

# Daniel

## Chapter One

### Daniel 1:1-2

**In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them to the land of Shinar to the house of his god, and he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god.**

- Babylon ascends as an Empire at end of 7<sup>th</sup> century/ beginning of 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. (domination by empires can be traced to Genesis 11—Tower of Babel on the plains of Shinar is synonymous with opposition to God—a place where wickedness was at home, and any uprightness could expect opposition. It was a place of false religion, self will, and great pride. The basis for 'enmity' can be traced to Genesis 3:15)
- In 609 BC—Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar, attacked Haran—when he dies, Nebuchadnezzar ascends throne and becomes the greatest ruler and most competent monarch of ancient times (ascends throne on September 6, 605BC). He brings about economic influence and political power.
- Timing is given in terms of events in secular history.
- Jerusalem has been attacked due to Babylonian expansionist policy
- The fall/destruction took place in 3 stages: 605, 597, and 587 BC (described in II Kings 24:1—25:1)
- Siege described in Daniel 1 –took place during first stage (Daniel grew up in Israel under good king—Josiah)
- Two ways to conquer a people: Use greater manpower/force/resources to keep a people in subjugation-----or-----Remove the youth and indoctrinate (prepare them to live in alternate kingdom—to think like Babylonians)
- Babylon and Jerusalem represent 2 cities to which men and women belong (2 gates, 2 ways, 2 masters)
- Daniel Chapter 1 is describing a robbery that is taking place—like the robbery that took place in the Garden of Eden (God is robbed of His possessions/blasphemies take place)
- Immediate consequence of this defeat—the disappearance of the City of God.
- The Lord is involved in the defeat of His own people. Daniel states this based on his belief of prophecy (foretelling/forthtelling)—During the reign of Hezekiah, Isaiah prophesied future judgment in Isaiah 39:6-7

- Prophecy is the interpretation of history from the standpoint of God. Consider Jehoiakim from prophetic standpoint: II Chron 36:5, II Kings 24:3-4, Deut 28:47, 49, 52, 58. God will always fulfill His word—allowing consequences to Himself and His people (Isaiah 40:8, Matt 24:35). His ultimate goal is MERCY.
- Vessels of the House of God—gold and silver cups used for Temple service. Hezekiah had shown these to the Babylonians 100 years earlier (Isaiah 39:2,4,6). Seized because of their natural value and as trophies of war.
- Placed in the treasury of his god--Marduk

### **Daniel 1:3-4**

**Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his officials, to bring in some of the sons of Israel, including some of the royal family and of the nobles, youths in whom was no defect, who were good-looking, showing intelligence in every branch of wisdom, endowed with understanding, and discerning knowledge, and who had ability for serving in the king's court; and he ordered him to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.**

- As Nebuchadnezzar took Israel into captivity—he took some of the most promising young men into his royal service. Leadership is not reserved for the Chaldeans alone—but offered to those who excel from among the exiles. (Chosen on basis of knowledge of every branch of wisdom—ethical and religious--and appearance)
- Youths approximately 15 years old—Isolated, Indoctrinated, Compromise, Confusion
- Exiles are tutored in Babylonian/worldly wisdom. To study Babylonian literature, they are subjected to an alien thought world. According to Sumerians (Babylonians)—2 classes inhabited the universe: human race and the gods. Pre-eminence belonged to the gods—who were not all equal. Babylonian religious study included magical, astrological, and scientific study. Study of such topics was banned in Israel (Deut 18:10-12, I Sam 28:3). Moses had been taught all the wisdom and art of Egypt—Acts 7:22.
- There was a difference between Babylon's spoken language (Chaldean—Aramaic mixed with Babylonian words) and written language (Akkadian)
- Ashpenaz—sometimes referred to as a eunuch—it is not implied in his title.

### **Daniel 1:5-7**

**And the king appointed for them a daily ration from the king's choice food and from the wine which he drank, and appointed that they should be educated three years, at the end of which they were to enter the king's personal service. Now among them from the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. Then the commander of the officials assigned new names to them; and to Daniel he assigned the name Beltshazzar, to Hananiah Shadrach, to Mishael Meshach, and to Azariah Abed-nego.**

- Choice food—food from royal table.
- Change of names—identity (indoctrination and confusion)
- Daniel (My Judge is God)—Belteshazzar (lord of the straightened treasure)
- Hananiah (Yahweh has shown grace)—Shadrach (the command of Aku—moon god)
- Mishael (who is what God is?)—Meshach (who is what Aku is?)
- Azariah (Yahweh has helped)—Abed-nego (servant of Nebo)

### **Daniel 1:8-10**

**But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself. Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials, and the commander of the officials said to Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has appointed your food and your drink; for why should he see your faces looking more haggard than the youths who are your own age? Then you would make me forfeit my head to the king."**

- Four youths—taken captive—have the courage to request permission to follow dietary laws of Torah—Lev 11, Deut 14
- These godly youth are thrust into an ungodly environment and get to choose how they will live. We ALWAYS have a choice—it is what we do with it.
- Meat on menu had most likely been sacrificed to gods of Babylon (Marduk, Nebo, Ishtar) and the wine—libations to these deity.
- Forbidden food—how satan tripped up Adam and Eve.
- This initial choice of Daniel—to not defile himself—set him up to be used by God for the rest of his life.
- Daniel chose restraint and temperance over indulgence and sensual pleasure. If we are ever going to be faithful in the big things—we must exercise faithfulness in the unseen/small opportunities
- He made the decision before God before seeking permission (made up his mind=purposed/decisive)
- Sought permission—stance of humility, with an expectation of God to support his stand.
- Jonathan Edwards made a list of 70 resolutions he completed before 20<sup>th</sup> birthday (never do anything but what tends to the glory of God—never do anything he would be afraid to do if it was an hour until the last trump)
- Overseer—answers to the king and does not want to pay for this test with his own life. (His heart toward Daniel: favor and compassion)
- Key for this section: to share a meal was to commit oneself to friendship/covenant. Daniel wanted to remain in friendship/covenant with the Lord.

### **Daniel 1:11-13**

**But Daniel said to the overseer whom the commander of the officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, "Please test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then let our appearance be observed in your presence, and the appearance of the youths who are eating the king's choice food; and deal with your servants according to what you see."**

- Daniel proposes testing the Lord's ways against the ways of the world.
- They were not 'living on bread alone' but on every word that proceeded from the mouth of God.
- Hosea 9:3
- Amos 7:17
- Servant would have received a benefit from exchanging rich food for vegetables (he was able to eat from the king's table)

### **Daniel 1:14-16**

**So he listened to them in this matter and tested them for ten days. And at the end of ten days their appearance seemed better and they were fatter than all the youths who had been eating the king's choice food. So the overseer continued to withhold their choice food and the wine they were to drink, and kept giving them vegetables.**

- Initially—this way of eating was to last 10 days—a trial
- In initial 10 days—appeared physically better than the others
- The Lord is the One who blesses our food/bodies
- The stance of these four through their first test—strengthens them for the rest of the trials they will face.
- Isaiah 3:1-3

### **Daniel 1:17-18**

**And as for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every branch of literature and wisdom; Daniel even understood all kinds of visions and dreams. Then at the end of the days which the king had specified for presenting them, the commander of the officials presented them before Nebuchadnezzar.**

- These four youths were granted special intellectual ability from the Lord ( Job 28:28—the fear of the Lord)—Wisdom was always intended to come relationally—not from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. James 1 tells us that it is available from Him through inquiry.

- Chapter 1 demonstrates that though God’s people are in exile due to God’s judgment—He is with them and able to bless their obediences.
- They mastered Akkadian and Sumerian scholarship—plus developed spiritual gifts: interpreting dreams and visions (Joseph excelled in the same gift while serving in Egyptian courts)
- Though the four were exposed to all the knowledge of Babylonian wisdom/culture—it did not result in conversion to an alien religion (accessed their mind/not their heart)
- Ways to approach culture:
  - 1) Resistance of culture
  - 2) Be Christ of the culture—social gospel—love and tolerance
  - 3) Separate spheres—Romans 13:1-7
  - 4) Transformation of culture—work within as agents of change
  - 5) In the world but not of it—John 17:16
  - 6) Sheep in the midst of wolves—Matt 10:16

Daniel teaches us—that in living in a hostile culture—our struggle is not to make the culture ‘Christian’—but how the godly can survive/thrive when subjected to a hostile culture.

- Colossians 1:9, 2:9-10

### **Daniel 1:19-21**

**And the king talked with them, and out of them all not one was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king’s personal service. And as for every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and conjurers who were in all his realm. And Daniel continued until the first year of Cyrus the king.**

- When the time of testing arrives—the four excel beyond the efforts of their peers.
- Receive government posts
- Magician: hartummim—one who used an inscribed chart/design to answer a question that was put to them.
- Enchanter: assapim—a soothsayer---a snake charmer
- These four youth function in the same arena—but do not access wisdom by the same means. They are ten times better—greater wisdom—ask and hear from the Lord.
- Daniel is in the royal academy for approximately 3 years. Arrived in Babylon 2-3 years after first invasion. His term of service would last more than 65 years (the length of the Babylonian captivity—probably helped negotiate the release of the exiles). Return to the land was promised in Deut 30:3-5, Jer 25:12
- II Chron 36:22-23, Ezra 1:1-4 (Isaiah 44:28, 45:6, Jer 25:8-14, 26:10)

# Daniel Chapter One-----Workbook

## **Project:**

Read Isaiah 58. Set aside time to fast and pray. Choose a form of fasting (food, sweets, media...) for the period of time it takes to complete chapter one of Daniel.

## **Harmonize:**

What else do we know about the land of Shinar from the scriptures?

## **Dig:**

- 1) When does the Book of Daniel take place?
  
- 2) What do we know about Daniel (the man) from the clues found in chapter one?
  
- 3) Who are the Chaldeans?
  
- 4) In what ways did Nebuchadnezzar attempt to transform these youths from a Hebrew identity to a Babylonian mindset?
  
- 5) What did God do in these young men to prepare them to serve in Nebuchadnezzar's courts?
  
- 6) How did Daniel respond to the requirements set out for him?
  
- 7) How long were they tested—fasting from choice food?

8) What did Nebuchadnezzar transfer from Jerusalem to Babylon?

9) What effect does it have on someone to change their name?

10) Why would eating the king's food be a cause for defilement?

**Discuss:**

1) How are Portland and Babylon similar? How are they different?

2) If you were put in similar circumstances to Daniel and his three friends—would you have responded in the same manner? Why or why not?

3) Are you confined by any trial (circumstance) against your will? How are you learning to thrive in the situation?

**Point of Prayer:**

Pray for the refugee crisis—and how the church can display the ways of Jesus.

**Integrate:**

What other scriptures come to mind as you read this chapter?

**Application:**

- 1) Is fasting a regular spiritual discipline for you?
- 2) What lessons have you learned from fasting?
- 3) Are you aware of any situation that you find yourself in where you come away with a sense of being defiled?
- 4) What do prisoners of war and refugees have in common?
- 5) What can we learn about suffering in chapter one?
- 6) If you were taken captive in war—what 3 friends would you desire to share this trial with? Why?
- 7) Do you read books that you disagree with? Why? Why not?