THE COURSE OF THIS WORLD

**DATE:**

**TEXT: Daniel 1:3-7; Ephesians 2:2; Romans 12:1, 2**

**INTRODUCTION**

The Bible says in **Romans 12:1, 2 –**

***“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” Paul speaks of being conformed and being transformed”***

Paul tells us not to be conformed to this world

The word ***“conformed”*** speaks of someone being *fashioned* like something

The word is translated ***“fashioning”*** in **I Peter 1:14** where we read –

***“As obedience children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance”***

The Bible is telling us not to let the world fashion us

Someone once paraphrased **I Peter 1:14** like this -

*“Don’t let the world squeeze you into its mold”*

We are not to let the world be the mold that shapes who and what we are

We live in a world that seeks to Conform us into its image

The world wants to be the mold that shapes -

→ Who we are

→ How we think

→ How we live

→ What we do

The Bible speaks of the ***“course of this world”*** in **Ephesians 2:2**

The word ***“course”*** literally means *“age”*

The course of the world is the age or culture in which we live

When we talk about the world we are talking about the culture in which we live,

A culture that exercises great influence on our lives

Instead of being ***Conformed***, we are to be ***Transformed***

We get our word *“metamorphous”* from this word

The Bible is saying that there is to be a spiritual metamorphous of life

There is to be a total change of life

Instead of being like the world in which we live,

We live a life that is holy and acceptable and completely given to God

If you haven’t realized it, this world wants to shape our values and determine our morals

The chief objective of the world is to turn us from God and have us live for ourselves

We see a great illustration of this in **Daniel 1:3-7**

The purposes and plans of Nebuchadnezzar are the same as the world

In our first study we looked at three kings in **Daniel 1:1, 2**

We saw Nebuchadnezzar as a Controlling King

We saw how he invaded and took captive the city of Jerusalem

We saw how he carried away captive many of the Jewish people

The world wants to control our lives

It wants us as it captives

If you remember, I shared with you how he invaded Jerusalem on different occasions and took captive the Jewish people

As we look at **vs. 3-7** we will see the ones that he took captive the first time he besieged the city

In **Daniel 1:3-7** we see his first invasion and the ones he took captive at that time

Let’s look at these captives and see how our text reminds us how the world seeks to control our lives

***“The Course of this World”***

**~~~Prayer~~~**

Let’s begin by noticing:

**I. THE “MANDATE” OF THE KING**

We read in **v.3 –**

***“And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes”***

Nebuchadnezzar gave the order to the chief of his court officials, to bring back to Babylon certain Jewish young men

These are called ***“children”*** in **v.4**

The word used speaks of a *“lad”* or *“offspring”* or *“young man”*

When they are referred to as children, it does not always mean they were little children

The word indicates that they are young men

These were boys in their teen age years

It is among these teenage boys that we meet Daniel for the first time

We read in **v. 6 –**

***“Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah”***

Daniel was one of the captives that were carried into Babylon during Nebuchadnezzar’s first raid of Jerusalem

Now, as we look at this **Mandate** of Nebuchadnezzar we see that he was very selective in who he wanted taken captive

There were certain specifications that he gave to Ashpenaz

First, we see there were:

**A. ‘Royal’ Specifications**

As we read in **v.3**, he was to bring to Babylon -

***“certain of the children of Israel, and of the king’s seed, and of the princes”***

They were to be of royal and noble blood

No doubt, one of the reasons these were chosen is because their presence would be a constant reminder of his conquest over Jerusalem and Judah

There were not only **‘Royal’ Specifications**, but also:

**B. ‘Physical’ Specifications**

We read in **v. 4** that these captives were to be those -

***“in whom was no blemish, but well favoured”***

The word ***“blemish”*** is used to speak of both the physical and moral

As used here it no doubts refer to them physically

These were to be healthy young men

The word ***“well favoured”*** means that they were *“good in appearance”*

There were no sissy’s or ugly ducklings in this group

They were all masculine and handsome young men

**‘Royal’ and ‘Physical’ Specifications**

There was a third specification and it involved:

**C. ‘Educational’ Specifications**

We also read in **v. 4** that they were to be

***“skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science”***

These were all straight ‘A’ students

These were the valedictorians of their class

They were Ivy League candidates

**‘Royal’, ‘Physical’ and ‘Educational’ Specifications**

A fourth specification involved:

**D. ‘Vocational’ Specifications**

**V.4** tells that they had be -

***“such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace”***

They had to have the ability to serve King Nebuchadnezzar in his court

They had to have leadership and administrative skills

They were to be able to hold a position in public life

All these specifications indicated that these Jewish teens were the cream of the crop

As I mentioned earlier, **v.6** tells us that one of these special captives was Daniel

What Nebuchadnezzar required in these captives reveals that Daniel was an exceptional young man

As we would say, he was sharp as a tack

He was of noble birth, handsome, well educated, and showed early certain abilities that marked him for a successful and useful life

As we will learn in future studies, there was a spiritual side of Daniel that was exceptional

I said at the beginning that these verses illustrate how the world seeks to control our lives

It is always the best Christians that are in the crosshairs of the world and the devil

The closer we live to God and the more serious we take the things of God,

The greater the desire of the devil to take us away from God and make us his slaves

Have you noticed that it is when we get serious about God that the devil raises his ugly head?

I have heard people say, *“When I started living for God everything started going wrong”*

That’s always the case

The devil doesn’t want us living and serving God

He will always fight us when we get down to business with God

As we move further into the story we see that there was a reason why Nebuchadnezzar wanted this quality of young men brought to Babylon

**THE “MANDATE” OF THE KING**

Notice with me not only the **Mandate** of the king,

But also:

**II. THE “MOTIVE” OF THE KING**

Now there was a reason Nebuchadnezzar wanted such outstanding and qualified young men

He had a purpose for having these kind of Jewish teens bought back to Babylon

We see this purpose as we look at how he would:

**A. ‘Teach’ Them**

Notice again **v.4** where we see that these Jewish teens would be taught -

***“the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans”***

Nebuchadnezzar wanted to give these young men a new education

**V.5** tells us that their new education would be for 3 years

They were going to get a Chaldean College education

*“Chaldeans”* in many cases is simply a synonym for Babylonian

But as used here, it means *“wise man”*

Throughout Babylon were priestly schools that were connected to every important Babylonian temple

In all probability, Daniel and these Jewish teens were placed in one of these centers of learning

The ***“learning of the Chaldeans”*** would have been comprised of the old languages of Babylon

Which would have been the two dialects of the Sumerians and Kassite along with other languages

It would be like you and I learning Spanish, French, and German at the same time

Their Babylonian education would have also consisted of astronomy and astrology; mathematics, natural history, plus a store of mythological learning

Also, there would have been some learning of agriculture and architecture

Of course there would have been teaching and training in the Babylonian religion with its many false gods

You could say that they would have had several majors

Now, there was a reason for this education

Nebuchadnezzar wanted to **‘Teach’ Them** so he could:

**B. ‘Turn’ Them**

The whole purpose of this education was to separate them from their Jewish culture

He wanted to make Chaldeans out of them

Their education was for the purpose of totally immersing them into a pagan society

It was not education with the goal of *information*

The goal was *indoctrination*

We read in **v.5 –**

***“And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king”***

This was not normal college cafeteria food

They didn’t live on food from a vending machine

You could say they *“ate like kings”*

Even the food they were given had a purpose to it

The Jews had very strict Levitical standards and strict guidelines about the food they ate

The word is *kosher* and the king’s meat would not have been kosher

I can imagine that pork was served every day

This change of their diet was another way of separating them from all previous religious training

It was another step in making Chaldeans out of them

The ultimate purpose is seen in the words

***“that at the end thereof they might stand before the king”***

Nebuchadnezzar was training them to be his servants

They were being trained to make him the ultimate authority in their lives

This is the ultimate objective of the world

It wants to be master and ruler of our life

The world wants to dominate our will, direct our desires, and displace our God

The world, the flesh, and the devil have one objective and that is to turn us away from God

The Bible says in **Galatians 5:17 –**

***“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would”***

There is a war going on for control of our lives

Both the Spirit of God and the flesh seek control of our life

And they are in constant war with each other for that control

The world, the flesh, and the devil want us to abandon our spiritual values, violate the commands of God, and turn our back on Him

Instead of Christ being King, the world wants to remove Him from the throne of our hearts and be our Lord

Lastly, notice not only the **Mandate** and **Motive** of the king

But also:

**III. THE “METHODS” OF THE KING**

Do you remember what I said in the beginning about being conformed to this world?

That was the objective of Nebuchadnezzar

He wanted to make these Jewish teens into Chaldeans

He wanted them to Think like Chaldeans, Act like Chaldeans, and Worship like Chaldeans

The objective of the world is no different

It wants to Fashion, Shape, and Mold our life so that we are like the world

**Ill.** I think of a mental patient in a state hospital who walked up the new doctor and said, *“We sure like you better than the last doctor”*

The new doctor smiled and said, *“Why is that?”* The patient said, *“Because you seem just like one of us”*

That’s what the world wants to do, to make us just like them

As we look at the methods of Nebuchadnezzar we see how the world tries to achieve this objective

First, he changed:

**A. ‘What’ They Were**

In all that we have seen, we see how Nebuchadnezzar was changing what they were

He was changing them -

→ From being Jews to Chaldeans

→ From being worshippers of the true God to worshippers of false gods

→ From being servants of a holy King into servants of a wicked king

He was getting them to abandon the laws of their God to obey his laws

The world seeks to change what we are

Instead of being people who love God,

The world seeks to make us people that love the world and the things of the world

Instead of obeying God’s commands and keeping the laws of God,

The world wants us to free our life of any spiritual principles

Instead of pleasing God, pleasing self is the objective

Furthermore, Nebuchadnezzar changed:

**B. ‘Who’ They Were**

We read in **v. 7 –**

***“Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abed-nego”***

Nebuchadnezzar even changed their names

***“Daniel”*** whose name means *“God is my judge”* was given the name -

*“Belteshazzar”* that means *“the god who Baal favors”*

There was ***“Hananiah”*** that means *“beloved of the Lord”*

His name was changed to ***“Shadrach”*** that means *“illuminated by the sun god”*

There was ***“Mishael”*** that means *“God is without equal”*

His name was changed to ***“Meshach”*** that means *“who is like unto Venus”*

Lastly, there was ***“Azariah”*** that means *“God is my helper”*

His name was changed to ***“Abed-nego”*** that means *“the servant of Nebo”*

I have no doubt that all the other teens brought to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar were given pagan names as well

It is unfortunate that most folks know them by their Babylonian names

The world wants to change our identity

Instead of being known as Christians,

The world wants us to be known by our worldly and immoral lives

Instead of having a name that is a testimony for the Lord,

The world wants us to be as everyone else in the world

Let me say it again, Christians are in the crosshairs of the world

**Ill.** A long time ago, a man by the name of William Law warned that the world would become a far greater enemy to the Christian than it was in apostolic times: *“It is a greater enemy, because it has greater power over Christians by its favors, riches, honors, rewards, and protection than it had by the fire and fury of its persecutors*

*It is a more dangerous enemy, by having lost its appearance of enmity. Its outward profession of Christianity makes it no longer considered as an enemy, And therefore the people are easily persuaded to resign themselves up to be governed and directed by it”*

The world wants to redirect our paths

It wants us to go *“the other way”*

In our next study we will learn that not everyone lets the world squeeze them into its mold

Regardless of the pressure the world puts upon us,

May God help us not to be shaped by the world in which we live

Turn to **Ephesians 2**