

## **Daniel: The Man Who Stood Faithful**

To set a time frame for the happenings in the book of Daniel, what was happening in the rest of the world at that time?

**Daniel lived in the sixth century before the birth of Jesus.**

**During this approximate period:**

- Construction began on the Acropolis in Athens.
- Mayan civilization flourished in Mexico.
- Aesop wrote his fables.
- Confucius and Buddha lived.
- Greek art began to truly excel.

Dan. 1: 1-2 Nebuchadnezzar conquers Jerusalem.

“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, with some of the articles of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the articles into the treasure house of his god.”

**Jehoiakim king of Judah:** This was a Judean king placed on the throne by the Pharaoh of Egypt. His name means “Yahweh raises up,” but the LORD did not raise him up at all – Pharaoh did.

**Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon:** This was the ruler of the Babylonian Empire. The name **Nebuchadnezzar** is a Hebrew transliteration of the Babylonian name *Nebukudduri-utzur*, which means “Nebu protects the crown.”

**Came to Jerusalem and besieged it:** Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem because the Pharaoh of Egypt had invaded Babylon.

- In response, prince Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptians at Charchemish, pursuing their army all the way down to the Sinai.
- Along the way (or on the way back), he subdued Jerusalem, which had been loyal to the Pharaoh of Egypt.

**“The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand”:**

- In this 597 B.C. deportation **Jehoiakim**, Ezekiel, and others were taken away. This deportation is described in 2 Kings 24:14-16.
- This was prophesied in Isaiah 39:7: *And they shall take away some of your sons who will descend from you, whom you will beget; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.*
- This prophecy leads some to think Daniel and his companions were made eunuchs.

The LORD gave Judah into the hands of the Babylonians for two reasons:

1. Israel's idolatry
2. Their failure to observe the Sabbaths for the land Leviticus 25:1-7 and 26:2-35.
  - This shows that God always settles accounts with those who refuse to respond to His warnings.
  - In the 587 B.C. invasion the city of Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed 2 Kings 25:9-10

**V. 2 “Some of the articles of the house of God”:** Nebuchadnezzar did not take *all* the furnishings of the temple, only **some**.

- The remaining furnishings were either hidden before Nebuchadnezzar came or they were brought to Babylon later.
- The confiscation of these items and their deposit in a Babylonian temple was a dramatic declaration by Nebuchadnezzar saying, “my god is better than your God.”
- Now the God of Israel had to vindicate Himself.
- This was a low time for Judah and God's people.
- It seemed that the God of Israel lost out to the gods of Assyria, Egypt, and Babylon.
- The Book of Daniel shows God vindicating Himself at a time when the conquest of Israel might have brought God's reputation into disgrace.

Allow me to interject at this point that the U.S. of America is not a perfect nation because there are imperfect people who inhabit it.

Yet, next to Israel, the U.S. is special in the Kingdom of God because of the covenant of April 1607 made between the Lord and the early settlers landing at Cape Henry, Virginia Beach.

All nations have a place in the heart and plans of the Lord for their destiny in His Kingdom, but the U.S. is one of two that have made a covenant with the Lord to follow the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This means the freedom in America to proclaim the Gospel and declare it to other nations is something this generation needs to contend for and take up the mantle and be faithful.

America is experiencing inward attacks on many fronts attempting to erode and eradicate our Christian heritage and silence the Gospel by accepting the gods of this world into our government, family, and church lives.

### **Babylon's system/plan of indoctrination.**

Dan. 1:3-4 **The best and the brightest of Jerusalem's young men are chosen and taken to Babylon.**

“Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel and some of the king’s descendants and some of the nobles, young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king’s palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans.”

- Bring some of the children of Israel: Nebuchadnezzar not only confiscated holy things from the temple but also the shining lights of Judah’s future, the young men 13 to 17 years old.
- A person’s world view is typically formed between the ages of 15 months to 13 yrs.
- The tactic of Nebuchadnezzar was to capture these youths and indoctrinate them into the Babylonian culture and incorporate them into the government and leadership of Babylon while they were young and pliable/easily persuaded.

### **The enemy is shrewd in his tactic and still works in the same way today:**

- The unrelenting effort of government is to educate children earlier and earlier under the guise of benevolent efforts to help parents out by educating the children.
- This tactic is called “indoctrination.”
- “**Indoctrination**” – “To instruct with a partisan or sectarian opinion, point of view or principle.”
- In an attempt to persuade children away from the godly instruction of the Christian home and the church, the education system is taking significant efforts to separate children from the family and turning the minds of the children away from the parents and home life.
- Matt 10:21 Jesus’ foretelling of last day attitudes among children-youth: “A brother will betray his brother to death, a father will betray his own child, and children will rebel against their parents and cause them to be killed.” NLT

### **Dan. 1:5-7 The Hebrew youths are groomed for the civil service.**

- The king appointed for them a daily provision of the king’s delicacies and of the wine which he drank, and three years of training for them, so that at the end of that time they might serve before the king.
- Now from among those of the sons of Judah were **Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah**.
- To them the chief of the eunuchs gave names: he gave **Daniel** the name Belteshazzar; to **Hananiah**, Shadrach; to **Mishael**, Meshach; and to **Azariah**, Abed-Nego.
- **The king appointed for them a daily provision of the king’s delicacies:**

- They were given the same food and wine prepared for the king was intended to be a special honor.
- In the ancient world, there was an enormous difference between the food enjoyed by the elite and what common people ate.

**To them the chief of the eunuchs gave names:**

The name **Daniel** (meaning *God is my judge*) was changed to **Belteshazzar** (meaning *Bel's prince*).

The name **Hananiah** (meaning *Beloved by the LORD*) was changed to **Shadrach** (meaning *Illumined by Sun-god*).

The name **Mishael** (meaning *Who is as God*) was changed to **Meshach** (which may mean *Who is like Shach*, which some believe was a Babylonian goddess corresponding to Ishtar or Venus).

The name **Azariah** (meaning *The LORD is my help*) was changed to **Abed-Nego** (meaning *Servant of Nego*).

**Three years of training for them:** The purpose of the food, names, and education was simple:

- This was an effort at total indoctrination, with the goal of making these young Jewish men leave behind their Hebrew God and culture by showing them the good life they could have if they would just convert.
- Nebuchadnezzar wanted to communicate to these young men, “look to *me* for everything.”

**Satan uses a similar strategy against believers today,  
wanting to indoctrinate us into the world system:**

Satan wants us to:

- Identify (name) us in reference to the world.
- Feed us what the world offers.
- Educate us in the ways of the world.

Daniel and his friends refused, insisting that they would look to God.

Dan. 1:8      **Daniel's decision to be faithful.**

**“But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore, he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.”**

**That he would not defile himself:**

- The ancient Hebrew word **defile** carries the thought of *polluting* or *staining*.
- That Daniel **requested** that he might not **defile himself** implies that he explained the spiritual basis for his request.
- He didn't make it seem that he wanted to avoid the king's food for other reasons.

**Therefore, he requested:**

- Daniel made a big deal over a little thing.
- The only way to go on with God is to be faithful in little things.
- We might ask, "Daniel, why bring religion into it?"
- Daniel realized that his relationship with God touched every area of his life, including what he ate.
- Significantly, the root of sin goes back to eating forbidden food.
- Luke 16:10 "If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest in little things, you won't be honest with greater responsibilities."

**That he might not defile himself:** Daniel and his friends considered the king's food defiled for at least three reasons:

1. It undoubtedly was not kosher.
  2. It was sacrificed to idols.
  3. Eating the king's food implied fellowship with Babylon's cultural system.
- Daniel did not object to the name given to him, because he knew who he was, and others could call him what they wanted.
  - Daniel did not object to Babylonian education, because he knew what he believed.
  - Daniel **did** object to the food from the king's table because eating it was direct disobedience to God's word.

"By eastern standards to share a meal was to commit oneself to friendship; it was of covenant significance."

**Nor with the wine which he drank:** God did not forbid drinking **wine**. Nevertheless, in pagan cultures most wine and meat were dedicated to the gods, so Daniel and his friends refused it.

**Therefore, he requested:** Daniel made a remarkably courageous decision, especially when there are reasons why it was a hard decision to make.

1. The king ordered the menu. Rejecting the menu was rejecting the king and could result in severe punishment.
2. Refusing the food might have branded them as being **uncooperative** and could have spoiled all chances of advancement (many other Hebrew youths **did** eat the food).

3. There was a **real threat of punishment**.

Ancient kings were well known for the severe and often sadistic punishments against those who crossed them.

Nebuchadnezzar was capable of great cruelty, he murdered the sons of one king of Judah before the king's eyes then immediately gouged out the eyes of the king, so his last memory would always be the murder of his sons (Jeremiah 39:6-7).

Other rulers of Judah were literally roasted to death over a fire (Jeremiah 29:22).

**The temptations to make compromises:**

- The food itself was no doubt pretty attractive and seemed a much better alternative than eating a vegetarian diet and water for three years.
- Mere distance made this challenging. Separated from family and home, it was easy to compromise.
- It was easy to *think that God had let them down* by allowing them to be carried away into Babylon.
- “Why should we risk our neck for a God who let me down?”
- Yet they were committed to obedience even if God did not fulfill their expectations.

**Daniel purposed/determined/set in his heart:**

**Daniel illustrated how to conquer a difficult trial and glorify God  
in the midst of testing:**

1. **The heart must be set.** Daniel **purposed in his heart**, making up his mind **beforehand** that he would not compromise.
2. **His life must be positive.** Daniel found favor with his superiors.
3. **Protest must be courteous.** Daniel **requested** to be excused from the king's table. He made a polite request, showing discretion.  
Making a stand for Jesus Christ does not mean we must be obnoxious.
4. **Self-denial must be sought.** Daniel and his friends knew this would cost them something, yet they were willing.  
“Be ready for a bad name; be willing to be called a bigot; be prepared for the loss of friendships; be prepared for anything so long as you can stand fast by Him who bought you with His precious blood.”

**The results of Daniel's courageous decision.**

Dan. 1:9      **God gave Daniel favor and goodwill with the authorities.**