

A Temperance Lesson

Daniel 1: 8-20. Study the chapter. Commit to memory vs. 16, 17. Read ch. 2.

GOLDEN TEXT—Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself.—Daniel 1: 8.

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.

9 Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.

10 And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king.

11 Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hanani'ah, Mi'shael, and Azari'ah,

12 Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.

13 Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenances of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.

Revised Version.—1 Omit the portion of; 2 made youths; 3 own age; 4 so should ye endanger; 5 with; 6 to the steward, whom; 7 appointed; 8 hearkened unto; 9 they were; 10 Omit the portion; 11 So the steward took away their meat; 12 Now, as; 13 And at; 14 appointed; 15 bringing; 16 every matter; 17 concerning which the king inquired; 18 enchanters.

14 So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days.

15 And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat.

16 Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse.

17 As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

18 Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar.

19 And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hanani'ah, Mi'shael, and Azari'ah: therefore stood they before the king.

20 And in all matters of wisdom and understanding that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.

THE LESSON EXPLAINED

Time and Place—Soon after 606 B.C.; Babylon on the Euphrates, 500 miles east of Jerusalem.

Connection—In the third year of Jehoiakim, King of Judah (606 B.C.), Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Jerusalem, and carried away several Jewish

prisoners, vs. 1, 2. Among these were the four youths of noble family mentioned in the Lesson, whom Nebuchadnezzar resolved to have trained for service in the royal court.

I. A NOBLE RESOLVE.—8. But Daniel. His name had been changed in Babylon, to Belshazzar (v. 7), but his heart was not changed.

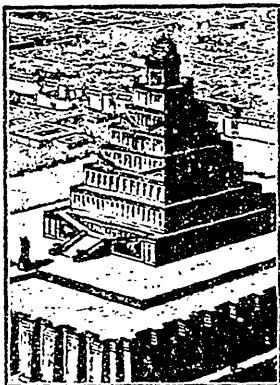
It was still loyal and true to the God of his fathers. Purposed in his heart; made up his mind, after thinking the matter out. Would not defile himself with the king's meat, nor with the wine. Food was sent to the four Jewish youths and those being trained with them, from the king's own table. This was a high honor. But the Jews had special laws about the killing of animals used for food (Deut. 12: 23, 24), and some animals they were not allowed to use at all, Lev. 11: 4-7, 10-12, 13-20. In eating the meat sent to him Daniel may have feared he

might break some of these laws. Then, too, both food and wine, before being sent might have been presented to some Babylonian god, and to use them would have been to show approval of idolatry. Requested of the prince of the eunuchs; Ashpenaz (v. 3), the king's officer in charge of the youths in training for the royal service.

3, 10. Daniel into favor and tender love; as Joseph found favor with the keeper of the prison in Egypt, Gen. 39: 21. I fear... the king. Well might he fear a ruler who had caused the children of Zedekiah to be slain before their father's eyes (Jer. 39: 6), and who in his rage threatened with death the wise men of Babylon, ch. 2: 5, 12; and who might order his head to be cut off, if he displeased him. Why should the king see your faces worse liking ("looking")? Eastern monarchs took pride in the beauty of their attendants.

II. A FAIR PROPOSAL.—11-14. Then said Daniel to the steward (Rev. Ver.) "Melsar" is a title, not a proper name. The "steward" was the one who actually supplied the food. Ashpenaz was not unwilling to grant Daniel's request, but did not wish to take the responsibility of doing so. Prove thy servants... ten days; long enough to give the new diet a fair chance. Give us pulse... and water. "Pulse" means various kinds of vegetable food. Daniel and his companions showed true temperance in refusing what they thought it wrong to eat and drink. It is certain that strong drink does harm to our bodies; therefore we should not use it.

III. AN UNEXPECTED RESULT.—15-17. Fairer and fatter in flesh. This is the first result of temperance—a strong, healthy body. We can stand cold and heat, and do hard work, better without, than with, strong drink. Proved them ten days; a good fair test. God gave them know-



A Chaldean Temple