

## Introduction to Daniel

Daniel is presumed to be a very young man in the court of the king of Judah when Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, raided Judah. Daniel says it is the third year but he is using the Chaldean method that does not include the year he came to power. Jeremiah says it is the fourth year as the Hebrew system does include the first year in power. This explains the difference with Jeremiah 25:1. Jehoiakim had been placed in power by Pharaoh Necho of Egypt. Nebuchadnezzar's father died in Babylon during the siege making Nebuchadnezzar the king. Daniel was growing up during the reign of Josiah the reformer. After Josiah died, the next king, Jehoiakim, dragged the nation back into idolatry. Daniel may have served the king in some capacity or he may have been tested in some way to find out his capabilities. He had seen Josiah's love for the Word of God and the blessings that followed when Josiah was obedient. He had also seen judgement come when Jehoiakim rebelled against the Word.

The ten northern tribes had gone into captivity a hundred years earlier. A few good kings in the southern two tribes caused that nation to survive awhile longer as the people turned back to God. Each good king was followed by a string of bad ones, and finally the judgement of God fell as promised in the law given to Moses. The king of Babylon would incorporate the brightest and best of the nations conquered into his court. In that way he could gain from the wisdom of those countries and indoctrinate them into encouraging the support of their countrymen. Along with the brightest and best-looking youth, he took many of the treasures of the Temple. The kingdom would continue a few more years but Daniel and his friends would be in training in Babylon. They were made eunuchs according to Isaiah 39:7. The kings of Babylon must have thought this would help them devote themselves to study and make them more docile.

The Hebrew Bible lists Daniel as third level of importance. One reason it may be placed there is the terms used to describe Daniel. He is not called a Hebrew [nabhi'] ("prophet"), but was rather a Hebrew [chozeh] ("seer") and a Hebrew [chakham] ("wise man"). None but the works of the Hebrew [nebhi'im] were put in the second part of the Jewish Canon, the third being reserved for the works of seers, wise men, and priests, or for those that do not mention the name or work of a prophet, or that are poetical in form. The Christian Bible places him with the Major Prophets.

The Book of Daniel was written half in Aramaic (Chaldean) and half in Hebrew. It is written in three parts. Chapter one is an introduction. 2-6 is a historical record and 7-12 a prophetic writing. There is some prophecy in historical and some historical in the prophetic sections.

Daniel is unique in several important ways. Daniel alone prophetically tells the names of coming kingdoms. There is the mention of angels and their hierarchy. It has a large portion dedicated to the end of days, more so than any other Old Testament Book. Throughout Revelation portions of Daniel are quoted or referred to. Only two chapters in Revelation do not have some background in Daniel. It is the only book to mention the 3 and a half and the 7 of the last days.

Verses 1-2 This was the first captivity and the beginning of the 70 years of captivity prophesied by Jeremiah. We will see these articles later in Daniel used by Belshazar. It was the LORD that delivered Jehoiakim into Nebuchadnezzar's hand. Consider the poor testimony that resulted from this evil King's rebellion against God. His body was dragged out the gate and left unburied.

Verses 3-4 So Daniel is of royal lineage, around 14-17, handsome and smart. The king of Babylon wanted the best to become his trained representatives and counselors. They had to be quick learners to pick up the language and customs of a new culture.

Verse 5 The king was served sumptuous amounts of the very best and he wanted his wise men in training to eat what came from his table. This would have included meats the Hebrews considered unclean. They were forbidden animals as well as ones prepared in a way other than the Law prescribed. Most young men in their teens would quickly be spoiled by this food. They would enjoy their 3 years of training because of the delicious meals, with a lot more variety than the common person received.

Verse 6,7 They all got new names to help them conform to their new identities. Daniel whose name means, God is judge, is changed to Belteshazzar or worshipper of Baal or Bel will protect. Hananiah means "The Lord is gracious but Shadrach means "inspired by Aku". Mishael becomes Meshach (belonging to Aku) and Azariah become Abednego or servant of Nego. It is an attempt to assimilate them into the culture, to make them conform.

Verse 8 Daniel made a resolution in his heart that he would not compromise. This was a strong stand for a young man captive and in a strange land. He was resolved not to defile himself. Are you resolved not to be defiled by the world? He went about it in a civil and polite way. James 1:27

Verse 9 When our heart is right, God often goes before us so that the way will be prepared for whatever God wants to do. He softened the official's heart toward Daniel.

Verse 10 He voices his fears to Daniel. The world-view is blind to the things of God. There is nothing of faith and obedience to God

Verse 11-14 But Daniel is confident that when you obey God you will be better off. He says, "Go ahead and rely on your eyes, but give us ten days on our own diet and then do the comparison." When you are challenged with God's ways versus the ways of the world, put it to a test. God's ways always win! You just need an honest, impartial judge. God expects us to try it. "If any man will do His will he will know of the doctrine whether it is of me or God." "Taste and see that the LORD is good." I encourage people to try God. Ask Him to show you He is real. Ask Him to show you the truth. He will. Are you prepared to honestly respond?

Verse 15 God wins! His ways win. He is always right and good. You can see the difference.

Verse 16 The world prizes its diet, TV, movies, luxury, expensive foods - and they see our diet of the Word and fellowship as rather bland and tasteless. You do have to develop a taste for it, but once you do you see how healthy and wholesome it is. Compare your soul after ten days of diet on godly things with theirs after ten days of diet on the world. Who looks healthier in the eyes of God?

Verse 17 Daniel had the same gift as Joseph. They all had wisdom from above and assistance in their learning because of their dedication to God. Can college students today expect the same? I believe so.

Verse 18,19 They ranked in the top of their class! God rewards faithfulness to His word and the honoring of conviction.

Verse 20 They far surpassed those with mystical arts and illusionary skills. Their knowledge and understanding was based on the reality of God while the others on the ever-changing wisdom of man.

Verse 21 Daniel begins a long term of service to kings, to influence them in the ways of God. He will serve into his eighties.