

# CAPITOL STUDIES

JANUARY 17, 2024 • WEEK 2



## DANIEL: CHRIST'S CIVIL SERVANT IN BABYLON

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### *Verse of the Week*

#### Daniel 1:8

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.

## Daniel: A Committed Civil Servant



**T**HE BOOK OF DANIEL is one of the most interesting portions of the Word of God. Throughout history God has from time to time raised up men who, in a very special way, exemplified strengths of character and powers of leadership. The Old Testament prophet Daniel was such a man. The biography and remarkable prophecies of this man of God are recorded in the book of Daniel. In G. H. Lang's very excellent treatment of the book of Daniel, he wrote the following: "A tool must fit the hand of the workman, the sword the hand of the soldier: God's instrument must be adapted to His use: His coworker must correspond with Himself: the character of the prophet must represent worthily the God before whom he stands and for whom he speaks."<sup>1</sup> Daniel was such a person. The book of Daniel is one of the most colorful and significant books in all the Bible.

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## INTRODUCTION

The prophet, a man for all seasons, stands in the gap through one pagan government after another as God's unequalled model of integrity. The book of Daniel is a lamp of prophecy which shines brighter and brighter as the present age of grace grows darker and darker nearer to Christ's return. It announces in advance and with unerring precision the destiny of men and nations. It is the Old Testament key to prophecy without which much of the New Testament would remain locked forever.

As you read through the story of Daniel, you will discover that he remained a humble, godly man of character through adversity and prosperity. How did he do it? I believe that Daniel was able to stay resolute because his faith was anchored in the sovereignty of God. Daniel believed that God had everything in His control, and that He was orchestrating all the events in the world around him to accomplish His purposes and to declare His glory. Herein lies the big idea of the book of Daniel: God is sovereign over all things.<sup>2</sup> In this chapter, Daniel illustrates the results of a life of commitment. He was consistent in his witness to God in the midst of great pressures. Through all his trials he remained faithful and was rewarded.

### I. THE REBELLION OF DANIEL'S PEOPLE BRINGS JUDGMENT

Although Daniel was in right relationship with God, that was not true of the nation as whole. Their sin had become so great that God brought the judgment that He had predicted many years before (Deut. 28:15-62; Deut. 31:16-21; Isaiah 39:6, 7).

#### A. Daniel Was Taken to Babylon

*Daniel 1:1-3*

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

*<sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>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.<sup>3</sup>*

Daniel, through no fault of his own, found himself captive in a foreign land and was exposed to many practices that were contrary to the Word of God. Daniel was likely only in his mid-teens, and yet he had a maturity and dedication about him that few have at that age. He must have been taken to Babylon because his captors saw a lot of ability and potential in him. Daniel records the first of three sieges which Nebuchadnezzar directed against Jerusalem. The destruction of the city and deportation of the Jews to Babylon mark the beginning of a long period of history which has come to be called the "times of the Gentiles." From the time



of this conquest of Jerusalem until the second coming of Christ, Jerusalem will be ruled by Gentile world powers.

One key thing to note in these verses is that Jehoiakim was given by God into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. This is the providence of the Lord (“Adonai” – absolute Owner and Master of all) on display.

## B. Daniel Was Trained in Babylon

Ashpenaz was to take captive four...

*Daniel 1:4*

*...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.*

Because of the family position (royalty) and his physical and mental ability, Daniel was chosen for training by the Babylonians. “Youth,” *yeledim*, refers to men between the ages of 15 and 20. They were to have the physical and mental qualities to work in the king’s court. This training involved instruction in a very complicated language and learning what was considered the wisdom of the day. The Chaldeans were considered specialists in the fields of magic and astrology. The leaders saw great good in Daniel. If he was successful in his training, although still a captive, he would probably occupy a preferred place in Babylon.

## C. Daniel Was Tested in Babylon

*Daniel 1:5*

*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.*

The problem that Daniel faced was that the training involved eating what was contrary to the Mosaic law. The delicacy of the food was not the issue, for it was the same that the king himself ate. Something about it, however, would have caused Daniel to defile himself if he had eaten it. He now had a choice to make. Should he do what he knew in his conscience was wrong, or should he jeopardize his whole future by remaining true to God and requesting some other kind of food? We are not informed precisely what offended these godly Jews, but likely the meat had been offered to idols or was a variety prohibited by the law.

*Daniel 1:6-7*

*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 Belteshazzar, to Hananiah Shadrach, to Mishael Meshach and to Azariah Abed-nego.*

In a further attempt to indoctrinate the young Hebrew men, the Babylonians changed their names. Their Hebrew names denoted their







worship and dedication to the true God. Their new names were statements of trust in the heathen gods of the Chaldeans. Daniel (“God is my judge”) was changed to Belteshazzar (“Bel protect his life”). Bel was the name of a Babylonian god. Hananiah (“Yahweh is gracious”) became Shadrach (“the command of the moon god”); Mishael (“Who is like God?”) became Meshach (“Who is like Aku?”—one of the heathen gods); and Azariah (“Yahweh is my helper”) became Abed-nego (“the servant of Nego,” another heathen god). The Babylonians hoped that these new names would help the youths forget their God and gradually become more like the heathen people with whom they were living and studying. Ashpenaz, the king’s eunuch (court official), was castrated to maintain his undivided attention to Nebuchadnezzar. Probably Daniel and the other youths were similarly conscripted.

Could Daniel afford to be different? Could he afford to face the wrath of the king and openly stand against wrong? What would be the problem of eating food that had first been offered to some heathen god as an act of worship? Were the king’s plans for their food really that serious? Did it matter? The king had given his orders, and many would have argued that they were only submitting to the authority of the powers that be, that they must obey the law of the land. After all, did not the king have authority given by God? Would not their compromise be quite harmless? Could they obtain a greater good by going along with the king’s plans? Do God’s commands ever override the laws of the land? If so, when?

How do Paul’s words fit with Daniel’s concern?

*1 Corinthians 8:4-13*

*[C]oncerning eating things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and there is no God but one.... However not all men have this knowledge; ...if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol’s temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols? For through your knowledge, he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died. And so, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble.*

## II. THE RESOLVE OF DANIEL’S HEART BRINGS TESTING

To remain faithful to God meant risking their favored positions, incurring the wrath of the king, and possibly losing their lives.

### A. Daniel's Request to Abstain

*Daniel 1:8*

*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.*



Daniel did not delay his decision. He resolved not to compromise. Because he had determined to be faithful to His God in the past, it was easier for him to make the right decision at this point. The change of residence, status, and names had given these Hebrew youth plenty of opportunity to submit to the ideas of this new land, but they had not. Maybe many other Jews taken into captivity did not consider the king's commands a problem, but these did.

*Daniel 1:9-13*

*Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials,<sup>10</sup> 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."<sup>11</sup> But Daniel said to the overseer whom the commander of the officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah,<sup>12</sup> "Please test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink.<sup>13</sup> 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 refused the shortsighted approach to life which sacrifices the eternal on the altar of the present. His whole life seems beyond reproach. Not a single sin is recorded against him. We are not to imagine that he was actually sinless, but we are given to appreciate that his deepest motives had the glory of God in view. He did not approach his supervisor in an arrogant and defiant manner, nor did he assume superiority. He requested in a gracious and tactful yet firm and uncompromising way. Daniel proposed to the one in charge of his training that the four young men have a ten-day trial period. During these ten days they would follow their own diet. If at the end they were in poorer condition than the other captives, they would then eat the king's food. This did involve some danger to Daniel, his friends, and to the one responsible for them, for it could have cost their lives.

## B. Daniel's Blessing from Abstaining

*Daniel 1:14-17*

*So he listened to them in this matter and tested them for ten days.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> So the overseer continued to withhold their choice food and the wine they were to drink, and kept giving them vegetables.<sup>17</sup> 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.*

What was the outcome? God, in His providence, directly intervened in several matters:

1. He prepared the heart of the overseer to grant Daniel's request. This steward had an affectionate regard for Daniel. This proves





that God has access to the minds and wills of even unregenerate men and can impact them as He wills. What the steward chose to do of his own free will was exactly what God had chosen for him to do.

2. God sustained Daniel and his brethren so that they suffered no ill effects from such a diet, but instead they were in better health than their pagan peers. They proved that life is more than meat and drink. They put their emphasis upon exercising themselves unto godliness, and they reaped the benefits of bodily health in the process.
3. God gave Daniel and his friends all sorts of knowledge and skills. They surpassed everyone else in the kingdom in their knowledge of the Chaldean language, literature, arts, crafts, and sciences.
4. God gave additional ability to Daniel. He was made to understand all visions and dreams.

Even Daniel's earlier training, excellent knowledge, and flawless physical appearance were but the preparations of a sovereign God.

### III. THE REWARD OF DANIEL'S CONVICTION BRINGS PROMOTION

*Daniel 1:18-21*

*Then at the end of the days which the king had specified for presenting them, the commander of the officials presented them before Nebuchadnezzar. <sup>19</sup>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. <sup>20</sup>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. <sup>21</sup>And Daniel continued until the first year of Cyrus the king.*

These young men were thoroughly instructed; they had extensive courses in liberal arts, which gave them proficiency in all the humanities, but they never adopted the philosophy or the religion of the Chaldeans.

God, in His providential and sovereign will, was working out the eternal purposes of His plan, and the details called for a Jewish prime minister and prophet to counsel several pagan Gentile kings and disclose to them (and to us) the course of world empires.<sup>4</sup> Nothing happens by accident.

### CONCLUSION

Daniel served from Nebuchadnezzar to Cyrus, through at least four major rulers in the ancient land of Babylon. He was used of God to give guidance and counsel to the greatest kings of the empires. And he did it starting as a young man.

1. Daniel had an undivided heart for God, which is why God could use him in such a big way. How is your heart?

Theme Verse

Daniel said,  
“Let the name of God be **blessed** forever and ever,  
For **wisdom** and **power** belong to Him.  
It is He who changes the **times** and the **epochs**;  
He **removes** kings and **establishes** kings;  
He gives **wisdom** to wise men and **knowledge** to men of understanding.”

Daniel 2:20-21

- 2. God’s grace provided Daniel with all the gifts he needed to do the job God wanted him to do. In like manner, God will bestow on you the gifts you need to do the job He has called you to do.
- 3. God's blessings on Daniel's life were in proportion to his willingness to remain true to His God, not compromising his commitment and conscience. How does this relate to your life and service?

*Dare to Be a Daniel*

Philip P. Bliss (1873), musical composer of “It is Well”

1. Standing by a purpose true,  
Heeding God's command,  
Honor them, the faithful few!  
All hail to Daniel's band!

2. Many giants, great and tall,  
Stalking through the land,  
Headlong to the earth would fall,  
If met by Daniel’s band.

*Dare to be a Daniel!*  
*Dare to stand alone!*  
*Dare to have a purpose firm!*  
*Dare to make it known!*

3. Hold the gospel banner high;  
On to vict’ry grand!  
Satan and his host defy,  
And shout for Daniel’s band.

Pastor Arin Hess

FOOTNOTES

- 1. G. H. Lang, *The Histories and Prophecies of Daniel*, Oliphants LTD, London, 1941, pg. 9.
- 2. Wiersbe, Warren W. *Be Resolute (Daniel): Determining to Go God's Direction*, David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.
- 3. All Scripture quotations, unless noted, are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, 1995 Update.
- 4. Some of this material is taken from Edward Watke Jr., *Study of the Book of Daniel*, Revival in the Home Ministries, Augusta, GA, 1992, pgs. 6-9.



WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY

Meeting during the  
108<sup>th</sup> Legislature’s  
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7:00–8:00 A.M. Wednesdays

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12:00 P.M. Wednesdays

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