

## **Adult Sunday Bible Study Lesson**

### **The Prophet Daniel**

**January 23, 2022**

#### **Honoring God in a Strange Culture**

**Situational Context:** Jehoiakim's third year was 605 B.C. In that year Nebuchadnezzar defeated a coalition of Assyria and Egypt at Carchemish and initiated Babylon's rise to international power. After the battle of Carchemish, Nebuchadnezzar advanced against Jehoiakim (2Ki 24:1, 2Ki 24:2; 2Ch 36:5-7) and took some Judeans captive, including Daniel. This was the first of three invasions of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar. The second was in 597 B.C. (2Ki 24:10-14), and the third in 587 B.C. (2Ki 25:1-24). In the Book of Jeremiah, Nebuchadnezzar's attack is dated to Jehoiakim's fourth year instead of the third (Jer 25:1; Jer 46:2). The difference of one year occurs because in the Babylonian chronology, which Daniel apparently used, the king's reign was officially counted from the first day of the succeeding new year, rather than from the actual date of his accession to the throne.

Nebuchadnezzar led the Babylonians to victory at Carchemish as crown prince and commander of the army. Shortly after this victory, he assumed the Babylonian throne when his father Nabopolassar died (626-605 B.C.). Nebuchadnezzar's reign (605-562 B.C.) is the historical context for much of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

**Lesson Theme: Daniel 1:8-10** In a set of circumstances that resembles the story of Joseph, Daniel finds Himself in the royal court of the King of Babylon. Daniel's circumstances were the result of God's actions of judgment against Israel. In a curious act of providence, the Lord places Daniel and his friends in a position to bless Israel's enemies and thus through their actions give a faithful witness as to the One True God, the Lord, the God of Israel.

Daniel's strategy is to give Glory to the Lord in his covenant faithfulness in exile.

**1. Through Courage: Daniel 1:8-10 (ESV)** <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> And God

gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs,<sup>10</sup> 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.”

**Interpretation:** Israelites perhaps considered food from Nebuchadnezzar’s table to be contaminated because the first portion of it was offered to idols. Likewise, a portion of the wine was poured out on a pagan altar. Ceremonially unclean animals were used and were neither slaughtered nor prepared according to the regulations of the law. he asked ... not to defile himself. He demonstrated the courage of his convictions.

### **Supporting Texts:**

**Genesis 39:21 (ESV)**<sup>21</sup> But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

**Proverbs 16:7 (ESV)**<sup>7</sup> When a man’s ways please the LORD, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.

### **Discussion Starters:**

**What was Daniel’s attitude?**

**What was the source of his resolve?**

**How does God dispose favor and compassion from a pagan?**

**What aspect of Daniel’s response demonstrates courage?**

**What is the relationship between faith and courage?**

**2. Through Trust: Daniel 1:11-16 (ESV)**<sup>11</sup> Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had assigned over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,<sup>12</sup> “Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink.<sup>13</sup> 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.”<sup>14</sup> So he listened to them in this matter, and tested them for ten days.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> So the steward took away their food and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

**Interpretation:** Daniel proposes a test in order to absolve the steward of fear while trusting God for the result.

### **Supporting Texts:**

**Revelation 2:10 (ESV)**<sup>10</sup> Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

**Psalms 111:10 (ESV)**<sup>10</sup> The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!

**Matthew 4:4 (ESV)**<sup>4</sup> But he answered, “It is written, ““Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.””

### **Discussion Starters:**

**How did Daniel make his proposal more acceptable for the steward?**

**Why was Daniel’s plan successful?**

**Was acceptance of the plan guaranteed?**

**3. Through Excellence: Daniel 1:17-21 (ESV)**<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup> 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.<sup>21</sup> And Daniel was there until the first year of King Cyrus.

**Interpretation:** God's blessing was not limited to physical well-being, but also included outstanding intellectual development during their three years of Babylonian education. With a view to what follows in the book, Daniel is distinguished from his companions in his ability to interpret dreams and visions, much as Joseph was in the court of Pharaoh.

Babylon fell to Cyrus in 539 B.C., or sixty-six years after Daniel had been taken captive to Babylon. Daniel lived through the entire period of the Babylonian captivity. Cyrus issued a decree in the first year of his reign permitting the Israelites to return from captivity, and to take with them the vessels from the temple that had been seized by Nebuchadnezzar (Ezr 1:7-11). The statement does not mean that Daniel died in the first year of Cyrus.

### **Supporting Texts:**

**Ecclesiastes 3:1 (ESV)**<sup>1</sup> For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

**Daniel 10:12 (ESV)**<sup>12</sup> Then he said to me, "Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words.

**1 Kings 8:50 (ESV)**<sup>50</sup> and forgive your people who have sinned against you, and all their transgressions that they have committed against you, and grant them compassion in the sight of those who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them

### **Discussion Starters:**

**Did God honor Solomon's prayer?**

**Why would the ability to interpret dreams and visions benefit Daniel?**

What kind of pressures does our culture place upon believers?

Why would God bless the Babylonian king through the captives?