



## A Clear Vision In A Confused World

### Dan 1:8

8 But Daniel **purposed in his heart** that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

In the year 605 BC, a young crown prince of the Babylonian Empire became commander and chief of the armies of Babylon.

- In the spring of that year he marched his armies through Egypt and Assyria conquering everyone and everything that crossed his path.
- He continued marching those armies through Syria and Palestine claiming victory after victory.
- By the year 597 BC he had moved into Judah and then Jerusalem.

On March 16th 597 BC, this crown prince, now King of Babylon, accepted the total surrender of King Jehoiachin, King of Judah and Jerusalem.

This King would go on to reign over the most powerful empire in the world for the next forty three years...his name, Nebuchadnezzar.

During his reign, Nebuchadnezzar helped build the city of Babylon into the most formidable fortress city the world had ever known.

- Babylon was a rectangular shaped city rising impressively above the desert in the land we now know as Iraq.
- The mighty Euphrates river flowed from north to south right through the center of the city.
- The city was surrounded by fifty miles of double walls.
  - o The inner wall was twenty one feet thick and three hundred feet tall.
  - o The outer wall was eleven feet thick and three hundred feet tall.
  - o Both of these walls were reinforced by 420 foot tall towers that were spaced at 60 foot intervals around the entire circumference of the city.
  - o The waters of the Euphrates were diverted to form a moat around these mighty walls.

**The city had eight gates. All of them were very impressive, but the most notable was the Ishtar gate.**

- This gate was not made of stone as the others, but beautiful lazuli blue tile.
- Ishtar gate was the most notable because it accessed the two citadels of the city and also an enormous palace.
- Just beyond the Ishtar gate was one of the seven wonders of the world;
- o The Hanging Gardens of Babylon.
- o Nebuchadnezzar built this garden for his homesick queen.
- o You would not expect to find a beautiful forest covered mountain in the middle of a fortress city, but there it was just beyond Ishtar gate.

- In the center of the city was a beautiful bridge supported by brick pillars linking the old part of the city to the new.
- Towering over this bridge was a massive thirty story building called the ziggurat.
- At the top of the ziggurat was a temple devoted to one of their many notable gods, Marduk.

**In that era of time, there was no city on earth as impressive or spectacular as the city of Babylon.**

What I find very interesting is...

- In the Ancient Akkadian language, Babylon means, "The Gateway of the gods."
- That would certainly be the impression one would have upon seeing this spectacular city....the city of Babylon looked like a Gateway to the Heavens.
- Yet in the Hebrew language, Babylon means something entirely different....it means '**confused.**' **Remember that!**

My message thought for tonight is, "**A Clear Vision in a Confused World!**"

I draw your attention back to the book of Daniel...

### **Dan 1:3-5**

3 And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, **that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes:**

4 Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, 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 of the Chaldeans.

5 And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king.

It was the custom of King Nebuchadnezzar to take the finest things of every land he conquered and bring those things to his palace.

This included the finest children....the kings orders were to bring the finest of the royal children to his palace in Babylon.

- The scripture records the names of four of these children...Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.
- o These four boys were of royal blood.
- o They were the strongest, healthiest, and the best looking young men in the kingdom of Judah.
- o They were also very wise and knowledgeable for their years.

At the time, these Hebrew boys were young teenagers between 14 and 16 years of age.

Nebuchadnezzar's plan was to place them in a three year training program to learn the customs and language of the Chaldeans.

- They would live in the palace of the king.
- They would eat at the kings table.
- They would sit and learn from the kings counselors.
- They would have all of the advantages of a prince.

Captivity wasn't looking to tough for these four boys.

They might have had it good in Jerusalem, but now they had the finest things in the world at their fingertips.

**It was into this perfect paradise in the middle of a desert they came...**

- Over the Euphrates River.
- Through the beautiful blue Ishtar gate.
- Under the mighty walls of the fortress city.
- Past the Citadels and hanging gardens of Babylon.
- And into the magnificent palace of King Nebuchadnezzar....King of all the world.

**This was the "gateway of the gods".**

Nebuchadnezzar had plans for these boys.

- Nebuchadnezzar said, I need just three years with these boys and they will be Babylonians!
- o Three years teaching them.
- o Three years showing them the wonders of Babylon.
- o Three years showing them how to worship the gods of Babylon.

Yet as Daniel was sitting down to his very first meal in the kings palace, he makes a decision that would come to define his years in Babylon....

### **Dan 1:8**

**8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank:** therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

Daniel purposed in his heart not to partake of the kings meat or drink.

Why?

- Daniel was a Hebrew boy.
- He wasn't about to transfer his citizenship.
- Daniel had been brought up in the city of Jerusalem.

It is very interesting to me that.....

- The name of Daniel's hometown, Jerusalem, means 'foundation' or 'city of God.'

Daniel was now living in the gateway of the gods....but Daniel had been raised in the city of God!

**Daniel was presented with a choice.**

For most people this would have been a confusing time.

- Here he was in the most beautiful and powerful city in the world....surrounded by many gods.
- Everything and everybody at his beck and call.
- Most people would give anything to live like Daniel lived.
- o But not Daniel.
- o Daniel had come from a city whose builder and maker was God.
- o Daniel had come from a city whose foundation was the one true God!

No, this wasn't a confusing time for Daniel.

- Daniel had a crystal clear vision of who he was.
- He had a crystal clear vision of Who his God was.

- And Daniel made a stand.

### **How was Daniel able to do this?**

Earlier I stated that the Hebrew meaning of Babylon is "confused."

**The Chaldean people viewed their city as the 'gateway of the gods', but Daniel viewed Babylon as confused.**

When Daniel looked at Babylon, he didn't see all the wealth, wonder and attractions....Daniel saw confusion.

- Daniel understood that these people were confused by many different gods.
- They were confused by all of the attractions, or should I call them distractions, of their beautiful city.
- They were confused by the many different temples and idols.

### **While living in this confused world, Daniel made a stand to live for his God!**

From his very first meal forward, Daniel established a clear pattern to live by.

#### **Dan 6:10**

10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber **toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.**

Three times a day, Daniel turned away from the gateway of the gods, and turned toward the city of God and prayed to the One True God.

- Three times a day this reminded Daniel who he was and where he came from.
- Three times a day this reminded Daniel that Babylon was not his home, he was just passing through.

### **Daniel was not confused.**

- He was crystal clear about what he needed to do.
- Daniel would remain true to His God.

### **This pattern that Daniel lived by gave him a clear vision in a confused world!**

That is what we need today! We need a clear vision in a confused world.

Never before in the history of mankind has the world had so much to offer.

- The world has a lot of good things to offer....technology, travel, education, wonders of the world.....future hopes and dreams.
- The world has a lot of bad things to offer....sin and immorality of every kind.

Satan has come in and he has blurred the lines of demarcation that separate God's church from the world.....for many, it has become **confusing to live for God in this world.**

The truth of the matter is this.....anything that pulls you away from God is a bad thing.

We have to be clear about one thing, and one thing only.....are we going to serve God no matter what this world offers us?

- Are the attractions of the world pulling you away from God?
- I'm not asking if they are good and bad.
- Are they pulling you away?

Some are confused about what God requires, but God is not the author of confusion.

- Some things in this world might look ok, or even good.

Yet the Bible says;

### **1 John 2:15**

**15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.** If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Everything around Daniel looked good...everything around Daniel was the best in the world had to offer....it was Daniel's for the taking.

No doubt he was tempted.

I have to imagine that first meal at the palace was a grand occasion.

- The finest of china.
- The finest linens and decorations.
- The finest cuts of meats and produce.

Daniel had been captive, he had to have been very hungry.

- The kings meat had to have looked good.
- The kings meat smelled good.
- No doubt it was good to eat and filled with protein.

But Daniel said, I have purposed in my heart....I know if I eat that meat....I will be defiled.....I know if I eat that meat I will be disobeying God.

- Daniel did not allow himself to be confused.
- Daniel knew and understood what God required of him.
- Daniel knew who he was and Who His God was.

I am talking to a church tonight who knows who you are;

- God has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light,
- You are a chosen generation.
- You are a royal priesthood.
- You are a holy nation.

God has plans for you!

Paul said;

### **1 Cor 6:19-20**

**19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?**

20 For **ye are bought with a price:** therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

God has purchased you with His blood.

We can't allow ourselves to be distracted by Babylon.

Babylon might look beautiful but God has something greater for you than Babylon.

- Don't let Satan confuse you.
- We have the word of God, we know what His word says!
- As Daniel, we can have a clear vision of our future.

Nebuchadnezzar, you can try and woo me with a fancy room in a beautiful palace.

- You can entice me with the best cuts of meat.
- You can try and win me over with riches and goods...but I want you to know that my heart belongs to another!

Nebuchadnezzar, I acknowledge that I am your servant....I won't cause you any problems...I will do what you ask me to do...but there are just a couple of things you need to know about me....

- I will not eat your meat.
- I will not drink your wine.
- I will not bow to your idols.
- And I will not worship your gods!

### **Daniel had a vision...he stayed true to that vision...he belonged to God!**

Somebody praise Him with a handclap right now!

- Satan can paint a pretty picture...you might find yourself in a desert one day, with the devil pointing you toward Ishtar gate!
- But you can make up your mind that you belong to another!
- Get a clear vision for your life...don't let Satan woo you with the things of this world!

### **The bible says that Satan desires to sift us like wheat.**

- That can only happen if we are not submitted to God.
- It can only happen when we are confused and vulnerable.

Nebuchadnezzar pulled these boys in at a vulnerable time in their lives!

- They were hurting.
- They had been ripped from their homes.
- Taken from their families.
- Their King had just surrendered.
- Nebuchadnezzar pulls them in and begins to woo them with all the splendor of the kingdom.
- These boys were still young and impressionable.

Nebuchadnezzar said now is the time to pull them in...I just need three years!

I'll give them everything that I have for the next three years, and they will be mine!

That is what Satan does....Satan will tempt you with every promise of this world...he will take you to places that you never dreamt you could be!

- Satan doesn't need a lot of time.
- Just a few weeks.
- A few months to make an impression on your mind.

He just wants to get a hold of your mind and your body for a short time....and if he can do that, he will have you.

That is Satan's desire!

**I feel like there are some people in this place who know who you are!**

- You know who your God is.
- You have a clear vision.
- Your mind is made up.

If you don't have a clear vision...you need to get one!

- If you are confused...you need to get down on your knees a few times every day.
- Get in the Word while you pray and let God talk to you.
- That will bring some clarity.

It is not going to be easy.

It wasn't easy for Daniel.

Those first three years were really tough...

- He was a stranger in a strange land.
- He didn't know what had become of his family.
- He was emasculated....that means he could never have children.
- He had no chance of a future for a family of his own.
- There was no future for his country.

Then Nebuchadnezzar changed his name from Daniel which meant, "God is my Judge", to Belteshazzar which meant, "protect the king."

- Daniel was stripped of his identity.
- He was surrounded by false gods.
- And forced to protect a king who had destroyed his life.

**Nebuchadnezzar wanted Daniel to think that the God he had grown up with was finished, destroyed.**

But Daniel said, "I know who I am, and I know where I am going!"

- For three years Daniel stood his ground while living in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar.
- For three years he ate vegetables instead of the king's meat.
- For three years he prayed to the one true God of Israel.

When the three years of training was over, these boys were brought before the king;

**Dan 1:19-20**

19 And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king.

20 And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.

In three years time, Daniel and these boys became ten times wiser than all of the king's counselors!

## **Do you know what that is called.....that is called God's favor!**

- That is what happens when you make a stand.
- That is what happens when you have a clear vision.

For the next sixty plus years Daniel lives in the palace in Babylon...interpreting the dreams of kings.....many of them rise and fall...finally a Persian King named Darius gains power.

## **Under Darius, Daniel becomes president of the Media Persian Empire...**

God's favor!

When you are willing to stand up for God in the midst of a confused world, God will bring favor to your life.

That is what we need in Valparaiso...we need God's favor!

How did Daniel do it?

- He remembered who His God was.
- He remembered what His God required.

He was Daniel, not Belteshazzar.

## **His name meant, "God you are my judge!"**

- Nebuchadnezzar is not my judge.
- Belshazzar is not my judge.
- Darius is not my judge.
- Marduk is not my judge.

## **God you are my Judge! I live my life for you!**

I wonder if there is anybody here like Daniel tonight?

- You want to make a stand for God.
- You want to make a stand for truth.
- You want God's favor in your life.

Come and tell God tonight!