

MESSAGE MINDER

January 2, 2011

But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank.

Daniel 1:8



Resolution for the New Year

By Jonathan Stone

Some things come to us in life as a surprising gift. We never saw them coming and we never could have conjured them up. Other things come easy for us because of the God-given talents that we have, which are necessary in attaining them. However, there are some things that will only come to us with one thing--*resolve*. Resolve is an earnest decision. It's what we more commonly identify as determination.

That is NOT to say that you can resolve anything you want into your life. Some would like to believe that anything can be achieved with a strong will. However, this is not true. For example, spiritual transformation cannot be brought about by human will power. It can only be brought about by the power of the Holy Spirit. While the endless selection of self-help books available

today would make one suspect that spiritual change can be brought about with a little bit of "old fashion determination," this is simply not the case. Nonetheless, personal resolve is encouraged in Scripture by the examples of the heroes of the faith.

David, while being less than perfect, was known for the purity of his heart. Yet, in becoming that person he first resolved that he would not sin with his mouth (see Psalm 17:3). Job, also regarded as a man of godly character, made a covenant with his eyes not to gaze at a young lady (Job 31:1). Ezra showed remarkable leadership in restoring the priesthood after the exile, but at some point he had to "set his heart to study the Law of the Lord" (Ezra 7:10). Daniel was famous for his personal integrity, but he first resolved not to defile

himself (Daniel 1:8). Solomon was famous for his wisdom, and while it was a gift from God, at some point he resolved "to know and to search out and to seek wisdom" (Ecc. 7:25). The Apostle Paul was known for the powerful gospel that he preached, but he first resolved "to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor 2:2). Ruth became the great grandmother of King David through her determination to stay with Naomi (Ruth 1:18). And Jesus wrought about salvation for all of humanity through his resolve to go to Jerusalem and die (Luke 9:51). Sometimes great things happen through chance and/or talent. But more times than not they happen when someone resolves to push forward. Prayerfully consider which resolutions God might be looking to hear from you this year!

Wait! Christmas Isn't Over!

The word *advent*, means “coming,” and celebrates the coming of God through the birth of Jesus Christ. Advent commemorates the first coming of Jesus while simultaneously anticipates the second coming of Jesus. Traditionally the advent season which leads up to Christmas was considered a time of reflection and heart-preparation, similar to the way that the season of Lent serves believers in between Ash Wednesday and Easter. For many, the Christmas season comes to an abrupt end on Christmas night. However, this is to lose heart and meaning of the Christian meaning of Christmas, in which Christmas day serves as a threshold between Advent and Epiphany.

And the star, which they had seen in the east, went on before them until it came and stood over the place where the Child was. When they saw the star had stopped, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. after coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshipped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Matthew 2:9-11

The Epiphany Season

Christmas comes from the *Mass of Christ*, a festival which celebrates the *Nativity*, or birth of Christ. The celebration of the *Nativity* began to appear within certain Christian communities as early as the 3rd century. The *Twelve Days of Christmas* are the days in between the *Christ Mass* and *Epiphany*, or *Three Kings Day* on January 6th.

Epiphany celebrates God's revelation to the Gentiles (or all non-Jewish peoples) through Jesus Christ. It recalls the first Gentile act of worship of Christ when the three wise men from the East came and adored Jesus in the manger. This act of worship by the Magi, which corresponded to Simeon's blessing that this child Jesus would be “a light of revelation to the Gentiles” (Luke 2:32), was one of the first indications that Jesus came for all people, of all nations, of all races, and that the work of God in the world would not be limited to only a few.

For my eyes have seen Your salvation...a light of revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.

Simeon (Luke 2:30, 32)

