

The Book of Daniel

Chapter One



The first chapter of Daniel provides not only an introduction to the book, but also a glimpse into the character of Daniel and our first example of God's faithfulness to him.

1:1-2 – An invasion of Judah

"In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god."

Jehoiakim – King of Judah. His real name is Eliakim. He reigned ___ years and was a son of Josiah. His father was murdered by Pharaoh Neco and his brother, Jehoahaz, reigned for three months before being taken prisoner by Pharaoh Neco. Pharaoh Neco then set Eliakim (Jehoiakim) up as king.

- Eliakim –
- Jehoiakim –

Nebuchadnezzar – A King of Babylon, son of Nabopolassar. He had a reign that spanned around ___ years. During his reign, Babylon was at its peak of power and dominance. He rebuilt almost every city and province within his dominion and later beautified Babylon by building the hanging gardens.

- Nebuchadnezzar –
- Nebo –

The timing of this event was approximately 605 B.C. Read also 2 Kings 23:31-24:4 and 2 Chronicles 36:1-8 for another perspective. In the account from 2 Kings, we read that God allowed this to befall Judah because of the "sins of Manassah" and the shedding of innocent blood. We also read here in Daniel that the "Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand..." Who was Manassah and what did he do? (See 2 Kings 21:1-18)

Kings of Judah	Good or Bad	Reign (B.C.)
Hezekiah	Good	715 – 686
Manassah	Bad	686 – 642
Amon	Bad	642 – 640
Josiah	Good	640 – 609
Jehoahaz	Bad	3 months
Jehoiakim	Bad	609 – 597
Zedekiah	Bad	597 – 586

Why would Nebuchadnezzar take some of the vessels of the temple to the house of his god?

Where have we seen Babylon before in the Bible? (See Genesis 11:1-9)

Shinar –

1:3-7 – The abduction of Daniel, Hanaiah, Mishael, and Azariah

"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; Children in whom [was] no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as [had] ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing

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them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king. Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: 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 Abednego.”

Ashpenaz – The _____ of Nebuchadnezzar’s court. He is called a eunuch in this passage, but the word eunuch also means “chief of court”. Whether they really were eunuchs is debatable.

Daniel – a young Jewish man from the royal family or nobility of Judah

- Daniel –
- Belteshazzar –

Hananiah – a young Jewish man from the royal family or nobility of Judah

- Hananiah –
- Shadrach –

Mishael – a young Jewish man from the royal family or nobility of Judah

- Mishael –
- Meshach –

Azariah – a young Jewish man from the royal family or nobility of Judah

- Azariah –
- Abed-nego –

Why would Nebuchadnezzar seek youths from the royal family and nobility of Judah to serve him?

What was the purpose of their education?

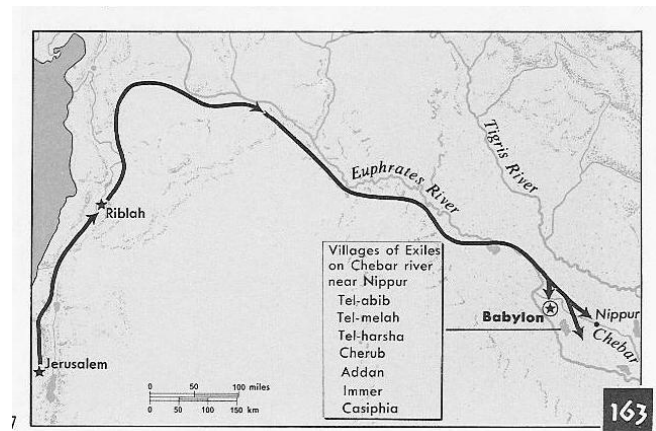


Figure 1: Exile of Judeans to Babylonia

Why were they renamed?

1:8-17 – Their first test

“But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why

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should he see your faces worse liking than the children which [are] of your sort? then shall ye make [me] endanger my head to the king. Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants. So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days. And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat. Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse. As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams."

In this passage, we see the intertwining of man's responsibility toward obedience and God's sovereign intervention to accomplish His will and bless those who love Him.

The Principle of Purpose

The first part of this passage mentions that Daniel "purposed in his heart" to be obedient to God. There is a significant principle here that we see throughout Scriptures. Look at the following examples:

- Joshua 24:15 –
- Ezra 7:10 –
- Ruth 1:17-18 –
- 1 Kings 5:5 –
- Acts 11:23 –

Did God bless each of these individuals for their determined attitude?

Purposing something in your heart is more than an act of stubbornness. It is born out of a conviction that your purpose is aligned with God's will and therefore has His blessing. Let's look at Daniel's conviction.

The King's Meat and Wine

There is a two-fold reason that Daniel and his friends did not partake of the king's meat and wine. First, it is likely that many of the meats eaten by the Babylonians violated the Jewish dietary laws. These laws prohibited them from eating "unclean" animals (see Leviticus 11:45-47). They were counted as unclean by either their identity (cloven foot, fowls of the air, ...) or by their method of death (strangled, natural death, torn to pieces, ...).

However, not all of the meat consumed at the king's table would be unclean. Couldn't they have just asked for beef, chicken, or some other kosher food? Also, the Jews commonly drank wine, so it is not likely that Daniel and friend would have refused the wine because it contained alcohol. The reason for their refusal to eat was the Babylonian custom of offering the first part of their libations (alcoholic beverages) and their meat to their idol gods. To eat meat and drink wine with the Babylonians was to take part in an idolatrous act. Read Deuteronomy 32:36-38 for an example of God's disapproval of those who took part in such acts.

Drawing the Line in the Sand

How did Daniel pursue his conviction? Is there something we can learn from this?

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What was the prince of the eunuch's concern with allowing Daniel and friends to eat pulse?

How did God intervene to make this test possible?

Explain the wisdom of Daniel's proposed solution in light of 1 Peter 2:17 and Romans 12:18.

What is pulse?

How did God bless Daniel and his friends? How was Daniel distinguished from them?

1:18-21 – The result of faithfulness

“Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king. And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm. And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus

Is it fair to say that faithfulness to God always results in material blessing?

Is it fair to say that faithfulness to God always results in some type of blessing?

God could have blessed Daniel and his friends in many ways. Knowing what you know about what lies ahead in Daniel and the rest of Scripture, why did the Lord choose this path of blessing?

Items for Discussion:

What have you learned from Chapter One that impacts your daily life?