

Daniel – Chapter 1

Open the Book of Daniel

Daniel 1:1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

Daniel 1:2 And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god.

- *God brings judgement*

Notice that as predicted God initiates the proceedings and it is he that turns Jehoiakim over to Nebuchadnezzar. This turning over even extends to the articles that were consecrated to the service of God in the temple. In The King James version the place where Nebuchadnezzar takes the implements taken from the Temple of God is called the land of Shinar. This refers to the district in the land of Babylon equivalent to what would call a county today.

- *The treasure house of his god*

This Treasure house was a museum located to the north of the palace and was also part of rebuilding projects of Saddam Hussein who fancied himself as Nebuchadnezzar's successor destined to rebuild the glorious Babylonian empire. This treasure house will figure prominently again later on in the book.

- *Enlightened conquest*

The Babylonians, and later on the Persians and Greeks, unlike the Romans who came later did not wantonly murder and destroy the people they conquered, but rather sought to incorporate them and their unique skills and capabilities into their culture for their own benefit.

Alexander the Great, even though he destroyed the armies of the people he conquered, was mostly welcomed by them and incorporated their best ideas and practices into his own empire. In contrast, the Romans, in keeping with the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream as the empire of iron, ground their enemies in the dust and utterly destroyed them.

- *Back to school for Daniel*

So in accordance with this policy, Daniel, among the best and brightest of the captives of Judah was ordered to attend graduate school to learn the language and culture of Babylon. The King James Bible uses the word “eunuch” as the title of the official the king put in charge of Daniel and his friends. The NIV Bible more correctly translates this term which has a narrower meaning today than it did in those days. While it is true that some of the servants of the king were castrated males in those days, most were not. Potiphar, the master of Joseph of Egypt, an official of the Pharaoh’s court was called a eunuch, yet he was a married man. Ashpenaz’s name has been found in the archeological records of Babylon inscribed in monuments.

Daniel 1:3 Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring in some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility--

Daniel 1:4 young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians.

- *Babylon's legacy still alive today*

The Babylonians had a highly developed mathematics and astronomy. 360 Degrees in a circle, 60 seconds in a minute 60 minutes in an hour and 24 hours in a day all stem from Babylon. They wove their

knowledge of astronomy into a cult religion which is still reflected in astrology today and appears daily in the form of horoscopes and other forms of fortune telling. Later in the book of Revelation we read of the "Mystery Babylon". If you are interested read these passages of scripture together: 1—Isaiah 13&14; 2—Jeremiah 50&51; 3—Revelation 17&18.

- *Well treated prisoners*

These young exiles did not subsist on prison rations but were to be given the very best available, right from the king's kitchen. They all had godly Hebrew names, such as for example Daniel whose name means God is my judge. In accordance with the Babylonian assimilation policy they were assigned new names so they might forget their Hebrew heritage. It is instructive to recognize that the Jews had the name of God connected to their names very frequently. The new names were pagan, occult names ascribed to these young men.

Hebrew names:

Daniel; "God is my Judge"

Hananiah: "Beloved of the Lord"

Mishel: "Who is as God"

Azariah: "The Lord is My Help"

Babylonian names:

Beltashazzar: "Prince of Bel"

Shadrach: "Illumined by the Sun God"

Mishech: "Who is like unto the Moon God"

Abednego: "Servant of Nego, a shining fire"

Daniel 1:5 The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service.

Daniel 1:6 Among these were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.

Daniel 1:7 The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

- *Resisting peer pressure*

Daniel and his three teenage friends were under tremendous pressure to conform to the culture and diet of their captors. However, they loved Yahweh and His law and were determined to obey, but not in a confronting and rebellious demeanor. The kitchen in Babylon was not kosher.

Daniel 1:8 But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.

What would you and I do in such a situation? Would we give in or try to change them by for example preaching vegetarianism? Daniel recognized that the most important stewardship he had was that of his heart. The important phrase is "he purposed in his heart" (KJV) that he would be obedient to God and not defile himself.

- *Daniel proposes a test*

Daniel 1:9 Now God had caused the official to show favor and sympathy to Daniel,

Daniel 1:10 but the official told Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you."

God gave the officer that Nebuchadnezzar had set over Daniel and the rest of the students a favorable disposition toward Daniel. However, the Officer was frightened, and with very good reason.

Nebuchadnezzar did not mess around and was capable of dishing out some extremely draconian punishment to those who displeased him. We will see some of this in the next chapter where he threatens to turn the Chaldeans houses into dunghills. Nebuchadnezzar was known to roast officers who displeased him over a slow fire.

Daniel 1:11 Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah,

Daniel 1:12 "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink.

Daniel 1:13 Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see."

- *The test is carried out*

The issue here is not a vegetarianism, but Daniel wanted to avoid eating meat sacrifice to idols, pork, and other foods forbidden by the Torah and thus defile himself. Notice that Daniel was not trying to convert them, but only to practice his faith.

Daniel 1:14 So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.

- *The Score*

Daniel 1:15 At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food.

Daniel 1:16 So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.

The fact that Daniel and his friends did not eat of the rich, fat laden food and wine from the King's table was healthier for their bodies was only part of the reason for their healthy appearance. God blessed them because they did not conform to this world but were willing to be obedient.

- *The result of obedience*

Daniel 1:17 To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.

These young men were given wisdom and understanding because of their obedience. That is always the order in which things must be in God's economy. First, there must be obedience and then follows revelation, wisdom and knowledge. Don't expect wisdom and knowledge given to you by God, if you're not obedient to what you know God wants you to do. If we are obedient to God, only then will he reveal himself to us and give us further wisdom and understanding.

Daniel 1:18 At the end of the time set by the king to bring them in, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar.

Daniel 1:19 The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service.

Daniel 1:20 In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanterers in his whole kingdom.

- *Magna cum laude graduation*

At the end of their three-year Babylonian Graduate School it was time for the final examination before the king. Not only, did they pass with flying colors but they received a perfect score of 10 and were given high positions at the king's court.

- *Staying power*

Daniel 1:21 And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.

Daniel endured not only through the entire Babylonian empire, but also to the succeeding Persian empire under Cyrus. It is very rare for a high official to continue in the administration of a succeeding empire. More often than not in those days, the higher officials in a conquered empire were imprisoned if not executed. In our case in the United States that would be like carrying on from a previous administration under the old president to the new.

- *Application for us today*

Daniel resolved in his heart to be obedient to do the will of God as he understood it and God himself arranged the circumstances such that he was able to do so. In the same way, for us also, if we endeavor to want to do the will of God, He will provide the power and ability to do so.