

Obeying God

Daniel 1

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**BIG BEND
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Why might some of the Jewish Rabbis not respect or acknowledge Daniel as a prophet of the highest esteem?

- 1) They say Daniel did not live such a mortified life as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, or some of the other prophets
- 2) He lived like a prince, and was a prime-minister of a state in a foreign country... he collaborated with a conqueror of Israel
- 3) He wrote his book in a heathen country where he had his visions – and not in the land of Israel

What makes the writings of Daniel important?

He speaks plainly of the time of the Messiah's coming & return. Jesus referred to Him when He spoke of His return in the Olivet Discourse.

Daniel 1:1-20

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 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. ³ 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, ⁴ 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. ⁵ And 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. ⁶ Now from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. ⁷ 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. ⁸ 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. ⁹ Now God had brought Daniel into the favor and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs. ¹⁰ And the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who has appointed your food and drink. For why should he see your faces looking worse than the young men who are your age? Then you would endanger my head before the king." ¹¹ So Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, ¹² "Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³ Then let our appearance be examined before you, and the appearance of the young men who eat the portion of the king's delicacies; and as you see fit, so deal with your servants." ¹⁴ So he consented with them in this matter, and tested them ten days. ¹⁵ And at the end of ten days their features appeared better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king's delicacies. ¹⁶ Thus the steward took away their portion of delicacies and the wine that they were to drink, and gave them vegetables. ¹⁷ As for these four young men, God gave them knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. ¹⁸ Now at the end of the days, when the king had said that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹ Then the king interviewed them, and among them all none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they served before the king. ²⁰ And in all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king examined them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm. ²¹ Thus Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus.

v1-2 – What happened during *the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah?*

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in 586 BC carrying off articles of the temple along with many Jews into captivity.

- This was the beginning of the “Times of the Gentiles.”

Why did God raise up Babylon to enslave Judah?

Two main reasons: Idolatry & Israel’s failure to observe the sabbaths for the land.

Leviticus 25:2-4 – *“When you enter the land I am going to give you, the land itself must observe a sabbath to the Lord. For six years sow your vineyards and gather their crops. But in the seventh year the land is to have a sabbath of rest, a sabbath to the LORD. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards.”*

What is idolatry and why was it a problem with God?

- Idolatry is compromising with the world in worshipping what is created instead of the Creator.
- Idolatry is like adultery... unfaithfulness to Whom faithfulness is due.

Observing the sabbaths were part of the Law... why was obeying the Law important for Israel?

Israel was set apart as God’s representatives to mankind on earth. Keeping the Law demonstrated faithfulness to God.

So, did the Israelites earn salvation by being obedient to the Law?

- No, that would be salvation-by-works... what all human religions think earns them favor with God for life after death.
- They were saved the same way we are saved today... by grace, the unmerited favor of God, through faith in His provision for eternal life.
Ephesians 2:8-9 – *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

We have the advantage today of knowing the details of the provision God made for our salvation... Jesus dying on the cross to pay the penalty of our sin. God’s

faithful in Old Testament times knew they couldn’t perfectly keep the Law so they had to trust in God’s grace and knew His provision would have something to do with the promised Messiah but didn’t know what.

v3-5 – Why did King Nebuchadnezzar include young Israelites in the training with his descendants?

He not only destroyed Jerusalem but took the shining lights of Judah’s future... the best and brightest of their children. Their indoctrination was intended to wipe out the culture of the Jews.

What do we know of Ashpenaz?

Ashpenaz was Nebuchadnezzar’s “master of the eunuchs” (v3) ...Eunuchs were in charge of royal harems; Daniel and his friends were probably emasculated

2 Kings 20:16-18 – *Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, “Hear the word of the Lord: ¹⁷ ‘Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and what your fathers have accumulated until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left,’ says the Lord. ¹⁸ ‘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.’”*

Why do you think that Daniel and his friends were chosen to partake of royal Babylonian instruction?

- King Nebuchadnezzar recognized that the Hebrews were intelligent, ingenious, inspired and had great potential in supporting his kingdom.
- The children and young men were to be of the noble and royal extraction – handsome, aptitude for learning, well informed, quick to understand, no physical abnormalities (v4)
- As the Temple vessels, these young boys were also considered as “trophy” to make a show of Nebuchadnezzar’s military and government success.
- These children were also hostages that insured the fidelity, loyalty, and control of their parents back in the land of the Hebrews – those left behind.
- He was bringing up a succession of people who would be fit for public service and have the ability to conduct the king’s business.

What kind of training did Daniel and his friends receive?

- These young men were to be taught the language and literature of the Babylonians (Chaldeans)
- They were to be trained in the laws of the country, in history, philosophy, mathematics, the art of husbandry, war and navigation
- They were given three years to finish their study and learning and then be judged by the king himself for their competence and skills (v5)

Why did the trainees receive the king's delicacies?

It was part of their indoctrination... King

Nebuchadnezzar wanted to communicate to these young men his generosity and that they could look to him for everything they needed. Instead they looked to God!

v6-7 – What was so important about a name change?

The “prince of the eunuchs” changed their names to show authority over them and their subjection to him; they are going to be Chaldeans!

- Daniel: “God is my Judge” – Belteshazzar: signifies “the keeper of the hidden treasures of “Bel” (moon god)
- Hananiah: “The grace of the Lord” – Shadrach: means “the inspiration of the sun” (Sun god Re)
- Mishael: “He that is the strong God” – Meshach: means “the goddess Shach”, name which Venus was worshiped
- Azariah: “The Lord is my help” – Abednego: means “the servant of the shining fire” (they worshiped the god of fire)

v8 – Why would Daniel and his companions not accept the choicest food and wine provided?

They knew the food had been “offered” or “sacrificed” to the Chaldean idols and thus they would have been defiled (made unclean) by eating it.

- It was the Babylonian mode of worship to sacrifice animals to their gods.
- While it was also the Hebrews mode of worship to sacrifice animals to God, it was only the Jewish priests who ate the food that had been sacrificed to God.

Where did all this sacrificing of animals come from?

It originated with God Himself...

Genesis 3:21 – *for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them*

To make clothes from animal skins, the animals had to be killed. This shedding of blood symbolized the covering of sin that would be achieved by blood sacrifice. The principle here is explained...

Hebrews 9:22 – *without shedding of blood there is no remission [of sin]*

And blood sacrifice pointed to the ultimate sacrifice that would be made when Jesus died on the cross to pay our sin penalty. This principle is demonstrated in the first sons of Adam & Eve...

Genesis 4:3-5 – *Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, but He did not respect Cain and his offering.*

How about the idol worshipers... why did they sacrifice animals?

These practices were human religions inspired by demons masquerading as God, attempting to copy while distorting the principles God has revealed to us.

2 Corinthians 11:14 – *And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.*

v9 – How did God enable Daniel to escape the temptation to be defiled by the king's food?

God gives Daniel “favor and good will” with the authorities. Certainly, Daniel’s wise actions contributed to his good will but even that was God working through Daniel.

v10-13 – How did Daniel handle the situation?

Daniel proposed a test... drink only water and eat only vegetables (that were not sacrificed to idols) for 10 days then see how they fared in comparison to the others.

Why did Daniel make a big deal over a little thing of not eating the King's food?

He was being faithful in the little things... His relationship with God touched every area of his life, even what he ate and drank.

v14-16 – How did Daniel and friends do on the test?

They passed the test. They were healthier than the others who ate the King's food

How did they pass the test?

God was with them and honored their effort to honor Him.

- They had been taken away from their families, home, lost their manhood, names changed, and told what to eat – yet were faithful!
- In the long term, Daniel and his companions are blessed and promoted because of their faithfulness

v17-20 – How did Daniel and his friends do in their training?

God blessed them in it. Their special intellectual ability was not due to their diet, but to the special intervention of the Lord.

- These young men from Jerusalem were immersed in the study of Babylonian culture, literature and religion; yet they remained faithful to God.
- The work of the prophets like Jeremiah, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk had not been in vain; they were in the world, but not part of it!

What was the finding of the king at the end of the training?

The Hebrews were ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in the whole kingdom of Babylon.

- This was God's gift to the loyal dedicated young Hebrew men

Why did the king personally interview the trainees?

It emphasizes the importance of the training. The direct questioning by King Nebuchadnezzar speaks highly of his intelligence, status, and desire to take advantage of the intelligent individuals in his service.

What observations can be made about God's special relationship with the nation of Israel in this introduction to the book of Daniel?

- The Jews were being punished having sinned "greatly" displeasing God.
- God's chastisement of the Jews is out of His love for them saving them from themselves
- God is sovereign and He had a plan for Israel
- King Nebuchadnezzar was God's servant for implementing His plan
- Despite Israel's chastisement, there was a remnant, some Jews who still honored and pleased God

What application can be made to the here and now?

- We can be blessed even in the mist of dire circumstances.
- Honor God even in the small things and He will honor us.