

THE BOOK OF DANIEL

Daniel 1:8-21 | Session 3 | B.C. 606-603

Daniel and his friends along with other young people who were *of the king's seed and of the princes* (1:3), taken from their homes in Judah, became captives to the Babylonians in the *land of Shinar*, i.e., Babylon. The purpose of their abduction was so they might endure a rigorous three-year training course in which they would be taught *the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans*. That is, to brainwash them in the pagan ways so that they might forget all of the things of God, and the law of Moses, they had been taught in their Jewish homes. It is quite plausible that Nebuchadnezzar took these young boys in order to groom them to help win over future captives who would be brought from Judah to Babylon. *If you can win over the minds of the young people, they will be the influencers in the next generation*. Controlling the captives was the plan.

The first form of subjugation was a change of body; Castrate these young men to make them eunuchs. This was foretold in 2 Kings 20:17,18. This horrific practice of emasculation was abominable to the Jews, and eunuchs were not allowed in public worship partly because the mutilation was performed in honor of a heathen god (Deuteronomy 23:1). Eunuchs were often placed in high official roles perhaps due to their inability to fall into sexual impropriety. The second form of domination over these boys was a change of names; From Hebrew God-fearing names to pagan names of the Chaldean gods. The third form of control was a change of diet;

Verses 8,9—

But **Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine Daniel, requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself**. Daniel did not refuse the king's food because of his personal dietary preference. These boys were subjected to a diet that was unfit according to Jewish law; that is, *meat* which had been sacrificed and offered to idols. Gentile nations not only ate unclean animals, which were forbidden by Jewish law, but also the clean animals were first offered as victims to their gods, and part of the wine was poured out as a liquid offering on the pagan altars.

Daniel was obeying the law of Moses in which he was not allowed to eat meat (or food) offered to idols. Leviticus 3:17; 7:26; 17:10-14; 19:26; Exodus 34:14; 1 Corinthians 10:20.

The Law of Moses had been engrained in Daniel in his Jewish home. Perhaps others would have given in to their plight as captives; Daniel had the courage to speak up to **the prince of eunuchs** and **God had brought him into favour and tender love** with him (that is, God ordained *mercy and compassion*). We have seen God's hand of mercy in the same manner before in Genesis 39:21, *"But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison."* While every Proverb is not to be taken as doctrine for our own lives, there is a general Proverb that says, *"When a man's ways please the LORD, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him"* (Proverbs 16:7). Daniel's characteristics (purpose, prayer, prophecy, and integrity) were used by God to accomplish this mercy and compassion by the **prince of eunuchs**.

Verses 10-14—

God's Sovereign hand allowed the **prince of eunuchs** to hear Daniel out. His first reaction was fear. The king had given the order for all the boys to eat the king's food and drink the king's wine, what if Daniel and his three friend's **faces** were **worse liking** (sadder) than the others? The king would have the **head** of the **prince of eunuchs**. His job was to *teach them in the ways of the Chaldeans* (1:4). In Daniel's wisdom he implores the **prince** to give them **ten days; and let them give us pulse** (Literally, something that is sown; e.g., vegetables) **to eat, and water to drink**. Then, let's see how we look in comparison with the others.

Verse 15, 16—

Ten days was probably a reasonable request. Agreeing to it, it was evident at the end of the time period **their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat**.

Experiment completed **Melzar took away their portion...and gave them pulse** (a different Hebrew word than verse 12, but still indicates vegetables). This is not intended to be a diet that will bring one closer to God; in fact, the passage says nothing about Daniel wanting to be closer to God. Daniel was obeying God and His Law. That was all. As I mentioned earlier, Daniel only refused the king's food and wine because it had likely been offered or sacrifice to a pagan god. Don't develop a doctrine of eating from this passage. The rule of interpretation is, *don't make a doctrine or a rule for your own Christian living out of an historical account*.

Verse 17—

Children, this word can mean *boys, youth, sons*, but really not *young men* as the NIV translates it. These were 15-year-olds. We might call them teenagers today, but as parents, we would still consider our 15-year-old a child in many ways.

God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom. We have already seen in verse 4 that these boys were skillful in wisdom, cunning in knowledge, and understanding science; what God does here is take what they already have and expands it dramatically. There is no supernatural promise in Scripture to make you smarter than what you have studied (2 Timothy 2:15). Study God's Word and what you learn can be manifested in your life for His glory. I think there is a principle that when someone studies, whatever field it might be in, law, medical, marketing, finance, etc., which are governed by the laws of general revelation, the one who knows God will be better in his field than the person who does not know God. I'm not even talking about a Christian; I mean one who has a Biblical world view and understand there is a Creator behind it all. I have contended for quite some time that if you know the Bible you are a smarter person than those around you who don't know God's word. This is why the dumbing down of Christianity is such a tragedy. When it comes to the understanding Biblical principles we should not try to make things simpler, rather we should work at making people smarter so they can understand difficult principles. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction." Proverbs 1:7. So God can and will expand your natural knowledge to accomplish His will.

Verses 18,19—

Here is proof of what I just said, look what happened to these boys at the end of **the days**, that is three years. They were brought before the **king...and among them was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king.**

Verses 20,21—

In fact, the king **found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.** Daniel and the other boys were obedient to God and His law and the result was God blessed them. They lived for God and did not compromise in the face of great pain and pressure. When we put God first, no matter what crisis, we will be better equipped to make it through the trials and we will be able to help others along the way as well.