.

¹⁵ Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, To the recesses of the pit.”

Ezekiel 28:2-8 (NASB)

² Son of man, say to the leader of Tyre, 'Thus says the Lord God, 'Because your heart is lifted up And you have said, 'I am a god, I sit in the seat of gods In the heart of the seas'; Yet you are a man and not God, Although you make your heart like the heart of God—

³ Behold, you are wiser than Daniel; There is no secret that is a match for you.

⁴ "By your wisdom and understanding You have acquired riches for yourself And have acquired gold and silver for your treasuries.

⁵ "By your great wisdom, by your trade You have increased your riches And your heart is lifted up because of your riches—

⁶ Therefore thus says the Lord God, 'Because you have made your heart Like the heart of God,

⁷ Therefore, behold, I will bring strangers upon you, The most ruthless of the nations. And they will draw their swords Against the beauty of your wisdom And defile your splendor.

⁸ "They will bring you down to the pit, And you will die the death of those who are slain In the heart of the seas.”

Obadiah 1:4 (NASB)

“⁴ Though you build high like the eagle, Though you set your nest among the stars, From there I will bring you down," declares the Lord.”

DEEPER STUDY # 3

(Daniel 5:1-4) Drunkenness, Example of, Belshazzar’s Banquet—Orgy, Example of, Belshazzar’s Banquet—Immorality, Example of, Belshazzar’s Feast—Hard-hearted, Example of, King Belshazzar—Belshazzar, Sins of, Immorality and Defiance—Partying, Example of, Belshazzar’s Drunken and Immoral Banquet—Irreverence, Example of, Profaning God’s Name; Defiling Holy Things: Belshazzar hosted a huge banquet for the nobles of Babylon, a banquet that turned into an immoral and blasphemous orgy.

Note the Scripture and outline:

Over one thousand of the king’s nobles and their wives and concubines attended the banquet (**Daniel 5:1, 3**). Ancient rulers were known for hosting lavish banquets to display the wealth, power, and glory of their kingdoms. Interestingly, the king held this large feast while the enemy, the Persian army, was camped outside the city gates laying siege to Babylon. Imagine such boldness! The leaders of Babylon must have felt the city was impregnable because of its massive walls, lookout towers, and bronze

gates. Also, the city appeared to be totally self-sustaining, for the Euphrates River ran through the city to provide water, and there was enough food and supplies stored up to last many years. Feeling perfectly secure, Belshazzar apparently planned this banquet to stir the morale of his people to face the daily assault of the Persians against the walls and gates of the city.

Soon after everyone arrived, both the king and the guests began to engage in wicked and defiant behavior ([Daniel 5:2-4](#)). Not only were the wives present for the banquet, but the concubines were as well. With wine flowing freely and everyone gratifying the lust of their flesh, the party quickly degenerated. At some point during the festivities, the king thought of a way to show the superiority of Babylon's so-called gods over those of other nations. He ordered his servants to bring in the gold and silver cups that Nebuchadnezzar had plundered from the temple in Jerusalem ([Daniel 1:2](#)). By drinking from these trophies of war, the nobles would be reminded that their so-called gods had always made Babylon victorious over other nations. Remembering this fact would help encourage the nobles in the face of the Persian siege of the city.

But Belshazzar overlooked one fact: these particular cups were the sacred vessels of the LORD, the living and true God. They were holy, set apart for the use of the LORD and His service alone. Thus when the king and guests began to drink from these holy cups, they were committing blasphemy against the LORD. They were profaning the very Name of God. They even toasted their false gods while they drank from the sacred cups dedicated to the LORD.

Belshazzar and his nobles were guilty of three very serious acts of wickedness:

1. drunkenness and immorality
2. blasphemy against the LORD
3. idolatry

Thought 1. What a warning to stay away from wild parties—parties where drinking can and oftentimes does lead to suggestive and immoral behavior! Strong drink dulls our senses and ability to reason. Drunkenness can cause us to lower our standards and weaken our morals, leaving the door wide open for irrational thinking and bad decisions we might soon regret.

In such an atmosphere, people frequently lose their inhibitions, saying and doing things they would not normally say and do. These things might be sexual in nature, or they might be brazen, bold, arrogant, or downright ugly talk. Loose lips easily profane God's holy Name and even dare us to be irreverent toward God. Lastly, drunkenness can not only *lead* to

idolatry but also can *be* idolatry. Any time we give ourselves over to the control of another—whether a person, substance, position, or otherwise—we make an idol out of that entity. No wonder God warns us so strongly about the dangers of drinking!

1) Listen to God’s warning against drunkenness.

Luke 21:34 (NASB)

“³⁴ Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap.”

Romans 13:13 (NASB)

“¹³ Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy.”

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (NASB)

“⁹ Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals,
¹⁰ nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.”

Galatians 5:19-21 (NASB)

“¹⁹ Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality,
²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions,
²¹ envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Proverbs 20:1 (NASB)

“¹ Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, And whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise.”

Proverbs 23:20 (NASB)

“²⁰ Do not be with heavy drinkers of wine, *Or* with gluttonous eaters of meat.”

Isaiah 5:11 (NASB)

“¹¹ Woe to those who rise early in the morning that they may pursue strong drink, Who stay up late in the evening that wine may inflame them!”

Habakkuk 2:15 (NASB)

“¹⁵ Woe to you who make your neighbors drink, Who mix in your venom even to make *them* drunk So as to look on their nakedness!”

2) Listen to what God's Word says about immorality.

Matthew 5:27-30 (NASB)

²⁷ "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery ';

²⁸ but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

²⁹ If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

³⁰ If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell."

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (NASB)

⁹ "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals,

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2 Peter 2:12-14 (NASB)

¹² "But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed,

¹³ suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong. They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you,

¹⁴ having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children."

Revelation 21:8 (NASB)

⁸ "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part *will be* in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Exodus 20:14 (NASB)

¹⁴ "You shall not commit adultery."