

# DARE TO BE DIFFERENT (Part 2): Daniel and His Friends

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## I. INTRODUCTION

A. True believers are brand-new creations born from above:

1. **John 3:7:** *You should not be surprised at My saying, “You must be **born again** [lit. “from above”].”*
2. **2 Cor. 5:17** (NKJV): *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a **new creation**; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*
3. **Ezek. 36:26-27:** *<sup>26</sup>I will give you a **new heart** and put a **new spirit** in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup>And I will put My Spirit in you and move you to follow My decrees and be careful to keep My laws.*

B. True believers are *in* the world but not *of* the world:

1. **John 17:14-19:** *<sup>14</sup>I have given them Your word and the world has hated them, for **they are not of the world any more than I am of the world**. <sup>15</sup>My prayer is not that You take them out of the world but that You protect them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup>**They are not of the world, even as I am not of it**. <sup>17</sup>**Sanctify them** by the truth; Your word is truth. <sup>18</sup>As You sent Me into the world, I have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup>For them I sanctify Myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.*
2. **Gal. 6:14:** *May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which **the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world**.*

C. True believers are different—they are separated, set apart. In this two-part study, we will examine a few biblical characters who demonstrated this quality in inspiring ways:

1. Caleb – A Different Spirit (Part 1)
2. Daniel and His Friends (Part 2)

## II. DANIEL AND HIS FRIENDS

### A. Background (**Dan. 1:1-7**):

<sup>1</sup>*In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it...* <sup>3</sup>*Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring in some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility—* **<sup>4</sup>young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians.** <sup>5</sup>*The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service.* <sup>6</sup>*Among these were some from Judah: **Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.*** <sup>7</sup>*The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name **Belteshazzar**; to Hananiah, **Shadrach**; to Mishael, **Meshach**; and to Azariah, **Abednego**.*

1. Babylon destroyed the temple and Jerusalem, killed many of God's people, and took the rest into captivity; spiritual Babylon symbolizes the self-serving, self-exalting, idolatrous, antichrist system of the present evil world
2. Nebuchadnezzar wanted the smartest and best of the Israelite captives—**the youth**—to be indoctrinated in the ways of Babylon (just like the devil!)
3. Their godly names (which end either with -el for *Elohim* or -iah for *Yah* or *Yahweh*) were changed to blasphemous names of Babylonian idols:
  - a) Daniel (“God is my Judge”) → Belteshazzar (“Bel, i.e., Marduk protects my life”)
  - b) Hananiah (“The Lord shows grace”) → Shadrach (“Command of Aku the Sumerian moon-god”)
  - c) Mishael (“Who is what God is?”) → Meshach (“Who is what Aku is?”)
  - d) Azariah (“The Lord helps”) → Abednego (“Servant of Nego”)

4. Names speak of *identity*—the evil one and his world system pressure people to forget/forsake God and adopt the perverse identities of this fallen world
5. Babylon means confusion—there is unprecedented confusion in the world today—people don't even know who they are!

B. Daniel and his friends refused to compromise or conform

1. **Dan. 1:8-15:** <sup>8</sup>*But **Daniel resolved not to defile himself** with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way. <sup>9</sup>Now God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel, <sup>10</sup>but the official told Daniel, “I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you.” <sup>11</sup>Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, <sup>12</sup>“Please **test your servants for ten days:** Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. <sup>13</sup>Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see.” <sup>14</sup>So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days. <sup>15</sup>At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food.*
2. They were *in* Babylon—immersed in the language, customs, and culture—but they were not *of* Babylon!

C. The Church's love affair with the world

1. Many people in the churches today, even pastors and leaders, are indistinguishable from the world—they dress and talk the same, have the same hairdos, tattoos, piercings; more tragically, they have adopted the same philosophies and lifestyles!
2. **James 4:4:** ***You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.***
3. **1 John 2:15-17:** <sup>15</sup>***Do not love the world** or anything in the world. **If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is***

**not in him.** <sup>16</sup>*For everything in the world—the **cravings** of sinful man, the **lust** of his eyes and the **boasting** of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world.* <sup>17</sup>*The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.*

4. Note the following about the world:

a) It spots, stains, pollutes, corrupts, and defiles (James 1:27; 2 Pet. 1:4; 2:20)

b) It is ruled by darkness (**Eph. 6:12**):

*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the **powers of this dark world** AND against the **spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms**.*

c) The world promotes a God-rejecting, humanistic “wisdom” which God calls “foolishness” (1 Cor. 1:20-25; 3:19)

d) There is a strong current in the world—dead fish just go with the flow, but living fish fight the current to swim upstream (**Eph. 2:1-5** NKJV):

<sup>1</sup>*And you He made alive, who were **dead in trespasses and sins**, <sup>2</sup>in which you **once walked according to the course** [“la corriente” RVR1960] **of this world**, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, <sup>3</sup>among whom also **we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh**, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. <sup>4</sup>But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, <sup>5</sup>even when we were dead in trespasses, **made us alive together with Christ** (by grace you have been saved).*

e) The fallen world system is under Satan’s control and must be overcome by every true believer (**1 John 5:4-5, 18-19**):

<sup>4</sup>*For everyone born of God **overcomes the world**. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. <sup>5</sup>Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God... <sup>18</sup>We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the*

*one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him [“The Evil One can’t lay a hand on them” MSG]. <sup>19</sup>We know that we are children of God, and that **the whole world is under the control of the evil one.***

D. Come out, be separate, do not conform

1. **Rom. 12:1-2:** *<sup>1</sup>Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. <sup>2</sup>**Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed** by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.*
2. Paul urges us to be different, to separate ourselves from the Babylonian culture just as Daniel and his friends did (**2 Cor. 6:14-17**):

*<sup>14</sup>Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? <sup>15</sup>What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? <sup>16</sup>What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be My people. <sup>17</sup>Therefore **come out from them and be separate**, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.”*

- E. Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah refused to go along with the crowd and bow down to Nebuchadnezzar’s 90-foot idol (Dan. 3)
- F. Daniel refused to stop praying because of the Medo-Persian decree and faced the lions (Dan. 6)
- G. The idolatrous, harlot spirit of Babylon is being revived in these last days and will be prominent during the Great Tribulation
  1. **Rev. 17:1-5:** *<sup>1</sup>One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the punishment of the **great prostitute**, who sits on many waters. <sup>2</sup>With her the kings of the earth committed adultery and the inhabitants of the earth were **intoxicated with the***

*wine of her adulteries.*” <sup>3</sup>Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was **covered with blasphemous names** and had seven heads and ten horns. <sup>4</sup>The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, **filled with abominable things** and the **filth** of her adulteries. <sup>5</sup>This title was written on her forehead: **MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.**

2. **Rev. 18:1-5, 20, 24:** <sup>1</sup>After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor. <sup>2</sup>With a mighty voice he shouted: “**Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! She has become a home for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit, a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird.**” <sup>3</sup>For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries. The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her **excessive luxuries.**” <sup>4</sup>Then I heard another voice from heaven say: “**COME OUT OF HER, MY PEOPLE,** so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; <sup>5</sup>for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes...” <sup>20</sup>Rejoice over her, O heaven! **Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets! God has judged her for the way she treated you...** <sup>24</sup>**In her was found the blood of prophets and of the saints, and of all who have been killed on the earth.”**

- H. God is looking for men and women who will stand for God and His righteousness in these last days: People who don’t stand for something will fall for anything!

### III. CONCLUSION: HOW CAN WE BE DIFFERENT?

- A. We need to be born from above—radically converted, transformed into new creations in Christ
- B. We need a spirit of faith—every promise of God is true!
- C. We need Christ in us, the hope of glory (Col. 1:27) and the fullness of the Holy Spirit who will strengthen us, teach us, sanctify us, and guide us

- D. There is a “spirit of the world,” but we have received the Spirit of God, not the spirit of the world (1 Cor. 2:12):

*We have not received the **spirit of the world** but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.*

- E. We need the Presence of God in our lives (Ex. 33:12-16):

*<sup>12</sup>Moses said to the LORD, “You have been telling me, ‘Lead these people,’ but You have not let me know whom You will send with me. You have said, ‘I know you by name and you have found favor with Me.’ <sup>13</sup>If You are pleased with me, teach me Your ways so I may know You and continue to find favor with You. Remember that this nation is Your people.” <sup>14</sup>The LORD replied, “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.” <sup>15</sup>Then Moses said to Him, “**If Your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here.** <sup>16</sup>How will anyone know that You are pleased with me and with Your people unless You go with us? **What else will distinguish me and Your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?**”*

- F. Something was different about Christ’s disciples (Acts 4:13):

*When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.*