



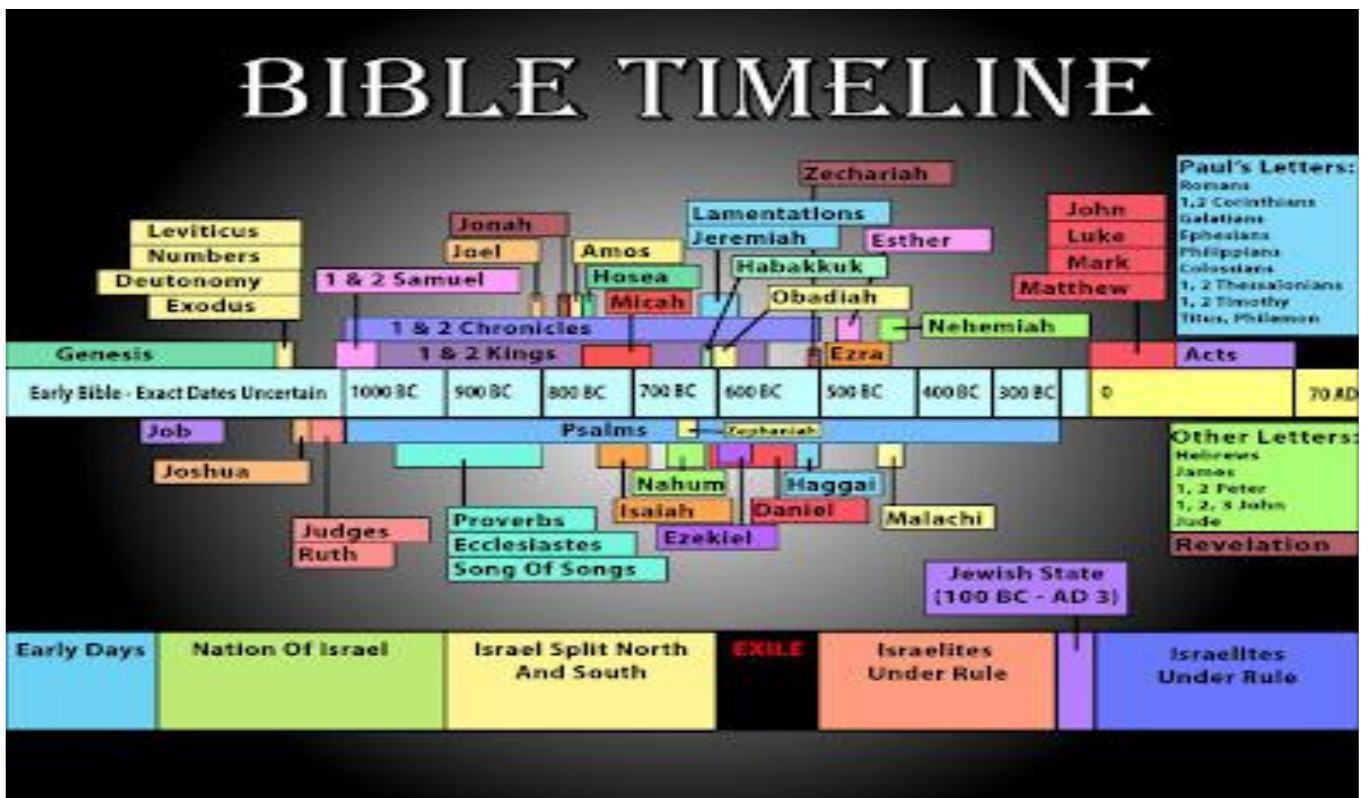
The faith of Daniel and his friends



STUDY ONE – OBEYING GOD

Read: Daniel chapters 1 and 2

The story of Daniel and his three friends is well-known and for those who were privileged to have attended Sunday School, one of the most popular accounts of the Old Testament. It is easy to think of it at that level, but this is so much more. This is a story that demonstrates the power and faithfulness of God as well as the faithfulness to God, of these four young men.



We have looked at this Bible Timeline in a previous study and it helps us to see where the exile in the book of Daniel fits into the history of God's chosen people.

Chapter 1: The book opens with a short account of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, having besieged the city of Jerusalem and taken thousands of captives as well as all the precious things from God's house. It is estimated that Daniel and his friends were taken around 605 B.C., although captives continued to be taken until around 582 B.C.

The Babylonian empire conquered all the provinces ruled by Assyria and consolidated them in the area we call the Middle East. Babylon needed to administer its huge kingdom and among the thousands of captives were not only fighting men but also those who were educated and skilled. The young men who were educated or had the necessary skills needed to do this were chosen for special training.

The master of the eunuchs, Ashpenaz, was told to prepare those young men who 'fitted the bill': strong, healthy and good-looking. They also had to be well versed in every branch of learning, have good judgement, and be suited to serve in the royal palace. They were to be trained in the language and literature of Babylon. For three years they were to be given a daily ration of food and wine from his own kitchens. (*Daniel 1:4-5*).

Many people may think this sounded good, but Daniel and his three friends were not happy. The Jews of course had strict dietary laws and Daniel did not want to defile himself so asked permission not to eat these unacceptable foods. It is interesting what verse 9 of chapter 1 says of Daniel: *"Now God had given the chief of staff both respect and affection for Daniel"*.

- What does this tell us about God's provision for Daniel, but also for us?
- Was this a result of Daniel and his friends' obedience to God?

Read verses 10-17

- Daniel's wisdom and faith were evident from the result of eating their simple food for ten days. Do we think about our actions and whether they are guided by God's word?
- Do you think verse 17 was in any way a consequence of Daniel's request?
- *2 Timothy 2:7 says: "Think about what I am saying. The Lord will give you understanding in all these things." Proverbs 2:6 says: "For the Lord grants wisdom! From his mouth come knowledge and understanding." James 1:5 says: "If you need wisdom – if you want to know what God wants you to do – ask him, and he will gladly tell you. He will not resent your asking."*
- How often do we ask God for wisdom? If we have difficulties, do we ever look to see what the Bible says about that specific problem?

Read verses 18-21

- To what do you attribute the reason for this success? King Nebuchadnezzar reigned for 43 years.

Chapter 2:1-23 Because of the length of this chapter, we will look at the first half this week and continue it in next week's study.

I think it's important to point out that it was common practice then to consult astrologers. The following article from the website *Got Questions*, however, clearly lays out the Biblical stance:

'The Bible says that stars, along with the sun and moon, were given for "signs" and "seasons" ([Genesis 1:14](#)); that is, they were meant to mark time for us. They are also "signs" in the sense of navigational "indicators," and all through history men have used the stars to chart their courses around the globe.

'Astrology is the "interpretation" of an assumed influence the stars (and planets) exert on human destiny. According to astrology, the sign you were born under, Aquarius, Pisces, Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, or Capricorn, impacts your destiny. This is a false belief. The royal astrologers of the Babylonian court were put to shame by God's prophet Daniel ([Daniel 1:20](#)) and were powerless to interpret the king's dream ([Daniel 2:27](#)). God specifies astrologers as among those who will be burned as stubble in God's judgment ([Isaiah 47:13-14](#)). Astrology as a form of divination is expressly forbidden in Scripture ([Deuteronomy 18:10-14](#)). God forbade the children of Israel to worship or serve the "host of heaven" ([Deuteronomy 4:19](#)). Several times in their history, however, Israel fell into that very sin ([2 Kings 17:16](#) is one example). Their worship of the stars brought God's judgment each time.

'The stars should awaken wonder at God's power, wisdom, and infinitude. We should use the stars to keep track of time and place and to remind us of God's faithful, covenant-keeping nature. All the while, we acknowledge the Creator of the heavens. Our wisdom comes from God, not the stars ([James 1:5](#)). The Word of God, the Bible, is our guide through life ([Psalm 119:105](#)).'

This demonstrates the importance of knowing the Scriptures and what God has to say rather than, as today, the media or people who claim to tell us what the stars have to say to us on any given day.

- What was King Nebuchadnezzar's demand of his magicians etc.?
- Despite his expectations being unreasonable, and the astrologers telling him so, the King threatened the execution of all wise men – which, of course, included Daniel and his friends. How did Daniel respond to the news?
- What does verse 19 show about God's faithfulness?
- Can we develop our faith so we have that total confidence Daniel exhibited?
- How do we develop our faith?

We may not have the high standing of Daniel, but it is important that we develop and exhibit faith and confidence in God's word.

It is also important that we speak out our faith when discussing these important issues.



Prayer:

Father God, we ask that your Holy Spirit will enable us to trust you and not try to 'do it my way'.

Amen