

**Sold Out**  
The Life of Daniel  
Daniel 1  
June 13, 2021

Welcome again to worship.

The book of Daniel is a favorite of children and youth. The stories of the fiery furnace and the lion's den are favorites. The visions captivate our imagination. But for adults, the book tends to lose its luster and interest.

But when you realize that it is the story of faithful servants of God living in a pagan and evil society, you understand that it is a story that is just as relevant today as it was when it happened.

So, we are studying the Book of Daniel, a story of the past that prepares us for living in the future, and how we must look to the Lord alone for deliverance.

This morning, we are going to dive into chapter 1. Let's look at the first 3 verses:

*During the third year of King Jehoiakim's reign in Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. The LORD gave him victory over King Jehoiakim of Judah and permitted him to take some of the sacred objects from the Temple of God. So Nebuchadnezzar took them back to the land of Babylonia and placed them in the treasure-house of his god. Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, his chief of staff, to bring to the palace some of the young men of Judah's royal family and other noble families, who had been brought to Babylon as captives.<sup>1</sup>*

In 609 BC, the last righteous king of Judah, Josiah, died. His son Jehoahaz began a succession of 4 bad kings who led the people to idolatry and evil. God had told the people that if they worshipped other gods, killed the young, judged falsely, and took advantage of the poor and helpless, He would pronounce judgment upon them.

Judah was exiled to Babylonia because she disobeyed God's word regarding covenant-keeping, the sabbath years and idolatry.<sup>2</sup> The first deportation in 605 BC included Daniel. The second included the prophet Ezekiel 8 years later. A third deportation took place in 586, when the Babylonians destroyed the city of Jerusalem and Solomon's temple.

I want you to imagine if you will that you are Daniel. You are an upright person who finds himself taken from his home by an evil king and forced to serve that king. What are you to make of that?

**Well, first, God May Send You to a Difficult Place (1:1-3).**

God may sovereignly send you to a difficult place to spread His name among the nations.

Verse 2 clearly indicates Who is in control. Not Jehoiakim, not Nebuchadnezzar, but the Lord. He gives the victory to Nebuchadnezzar. And even when it seems as if the worst has come, God still works. Verse 3:

*Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, his chief of staff, to bring to the palace some of the young men of Judah's royal family and other noble families, who had been brought to Babylon as captives.<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel 1:1-3 (NLT2)

<sup>2</sup> See Leviticus 25:4; 26:27-35; Deuteronomy 28:15-68; 2 Kings 25:1; and 2 Chronicles 36:20-21

<sup>3</sup> Daniel 1:3 (NLT2)

What government puts their enemies in the palace? You see, God will use Daniel throughout his life to be a witness within the evil and pagan government. Over and over, we will see that. In spite of the difficult circumstances, Daniel is there; he's God's man, no matter where he is.

In these evil times we find ourselves, we can bemoan about how bad it is, wish it was like it once was, feel completely defeated, but that's not what God wants for us. That's not what Daniel was, and we should not be that way either. God has placed us here today in these difficult times to spread His name among the nations.

**Second, Be Prepared for the Pull to Backslide.**

We need to be prepared for the challenges non-Christian cultures will throw at us to lead us away from God.

The Babylonians did 4 things to our heroes:

First: Isolation. Back to verse 3:

*Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, his chief of staff, to bring to the palace some of the young men of Judah's royal family and other noble families, who had been brought to Babylon as captives.<sup>4</sup>*

Daniel and his friends are taken from their families and their people, isolated from the people of their faith.

Second: Indoctrination. Verse 4:

*"Select only strong, healthy, and good-looking young men," he said. "Make sure they are well versed in every branch of learning, are gifted with knowledge and good judgment, and are suited to serve in the royal palace. Train these young men in the language and literature of Babylon."<sup>5</sup>*

The young men are taught the evil and pagan ways of Babylon. They are taught their sciences, their politics, their ethics, their language, and their literature.

I remember as a senior in high school, I was required to read The Great Gatsby. Now, while there are some who believe it is an American classic, it is also debauched and immoral. As a Christian, I hated reading it.

And today, it has only gotten worse. Throughout media, we see immorality, blasphemy, adultery, and the list goes on. I have begun to ask myself, when I am watching a show, how would I feel if Jesus saw me watching it? This evil society we live in is trying to cause you to backslide.

Third, we see Assimilation. Verse 5:

*The king assigned them a daily ration of food and wine from his own kitchens. They were to be trained for three years, and then they would enter the royal service.<sup>6</sup>*

Daniel and his friends were told what to eat and drink, what they were to learn, then what they were to do. That's assimilation.

Finally, their identity is changed. Verses 6-7:

*Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were four of the young men chosen, all from the tribe of Judah. The chief of staff renamed them with these Babylonian names:<sup>7</sup>*

Here is what the names mean:

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<sup>4</sup> Daniel 1:3 (NLT2)

<sup>5</sup> Daniel 1:4 (NLT2)

<sup>6</sup> Daniel 1:5 (NLT2)

<sup>7</sup> Daniel 1:6-7a (NLT2)

Daniel means “God is my Judge.” They changed his name in Chaldee to Belteshazzar, which means “the treasure of Bel”.

Hananiah means, “The Lord has been gracious to me,” or “He to whom the Lord is gracious.” They changed his name in Chaldee to Shadrach, which means “The inspiration of the sun” or “God the author of evil, be propitious to us.”

Mishael in Hebrew means “He who comes from God.” They changed his name in Chaldee to Meshach, which means, “He who belongs to the goddess Sheshach,” a celebrated deity of the Babylonians.

Finally, Azariah in Hebrew means “The Lord is my Helper.” They changed his name in Chaldee to Abednego, which means “the servant of Nego,” who was one of their divinities; by which they meant either the sun, or the morning star; whether Jupiter or Venus.<sup>8</sup>

They changed these young men’s names from those that honored the God of Israel to names that honored their Babylonian gods.

Like Daniel and his friends, we need to be prepared for the challenges non-Christian cultures will throw at us to lead us away from God.

### **Third, Determine Early Not To Compromise.**

Determine early in your life and heart that you will not compromise your convictions and commitments to God.

In verse 8, Daniel resisted the temptation to defile himself:

*But Daniel was determined not to defile himself by eating the food and wine given to them by the king. He asked the chief of staff for permission not to eat these unacceptable foods.*<sup>9</sup>

Now, why did he do this? It has been speculated that there were 3 reasons:

1. Because it was food forbidden by the Jewish law.
2. Because the way the food was prepared. The Babylonians strangled their animals and did not drain the blood. The blood is sacred in Judaism.
3. Because the animals that were eaten were first offered to their gods.<sup>10</sup>

So, what did Daniel do? He won the favor of those in authority. Verses 9:

*Now God had given the chief of staff both respect and affection for Daniel.*<sup>11</sup>

And because of that, Daniel offered an alternative solution that was win-win.

Verses 11-13:

*Daniel spoke with the attendant who had been appointed by the chief of staff to look after Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. “Please test us for ten days on a diet of vegetables and water,” Daniel said. “At the end of the ten days, see how we look compared to the other young men who are eating the king’s food. Then make your decision in light of what you see.”*<sup>12</sup>

You may have heard of the Daniel Diet. This is where it comes from.

Daniel offered an alternative solution without compromising his beliefs.

You and I need determine early that we will not compromise our convictions and commitments to God. There were plenty of German pastors and Christians who

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<sup>8</sup> Adam Clarke’s Commentary, Daniel 1:7

<sup>9</sup> Daniel 1:8 (NLT2)

<sup>10</sup> Adam Clarke’s Commentary, Daniel 1:8

<sup>11</sup> Daniel 1:9 (NLT2)

<sup>12</sup> Daniel 1:11-13 (NLT2)

compromised their convictions early on to the Nazis, only to find themselves too deep. Only a few saw the evil early. It is very hard to do that in the midst of the situation. You must commit yourself early.

**Finally, Trust God to Honor Your Devotion and Faithfulness to Him (1:14-21).**

Trust God to honor your devotion and faithfulness to Him. Look what happened to Daniel and his friends when they honored God. Verses 14-21:

*The attendant agreed to Daniel's suggestion and tested them for ten days. At the end of the ten days, Daniel and his three friends looked healthier and better nourished than the young men who had been eating the food assigned by the king. So after that, the attendant fed them only vegetables instead of the food and wine provided for the others. God gave these four young men an unusual aptitude for understanding every aspect of literature and wisdom. And God gave Daniel the special ability to interpret the meanings of visions and dreams. When the training period ordered by the king was completed, the chief of staff brought all the young men to King Nebuchadnezzar. The king talked with them, and no one impressed him as much as Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. So they entered the royal service. Whenever the king consulted them in any matter requiring wisdom and balanced judgment, he found them ten times more capable than any of the magicians and enchanters in his entire kingdom. Daniel remained in the royal service until the first year of the reign of King Cyrus.<sup>13</sup>*

We see here that God blessed them physically, mentally, spiritually, socially, and gave them long influence.

God blesses us when we remain devoted and faithful to Him.

My friends, we live in strange times. I read about the changing math, you know, the new math. It used to be that you would see a math problem like this:

“A logger cuts and sells a truckload of lumber for \$10,000. His cost of production is four-fifths of that amount. What is his profit?” Well, what is it? It's \$2,000. Here's the new math, politically correct version: “An unenlightened logger cuts down a beautiful stand of 100 trees in order to make a \$2,000 profit. Write an essay explaining how you feel about this as a way to make money.”

Even in times of great trial and opposition, Christians must remain faithful to God and His commands, imitating Christ's own steadfastness as He endured persecution and death for our sakes.

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<sup>13</sup> Daniel 1:14-21 (NLT2)