

CORE Seminar
Spring 2024
Book of Daniel: Part 1 [Chapters 1-6]
Week 2: Daniel 2

INTRODUCTION

Welcome back guys! Thankful to see you all again this week.

Last week, we spent some time going over the background of Daniel.

The book starts with the first wave of the Babylonian captivity

- Started in **605 BC** when King Neb defeated Judah / Jerusalem
- Took the cream of the crop and took them off to Babylon – *good way to keep the locals in line with Babylonian rule if you have their kids.*

We had an introduction to some of the main characters in the book:

- Daniel – Belteshazzar
- Hananiah - Shadrach
- Mishael - Meshach
- and Azariah - Abednego
- King Neb
- King Belshazzar
- A diet
- A statue
- A fiery furnace
- A writing Finger
- And a lion's den

Then we spent some time laying the foundation of the exiles in Babylon [which Daniel and the boys were a part of] in **Psalm 137**. And we asked how can the exiles [or we] sing the Lord's Song in a foreign land?

- How can the exiles sing with hope?
- How can the exiles sing God His praise when they are away from Jerusalem and the Temple?
- How can the exiles sing with joy when they find themselves in the midst of Babylon – in one of the most wicked and cruel nations at that time?

And then we asked – how can we do the same – as Christians today?

- We are always the minority.
- And, we are finding ourselves – as every year passes – questioned by our country for our faith.

So, **Psalm 137** was a good lead in for where we are in Daniel.

And what we see immediately, is that Daniel and his friends are not going to be a people that are going to **give in**.

- Daniel and his friends are not the guys who are on the riverbanks – hanging up their lyres – and trying to figure out how they can sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land.
- And really, this is a prologue for the rest of the book – this is how Daniel and his friends are **resolved** to be.
- This is the resolve [**resolution**] that launched their lives throughout the first 6 chapters of Daniel

The theology of Daniel is a true **vision** of the true **God** and what He is doing in the **world** – not just Jerusalem or the Temple.

So, let’s start off with a prayer and then we’ll move to **Daniel chapter 1**.

PRAYER

Have someone in your group read Daniel 1:1-2

1 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.

Ok, this is a good place to stop and discuss something that we will see played out continuously in the book of Daniel.

Verse 1 – the opening verse sets the stage for King Neb’s conquest of Jerusalem – now we won’t get into the history of this conquest [some of you just really got excited!] – but know that his conquest was many stages. It started in 605 and didn’t end until 586 BC

- **In 586** he comes back to Jerusalem - sacks the city and burns the Temple

We are in **605 BC** as we open the book, and what comes next is a bit of a shocker to our ears: “And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his [King Neb’s] hand...”

- Did anyone pick up on that?

QUESTION: According to verse 2, why was King Neb able to besiege Jerusalem – eventually sacking of Jerusalem and burning the Temple – and take Johoiakim, King of Judah, and artifacts of the temple of God into the treasure house of his god? [Only through the power of God! God allowed it – “and the Lord gave...”]

- Why would Daniel write that that ultimate responsibility for the defeat of Judah to the Lord? [Is God a God of judgment? Didn't we say last week that God had sent prophets to them to turn from their wicked ways?]
- Do we like to think of God in this way – giving His people over to trials and judgment?
- Why would God take His people to such a wicked place — back to Babel? [The Jews couldn't keep abusing the temple and think that God will not send His curses. It showed the faithfulness of God that he keeps His promises. Babylon was the place of total opposition to God, and they are where they are because God has placed them there. Daniel and his friends understood this theology of captivity, the loving sovereignty of God.]
- What does this teach us about the actual “power” of King Neb? [Limited – only given by God. We see examples of this not only with earthly rulers in the bible but also of “ in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience” [Ephesians 2:2] in Job 1:6-12; Job 2:1-6]
- What does this teach us about Daniel's view of God? [He's BIG – and His power and influence and Sovereignty exist outside of Jerusalem & the Temple. Remember last week, how can we sing the Lord's Song? In Daniel's writing, we can already see how he has discovered a way to sing the Lord's Song because he knows God is everywhere and always in control of everything.]

Ok, let's keep reading...

Have someone in your group read Daniel 1:3-7

³ 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.

Wow! What is going on here? Does it sound like these guys were being beaten every night? Or mistreated in any way? *[Doesn't to me!]*

It looks like to me that King Neb is trying to **reprogram** Daniel and his friends [plus the other exiles] not by persecution, but by **privilege**.

- They were not being mistreated at all. Privilege was the most effective way to dislocate their center in God and to undermine their dependence upon Him.
- The same is true for us today. When I have plenty of food, clothing, a nice car and home, a well-paying job, and many other comforts, I can easily ignore or forget that I am dependent upon God.
- But, let a sickness or some other life event hit – and what do we do? *[GOD!! Where are you? Have you forgotten me in my time of NEED??]*

QUOTE: Andrew Murray: *In time of trouble, say first, He brought me here. It is by His will I am in this difficult place — in that I will rest. Next, He will keep me here in His love and give me grace in this trial to behave as His child. Then say, He will make this trial a blessing, teaching me lessons He intends me to learn and working in me the grace He bestows. And last say, in his good time He can bring me out again how and when He knows. Therefore I say these four things: I am here by God's appointment, in His keeping, under His training, for His time.*

QUESTION: How might you apply Andrew Murray's quote to something you are facing right now?

What are the five ways that King Neb plans to weaken and "Babylonize" them through privilege?

1. **Isolate them...** remove them from family and communities.
2. **Rename them...** new names tied to Babylonian gods.
3. **Educate them...** language, sciences, medicine etc.
4. **Give them new clothes...** change their cultural identity.
5. **And, wine & dine them...** how Nebuchadnezzar wine and dined them to his rich, kingdom food.
 - *How easy it is for us to take the bait in this world. What looks good, what tastes good, is not always the route we should follow.*

Being re-programmed by the world is a seduction, a drift — that begins with little things in how we spend our money, our time... in what we watch, how involved we are in

church... Or we justify what we do by using the word “just” (I’m just eating this now, I’m just doing this for this time.... Be still and ask the Lord where you are compromising.

Let’s keep reading...

Have someone in your group read Daniel 1:8

⁸ But Daniel resolved [*Hebrew = purposed in his heart*] 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.

This is a VERY BOLD thing for Daniel to do... he came to the CHIEF of the eunuchs and said, “I don’t want to defile myself...”

Think about this before we move on – there would be not study on the book of Daniel without **verse 8**.

- **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.**

Now, I want you to know that this Hebrew word of “defiling” has the idea of:

- Polluting
- Or staining

So – by stating this to the chief of the eunuchs – Daniel is saying, **“I don’t want to pollute or stain myself. I don’t want to eat or drink the king’s food because it would defile me before my God.”**

- In stating this, Daniel is explaining the SPIRITUAL reason for his request.
- And this is a BOLD request!

And this is BIG - Daniel requested – **“he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself.”**

- He intentionally brought attention to himself by making this request.

And, he didn’t say he couldn’t eat the food for other reasons – like he could have said:

- The food upsets my stomach OR I have a medical condition
- When really all along it is a spiritual reason...

In making this statement, Daniel realized that God touched EVERYTHING he did in his life – including what he ate.

And honestly, from our study this word “defiled” will constantly be challenged as we know it.

We say there’s a lot of things that “defile” us. We were taught that it was:

- Dancing
- Playing Cards
- Music
- Clothes
- Relationships.

And then we internalize those things and we teach them to our kids... and so on and so forth... but we really don’t find these things in Scripture...

Even this week, we seen that King Neb gave the boys:

1. A New home
2. A New name
3. A New education
4. New clothes
5. And, new food

Last week, we asked, “why the food?” What is the answer? **[Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank]**

- **So, their location didn’t defile them?** – Babylon [or New Orleans, New York, California, or Las Vegas?]
- **So, their names didn’t defile them?** [they were renamed after Babylonian gods]
 - Daniel knew who he was – he didn’t care what you called him.
- **So, their education didn’t defile them?** [all of those Babylonian professors pouring vile teaching into them?]
 - They were still enrolled [and on scholarship] in this Babylonian 3 year college. Daniel knew what he believed. **“You want to teach me other things as well? Go ahead!”**
- **So, their clothes didn’t defile them?** [Wearing all of those indecent clothes that a good Jewish person would never wear!]
 - Clothes are clothes – they don’t defile you... they may define you – but they don’t defile, pollute, stain or separate you from God.

QUESTION: Why did Daniel & the boys believe eating the king’s food or drinking his wine would defile them?**[The four young men didn’t have any choice about the first four de-programming plans: (Removing, Renaming, Reeducating, Reclothing). Eating the food was direct disobedience to God’s Word. It was a heart issue. The food is associated with the dependence of the men on the king instead of God. It’s not a heart pursuit but the issue of just**

going along. They did not gain anything for themselves. How defile? Pork; Wasn't kosher; and probably offered to idols.]

Based on our definition of "defiled," what does it mean to be defiled by the world?

Have someone in your group read Daniel 1:9-16

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.

So God gave favor & compassion from the chief of the eunuchs to the boys.

- But – you can tell that the eunuch was apprehensive – **"So you would endanger my head with the king."**
 - Listen boys – I like you but I'm not willing to die for you.
- Daniel was wise – he didn't want to risk this guys life for his request so he simply says, **"Test your servants for ten days..."**
 - Daniel had faith that God would take care of the matter... and guess what He did...

QUESTION: In verse 9, God gave Daniel, "favor and compassion." How is the Lord's favor and compassion obvious in Daniel's life in these verses?

Let's read on...

Have someone in your group read Daniel 1:17-21

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. ¹⁸ 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.

QUESTION: Chapter 1 finishes with King Neb testing Daniel, the boys and the exiles. And Scripture doesn't hold back – Daniel and the boys pass with flying colors – ALL A's! In fact, the text says they were “10 times better” than anyone else in the kingdom.

- Why do you think this point is emphasized – 10 times better?

CONCLUSION

Tonight, we explored a story about four men: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. We learned about their commitment to being faithful to God. Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the whole book of Daniel. In the upcoming chapters, we'll witness how Daniel and the boys continue to resolve to be God's people in a foreign land. Though they are no longer in God's land – Jerusalem - or able to go to God's Temple. They still show themselves as belonging TO GOD – no matter WHERE they are. Looking forward to chapter 2!