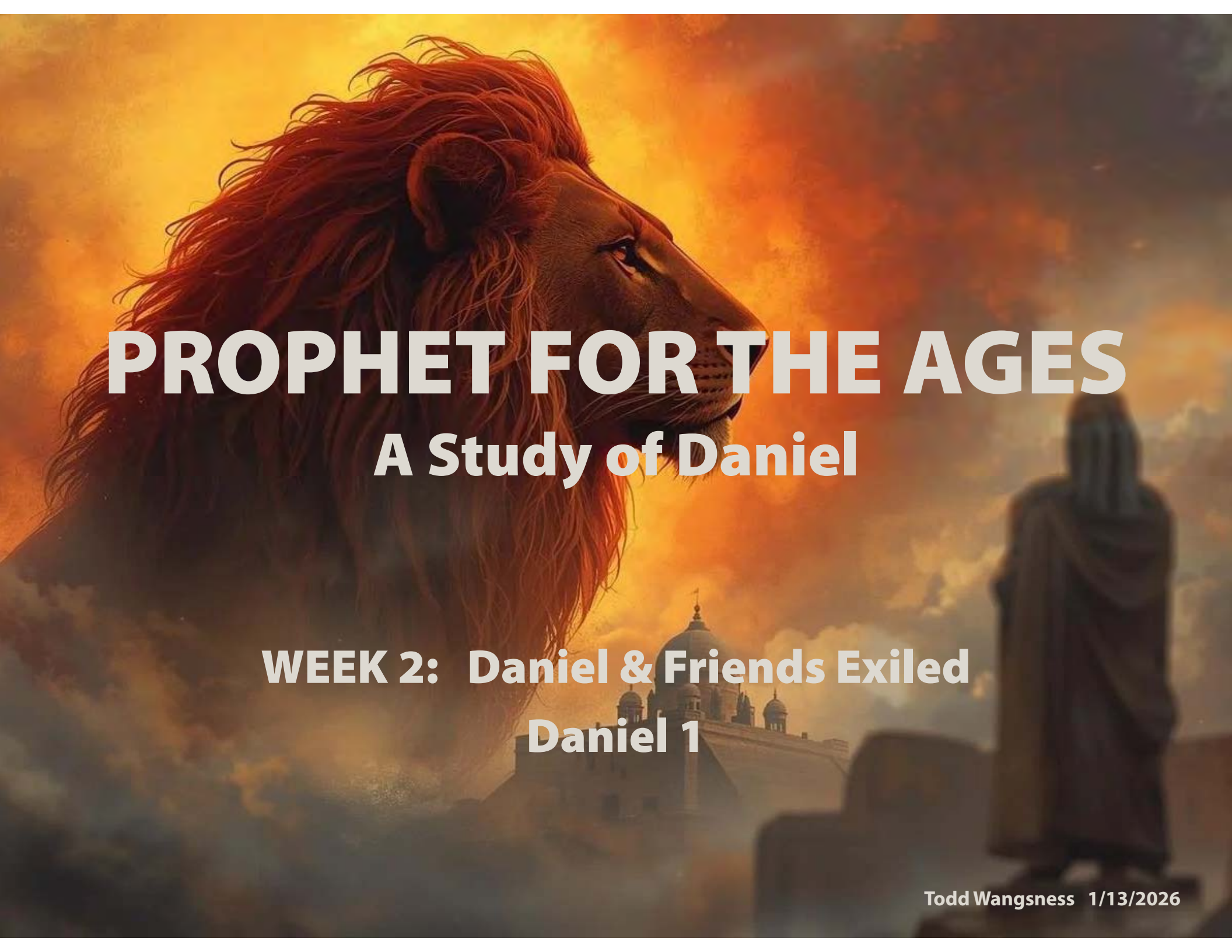




PROPHET FOR THE AGES

A Study of Daniel

WEEK 2: Daniel & Friends Exiled
Daniel 1

Prophet for the Ages: Daniel & Friends Exiled

Notable Quote About Daniel 1

"Daniel wanted to please the Lord in every respect, not just in the most important moral aspects of his life. These young men faced a situation common to every modern Christian youth."

It has well been said that faith is not believing in spite of evidence—that's superstition—but obeying in spite of consequences. Faith is one of the forces by which men live, and the Christian believer lives by faith in the living God and what He has revealed in His Word.

Each believer is either a conformer or a transformer. We're either being squeezed into the world's mold or we're transforming things in the world into which God has put us. Transformers don't always have an easy life, but it's an exciting one, and it gives us great delight to know that God is using us to influence others.

God would rather have His people living in shameful captivity in a pagan land than living like pagans in the Holy Land and disgracing His name."

- Warren Wiersbe

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Dan 1:1-2 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. 2 And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the articles of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the articles into the treasure house of his god.

- **Isaiah predicted that Babylon would invade Judah around 800 BC, almost 200 years before the prophecy was fulfilled**
 - ***Isa 39:5-6 Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the Lord of hosts: 6 'Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and what your fathers have accumulated until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left,' says the Lord.***
- **Thus began 70 years of Judah's exile in captivity as prophesied in Jeremiah**
 - ***Jer 25:11-12 And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. 12 'Then it will come to pass, when seventy years are completed, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity,' says the Lord; 'and I will make it a perpetual desolation.***
 - ***Jer 29:10 For thus says the Lord: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place.***

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The Fall of Jerusalem documented

- Judah (and Israel) were sent into captivity for practicing the most heinous forms of idol worship, including child sacrifice (2 Kin 21:1-15, 2 Chr 36:14-20)
- Interestingly, Babylon was the cradle and epicenter of world idolatry
- When God punished His people, He was basically saying, “You want idolatry? Well, you’re going to get all the idolatry you can imagine!!!”
- *2 Chr 36:17-21 Therefore He brought against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or virgin, on the aged or the weak; He gave them all into his hand. 18 And all the articles from the house of God, great and small, the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king and of his leaders, all these he took to Babylon. Then they burned the house of God, broke down the wall of Jerusalem, burned all its palaces with fire, and destroyed all its precious possessions. 20 And those who escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon, where they became servants to him and his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, 21 to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths. As long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.*
- The result is the Jewish people developed a strong aversion to idolatry. It hasn’t ever been a problem with them since

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Dan 1:3-4 *Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel and some of the king's descendants and some of the nobles, 4 young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans.*

- Isaiah also predicted that some young nobility sons would be taken captive and made eunuchs to serve in the king's palace
 - *Isa 39:7 'And they shall take away some of your sons who will descend from you, whom you will beget; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.'* ”
- While the bible does not conclusively say Daniel and friends were castrated, as the term eunuch can sometimes refer to court officials, it typically refers to a man that has been castrated
 - *2 Kin 20:17-18 'Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and what your fathers have accumulated until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left,' says the Lord. 18 'And they shall take away some of your sons who will descend from you, whom you will beget; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.' ”*
 - This was a common practice in the day. Eunuchs were to serve the King without the distraction of marriage or the threat of embittered progeny

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- Nebuchadnezzar stipulated that the chosen men be the seed of the royal family and nobility
- It is essential to note that – throughout the book of Daniel – he is consistently distinguished from his three friends
- We can deduce that Daniel was of royal lineage, while his three friends were likely of noble lineage
- In verse 4, *young men* (Heb 'yeledim') refers to men between the ages of 17 to 20
- He also stipulated they were to be very handsome and:
 - ***Gifted in all wisdom:*** High capacity for learning (high IQ)
 - ***Possessing knowledge:*** The ability to quickly acquire knowledge and make intelligent inferences based on bits of knowledge
 - ***Quick to understand:*** Having a knowledge of and aptitude for scientific knowledge

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Dan 1:5-7 *And the king appointed for them a daily provision of the king's delicacies and of the wine which he drank, and three years of training for them, so that at the end of that time they might serve before the king. 6 Now from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. 7 To them the chief of the eunuchs gave names: he gave Daniel the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abed-Nego.*

- Hebrew and Babylonian names (and their meanings) of our heroes
 - **Daniel** (*God is my Judge*)
 - **Hananiah** (*Beloved of the Lord*)
 - **Mishael** (*Who is as God*)
 - **Azariah** (*The Lord is my Help*)
 - Belteshazzar** (*Prince of Bel*)
 - Shadrach** (*Illumined by the Sun God*)
 - Meshach** (*Who is like unto the Moon God*)
 - Abed-Nego** (*Servant of Nego a shining fire*)
- These young men were to become administrators of the affairs between Babylon and the vassal Jewish state
- They learned Chaldean culture and language during three intense years of training
 - Daniel learned it so well that six chapters of the book were written in Aramaic.
- Scholars note such accurate descriptions of court life under Nebuchadnezzar that it *"must have been written by an eyewitness"*

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Dan 1:8-10 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. 9 Now God had brought Daniel into the favor and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs. 10 And the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who has appointed your food and drink. For why should he see your faces looking worse than the young men who are your age? Then you would endanger my head before the king."

- The King's delicacies consisted of meat and wine, both prepared in a non-kosher manner and likely dedicated during idol worship
- Daniel and friends had the favor and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs
- He listened to Daniel's request, but rejected it due to a very real fear of execution for countermanding the King's command to provide the best care for the boys

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Dan 1:11-14 *So Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, 12 "Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink. 13 Then let our appearance be examined before you, and the appearance of the young men who eat the portion of the king's delicacies; and as you see fit, so deal with your servants." 14 So he consented with them in this matter, and tested them ten days.*

- Daniel respectfully requested the chief steward (Daniel's immediate supervisor who reported to the chief of the eunuchs) perform a scientific experiment regarding their diet
- The request seemed logical to the steward, so he granted his permission

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Dan 1:15-16 And at the end of ten days their features appeared better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king's delicacies. 16 Thus the steward took away their portion of delicacies and the wine that they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

- Food grown from the ground was considered kosher under Mosaic Law
 - Had they consumed the King's delicacies, they would be breaking the Mosaic commands
- Daniel and his friends appearance was healthier and better nourished than everyone else
- Vegetables are certainly healthy, however, people tend to lose weight when consuming only vegetables
 - Apparently, God blessed their obedience with health and vitality over and above the nourishment they would have received from a vegetarian-only diet
- The passage underscores the wisdom and diplomacy the youngsters exercised dealing with their handlers

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Dan 1:17 *As for these four young men, God gave them knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.*

- God blessed the obedience of the boys by giving them knowledge and skill in **ALL** areas of *literature and wisdom*
- Additionally, God blessed Daniel with a special gift of understanding in *all visions and dreams*
- This blessing sets the stage for the remainder of the book of Daniel with respect to the incredible visions and dreams given to Daniel and his God-given ability to interpret the dreams accurately

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Dan 1:18-21 *Now at the end of the days, when the king had said that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. 19 Then the king interviewed them, and among them all none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they served before the king. 20 And in all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king examined them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm. 21 Thus Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus.*

- From the context of these verses, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were among many contenders for positions of great responsibility
- They not only far exceeded their peers, but were found to be *ten times better* than ALL of the magicians and astrologers in the King's realm in *every matter of wisdom and understanding*
- Consequently, the King specifically commissioned these young lads to serve in his court
- Daniel – in particular – continued in this service all the years of Judah's exile until at least the 3rd year of the Medo-Persian empire, when the last vision given to Daniel was recorded

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Questions to Ponder

- **God's punishment of a corporate entity (Judah in this case) results in both the guilty *and* innocent being caught in the fallout from God's punishment**
 - This was certainly true of Judah's captivity into Babylon
 - During the Holocaust, an estimated 250,000 Messianic believers were slain
 - Is it fair that innocents also suffer?
 - How may this 'corporate guilt' also affect us in our families or churches?
- **How would you feel about your captors after having your family members and friends brutally raped and murdered, your homeland decimated, being taken captive, exiled in a strange land, being castrated, and all hopes of having a loving wife and children dashed?**
 - It's so easy to read over these passages without placing ourselves in their shoes and appreciating the gut-wrenching emotional upheaval they must have experienced
 - The maturity and grace they demonstrated in view of these horrific experiences is truly incredible
- **It's quite obvious that our four friends in Daniel came from families that revered God**
 - How can we instill Godly values within our families to positively affect the next generation?