

Christian Reconstruction

Isaiah 61:4

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DANIEL'S JOB

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Daniel was one of the sons of the Israelite nobility deported to Babylon for education when Nebuchadnezzar first conquered Judah (Dan. 1:1-4). Babylon had a policy of taking the most promising youth from conquered lands and placing them at the wonderful (full of occult wonders) Babylonian public schools. In this way, the world would gradually be "made safe for Babylonian democracy," or whatever. At the end of his education, Daniel would enter the king's personal service, his cabinet (1:5).

Daniel had studied Genesis 37-50, and so he knew about Joseph's job. Indeed, Daniel became a second Joseph, and through faithful service he became second only to the king himself in the government of Babylon (Dan. 248): ruler over the actual province of Babylon itself, and chief over all the wise men of Babylon. Like Joseph, Daniel was a skilled interpreter of the Word of God, which came to them both in form of dreams, as it comes to us in Holy Scripture. During the seven years of Nebuchadnezzar's madness (Dan. 4), Daniel was the *facto* ruler of the entire empire. Later on, when Persia conquered Babylon, Daniel rose to become second in command there as well (6:2, 3, 24, 28).

In the history of Joseph the emphasis is on the actual service, while in the history of Daniel it is on service without compromise (Dan. 1, 3, 6). Daniel's job was not to compromise his faith while serving pagan lords.

Unclean Foods

"But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself" (Dan. 1:8, NASV). Notice two things that Daniel did not do. First, he did not compromise the law of God. Second, he did not use this occasion to defy those in authority over him. Instead, he appealed to them for permission, and when it was not immediately forthcoming (1:10), he came up with a creative solution (1:12, 13). Had push come to shove, Daniel doubtless would have remained faithful to the law and taken the punishment meted out to him (cf. ch. 3, 6); but God blessed his humble spirit and this was not necessary.

Why was this such a big deal? Daniel's refusal to drink the king's wine was not due to any stipulation in the law, and so was probably due to a desire to avoid involvement in the libations associated with pagan worship (Deut. 32:38). The food was another matter. Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 provide extensive lists of clean and unclean animals, and these are said to be definitive of holiness before God (Lev. 11:45, "thus you shall be holy for I am holy").

A study of these passages reveals that the unclean animals are identified in terms of two characteristics. First, their mode

of locomotion entails their flesh's coming in contact with their environment. In this sense, all the unclean creatures "crawl on their bellies" like the cursed serpent (Gen. 3:14). Things that crawl on the ground, fishes without protection, larger animals that don't have "shoes" to keep the flesh of their feet from contact with the soil—these are unclean, for they in their lifestyles are like the Satanic serpent.

The second identifying characteristic of unclean creatures is their diet. Anything that eats carrion or dung or rotting things is unclean. Like the serpent, they eat "dirt" (Gen. 3:14), for all animals and man are made from dust and return to dust (Gen. 1:24; 3:19). Rotting carrion and dung, therefore, are forms of dirt.

These animals are unclean because their ways of life are emblematic of the way of Satan. They are, thus, analogues to the unclean and Satanic pagan nations of the world. Leviticus 20:22-26 explicitly connects the unclean lifestyles of these animals with the evil lifestyles of the pagan nations (cf. Acts 10 and 11).

We can see that Daniel had no choice in the matter. His refusal to eat unclean food was the sign that he would not "eat" the unclean lifestyle of Babylon. He would serve Babylon faithfully and humbly, but he would not adopt her ways. Daniel's job was to maintain the antithesis between light and darkness in the midst of service.

Our job is the same, though we no longer keep the food laws of Leviticus 11 as symbolic markers (cf. Acts 10 and 11). We too must maintain the antithesis, even in the face of fiery furnaces and lion's dens (Dan. 3, 6). The greatest testimony to Daniel's faithful service is in Dan. 6:5, where Daniel's enemies say, "We shall not find any ground of accusation against this Daniel unless we find it against him with regard to the law of his God." They could find no other ground because Daniel had been so excellent a servant; they knew that the law of God might provide a ground because Daniel had so faithfully maintained the antithesis.

Mordecai and Esther

Even though he lived after Daniel and in the same city, Mordecai had to be taught the lesson of Daniel's job the hard way. Mordecai's pride got in the way of humble service when he refused to extend common courtesy to Haman (Esther 3:2). [Some people think Mordecai was right not to bow before Haman, but for proof of the contrary see Gen. 23:12; 33:3; 37:7, 8; 42:6; 43:26ff.; Ruth 2:10; 1 Sam. 24:8; 1 Ki. 1:16, 23 Esth. 8:3.] At the same time, Mordecai was scheming how to get influence at court.

Mordecai instructed his niece, Esther, to keep her religious identity a secret, to conceal the antithesis (2:10). Indeed, Esther, unlike Daniel, ate the unclean food (2:9), placing her-

self completely in the hands of the pagan supervisor (2:15; cp. Dan. 1:8-13). Mordecai was probably not very distressed at what was happening to Esther, for had he desired to protect her, he doubtless could have hidden her.

Once Esther was queen, Mordecai protected his Investment by turning in two men who were plotting to kill the king (221, 22). This was a righteous act in itself, but Mordecai's motives were, to say the least, mixed.

Mordecai's pride got him in trouble. Haman determined to kill him, and to kill all the Jews. Daniel had maintained the antithesis, and his prayers had served to protect Israel from the judgment of God (Ezek. 14:14, 20; Dan. 6:10); Mordecai's actions were exposing Israel to destruction. Mordecai wanted Esther to conceal her heritage because that fit in with his plans. When, however, Haman challenged Mordecai for refusing to show him courtesy, Mordecai drew back in pride and arrogance and said, "I am a Jew" (Esth. 3:4); and when Haman learned this, he resolved to kill all the Jews. Mordecai was turning the religious **antithesis** into a racial one.

God forced Mordecai's hand. Mordecai told Esther to reveal her heritage to the king, so that the king would spare the Hebrews out of his love for her (48). Esther, however, was terrified to do so, for the king had seemingly lost interest in her, and for her to go into his presence without having been summoned was to risk death (4:11). Mordecai, however, having

regained his faith, assured her that God would not let His people die (4:14).

The penitent Mordecai is now a man God will use. He is immediately elevated to high office in the kingdom, as a result of a seeming coincidence, and is invested with the robes of the king himself (ch. 5). The fearful Esther also now acts in faith, and reveals her faith to the king. All is well, and the king not only destroys Haman, but authorizes a holy war against all the enemies of the kingdom of God. This not only protected the Jews for many years to come, but also greatly facilitated the spread of the gospel in that society.

In the end we read these words "And all the accomplishments of King Ahasuerus, his authority and strength, and the full account of the greatness of Mordecai, to which the king advanced him, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia? For Mordecai the Jew was second only to King Ahasuerus and great among the Jews, and in favor with the multitude of his kinsmen, one who sought the good of his people and one who spoke for the welfare of his whole nation" (Esth. 10:2, 3).

Daniel resolved to keep the law of God at all costs when a young man. Mordecai tried to scheme his way to power, and had to learn the hard way. The job of Christian Reconstruction is Daniel's job. Let us not make the mistakes of Mordecai.