

# Summary Daniel 1:1-21

## HONOURING GOD IN A WORLD THAT DISHONOURS HIM

We're starting a new series of sermons in Daniel. Daniel has 12 chapters: chapters 1-6 is historic, re Daniel's life. Ch 7-12 is prophetic and comprises visions of future events, including a timeline of when Israel's Messiah would appear and events to follow. For decades God had pleaded with his people, to honour the covenant he had made with them and honour Him but instead they engaged in godless living. So God used King Nebuchadnezzar to deal with them. In 605 BC, he laid siege to Jerusalem. The report in Daniel 1:1 and 2 shows that God is the power behind the conquest of Jerusalem though Nebuchadnezzar is credited with the victory.

### 4 Realities we can learn from Daniel 1.

**Reality 1: Life isn't always predictable or fair.** Lots of events in our lives are beyond our control. But when life happens unexpectedly, we should not discount God's movement behind the scenes. There are always 2 sides to all that we face; the **factual side** covering the WHAT, WHO, WHEN, and the **actual side**, the WHY, which we may not always readily understand at the time. John, Nelson Darby wrote, '*God's ways are behind the scenes, but He moves all the scenes that He is behind.*' The Book of Daniel enables us to be realists- the realism that God is still on his throne, that He is the one who 'works *all* things together for the good of those who love him'.

**Reality 2: The world demands conformity.** (V3-7) The king chose captives that could be put through his 4-tier program to make them think differently, and planned to turn them into full-fledged Babylonians.

**Application:** This concept hasn't changed today. Look back over the past 40 years and see how the culture and values have changed. Laws are made to recognize and legitimize anti-God values. The world would like to make sin acceptable to us so that we compromise all God's standards and values. That is why we hear of Christians who choose to speak the truth being sacked, persecuted or prosecuted in various institutions.

The king's 3 year: 4-tier conformity scheme can be broken down as follows:

1 : Isolation-the Hebrew children were far from home (over 500 miles), in a foreign land with no parents, no guardians, no temple fellowship of the Jewish people; no regular reading of the Torah-the law of God.

2: Indoctrination-a program of social engineering and brain washing, labelled education that was designed to erase all their former godly values. A curriculum filled with the teaching of the Babylonian language, arts, magic, medicine, law etc. which were all linked to the worship of their many gods.

3: Intimidation-Daily food provision from the king's table- rich delicacies and wine. This food had initially been offered to their pagan gods. The intention was to make them think that Babylon is all there is to happiness, to being cool, and to abandon Yahweh, His laws and values, and think they are archaic.

4: Redesignation: Their beautiful Hebrew names that godly parents had meaningfully given their kids were changed. All four names testify to Israel's God. E.g. Daniel means 'God is my judge'; but was replaced with the name Belshazzar- meaning, 'may Bel protect the king'; Bel being one of their main idols. Daniel, a youth who had grown to love God and live to honour Him was now expected to think of himself in terms of the fake god-Bel. Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah were all renamed with references to Babylonian gods too. Instead of serving Yahweh, these four youths were now in the service of Babylon and its idols.

**Reality 3: Courage begins inwardly** (V8-17) **But Daniel resolved he would not defile himself with the royal food & wine.** Daniel had to be courageous and choose his battles. He couldn't help being taken captive to Babylon, or educated with their curriculum, or having a name change according to their pleasure. But when it came to consuming the royal cuisine

that meant compromising his religious values, Daniel drew the line. Why? The food was not kosher (religiously clean), so unacceptable to a Jew. It must have been unnerving for Daniel to resist, but he did it with wisdom. Notice that he didn't organise a protest. He was polite-  
v8'*Daniel asked the chief official for permission not to eat their food.* In V12 Dan starts his request with 'please ...', he is courteous/humble, which are the traits of a servant of God (2Tim:2:24.)

Taking a stand here, meant taking a public stand for God. They must have spent a lot of time praying for God's wisdom and clarity regarding the steps they were to take. Testing their plan of vegetables and water instead of royal cuisine for 10 days at the beginning of their 3 years of training became acceptable to the guard for a limited trial. A 10-day period on a vegan diet would not normally make a difference; but God stepped in and performed the miracle, such that they looked much healthier & better nourished than others, so God made the guard agree to the veg & water diet for them for 3 years.

It's easy looking at the statistics to see ourselves as being in a kind of 'exile', stuck in a new spiritual Babylon surrounded by idolatry. For Daniel and friends, **this decision made in his heart, became a conviction for him to live his life by.** This key decision affected how Daniel lived the whole of his life as we shall see throughout our time in the book of Daniel. Sometimes this decision almost cost him his life as we shall learn later in our sermon series, but Daniel was determined.

Remember Joseph, sold into slavery by his brothers to a foreign land. He had an opportunity for promotion by sleeping with Potiphar's (his boss) wife. That was an appealing *delicacy* but he was able to respond; '*how can I do this evil thing and sin against God?*' (Gen 39:9) **Daniel and his friends like Joseph, lived with one main purpose, -to honour God.**

**Reality 4: God rewards loyalty.** (V19-21) After 3 years, they were deemed as outstanding because God gave them increased aptitude, intellect and supernatural favour. How great indeed is our God! V21- *Daniel continued till the time of king Cyrus*- He was blessed with a long life that spanned 70 years in Babylon such that Daniel was able to influence the life and government of four successive kings. It was not always easy, but Daniel stood fast, holding to God with conviction throughout his lifetime.

**Application:** Let us compare our faith to Daniel's; a 15-17year old refugee abducted from home to a hostile foreign land. Would you compromise your faith or would you stand for Jesus? **But Daniel resolved in his heart...** Today, will you resolve in your heart to follow Jesus all the way.? '*I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back*'; *is that the song in your heart?*

Other Jews who heard this story about Daniel and his friends must have been encouraged to remain faithful to God while in exile. How willing are we to be different and so *prove* God faithful? The writer Os Guinness puts it like this: 'A living faith is better tested in crisis rather than creeds. **Why were Daniel and his friends able to stand as mature men before the lions and the fiery furnace? It is because they took a stand as youths over something as apparently inconsequential as food. I don't know what God has in mind for you/me in the future, but I do know that how we shall fare then will, in some measure, be dependent upon how we are faring now.** What makes Christians distinctive in this world is our faithfulness to God and his Word. Romans 12:2 urges *us, 'Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.'*

Today, Christians are losing their jobs because of their biblical views on gender cultural ideology. Others are being cancelled, ostracized and disowned by their families; their means of livelihood destroyed, and others have family members who try to kill them just because they have embraced Jesus as Saviour. In Romans 8, Paul declares, '*in all these things, we are more than conquerors... through Him who loved us.* Rom 8:35-39. Will you stand firm beloved of God?

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