

PLAIN FOOD FOR CLEAR BRAINS

– NOVEMBER 14. – DANIEL 1:1-21. –

JEWISH CAPTIVES – THE BABYLONIAN COURT – THE KING'S DAINTIES – DANIEL AND HIS CHUMS – LOYALTY TO PRINCIPLE AND ITS ADVANTAGE – PRINCIPLES ARE ETERNAL – SELF-CONTROL BRINGS BLESSINGS.

"Watch ye; stand fast in the faith; quit you like men; be strong." – 1 Corinthians 16:13.

TODAY'S Study is specially selected for the World's Temperance Sunday. How glad we are that the subject of temperance is making such grand headway throughout the world! We will not controvert the claim of some that they are strong enough to use intoxicating liquors wisely, without injury, and to their profit. This may be true of some; but all will agree that such are the minority – that the vast majority of humanity have not sufficient self-control to pursue such a course. With the majority, undoubtedly the safe course is to decide, once and forever, that they will never use intoxicating liquors as a beverage, unless medically prescribed as an absolute necessity.

When we consider the worries of life, the crime, the headaches and the heartaches directly traceable to alcohol, it seems amazing that the wiser and the better balanced of humanity should be unwilling to curtail their own liberties in the interest of their fellowmen in general. The temperance sentiment – the total abstinence sentiment – is growing everywhere, our own nation grandly leading. We must not, however, deceive ourselves into thinking that the world has turned from alcohol. Undoubtedly no radical, permanent results will be reached until Messiah's Kingdom shall take the full control of earth's affairs. We may be sure that

thereafter nothing shall be permitted to hurt or to injure in all God's holy Kingdom. – Isaiah 11:9.

The good news that the Russians had abolished the use of vodka in their army and throughout the nation has been offset by later news that the people, giving up their usual intoxicant – vodka – have taken to private distilling, and as great intemperance as ever prevails. The report that the use of liquors in the armies of France and England has been abolished, and that in the home lands the temperance spirit is growing, is offset by the terrible news that in all the armies it has been found necessary to stimulate the soldiers with alcoholic beverages, just prior to ordering the men to make one of those terrible charges against entrenched foes in which sometimes a half and sometimes all of the chargers are wounded or killed. The nervous strain incidental to such a charge seems to require that sensible men shall to some extent befog their senses in order to participate willingly.

How terrible a thing is this war! How shocking it is that men should be half-drugged before being commanded to go to their death! Alas; how absurd the claim that [R5796 : page 330] the kingdoms at war are kingdoms of Christ, and that the world in general is Christendom – Christ's Kingdom! How glad we are to know now that the Kingdom of God's dear Son is very different from these kingdoms, and that it is about to be inaugurated! And how necessary seems the Bible declaration that incident to the establishment of the Kingdom of God under the whole heavens is the great Time of Trouble, which already is beginning, and which the Bible indicates will end with anarchy and the utter destruction of the present order of society! Thank God that a new order will speedily take its place – symbolically called the new heavens and the new earth, wherein will dwell righteousness, and wherein wars will cease to the ends of the earth! – Psalm 46; 2 Peter 3:13.

PLAIN FOOD – NOT KING'S DAINTIES

Those inclined to think of the people of three thousand years ago as merely monkey men may take a lesson from today's Study. It not only shows great intelligence on the part of some of the youths taken prisoners from the land of Israel into the land of Babylon, but it also shows a breadth of wisdom in the Babylonian king. The fact that King Nebuchadnezzar selected young men from the captives to be especially trained in the Babylonian schools as the king's advisers and wise men shows us a breadth of thought that is equaled by very few of the monarchs of today. Would King George of Great Britain accept some young German captives and make special provision for them as counselors? Or would the Kaiser some young Britons and provide for them? Or would any of the other nations of the world today show as much breadth of mind as did Nebuchadnezzar 2,500 years ago?

Not only was this done, but young Jewish captives proving their qualifications were given every opportunity to use their talents for the benefit of the nation adopting them. Daniel became Prime Minister in Babylon; and others of the Jewish captives attained to the rank of presidents of different divisions of the Babylonian Empire. Surely this shows not only that in some of the Jews there was merit of a high order, but also that there was an ability to appreciate this and an absence of narrowness and jealousy hindering the best interests of the empire.

Today's Study introduces us to the time when four of these Hebrew captives had been selected and been placed in Nebuchadnezzar's special school. This provision for them included not only their training, but also liberal provision for their physical welfare. They got a portion of the king's meat; that is, they shared in the food prepared for the royal family and supposed to be necessary for the development of the highest intelligence and ability.

Daniel and his three chums met the situation wisely. Under the Lord's blessing Daniel's meekness, gentleness and general nobility of character, derived from his knowledge of the true God, the faithful training of godly parents, and the knowledge of the Divine Law and promises, commended him at once to the loving favor of the chief eunuch. Thus the way was prepared for the favorable consideration of the proposition that these four young Hebrews would prefer to have plain food rather than the dainties and wines provided from the king's table.

The prince of the eunuchs hesitated to grant their request, believing that it would show unfavorably in the personal appearance of the Hebrews; and that this would be a reflection upon him and call for inquiry, and bring upon him the king's displeasure, and perhaps punishment. In reply to this, Daniel and his associates requested that the matter be tried out for ten days; and that if at the end of that time they seemed to be losing in flesh or otherwise inferior to the others, their request for a change of diet would be withdrawn; otherwise that they should be permitted to continue on the plain food.

Their request was that they be permitted to eat pulse. This, strictly speaking, seems to signify leguminous foods, such as beans, peas, etc.; but we surmise that the word is used in a general way to signify vegetables. The world is coming to recognize the fact that such leguminous foods as beans and peas contain the elements of nutrition generally sought for in flesh meats; and, more and more, flesh food is being discarded or limited and farinaceous and leguminous foods being substituted, and apparently in many cases to advantage in our day. We are not to think, however, that the Bible prohibits the use of flesh food. Christians are left to the exercise of their judgment and **[R5796 : page 331]** experience as respects what kind of food will best nourish their bodies and make them most useful in the Lord's service. That flesh meat is not to be despised

nor considered sinful is abundantly proven by the fact that our Lord and the Apostles ate meat – lamb, fish, etc.

LOYALTY TO GOD AND TO PRINCIPLE

There is a special reason why Daniel and his fellows desired to be excused from eating of the king's portion. It was customary at that time to offer meat before idols before partaking of it – as though wishing to have some special blessing upon the meat. While such a blessing would not really injure the meat – for an idol is nothing and could neither bless nor curse the meat – nevertheless, to eat such meat would more or less imply to the people that the young men were receiving blessings from the heathen gods, and that any wisdom or efficiency that they might have were thus derived. Doubtless this thought had much to do with the request for the change of the food.

Besides, although the Scriptures have not forbidden the use of alcoholic liquors, they do indicate special blessings upon those who abstain, as well as upon eunuchs. Daniel and his fellows were apparently fully consecrated to the Lord; and their being away from home in a heathen land, instead of relaxing their religious interest, seems to have deepened it. More than ever they realized their need of a true God and desired to be His true servants.

How the Lord greatly blessed these young Hebrews in their resolution to live upright, clean lives in the midst of the heathen is a part of this lesson. At the close of the ten days of trial the four young Hebrews were found to be advantaged by the difference of diet; and the record is that eventually, when the king began to inquire of them, he found them ten times more wise than the magicians and astrologers of his realm. Nebuchadnezzar's wisdom was manifested in his exalting of these young men to high positions in his realm. It paid the young Hebrews well for all their self-denials and their loyalty to God and to principle.

We believe that there is a general operation of Divine Law to the effect that whoever seeks to live conscientiously, cleanly, purely, honestly, will have compensations in his own heart, in his own life, whether he also reaches positions of honor amongst men or not. The ideal condition, of course, is that of the true Christian, who is not merely a church member – not merely an attendant at church services – but whose entire will has been given to the Lord. To such an one, as the Apostle explains, "old things have passed away, and all things are become new." – 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Such go to the Bible to learn therein the will of the Lord concerning them, and then to the best of their ability live in harmony with that will. It regulates them as respects what they eat, what they drink, where they go, what they do, what they read, what companionship they cultivate, and as respects even their very thoughts. With this class everything is subjected to the Divine will. Of all the people in the world these have the best ground for happiness and peace, having the promise not only of the life that now is, but also of glory, honor and immortality in the life to come as members of the glorified Church, sharers in its great work of blessing humanity during the thousand years of Messiah's Kingdom.

A GOVERNOR'S VIEW OF TEMPERANCE:

"There is no denying that intoxicating liquors are indulged in by many respectable people; or that they are associated, in some literature and in some society, with good fellowship and merry times; or that some persons can use them moderately without immediate apparent injury. But take my word for it, that the risk of their use is a terrible risk; that there can be just as good times and just as good fellowship without them; and that nobody thinks a bit the less of a young fellow because he will not use them; but, on the contrary, that every business man or professional man, whatever his

own habits, instinctively turns away from employing any young man who has the taint of liquor about him.

"Every physician now condemns the use of alcohol as a drink. Every employer counts the use of it against an employee. If you want a clear head, if you want a sound heart, if you want a clean conscience, if you want a healthy body, if you want money in your pocket and credit to your name, put your foot right down and say that you are going to abstain from the use of intoxicating liquors, and keep the faith. Is there anything nastier than a man under their influence? Be clean and wholesome. Keep your brain clear, your head steady, your self-respect firm, and you will have a life that is worth living. This is not a matter of goody talk and sentiment. If nothing else will convince you, experience will; but it will be that experience which can only come too late to be of any use. You may think that you have self-control enough to take care of yourself. But the chances are that your self-control will be no more than pasteboard against a Gatling gun if you tamper with temptation and once begin the indulgence of intoxicating liquors.

HOW RUSSELL SAGE COUNSELED

At a University Club meeting one of the members entertained his fellows with the following story: – **[R5797 : page 331]**

"My first years in New York were not successful ones. I came down from the upper part of the State, determined to get along; but somehow, after a brief experience of city life, I became discouraged and lax. There were no positions but clerkships to be gotten, and to work my way up to the top from an army of young clerks, all as efficient as myself, seemed hopeless. At twenty-five, I was making only four dollars a week more than when I started; and I hadn't a cent to my credit in the bank.

"One day, scared and desperate about my future, I called to see Russell Sage. Sage came from my part of the country, and had

known my father well. He listened to my narrative with interest. 'Do you drink?' he said.

"'Yes, sir, moderately,' said I; 'but only very moderately.'

"'Well, stop it for a year. Then come to see me again,' said Mr. Sage.

"I stopped drinking for a year; and at the end I paid my second visit to the millionaire. He remembered all about me. He chatted a little while. Then he said, 'Do you gamble?'

"'Yes,' I said; 'I sometimes gamble.'

"'Well, give it up for a year; and then come to see me.'

"So I stopped gambling; and the year went by, and for the third time I appeared in Mr. Sage's office. 'Do you smoke?' he said, after we had had a third discussion of my affairs.

"'Yes, sir,' said I.

"'Stop smoking,' said he. 'Come back after you have stopped smoking for a year.'

The speaker laughed. One of his auditors said impatiently: "Well, when you went back what happened?"

"I never went back," was the reply, the speaker's eyes were twinkling humorously. "Because if I had, Mr. Sage would only have told me that now I had given up drinking, gambling and smoking, I must have saved enough money to start myself in business. It was true; I had saved enough money to start myself in business. That shrewd, wise man had set me, almost without my knowing it, on the road to success."

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