

THE THREE HEBREW CHILDREN

***Dan 1:6** Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah:*

***Dan 1:8** 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.*

We cannot talk about youth and the Word of God without considering the tremendous example of Daniel and his Hebrew friends in Babylon. Keep in mind that Babylon was a superpower with every kind of luxury and temptation designed to appeal to the flesh and senses. The world today appears to draw our children from one obsession to another with little spiritual value. Youth seems like a mist spent in the hold of one form of entertainment or the other. This was also the case in Babylon. Food, luxuries and entertainment was high on the agenda. The king had selected Daniel and his friends for a privileged life in his court and he wanted them to look and think like Babylonians.

***Dan 1:5** 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.*

***Dan 1:7** Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego.*

Clearly, it becomes all the harder to resist when the king of Babylon shares his food with you and gives you Babylonian names. It would have been easier for Daniel and his friends to stay true to their Hebrew heritage had they been alienated and excluded from Babylonian society. Not so! The enemy has many strategies to entice Christian youth to surrender their salvation. He knows that youth love to be included and feel a sense of belonging. Pharaoh did the opposite: he mistreated and alienated the Hebrew slaves whom he oppressed brutally. Now, Satan had almost 900 years to learn his lesson. In Babylon, he chose luxuries and recognition. There was one problem, however. Daniel and his friends had ‘purposed’ in their hearts not to defile themselves with the king’s meat or wine. This is quite amazing given that they were between 11-13 years of age. How do children of such tender age develop so powerful convictions? The answer is through the same God that these children faithfully served all their lives in Babylon.

***Dan 2:17** Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions:*

***Dan 2:18** That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.*

***Dan 2:19** Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven.*

The above practice of the Hebrew children is a window into one reason for their success. They formed a church – a community of believers in exile. Today’s youth are often individualistic; but even when they come together, peer pressure is sometimes exerted towards

negative purposes. The Hebrew children learned very early the value of a spiritual community. God is quick to bless those who obey the command to fellowship and edify each other for Christ's sake.

***Heb 10:25** Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

They teach us that fellowship and the gathering of believers is the way to hear from the almighty. All of them were in danger and they needed to pray and fast together to hear from the God who speaks to kings in dreams. Despite the fact that God demonstrated clearly to Nebuchadnezzar that these Hebrew children were his beloved children, and revealed the dream to them, the king quickly forgot this lesson.

***Dan 3:19** Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: therefore he spake, and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heated.*

The above is illustrative: our enemy does not intend to let us rest in peace in our salvation while living below here in Babylon. The anger of the king was Satan's anger. Nevertheless, not only did the Hebrew children stand their ground without wavering, but they also answered with humility – never arrogance. They teach us that we are not wrestling against flesh and blood (Eph 6:12) but against spiritual wickedness in high places. In answering with humility, they showed that they respected authorities, as God commanded, without caving in to their ungodly demands. Young children, dare to be a Daniel! Dare

to stand up against the tide of vanity and frivolity of our times! Look to the example of the Hebrew children!