

The Book of Daniel: the Key to Bible prophecy

Chapter 1

Introduction to Chapter 1

Chapter one is an introduction to the rest of the book Daniel. Here, we learn Daniel's background and the cause of his success, with God and men. Daniel begins in the year 605 B.C. a period of upheaval in the world, when Jehoiakim was king of Judah.

Before 605 B.C., God had warned Jerusalem and Judah of coming judgment, largely through the Jeremiah's ministry. Israel, the northern kingdom, captured by the Assyria in 722 B.C., ceased to exist. Judah, the southern kingdom, averted God's judgment through the ministry of Isaiah, and Hezekiah, a righteous king, in 701 B.C. (Isaiah 37)

Hezekiah's great grandson, Josiah brought a short-lived revival in Judah and Jerusalem during the ministry of Jeremiah from 630 to 609 B.C. Though the revival had influence on the sincere, most gave lip service to the warnings of judgment for idol worship. God asked Jeremiah, find a righteous person in Jerusalem and he would spare the city. Though there were righteous people such as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and Zephaniah living in the city, they were rare and odd.

1 "Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem; See now and know; And seek in her open places If you can find a man, If there is anyone who executes they swear falsely."

Jeremiah 5:1-2

In addition to idolatry, Jerusalem fell into sexual perversion, assembling in numbers at the houses of cult prostitutes, and committing adultery with their neighbor's wives. After Josiah's death in 609 B.C. Jehoiakim, reverted back to the sin's of his ancestors, allowing Judah to sin openly, and bringing judgment on the city. (2 Kings 23:35-36). Judah worshiped the gods of the Babylonians and Caananites.

7 "How shall I pardon you for this? Your children have forsaken Me And sworn by those that are not gods. When I had fed them to the full, Then they committed adultery And assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses.

8 They were like well-fed lusty stallions; Every one neighed after his neighbor's wife.

9 Shall I not punish them for these things?" says the Lord. "And shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this?"

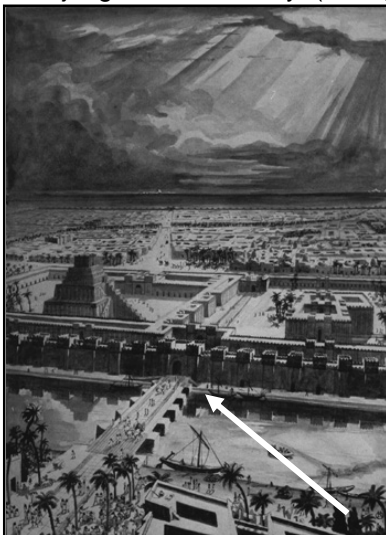
Jeremiah 5:7-9

The 605 B.C. was a transition year for the whole Middle East; Nebuchadnezzar was general of the Babylonian forces. In May-June of 605 B.C. Egypt was defeated at the battle of Carchemish (Jeremiah 46:2, 25:1), removing Judah hope in Egypt. Refusing Jeremiah's pleas for repentance, the city faced God's judgment. Also in 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar's father, Nabopolassar, died making Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon's new king.

Nebuchadnezzar, on his return to Babylon defeated Egypt's ally Judah, taking hostages from the royal family and treasures from the Temple and returned to Babylon.



Reconstruction of Babylon's Isthmar Gate during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar



Entrance to the Isthmar Gate inside Babylon, by the Euphrates River

The Captivity of Judah

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

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.

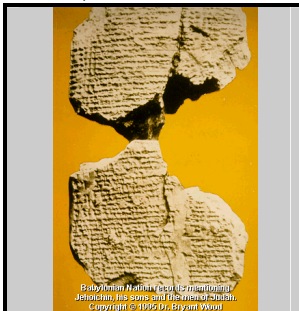
Daniel 1:1-2

Third year: One of the first attacks against Daniel begins here, Daniel says Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem in the third year, Jeremiah says fourth year. Critics of the Bible say, Daniel is in error because Jeremiah says Nebuchadnezzar came in the fourth year. (Jeremiah 25:1, 46:2) Daniel, however used the Babylonian method of accounting, which means the first year of a king's reign is his, "year of ascension" and the following years considered the years of reign.

Jeremiah's fourth year would be Daniel's third year for Jehoiakim's reign. Daniel schooled in Babylon, used the Babylonian method for determining a king's reign.

Jehoiakim: (609-598 B.C.) The second son of Josiah, Eliakim replaced his brother's 3-month reign, after his father's death in 609 B.C., Pharaoh Neco of Egypt installed him. Neco changed his name to Jehoiakim; he reigned as king for 11 years, from age 25 to 36. Jehoiakim was wicked king, who executed the prophet Urijah (Jeremiah 26:20-24), he burned Jeremiah's prophecies in the fire and ordered Jeremiah arrest (Jeremiah 36:20-26), he rejected God's word spoken through Jeremiah.

He surrendered to Babylon in 605 B.C., after Egypt was defeated, but three years later, he rebelled against Babylon. His son Jehoiachin succeeded him for about 3 months, and was carried off into Babylon in 598 B.C. when Babylon defeated Jerusalem again. His brother, Mattaniah known as Zedekiah, became Judah's last king (598 to 586 B.C.).



Babylon nations record

Tablets found in Babylon, dated 595 BC and 570 BC. List rations of oil and barley delivered by the royal storehouses to the deposed Jehoiachin and his entourage. This is important because it confirms what the biblical account of his treatment in 2 Kings 25:27.

Jehoiachin was released by Evil-merodach, Nebuchadnezzar's successor in 37th year of his captivity (561 BC)

Nebuchadnezzar: King of Babylon, (605-562 B.C.) succeeded his father Nabopolassar who founded the Neo-Babylonian Empire after rebelling from the Assyrian overlords in 621 B.C. Chapters 1 to 4 of Daniel cover his reign. Daniel Chapter four is written by a converted King Nebuchadnezzar, who writes his testimony for the world to know the power of Daniel's God.

Jerusalem: Babylon conquered Jerusalem three times. First in 605 B.C., following the Battle of Carchemish, Second, in 598 B.C., following the rebellion of Jehoiakim, who died before the siege was ended, and his son Jehoiachin was taken captive along with Ezekiel the prophet. The third time is 586 B.C., Babylonian armies destroy the city, the walls and the Temple. Most people are killed, some hostages are taken to Babylon, the poorest people are left in the land and some escape to Egypt, taking Jeremiah there as a captive. *Lamentations* covers this period, the third fall of Jerusalem.

Besieged it: This is the first captivity, 605 B.C., hostages and Temple treasures are removed to Babylon. Judah realized with the defeat of Egypt there was little hope holding out, and Jehoiakim switched alliances to Babylon for three years.

Lord gave: Nebuchadnezzar did not defeat Jerusalem, God defeated Jerusalem as punishment for their sins. Babylon was only an instrument for judgment, this is the theme of *Habakuk*, how a wicked nation could be used for judgment.

One of the main themes in the book of Daniel is the sovereignty of God. Here, even Jerusalem's defeat was because of sin, not the strength of Babylon.

The sins of Jerusalem, included idolatry, sexual perversion and child sacrifice caused their defeat. For these reasons, God gave Jerusalem into the hand of Babylon. God is control of the nations.

"and say, 'Hear the word of the Lord, O kings of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem. Thus says the

Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: "Behold, I will bring such a catastrophe on this place, that whoever hears of it, his ears will tingle. "Because they have forsaken Me and made this an alien place, because they have burned incense in it to other gods whom neither they, their fathers, nor the kings of Judah have known, and have filled this place with the blood of the innocents
Jeremiah 19:3-4

Articles of the house: This refers to the Temple treasures in Solomon's Temple. Not all the treasures were taken, some were removed in 598 B.C. at the second conquest and the rest in 586 B.C., the third conquest. (Jeremiah 27:19-20). Belthazzar, would use these Temple treasures in a drunken orgy in Daniel chapter five, bringing his defeat and God's wrath. Cyrus, the Persian would restore the treasures to Judah after he defeats the Babylonians.

Shinar: Babylon's old name (Genesis 11:2, 14:1, Isaiah 11:11, Zechariah 5:11), the location where all of humanity settled following the flood, where the tower of Babel was located.

His god: The chief god of Babylon was Marduk also known as Bel, along with his consort Ishtar the goddess of love and war. Nelson's Bible dictionary, describes the pantheon of Babylonian gods,

The ancient Babylonian and Assyrian goddess Ishtar symbolized Mother Earth in the natural cycles of fertility on earth. Ishtar was the daughter of sin, the moon god. She was the goddess of love, so the practice of ritual prostitution became widespread in the fertility cult dedicated to her name. Temples to Ishtar had many priestesses, or sacred prostitutes, who symbolically acted out the fertility rites of the cycle of nature. Ishtar has been identified with the Phoenician Astarte, the Semitic Ashtoreth, and the Sumerian Inanna. Strong similarities also exist between Ishtar and the Egyptian Isis, the Greek Aphrodite, and the Roman Venus. Associated with Ishtar was the young god Tammuz (Ezek. 8:14), considered both divine and mortal. In Babylonian mythology Tammuz died annually and was reborn year after year, representing the yearly cycle of the seasons and the crops. This pagan belief later was identified with the pagan gods Baal and Anat in Canaan....Another kind of god in both Babylonia and Assyria was a national god connected with politics. In Assyria it was Ashur, and in Babylonia it was Marduk, who became prominent at the time of HAMMURABI (1792-1750 B.C.). The ancient ideas about the ordering and governing of the universe were taken over by these two gods. Marduk, for example, achieved his prominence by victory over Tiamat, goddess of the ocean. This cosmic conflict, described also in ancient Sumerian and Canaanite myths, was believed to have established order.¹

God demonstrated his anger, against Judah, by allowing desecration of his Temple to demonstrate their disobedience and his displeasure (2 Chron. 7:19), brining his wrath on a deserving Babylon at a future date.

Daniel and his friends training

DA 1:3 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,

DA 1:4 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.

DA 1:5 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.

DA 1:6 Now from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

DA 1:7 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.

Daniel 1:3-7

Ashpenaz: According to Walvoord's commentary on Daniel, Siegfried H. Horn, reports, the name Ashpenaz,

"appears in the Aramaic incantation texts from Nippur as 'SPNZ, and is probably attested in the Cuneiform records as *Ashpazanda*". Horn goes on to identify him as, "the chief of King Nebuchadnezzar's eunuchs (Dan. 1:3)"²

¹ Nelson's illustrated Bible Dictionary, Nelson Publishing, 1986, Pg 429

² Daniel; The Key to Bible Prophetic Revelation, Moody Press, 1971 Pg. 33

According to Josephus, Daniel and his friends were made eunuchs in Babylon. The four young men were descendents of Judah and of the nobility of Jerusalem. Josephus also reports the four were descendents of Zedekiah, Josiah's youngest son and Judah's last king. Since Zedekiah was 21-years of age in 598 B.C. when he came to power, and Daniel had already been in Babylon for 7-years, they were related in extended way to him.

Now among these there were four of the family of Zedekiah, of most excellent dispositions, one of whom was called Daniel, another was called Ananias, another Misael, and the fourth Azarias; and the king of Babylon changed their names, and commanded that they should make use of other names. Daniel he called Baltasar;³

The Hebrew word for eunuch is *saris* and means 'Court officer' and "castrate". Servants to the king were often castrated, because they would interact with the king's wives and concubines. Isaiah foretold the offspring of Hezekiah; would serve as eunuchs in Babylon. (2 Kings 20:18).

Some of the children: The children taken in 605 B.C. by the Babylonians would serve several purposes.

1. They were hostages, to keep the nobility from rebelling against Babylon.
2. They would help Babylon administer the territory.
3. They would help Babylon, understand the customs and cultures of their new territory.

Young men: The Hebrew word, יָלֵד *Yeled*, translated *young man* is most likely a male about 14 to 15 years of age.

Serve: These boys were the best Judah had to offer. They would help administer the Babylonian kingdom. They needed to understand Babylonian culture, traditions and religion. The Babylonian culture was a very religious system, with the King acting out the role of Marduk, the chief god of Babylon in the annual festival. In order to serve, they needed to be part of the Babylonian system.

Teach: Daniel and his friends were to be taught the **literature** and **language** of the Chaldeans. The common language of the masses was Aramaic, but the priestly language was Akkadian. This was the more ancient language, much in the same way Latin, became the language of the religious community in Europe.

Daniel, like Moses was educated in the learning and science of land of his captivity. Daniel sets an example for believers, we can learn the teachings and philosophy of the world, but we don't have to accept them. Daniel's learning gave him the opportunity to be a witnesses for the true God. In the same way, God can use our service in this world as way to reach those who are lost.

Chaldeans: The word, כַּשְׁדִּי *Kasdiy*, has a dual meaning. The word means the people of an area of lower Mesopotamia in one sense, but in a second sense the word by extension means wise men, such as astrologers. According to the *International Bible Encyclopedia*, Chaldeans in this respect means,

Comprised the study of Sumerian, Akkadian, Aramaic (Chaldee), and other languages as well as extensive literature written in them. Historiography as well as sciences of astronomy, mathematics, and medicine formed a large part of the specialist work.⁴

Daily provisions: Babylon was a highly religious society with, continual animal sacrifice and rituals. Since the King was also a religious leader, the food from his table would have been sacrificed to the Babylonian pantheon. The food provided to Daniel and his friend's was part of the King's very own diet, to reject the food outright would be an act of rebellion. Daniel and his friends needed to be very careful how they approached the subject.

Three years: The training Daniel and his friends was to receive would be a three-year training

³ Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Pg. 664

⁴ The International Bible Encyclopedia, Editor G.W. Bromiley, 1979, Eerdmans Publishing, Vol. 1, Pg. 632

program, after which they would be tested by the King himself. The educators, knew their lives were on the line for their students. If their students looked bad, they could die, life was a cheap commodity in Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar was also known for his harshness. In 586 B.C., King Zedekiah, the youngest son of Josiah, tried to escape from the Babylonian siege at night. When he and his sons were caught, they saw the cruel actions of Nebuchadnezzar, who blinded Zedekiah after he witnessed the murder of his sons (Jeremiah 39:5). Nebuchadnezzar, was also known for burning people alive as we see in Daniel chapter 3.

Therefore, his officials were terrified at offending him, and more then likely told Daniel of the consequences of making him mad.

Chief of the eunuchs: Daniel and his friends were under the control of Ashpenaz, and were more then likely eunuchs. The point they are renamed by Ashpenaz, reinforces they were under his direction and his responsibility. The wives and concubines of the king were part of the religious system of Babylon. Another part of the system, was the temple prostitutes, whose Babylonian system found it way to Judah. The eunuch's in part were shielded from the corruption of the Babylonian system.

We see they religious emphasis in Babylon by the names given to Daniel and his friends. The adoption of foreign names is not unique to Daniel, Joseph was given an Egyptian name by Pharaoh, and so was Moses, whose name means "Drawn" in Egyptian.

Living in the world, causes us to make some concessions on what the world imposes. There are limits to the concessions a believer should make. Daniel and his friends demonstrate we can live in the world, and still be true to our relationship with the Lord.

The Meaning of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah

Hebrew Name	Meaning	Babylonian Name	Meaning
Daniel	God is Judge	Be'teshazzar	May Bel protect his life
Hananiah	Jehovah is gracious	Shadrach	Command of Aku ⁵
Mishael	Who is he that is God	Meshach	Who is what Aku is?
Azariah	Jehovah has helped	Abed-Nego	Servant of Nebo ⁶

Daniel's heart

DA 1:8 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.

DA 1:9 Now God had brought Daniel into the favor and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs.

DA 1:10 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."

Daniel 1;8-10

Daniel purposed: In the first eight verses, we see what separated Daniel from most of the people living in Jerusalem. He sought to please God, regardless of his circumstances. Try to imagine the perspective of this young man, he was taken to a foreign land, away from parents and family, forced to submit to a violent and pagan people, yet he had purpose. Daniel knew who he was and who God was.

The Hebrew word, שׁוּמ *Suwm*, literally means, "to put, place, set or appoint". Daniel, knew the direction he needed to God and he set course to accomplish his purpose.

His heart: Here the Hebrew word is לֵב *Leb*, and means, "inner man, mind or will". Daniel at an early learned the secret of spiritual success, to be real with God, to trust God and be obedient. Solomon learned this principle also, at the end of his life, Daniel learned at the start of his. Solomon, who was the wisest man world, fell because of his flesh. He was not willing to purpose in his heart, for this reason he lived a compromised with sin. (Nehemiah 13:6) God could use Daniel, because Daniel

⁵ Aku is the moon god of ancient Babylon

⁶ Nebo is was considered the son of the Babylonian god Bel.

wanted to be used and made himself available, by being sincere.

12 And further, my son, be admonished by these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh. 13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all. 14 For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.
Ecclesiastes 12:12-14

Defile himself: Daniel knew the provisions from the King's table were sacrificed to Idols, and by eating the meat he would be defiled. The meat more than likely includes foods violating the Mosaic law, in addition to being sacrificed to the pantheon of Babylonian deities. Wine, would also have had portions poured out as offerings in drink offerings. (Deuteronomy 32:8)

He requested: Daniel knew if God was willing, God would make away. Daniel, did not just wait for God to rescue him, he stepped forward in faith. He gave God the opportunity to work, by asking the for an exception.

Daniel had faith in God's ability, and because Daniel was willing to trust God, God could use Daniel. Peter was instructed to put his foot out of the boat on the water, he only began to sink when he lost faith. (Matthew 14:28-30)

God...brought...favor: Daniel stepped forward in faith, and allowing God work in his life. Ashpanaz was a high official who answered directly to the King. Nebuchadnezzar terrified him, he knew what he was capable of doing. Throughout scripture, we see this same principle applied in the success of other Bible heroes of faith.

Character	Faith action	God Response
Abel	Offered a better sacrifice (Gen. 4:4)	God respected his offering
Noah	Trusted God, was a just man (Gen. 6:9)	Saved from the flood
Abraham	Left his fathers house and family and went to Moriah (Gen. 12:1-4)	God established his offspring forever
Joseph	Resisted Potipher's wife (Gen. 39:8)	Made Prince of Egypt
Moses	Choose to serve God rather than Pharaoh, (Exd. 2:11)	Deliver of Israel
Joshua	Believed God could deliver Canaan to Israel. (Num.13:17)	Led Israel into the promised land, defeated God's enemies
David	Slew Goliath because he insulted God of Israel (1 Sam. 17)	Made king of Israel, forefather of the Messiah.

Daniel's test

DA 1:11 So Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,

DA 1:12 "Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink.

DA 1:13 "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."

DA 1:14 So he consented with them in this matter, and tested them ten days.

DA 1:15 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.

DA 1:16 Thus the steward took away their portion of delicacies and the wine that they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

Daniel 1:11-16

To the steward: The chief of the eunuchs, even though Daniel found favor with him was still terrified of Nebuchadnezzar, and resisted Daniel request. Most people at this point would resign themselves to fate. Daniel, had purposed in his heart and was not going to let the fear of the highest ranking person right under the King stop him. He went to the steward, the guardian, appointed by Ashpenaz and asked him, and he consented.

God tests the sincerity of our hearts, by allowing obstacles, if we trust God, we give him the opportunity to work in our lives. For example, If you have a desire to serve God on the mission field

and can't raise support, or the doors are closed. How do you respond? Do you give God the opportunity to work or do you shut the door and give up? Do you start learning the language? Making preparations despite the current circumstances?

Daniel, "purposed", in his heart not defile himself, and he was going to give God every opportunity to reward his faith.

Test your servants: Daniel made a deal with the steward in charge of him, if he didn't look good after ten days, then he would relent. The ten days gave Daniel and his friends time to have God intervene on their behalf. Daniel's back was to the wall, and by asking for a test, Daniel found favor with the steward. He let the steward benefit from his faith.

The world around us benefits from our trials. When they see God reward our faith, God gets the glory. Here the steward saw God at work.

Vegetables and water: The word for vegetables here is, זרע *Zeroa`*, meaning vegetables from sown seed, translated *pulse* in the King James Version. Daniel was more concerned with righteousness, then his comforts. He was willing to live on a meager diet, to righteous then indulge himself and sin, even though he had every excuse to do so.

He consented: The steward agreed to Daniel's test, and he saw God work. Daniel looked better not because of the food, but because of faith. God gave Daniel favor because Daniel was willing to be used by God.

Another principle we can see from Daniel, is if we are willing to be used God will use us. Daniel was contagious not only to his three friends but to all around him, who saw his faith in action. By the time we get to chapter 4, we see the most powerful man in the world confessing the God of Daniel as his God.

God rewards Daniel and his friends

DA 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.

DA 1:18 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.

DA 1:19 Then the king interviewed them, and among them all none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they served before the king.

DA 1:20 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.

DA 1:21 Thus Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus.

Daniel 1:17-21

God gave them: First, we see these four teenagers, willing to give up the best food in Babylon for vegetables and water. They are rewarded with a better appearance and favor before those in charge of them. However, this was only a trial run for them. Their step forward allowed God to reward them. They learned their hope and trust was in God alone.

God blessed them with his wisdom, though they knew the wisdom of Babylon, it was foolishness to them. For this reason, the wisdom from God's spirit was brighter than any wisdom that could be offered in Babylon.

The principle of God's wisdom is available today for all who see it, the wisdom of the world is foolishness to God. God used four teenage slaves, who trusted in God to be his testimony to a pagan world. God uses weakness for his glory, God does not need human strength to accomplish his purpose.

7 The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple;

Psalm 19:7

130 The entrance of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.

Psalm 119:30

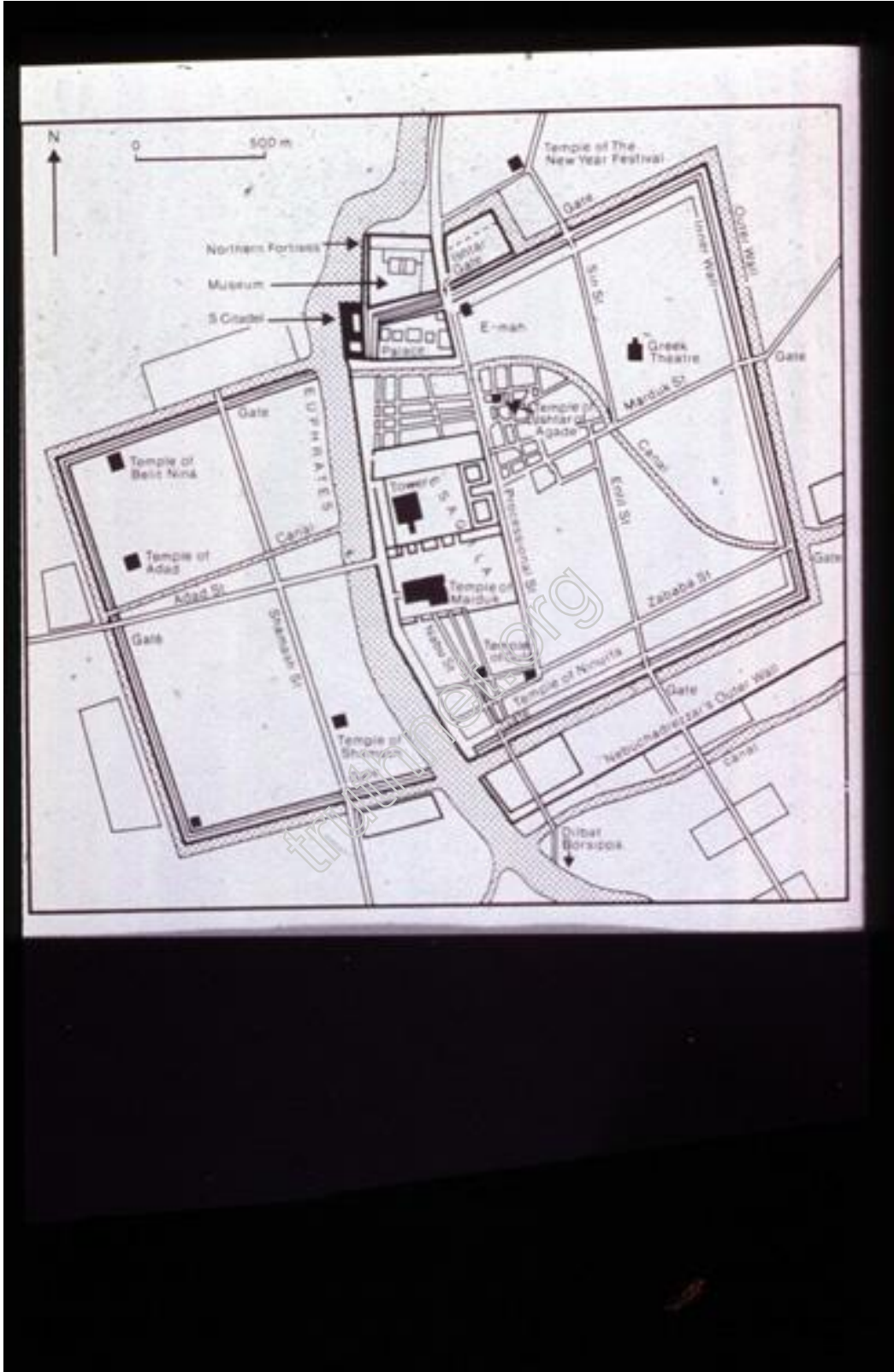
27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;

28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,

I Corinthians 1:27-28

The four teenage boys were given a super natural understanding by God, not for their glory, but for God's glory. God was able to use them as an example, to encourage those who would follow in generations to come, how to live a successful spiritual life.

Daniel began his ministry in 605 B.C. as hostage/slave of Babylon. He continued till 536 B.C.



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