

The Book of Daniel.04. Chapter 1

This morning, we continue in the series on the Book of Daniel looking at chapter 1

- Daniel chapter 1 is foundational to the book, setting forth the overall theme of the book which is the sovereignty of God, giving certain details that will be “picked up” later in the book, and introducing Daniel by establishing the motivation of his life

Outline of chapter

1:1-2 - The Historical Setting: First Stage of the Babylonian Exile

1:3-7 - Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah Selected to Serve in the Court of the King

1:8-16 - Daniel and Companions Tested and Remain Faithful to God

1:18-21 - Daniel and Companions Approved to Serve in the Court of the King

1:1-2 - The Historical Setting: First Stage of the Babylonian Exile

- **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. ² And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, 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 placed the vessels in the treasury of his god.*

- **There are at least four things of importance we can observe in these verses**

(1) The Sovereignty of God

- The sovereignty of God is seen in numerous places in this chapter, as well as the whole book, being first expressed in verse 1, “*the Lord gave...*”

- The Hebrew word “*adon*,” literally translated “*Lord*,” is not the Personal Name of Yahweh

(2) The Babylonians Under King Nebuchadnezzar Besiege Jerusalem

- This is the beginning of the fulfillment of the curses of the covenant (Lev. 26:33; Deut. 28:64) and prophecies from God (Isaiah 39:6; Jer. 25) that, because of the rebellion and sin against God, Jerusalem would be destroyed and the people taken into exile, which finally occurred in 587 B.C.

(3) The Date

The sovereignty of God fulfilling His word is manifested in the real world of time-space history, and, as is often done in the Book of Daniel, a specific date is given

- **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.*

- This is the year 605 B.C., the date of the first stage of the three stages of the Babylonian exile

- The date was after the historic Battle of Carchmish, when the Babylonian army under Nebuchadnezzar defeated Egypt, and Judea with Jerusalem, which was a vassal kingdom under Egypt, came under the rule of the Babylonian Empire and Nebuchadnezzar

Daniel’s dating is according to the Babylonian calendar system

- This is important to understand because different books of the Bible, both in the OT and NT, use different calendar systems for dating events and, to the ignorant, they seem to contradict

- While Daniel dates this event according to the Babylonian system, “*in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim*,” Jeremiah dates it in the “*fourth year of Jehoiakim*” (Jer. 25:1)
- This is the same way of dating this current year by different calendar systems, for example:
 - (a) Gregorian calendar: 2024 A.D. - “Anno Domini,” “The year of our Lord” from the birth of Jesus
 - (b) Hebrew calendar: 5784 - from the date of the Exodus, Exodus 12:1
 - (c) Islamic calendar: 1446 A.H. - “Anno Hijra,” from the year Muhammad left Mecca to go to Medina
 - (d) Freemasonry calendar: 6024 A.L. - “Anno Lucis,” “Year of light,” from the year of Genesis 3, “the Year of Lucifer” (“Light Bearer”) who, according to Albert Pike, in “*Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Rite of Freemasonry*,” is the god of Freemasonry

(4) The Vessels of God’s Temple are Taken

- **There are two important things about this sovereign act of God**

(a) The significance of this cannot be overemphasized because it demonstrates that the outward, physical “institutional means of grace,” such as the temple, have no spiritual power in and of themselves to save, their use can be corrupted, and, as a result can come under the just judgment and wrath of God to be destroyed

- The people of Israel were deceived, trusting in the temple while rebelling in sin (Jer. 7:4)
- Jesus said outward “religion” without inward relationship of love of God that is proven by the fruit of obedience to God will bring “*greater condemnation*” (Matt. 23:14; John 15:1-10)
- Jesus said to the Pharisees, quoting Hosea 6:6, “*I desire mercy, not sacrifice*” (Matt. 9:13)
- The temple in Jerusalem was destroyed twice, in 587 B.C. and in 70 A.D. (Matt. 23:38)

(b) On the “horizontal” level of human perspective, Nebuchadnezzar putting the vessels of God’s temple in “the house of his god” was understood to be a demonstration that “his god” is greater and more powerful than Yahweh, the God of Israel

- This same thing is expressed by Muslims when they say, “Allah Akbar,” “Allah is greater”

1:3-7 - Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah selected to serve in the court of the King

- **Daniel 1:3-7** = *Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility, ⁴ youths without blemish, of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to stand in the king’s palace, and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans. ⁵ The king assigned them a daily portion of the food that the king ate, and of the wine that he drank. They were to be educated for three years, and at the end of that time they were to stand before the king. ⁶ Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah. ⁷ And the chief of the eunuchs gave them names: Daniel he called Belteshazzar, Hananiah he called Shadrach, Mishael he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego.*

- **There are at least 6 things of importance we can observe in these verses**

(1) As Daniel and the others are introduced, we learn a number of things about them

- (a) Their personal Jewish names

- They are “*Daniel*,” “God is my judge,” “*Hananiah*,” “Yahweh is gracious.” “*Mishael*,” “Who is like God,” and “*Azariah*,” “Helped by Yahweh”

(b) They are “*of the royal family and of the nobility*”

- This means they are of the genealogy and related to King David
- Most significantly, along with their names, this would be their personal identity
- They would have grown up in, been accustomed to, and comfortable with the culture, manner of interaction, and way of life of the most politically powerful people in a king’s court

(c) They are “*youths*”

- Because the Hebrew word “yeled” can mean an age anywhere from a child to late teens, we cannot know their precise age
- The important thing is that at this age their character is being formed and matured

(d) Because “image” is so important in human judgment, they are physically good looking, being negatively “*without blemish*” and positively “*of good appearance*”

- Not like Jesus Who had no “*appearance that we should be attracted to him*” (Isa. 53:2)

(e) Being “*endowed with knowledge*” and “*understanding learning*” they, like so many Jewish people, are smart and highly intelligent

(f) Being “*competent to stand in the king’s palace*,” they have a high level of performance and achievement so as to be given the premier places of authority and responsibility as counselors to the king

(2) They are placed by the king under the authority of “*Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch*”

- The “*chief eunuch*,” literally “*Rab-saris*” meaning “chief officer,” is one of the highest-ranking officials in the Babylonian court and kingdom under King Nebuchadnezzar
- **Jeremiah 39:3** = *Then all the officials of the king of Babylon came and sat in the middle gate: Nergal-sar-ezer of Samgar, Nebu-sar-sekim the Rab-saris, Nergal-sar-ezer the Rab-mag, with all the rest of the officers of the king of Babylon.*
- The fact that this high official was given the responsibility to educate and assimilate these “*sons of Judah*” (1:6) shows the immense importance and the highest level of their education

(3) They are to be trained in the learning “*the literature and language of the Chaldeans*”

- This education, which would be “*for three years*,” would include learning the history, culture, way of life, and religion of the Babylonians
- While Deuteronomy 18:9 forbids “*following the practices*” of the demonic cultures, it doesn’t forbid the learning about them
- Because understanding the “enemy” is critical to winning the war, this is important for “apologetics,” the “defense” of the faith by intellectual reasoning and argumentation

(4) They are to be assimilated into the Babylonian culture in two ways

(a) They are “assigned a daily portion of the food that the king ate, and of the wine that he drank.”

- As such, it would be a peer pressure and “enticement/seduction” to eat and drink because:

- (1) This would have been the best, most “pleasurable” food to eat (“What’s wrong with going to the best, most expensive restaurants to savor and enjoy the finest food?” - Gen. 3:6)
 - (2) The belief that this was the best food “authorized by the government” for a healthy diet
 - (3) The great honor being given the choice food of the king and, thus, the worldly “self-esteem” to be among the “elite” favored by the king
 - (4) The fear that not partaking of it would dishonor the king and result in your own death
- This is clearly the fear and primary motivation of Ashpenaz (Dan. 1:10)

(b) They were given Babylonian names

- This was intended to “transition” their personal identity by establishing

- (1) The Babylonian authority over them, for a name is given to another by the higher authority
- (2) Their adoption of the religion and gods of the Babylonians

- This is expressed in the meaning of the names: “*Daniel called Belteshazzar,*” which may mean “Bel protects his life,” “Favored by Bel,” or “O Lady, wife of Bel, protect the king,” *Hananiah called Shadrach,*” which may mean “I am fearful of god” or “Command of Aku,” “*Mishael called Meshach,*” which may mean “Who is like Aku” or “I am of little account,” “*and Azariah called Abednego*” which may mean “servant of Nebo”

1:8-17 - Daniel and Companions Tested and Remain Faithful to God

- **Daniel 1:8-17** = *But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king’s food, or with the wine that he drank. Therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself. ⁹ And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs, ¹⁰ and the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, “I fear my lord the king, who assigned your food and your drink; for why should he see that you were in worse condition than the youths who are of your own age? So you would endanger my head with the king.” ¹¹ Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had assigned over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, ¹² “Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³ Then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king’s food be observed by you, and deal with your servants according to what you see.” ¹⁴ So he listened to them in this matter, and tested them for ten days. ¹⁵ At the end of ten days it was seen that they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king’s food. ¹⁶ So the steward took away their food and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables. ¹⁷ As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.*

- **There are at least 6 things of importance we can observe in these verses**

(1) Sovereignty of God

- The sovereignty of God is seen again in the words “*God gave...*”

- **Daniel 1:9** = *God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs*

- **Daniel 1:17** = *As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had*

(2) Daniel and others resolved not to defile themselves

- **Daniel 1:8** = *But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank. Therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself.*

The word translated “resolved” is literally “set in or grounded in his heart”

➔ **This is Daniel's foundational heart motivation that determined his actions**

The Scripture does not state what the particular reason was that would “defile” him

- While there have been different proposals of the reason, the most likely is that it would have been offered to the gods of Babylon, thus, just as Christians pray for God to bless and sanctify their food (1 Tim. 4:4), it would have been “made holy” to the Babylonian gods

➔ **The particular reason is probably not given because what is the critical principle is the foundational motivation of Daniel's heart that he “not defile himself”**

The word translated “defile” means “to make unclean, pollute, stain”

- It means to no longer be living according to the commandment of God that His people “*Be holy, for I am holy*” (Lev. 11:45)

- Being “defiled” and made “unclean” is not only a “legal” violation of the law of God that makes one guilty before God

➔ **It is the reality of personal pollution, corruption, and contamination that Personally repulses God and separates a person from His manifest, holy presence**

This is the most important principle in this chapter: the motivation of Daniel to be holy

➔ **It demonstrates the commitment of Daniel, as well as the others, to live and maintain a holy, sanctified life, being set apart to obey God and His commandments out of love and fear of God by not compromising with the surrounding worldly culture and all its pleasures**

While most Christians have a concept of sin that makes them “legally” guilty before God and, thus the absolute necessity of asking God to forgive them of all their sins, too many have little if any concept of living a holy life to God and not being “personally” “defiled”

The command, “Be holy for I am holy” is not an OT commandment that is, somehow, no longer applicable to Christians because we are “not under law but under grace”

- Being holy is the will and purpose of God commanded by Jesus and the whole NT

- **Matthew 5:48** = *You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

- **Romans 12:1-2** = *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

- **2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1** = *What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” ¹⁷ Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, ¹⁸ and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.” ¹ Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.*

- **Ephesians 4:24** = *Put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*

- **1 Thessalonians 4:3** = *This is the will of God, your sanctification*

- **1 Peter 1:14-16** = *As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance,¹⁵ but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,¹⁶ since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”*

➔ **Like Daniel, we are to be in the world and not of the world, doing the will of God**

- **1 John 2:15-17** = *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.¹⁷ And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.*

(3) It is of enormous significance that Daniel makes this choice as a “youth”

- “Youth” is the time in life that a person is making moral and spiritual choices that will form and mature their character throughout their life

- It is was because this was the foundational motivation of Daniel that God blessed him and could use him in the highest places of earthly power and authority in 2 empires

➔ **It was because of his uncompromising commitment to God that late in his life he chose to violate the law against praying and be thrown into the lion’s den (Dan. 6)**

(4) Daniel and his friends trusted God, agreeing to be tested

- In effect, this was a test of God, which, at appropriate times, is an act of faith (Mal. 3:8)

- This was the very opposite of the sin of testing God which is rooted in unbelief (Matt. 4:7)

➔ **It was from faith in their hearts that they were being faithful and obedient to God**

(5) As they were full of faith and faithful, God was faithful

- **Daniel 1:17** = *They were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king’s food*

➔ **In the real life “test,” God “proved” Himself to be faithful to them**

(6) God gave them spiritual gifts

- **Daniel 1:17** = *As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.*

➔ **These gifts, and especially Daniel’s, were vital for what happens in the rest of the Book**

1:18-21 - Daniel and Companions Approved to Serve in the Court of the King

- **Daniel 1:18-21** = *At the end of the time, when the king had commanded that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar.¹⁹ And the king spoke with them, and among all of them none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Therefore they stood before the king.²⁰ And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom.²¹ And Daniel was there until the first year of King Cyrus.*

- Because it was God’s will for them to be counselors to the king for the sake of His covenant people, God blessed and raised them up to this highest level of human government

→ This would fulfill God's word through Jeremiah 29:7, "*Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to Yahweh/ the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.*"