

DANIEL

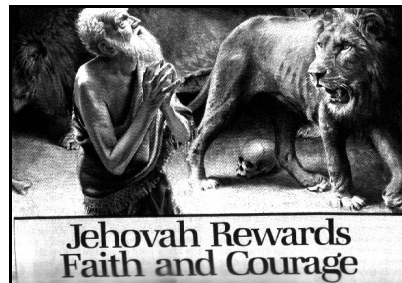
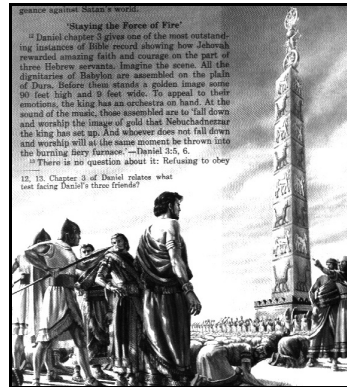
Was he a Jehovah's Witness?

WHY JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES USE DANIEL

JW's use Daniel a great deal in their public witnessing. They use particularly chapters 2 and 4 to demonstrate the nature of God's kingdom (2:44) and the kingdom's major purpose, the vindication of God (2:47; 4:34-37); chapter 4 is even used to tell us the length of the 'appointed times of the nations' of Luke 21:24 [= Gentile times; 4:16,23,25,32]. JW's also see themselves in the roles of Daniel, Meshach, Shadrach and Abednego, bravely resisting the temptations to compromise with the world

[on 1.1] The main blow to Judah came in 586 B.C. when Jerusalem was destroyed and the country became a province of Babylonia (2 Kings 25:1-21). Eleven years before (597), however, a prior taking into captivity had occurred when Jehoiachin ruled, and some 10,000 leading people were carried to Babylon (2 Kings 24:11-16). Eight years before this still, Daniel, his three friends, and other young Judeans had been forced to go (605). Their captivity in Babylon is the occasion of central interest in the book of Daniel. [Wood 13]

The predominant message is that God's people will experience suffering and be threatened with extinction, but that will not be the end of the story because their God is the living and all-powerful God who will get glory by vindicating His name and who will save them. [Baldwin 66]



Jehovah's Witnesses find role models and great encouragement in contemplating the example of Daniel and his companions (above illustrations from *Watchtower* Dec.1/1988)

WHY JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES SHOULD NOT USE DANIEL

1. **DANIEL'S NAME** – Like Ezekiel, as a prophet in exile he bore a name containing the non-covenant designation of Israel's God (e), not the covenant name (Yhwh; contrast Jeremiah, the prophet in the land)

... the city's fall occurred over a three-stage period spanning the years 605, 597, and 587 B.C. ... The siege recorded here in Daniel 1 took place in the first of those stages. The apparent victory of the Babylonian gods over the God of the people of Jerusalem was sealed by the removal of some of the sacred furniture to the shrine of Nebuchadnezzar's deity. The humiliation could not have been more patent. Humanly speaking this was a time when God's glory was discounted, and His people were not a testimony to His great name ... [Ferguson 29]

2. **DANIEL'S EDUCATION** – As with Joseph and Moses (Acts 7:22), God gave Daniel every advantage in the world of his day; Daniel did not reason that the world might seduce him, but learned 'the literature and language of the Chaldeans' (1:4); This was the only way to qualify to be in King's 'personal service', where God had appointed him to be (1:5)

To begin to study the Babylonian literature was to enter a completely alien thought-world. 'According to the Sumerians and Babylonians two classes of persons inhabited the universe: the human race and the the gods. pre-eminence belonged to the gods, though they were not all equal. At the lower end of the divine scale came a host of minor deities and demons, while a trinity of great gods, Anu, Enlil, and Ea, stood at their head. A modern scholar will observe that many of these gods are personifications of parts or aspects of nature. The sun and moon gods are obvious examples.' The writer of Daniel implies no objection to the study of a polytheistic literature in which magic, sorcery, charms and astrology played a prominent part, though these had long been banned in Israel (Dt. 18:10-12; cf. 1 Sa. 28:3ff.). These young men from Jerusalem's court needed to be secure in their knowledge of Yahweh to be able to study this literature objectively without allowing it to undermine their faith. Evidently the work of Jeremiah, Zephaniah and Habakkuk had not been in vain. In order to witness to their God in the Babylonian court they had to understand the cultural presuppositions of those around them, just as the Christian today must work hard at the religions and cultures amongst which he lives, if different thought-worlds are ever to meet. Incidentally such openness to another culture was not a feature of orthodox Jewish faith at the Maccabean period. On the contrary, everything Greek was studiously avoided. [Baldwin 80]

3. **DANIEL'S JOB** – Unlike JW's, Daniel did NOT view government service (in Babylon of all places!) as violating neutrality, or as supporting Satan's system (see *Reasoning* p.273); he rose to become third most powerful ruler in Babylonian empire (2:48,49; 5:29; cf. Joseph, prime minister of Egypt, Gen.41:39-46)

4. **DANIEL'S RELIGION** – Although well known for upholding his ancestral religion in daily practice (1:8; 6:5), Daniel became *chief of the magi* (4:9, 5:11; *magic-practising priests*, NWT), even taking upon himself the name of Babylon's god Bel (4:8,19). This obviously would involve a degree of contact - even religious joint-projects - with non-Jews. But Daniel was not 'of the world' even

though he was in it. His spirituality depended not on his HORIZONTAL relationships – his surroundings, his associations – but on his VERTICAL relationship with God (6:10; 9:2); stress that DIRECT faith was the source of Daniel's spirituality and his success (Heb.11:1,6,33,34)

[on magi] [the critics] have failed even to consider how a strict Jew, writing a book of fiction for the consolation of strict Jews, could have said that a strict Jew was a Babylonian wise man, if there was anything unlawful or improper in a strict Jew's being a Babylonian wise man. [Wilson Vol.I p.368]

5. A WITNESS, BUT NOT TO JEHOVAH—Despite *The Watchtower's* best efforts to obscure this fact, Daniel and his Jewish companions did NOT see fit to use the Tetragram in talking to non-believers (see, for example, story 78 in *My Book of Bible Stories* (1978), a children's primer which the current generation of JW's were raised on). Even the NWT bears witness to Daniel's failure to witness to the Name (the only NWT references to Daniel using the Name are in ch.9, a prayer)

ASK JW: Was Daniel a good Witness
if he kept the Name to himself?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Baldwin, Joyce *Tyndale Old Testament Commentary: Daniel* (1978)
Ferguson, Sinclair B. *Communicator's Commentary: Daniel* (1988)
Wilson, Robert Dick *Studies in the Book of Daniel* (2 vols. 1917)
Wood, Leon *A Commentary on Daniel* (1972)

NEXT STUDY: Why did not Daniel use *THE NAME*?