

Rebuilding After the Apostasy
Lesson 1 - Start Rebuilding with Consistency
(A Study of Daniel 1)

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Introduction: The true building of God has always been in the hearts of men.

- A. As apostasy loomed among God’s people He pleaded with them to surrender their hearts to Him (**Micah 6:6-8**).
 - 1. Rather than give God what he asked for the people gave outward service instead and left their hearts untouched (**Jer 3:10**).
 - 2. This kind of people would “follow the leader” and the current trends (paradigm shifts) so that they would stay with the whims of the present generation. Whatever the “felt-needs” of the people demanded is what the leaders gave.
 - 3. In all of this God was left out! As a result the people were destroyed by apostasy! (**Jer 5:30-31**).
- B. How do you rebuild after such a calamity?
 - 1. The same way you would build at any time, by finding men willing to yield their hearts to a living God!
 - 2. Rather than looking at numbers and worldly advantages, we need to understand that God can take one or a few to accomplish a mighty work for His glory.
 - 3. There are many possible occasions we may face in our life to be a Daniel in the rebuilding of the people of God!

Class Discussion:

- 1. What do we mean by “apostasy?” (**1 Tim 4:1; 2 Thess 2:3**)
- 2. What would be some of the steps in rebuilding after an apostasy?
- 3. When should one start rebuilding?
- 4. List some occasions where you might find yourself in a occasion of rebuilding.

I. Background and Chronology of the book of Daniel

- A. As with all apostasy the steps away from God took time!
 - 1. **Hezekiah (718-689)** tried to bring the people back from the apostasy of Ahab.
 - 2. **Manasseh (698-643)** went further into apostasy than any previous king. Because of his actions the fate of Judah was sealed. Even after the repentance of Manasseh, he was unable to stem the influence that he planted! (**2 Chron 33:4-9; Jer 15:4**)
 - 3. **Amon (643-641)** went back to the wickedness his father had introduced. He was assassinated.
 - 4. **Josiah (641-609)** put his whole heart into bringing the people back. His efforts never had a chance because the heart of the people had hardened beyond repentance! (**Jer 15:1-2**)
 - 5. **Jehoahaz (609)** was removed by Pharaoh-Neco and was replaced by **Jehoiakim (598-597)**.
 - a. After the defeat of Pharaoh-Neco by Nebuchadnezzar in the battle of

Carchemish (605 BC) the 70 years of captivity began (**Jer 46:2**).

- b. On the first invasion of Nebuchadnezzar there likely was a deal by Jehoiakim to give some of the best articles of the temple and to let Daniel and others be taken (**Dan 1:1-2; 2 Kings 24:1**).

B. The life of Daniel.

- 1. Daniel was taken as a teenager. If we suppose his age at 17, then the following chronology would be true:

Chapter 1 – 17 years old

Chapter 2 – 19 years old

Chapter 3 – 21-22 years old

Chapter 4 – 47-52 years old

Chapter 5 – early-mid 80's

Chapter 6 – 85 years old

- 2. The influence of Daniel cannot be underestimated!
 - a. His work involved the greatest kings of two of the most powerful world empires in history.
 - b. More importantly he provided a strong example for the remnant of God's people that would return to complete the rebuilding of a nation.

II. Daniel faces a sudden change in life (Dan 1:1-7)

A. There are few things more difficult than having everything about your life changed at once!

- 1. Daniel was taken hundreds of miles away to Babylon.
- 2. He no longer could go to the temple. He would soon hear of its destruction.
- 3. He had to learn a new language and associate with a pagan people.
- 4. His name along with his friends' names were changed.
 - a. **Daniel** (God is my judge) to **Beltshazar** (a servant of Bel) (Bel - the principle Babylonian deity)
 - b. **Hananiah** (Jehovah is gracious) – **Shadrach** (command of Aku [moon god]; inspired by the sun God)
 - c. **Mishael** (who is like God) - **Meshach** (who is like Aku)
 - d. **Azariah** (the Lord helps) - **Abed-Nego** (servant of Nebo) (Nebo, son of Baal, or among the Chaldeans probably denoted the planet Mercury, worshiped by them.)
- 5. He would take on a new occupation or die!
- 6. He was to be expected to take on a completely different diet.

B. While many things changed around Daniel, there were some things that did not change!

- 1. God and His presence did not change. (**Mal 3:6; Psa 139:7-10**)
- 2. What God expected of His people did not change. His word remains the same! (**Psa 119:10-11 , 137:1-6**)
- 3. Because of these things those who have a living faith will have a consistency about them in spite of the circumstances they face! (**1 Jn 5:2-5**)

An old seaman said, "In fierce storms we can do but one thing. There is only one way (to survive); we must put the ship in a certain position and keep her there."

"This, Christian, is what you must do. Sometimes, like Paul, you can see neither sun nor stars, and no small tempest lies on you. Reason cannot help you. Past experiences give you no light. Only a single course is left. You must stay upon the Lord; and come what may -- winds, waves, cross seas, thunder, lightning, frowning rocks, roaring breakers -- no matter what, you must lash yourself to the helm and hold fast your confidence in God's faithfulness and his everlasting love in Christ Jesus."

4. Do you think Daniel thought about the Bible account of Joseph? (**Gen 50:19-20**)
- C. Sudden changes often brings sudden conflicts!
1. Daniel was faced with eating food that was not acceptable to God. The food could have been offered to idols or was unclean (**1 Cor 10:28; Lev 11**)
 2. Would these exception circumstances give Daniel a reason to eat this food?
 - a. Did Daniel think of the example of King Saul and his reasoning? (**1 Sam 13:11-13**)
 - b. Would God allow us to face such circumstances?
 3. What things may have prepared Daniel before he faced this occasion?
 - a. Daniel was well acquainted with God's word that gave him wisdom (**Prov 1:7; Psa 119:97-101**)
 - b. Who was likely the greatest influence to such a faith in Daniel's life?
 - c. How early do we need to begin training our children?

Class Discussion:

1. Does there come a time where God gives up on people? How would you describe the hearts of these people? (**1 Tim 4:2; Rom 1:26,28**)
2. Name some possible situations that could occur in your life that would completely change your world.
3. Does our responsibilities to God change with circumstances? (**1Cor 7:18-20**)
4. Why is it better to study about a situation before temptation is faced rather than to wait to study until the temptation comes?

III. The response of a "sound mind." (Daniel 1:8-10)

- A. Unlike those of the world the right decision for Daniel was not difficult to know.
1. Those who trust in God and rely on Him develop a way of thinking! (**2 Tim 1:7,13**)
 2. On the other hand, sin can cause a person to flee from thinking and act crazy! (**2 Cor 4:3-4**)
 3. What seems obvious to the spiritually minded is foolishness to the world!
 4. The nation of Israel was destroyed because they had no sound thinking. What kind of challenges do we face today? (**2 Tim 4:3**)
- B. Consider the "thinking" of an unsound mind.

1. This is my personal decision and I do not want anyone violating my “autonomy!” or “You cannot tell me what to do.”
 2. “This is just a small matter and after all brethren disagree on many things.”
 3. “We will never have influence with others if we are so radical!”
 4. “While the *traditional* thinking of the Jews was to avoid certain foods we can serve God by a casual worship that includes cultural changes!”
 5. What do all of these statements have in common?
- C. The consistency of Daniel’s faith gave him a door of opportunity to do right.
1. Daniel spoke up immediately to request what was right.
 - a. What if Daniel had waited a few weeks after eating this food to make a request?
 - b. Consider Joseph’s advice to Jacob upon his arrival in Egypt. (**Gen 50:31-34**)
 2. This consistency brought Daniel favor with Ashpenaz.
 - a. Even the worldly admire a man of principle and character. (**Acts 2:47; 7:9-10**)
 - b. The influence of Daniel’s faith allowed the chief of the eunuchs to go contrary to his fears!
 - c. Do you recall how Paul’s faith caused others to listen to him? (**Acts 27:21-25,31-32**)

Submit to pressure from peers and you move down to their level.
 Speak up for your own beliefs and you invite them up to your level.
 If you move with the crowd, you'll get no further than the crowd.
 When 40 million people believe in a dumb idea, it's still a dumb idea.
 Simply swimming with the tide leaves you nowhere.
 So if you believe in something that's good, honest and bright -- stand up for it.
 Maybe your peers will get smart and drift your way.

Class Discussion:

1. What is the one consideration of a “sound mind?”
2. How can you tell the difference between a “sound mind” and an “unsound mind?” (**Jn 3:19-21**)
3. What does a person mean when they talk about the *traditional* position brethren hold on a given subject?
4. When applying for a job should a Christian keep quiet about his desire to serve God (attending on Sunday, avoiding social drinking, telling the truth at all times...)?
5. Do we hinder the gospel’s influence on other’s by strictly following everything God has said? (**Mt 28:19-20**)

IV. The proving of a Daniel’s choice (1:11-16)

- A. This was in fact a proving of God’s choice! (**1 Sam 8:7**)
1. In this way God wants us to “prove Him.” (**Mal 3:10**)
 2. God pleads with us to let go of our wisdom and fears and let Him give us the

true blessings of life.

B. Notice the confidence Daniel had in God's ways.

1. We should not approach God as a double-minded man being unsure of God's power. (**Jas 1:6-8**)
2. This is the key to a life filled with purpose and meaning. When we can confidently do what God has said and then leave the rest up to God we will be blessed! (**1 Cor 3:5-9**)
3. Let us welcome the testing of our faith! (**1 Pet 1:6-9**)

IV. The exaltation of a Biblical faith (Daniel 1:17-21)

A. Daniel and his brethren gained additional talents from God.

1. While they were given opportunity to learn and do more, they knew that God had ultimately gave them these abilities.
2. When we realize where our talents come from then God can use us. (**1 Cor 4:6-7**)

B. Daniel and his brethren gained greater responsibilities.

1. What is the use of ability without responsibility?
2. To serve before the king would bring responsibility in the work of God!

C. Daniel and his brethren gained greater influence.

1. The king began to be aware of their wisdom. He was to learn much more in time.
2. At this early time Daniel's influence was known both in Judah and in other countries. (**Ezk 14:14,20; 28:3**)

Harold Sherman quite awhile ago, wrote a book entitled How To Turn Failure Into Success. In it he gives a "Code of Persistence." If you give up too easily, write this down and read it daily.

1. I will never give up so long as I know I am right.
2. I will believe that all things will work out for me if I hang on until the end.
3. I will be courageous and undismayed in the face of odds.
4. I will not permit anyone to intimidate me or deter me from my goals.
5. I will fight to overcome all physical handicaps and setbacks.
6. I will try again and again and yet again to accomplish what I desire.
7. I will take new faith and resolution from the knowledge that all successful men and women had to fight defeat and adversity.
8. I will never surrender to discouragement or despair no matter what seeming obstacles may confront me.

Class Discussion:

1. How does God allow our faith be tested today?
2. How does our prayer life show the kind of faith that we possess?
3. How should we view any talent that we possess?
4. Do we always realize the extent of our influence?

Conclusion: What kind of a man did God use in the rebuilding of His people?

- A. God used a man who would stand for God in all things “large” and “small.”
 - 1. If God has instructed us on a matter there are no small things.
 - 2. We start with the weightier matters that cause us to keep all God has said.
(Mt 23:23)
- B. How would a Daniel be received in the churches today?
 - 1. There would be many that would attack him as a “watchdog” and carry on a whispering campaign to minimize his influence. There is one thing they would not do however, meet him with an open Bible to learn the wisdom of God!
 - 2. We show where our hearts are by our reaction to a challenge of our beliefs.
- C. Are we building a faith that is consistent regardless of the circumstances?

When God is With Us

Bill Hall

In our prayers, I am constantly hearing the expression, 'Be with this one,' and 'Be with that one.' What is meant by the expression?" That question was addressed to this writer thirty years ago. He would like to think that the answer given in this article will be more enlightening than the feeble answer given then.

A consideration of the occasions when God said, "I will be with you," should help in providing an answer.

To Moses: When Moses asked, "Who am I that I should go up to Pharaoh?" God replied, "I will certainly be **with** you" (**Exodus 3:12**).

To Joshua: "As I was **with** Moses, so I will be **with** you" (**Joshua 1:5**). God further assured Joshua that the crossing of the Jordan on dry ground would show the people that "as I was **with** Moses, so I will be with you" (**Joshua 3:7**).

To Gideon: "The Lord is **with** you, you mighty man of valor" (**Judges 6:12**).

To David: Saul said to David as he was leaving to face Goliath: "Go, and the Lord be **with** you" (**1 Samuel 17:37**). Two giants faced one another that day: one, a physical giant; the other, a spiritual giant. The difference in the battle was in the fact that God was **with** the spiritual giant and **was not with** the physical giant.

To Jeremiah: "Do not be afraid of their faces, for I am **with** you to deliver you" (Jeremiah 1:8).

Obviously, the expression, "I will be with you," is assurance of success in whatever God wants to accomplish through that person whom He is **with**.

Present Day Application

How can a man and his wife leave family and friends to go into some foreign field to preach the gospel? How can they go where custom and language are different and where living standards are far below what they have been accustomed to all their lives? The answer: "And lo, I am **with** you always, even to the end of the age" (**Matthew 28:19,20**).

How can a Christian face death in peace, with confidence as he passes from this life into the realms that he beyond? The answer: "Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art **with** me" (**Psalm 23:4**).

"Be with me, Lord, no other gift or blessing,

Thou couldst bestow could with this one compare;

A constant sense of Thy a abiding presence,

Wher-e'er I am to feel that Thou art near."

-TO. Chisolm

When God is Not with Us

If success is assured when God is with us, failure results when God is not with us. After the Israelites in their lack of faith refused to enter the promised land (Numbers 14:1-4), some had a change of heart and decided to go up after all. Moses warned them that they would not succeed, but would fall by the sword:

"Because you have turned away from the Lord, the Lord **will not be with you**" (Numbers 14:43). Their efforts indeed failed. One may appear to succeed for a while when the Lord is not with him, but eventually he will fail.

Conditions to be Met

What must be true of one if God is to be with him? The answer is found in God's statement to Jeroboam after promising him ten of the twelve tribes: "Then it shall be, if you heed all that I command you, walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will be **with** you and build for you an enduring house" (1 Kings 11:38). Unfortunately, jereboarn chose to follow his own ways rather than God's, and consequently his name ranks among the infamous.

When my loved ones are sick, or I am facing surgery, or am leaving for gospel meetings, or am in distress in any way, I want the prayers of that person whom God is with. I do not care about his race, gender, or station in life. If God is with him, he is the one whose prayers will avail. That person is the richest of all persons. Let each ask himself, "Am I that person?"

"Go, and the Lord be with you."

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