

Trust in the LORD in Difficult Days

Daniel 1

¹ In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ² The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along 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 he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god.

³ Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his officials, to bring in some of the sons of Israel, including some of the royal family and of the nobles, ⁴ youths in whom was no defect, who were good-looking, showing intelligence in every branch of wisdom, endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge, and who had ability for serving in the king's court; and he ordered him to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.

⁵ The king appointed for them a daily ration from the king's choice food and from the wine which he drank, and appointed that they should be educated three years, at the end of which they were to enter the king's personal service. ⁶ Now among them from the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. ⁷ Then the commander of the officials assigned new names to them; and to Daniel he assigned the name Belteshazzar, to Hananiah Shadrach, to Mishael Meshach and to Azariah Abednego.

⁸ **But Daniel made up his mind** that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself. ⁹ **Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion** in the sight of the commander of the officials, ¹⁰ and the commander of the officials said to Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has appointed your food and your drink; for why should he see your faces looking more haggard than the youths who are your own age? Then you would make me forfeit my head to the king." ¹¹ But Daniel said to the overseer whom the commander of the officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, ¹² "Please test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³ Then let our appearance be observed in your presence and the appearance of the youths who are eating the king's choice food; 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 their appearance seemed better, and they were fatter than all the youths who had been eating the king's choice food. ¹⁶ So the overseer continued to withhold their choice food and the wine they were to drink, and kept giving them vegetables.

¹⁷ As for these four youths, **God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every branch of literature and wisdom; Daniel even understood all kinds of visions and dreams.**

¹⁸ Then at the end of the days which the king had specified for presenting them, the commander of the officials presented them before Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹ The king talked with them, and out of them all not one was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's personal service. ²⁰ As for every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and conjurers who were in all his realm. ²¹ And Daniel continued until the first year of Cyrus the king.

OUTLINE OF DANIEL ONE

Daniel Chapter 1 is a story of what it takes to be a follower of Jesus in a day when the rest of culture isn't.

- I. **Daniel was in a minority of the Babylonian culture (v. 4).**
Babylon is the world's second empire (after Assyria), and it had conquered many other nations. When the Jewish "princes" were brought to Babylon, they were placed into a group of other young, good-looking men from many nations around Babylon.
- II. **Daniel made up his mind to follow the LORD (v. 8).**
Look in the mirror and determine your course before others look at you and demand your conformity. The time to make a decision to follow Christ is before the pressure comes.
- III. **Daniel appealed to government authorities over him (v. 8b).**
It's important to note that Daniel didn't "rebel" at the onset. He appealed to the leaders of the system that was already in place. Rebelliousness toward authority is not a mark of godliness, but patience and appeal in the middle of a conflict is humility and godliness.
- IV. **The LORD granted Daniel favor in the heart of the overseer (v. 9).**
The Scriptures are clear that "the heart of the judge (ruler) is in the hand of the LORD, and He turns it whichever direction that He pleases" (Proverbs 21:1). Trust the LORD, not men.
- V. **Obedience to the LORD brings the greatest wisdom and intelligence (v. 17).**
The greatest scientists, the greatest physicists, the greatest medical doctors, are all men and women who put their faith in the LORD and trust Him when the culture does the opposite.
- VI. **Daniel and his 3 friends were 10 times better than all the others in the king's court (v. 20).**
When it comes to numerology, the number 10 in Scripture speaks of divine completion or perfect leadership (government). We will see in our study of Daniel, that when it came time to give advice to the king of Babylon, Daniel alone (among the magicians) had the wisdom it took to lead the nation in its proper direction. Interestingly, Daniel founded a "School of the Magi" in Babylon, and its graduates are mentioned in the gospels at the birth of Jesus when it says, "Magi from the East came asking, 'Where is He that is born King of the Jews?'"
- VII. **Don't compromise your faith in Jesus during the midst of difficult times.**
I've told my wife on many occasions, "I am so excited to be alive in 2021. More than 1066 and the Invasion of England by William the Conqueror, more than 1861 and the beginning of the Civil War, more than 1917 and the beginning of the Great War to End All Wars (World War II), and more than 1940 and Winston Churchill saving Western Civilization from Nazi Rule. The years 2020 and 2021 are the CROSSROADS OF HISTORY, and those who make a determination to "stand for Jesus" in the midst of difficult times will be proven to be those who remain standing when the fortified walls of our cities collapse."