

Lessons from Daniel 1

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The Book of Daniel was written by Daniel a Jew who, together with his countrymen, was taken into Babylonian exile around 600 BC. Precise historical documentation supports the claim that Daniel was indeed the author of the book named after him. Daniel was a contemporary of Jehoiakim, king of Judah; Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, kings of Babylon; Cyrus and Darius, both Medo-Persian kings; and others.

I. Discussion of the Chapter

A. The Historical Setting

1. **Verse 1**—The third year of Jehoiakim’s rule lasted from Fall 606 to Fall 605 BC. Under Nebuchadnezzar the Babylonian kingdom flourished and became a world empire.

2. **Verse 2**—God allowed the Babylonian exile to happen because His people had apostatized, worshiped idols, and gotten involved in all kinds of injustice and evil. The prophets had warned against the exile, calling the people to repentance in order to avoid the disaster (see Jer 4:5–31, where Shinar is another name for Babylon).

B. The Test for the Young Exiled

1. **Verse 3**—Daniel and his friends were part of the first of three deportations. It was customary to take the leading families first in order to secure the faithfulness of the rest of the captives to the new ruler.

2. **Verse 4**—Nebuchadnezzar choose young people because they are full of energy and drive, and can still be easily influenced. God often called young people such as Jesus and his disciples, Samuel, David, Jeremiah (Jer 1:6), and Timothy. However, God also calls older people such as Moses, Aaron, Noah, and Nicodemus. Likewise, God calls you and me to follow and serve Him.

3. **Verse 5**—Nebuchadnezzar’s decision may not have been harassment, but a privileged opportunity. To refuse would have been more than impoliteness; at that time, a refusal to do what was demanded could have dangerous consequences.

4. **Verses 6, 7**—The giving of new names signified that the young men were accepted and welcome at the Babylonian kingly court.

C. Daniel and His Friends’ Reaction

1. **Verse 8**—Daniel exhibited courage and faithfulness. He was obedient to God. His stand was a difficult one to take especially when his countrymen reacted to the contrary. It is hard to address an issue, when others have already compromised. Daniel’s life was in danger, yet for him obedience to God was more important than his own life.

In what ways could we become “unclean” today? Through a false use of the gift of sexuality; by eating unclean and unhealthy food; or by entertaining bad thoughts (Matt 15:18, 19).

2. **Verse 9**—Daniel experienced God’s help, and learned that those who remain faithful to God will not be abandoned by the Lord. They have wonderful experiences. However, we need to dare to be obedient. Whoever is not faithful does not give God a chance to intervene.

3. **Verse 10**—*In comparison to Daniel, how did the commander respond?*

- He was fearful and tense; Daniel did not show any fear.
- He was all alone; Daniel had God’s support.
- He did not believe in Yahweh; Daniel did.

- He only valued what this earthy life holds; Daniel focused on eternal life.
- He doubted the positive outcome of the test; Daniel exercised his faith that the outcome will be for God's glory.

4. **Verse 11**—Daniel turned to his immediate supervisor and did not give up after an initial failure.

How do we react to failures?

5. **Verse 12**—Daniel's simple food differed radically from the king's menu.

6. **Verse 13**—Daniel was courageous in proposing the direct comparison. *In what did he believe?*

- God's power
- The correctness of his decision
- The superiority of his meal plan
- Success
- Because he dared believe as he did, he dared ask that his friends and he be compared with the other young men (v. 13).

7. **Verse 14**—The official had doubts but, nevertheless, took the risk.

D. The Final Result

1. **Verses 15–17**—Daniel's exercise in faith results in success for Daniel; he received God's blessings, experienced God's power, and was strengthened in faith.

What possible reasons could there have been for Daniel and his friends to look better in just ten days?

- God's blessings
- The right food (see biblical health principles)
- Faster recovery after the walk through the desert

Besides the obvious external signs of well-being, there were positive consequences in their mental and spiritual health. When one part of the body is compromised, other parts are also affected. When we place our complete selves—both body and mind—into God's will, we experience total, comprehensive health (3 John 1:2).

2. **Verses 18–21**—At the final examination Daniel and his friends were ten times wiser than the wise men, astrologers, and scientists in the entire kingdom. They were called to serve the king. God's blessings are crucial.

Babylonian wisdom was mixed with paganism and idolatry. How was Daniel able to stay away from these elements?

- He was determined to be absolutely faithful to God and His will.
- *He remained dependent on God and was humble.*
- His experience mentioned in Dan 1 may have been a safeguard for future trials.
- His constant prayer life (Dan 6) and his study of Scripture (Dan 9) shaped him.
- God blessed and sustained him.

II. Application of the Chapter

The following principles are important for our lives:

- The positive effects of purity and health
- Faithfulness pays off.
- Absolute obedience to God makes a difference.
- Most of all, God supports his children.