



# gracefellowship

Daniel: Thriving in Exile  
September 27, 2020  
Resolved

**:: 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 delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god.**

It's easy to look at our world in its current state and wonder if God is still in control. We see the moral breakdown and the hate driven tensions in our nation and we ask the question "how did things get this way?" We need to be reminded when we look at our world that God is in control. We need to be assured as Christians that God is sovereign over the affairs of mankind. We need to rest in the fact that the difficulties of our world and our personal lives are not taking God by surprise.

For these reasons and more we are going to take some time over the next couple months and walk through the book of Daniel. If ever there felt like a time in history that the people of God questioned the sovereignty of God, it would have been this period of time. And yet, as we study this book we are going to see how God is purposeful in His actions driving history toward His desired end and also how people who follow God can remain faithful to Him no matter the circumstances they find themselves in.

When we read the Bible its important to be able to know how the story fits together. We can easily miss things when we read the Bible if we don't know how the different writings fit together.

- At the same time Daniel was taken into captivity Jeremiah was God's prophet to the nation of Israel.
- Ezekiel was written during the days of the Babylonian captivity.
- The story of Babylon conquering Jerusalem can be found in 2 Kings 24-25 and 2 Chronicles 36.

- The books of Ezra and Nehemiah describe the end of the exile to Babylon and how they led people back to Israel to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple of God.

Let me set the stage for what we will see happening on the world stage just prior to the beginning of Daniel 1.

- The nation of Israel has long been split into two kingdoms- northern kingdom of Israel and southern kingdom of Judah (Jerusalem is in the southern kingdom).
- In 2 Kings 21 we read about a king named Manasseh who does evil in the eyes of the Lord. He led the nation to worship idols, he practiced divination, he set up alters to Baal in the Temple, he sacrificed his own son in the worship of false gods and he slaughtered his own people. 2 Kings 21:16 says, “Manasseh also shed so much innocent blood that he filled Jerusalem from end to end.” But God doesn’t immediately punish Israel for these sins.
- A young king named Josiah comes to the throne in Judah and leads them in great religious reforms. Josiah helps restore the worship of God to the people of Israel. The Egyptian pharaoh Necho marched against Judah and Josiah died in battle.
- Egypt then took the Southern kingdom as a tribute state and forced the people to pay money for protection. Pharaoh Necho put a new king on the throne who would be loyal to him named Jehoiakim. From there Pharaoh marched north and invaded Babylon.
- As a response to this invasion a young prince of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, went on the attack against Egypt. Upon his return from that conquest, Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem in 605 B.C. But before he conquered Jerusalem word came that his father died and Nebuchadnezzar had to return to Babylon to claim the throne. He returned in 597 and set up a ruler over Judah who would be loyal to him, a man named Jehoiachin. Jehoiachin rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, so he took him captive and replaced him with a man named Zedekiah. Zedekiah also rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, so he returned again in 587, laid siege to the city, starved the people out and finally destroyed the city of Jerusalem, the Temple of God and took the people of Israel into captivity in Babylon.

Just so we don’t believe these things are happening outside the sovereign control of God and are random events in world history, we are told why all these things are unfolding in 2 Kings 24:2-4

**:: 2 Kings 24:2-4**

**2 The LORD sent Babylonian, Aramean, Moabite and Ammonite raiders against him to destroy Judah, in accordance with the word of the LORD proclaimed by his servants the prophets.**

**3 Surely these things happened to Judah according to the LORD's command, in order to remove them from his presence because of the sins of Manasseh and all he had done,**

**4 including the shedding of innocent blood. For he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the LORD was not willing to forgive.**

God has brought judgment against Judah in the form of Babylon. But this isn't the end of the story. God has a purpose for sending His people into exile. God is going to raise up a small group of men to turn the world's most powerful empire on its head. In this book we are going to see the courage of people who are faithful to God and how God uses them to change the culture around them.

**Wherever life takes us, whatever it brings us, however difficult our problems, we must remain faithful to God.**

As a word of comfort to some of you here this morning I want you to know that God isn't surprised by what you're going through.

- Marriage struggle
- Financial hardships
- Issues with your kids
- Health crisis

God knows where you are and what you're going through. And on some level, God may be allowing you to go through this difficulty as a way to teach you to depend on Him, to turn you back to Him or to get your attention before your current path takes you in a direction God doesn't want you to experience. Often, God will develop our faith by allowing us to go through circumstances that require us to remain faithful.

**:: Romans 1:17**

**17 For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”**

**:: Habakkuk 2:4**

**4 “See, the enemy is puffed up; his desires are not upright— but the righteous person will live by his faithfulness —**

With that background, let's jump into the story of Daniel. Let's read the first chapter together and see how Daniel lives out his faith in a culture that is completely opposed to his way of life and does everything it can to influence Daniel to embrace a lifestyle that is opposed to God.

**:: Daniel 1:1-21**

**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 delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god.**

**3 Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring into the king's service some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility—**

**4 young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians.**

**5 The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service.**

**6 Among those who were chosen were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.**

**7 The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Beltshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.**

**8 But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.**

**9 Now God had caused the official to show favor and compassion to Daniel,**

**10 but the official told Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you."**

**11 Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah,**

**12 "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink.**

**13 Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see."**

**14 So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.**

**15 At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food.**

**16 So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.**

**17 To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.**

**18 At the end of the time set by the king to bring them into his service, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar.**

**19 The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service.**

**20 In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.**

**21 And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.**

**1. God is sovereign over the affairs of mankind. Daniel writes to show God's place and power in human events.**

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 delivered* Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god.

The sins of the kings of Judah- specifically Manasseh- had landed the people captivity. This was God's judgment for the evil that had been done against His holy expectations. That's a good reminder for us of two things:

- a. Our sins impact the lives of others around us. Sin almost never stops with you. There is a domino affect to sin. What individuals do affects the whole community of believers and what the community does affects each individual.
- b. God causes the rise and fall of kings and kingdoms. We are going to see that play out more fully as we get deeper into this book. As much as we love our country and want to see America thrive, we have to remember that this is not our home. We have another Kingdom we belong to that requires our faithful allegiance on a greater scale than our allegiance to this country.

Every day our allegiance to God is tested as we live in a world that is opposed to the rule and reign of Jesus. We are told in Romans 12 not to conform to the patterns of this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.

As Daniel is brought into captivity in Babylon he as a decision to make about whether he will assimilate into their culture and leave behind his faith and beliefs or if he will remain faithful to God no matter where he finds himself and what his circumstances are.

**3 Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring into the king's service some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility—**

**4 young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians.**

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**8 But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.**

King Nebuchadnezzar was smart. He took the brightest and the best and the strongest and removed them from their home land, bringing them to Babylon to be trained in the ways of the Babylonians. That left the poor and the weak and the uneducated back home where they wouldn't be a threat to their new masters. Nebuchadnezzar wanted to indoctrinate (or brain wash) the young men from Israel to embrace the Babylonian way of life. Here is how he intended to do that:

#### **Babylonian Indoctrination:**

a. **Educate them in the language and literature of their culture.**

No more would they hear about their culture, their history and their God, the young men would be limited to education based around the Babylonian culture and gods.

b. **Remove their Hebrew identity.**

The young men are given new names that fit their surroundings. This is where we find out Daniel isn't alone in his faithfulness to God. While there were many Hebrew boys who underwent this re-education, Daniel is mentioned with 3 friends who seem to have the same convictions he does. We will learn more about them as the book unfolds.

If you want to hold power over someone, give them a name. This is the tactic every playground bully you ever ran into as a kid. It may be how your boss keeps people in line. When you name something you have power over it. We name our pets...and our children! Just showing our dominance!

The names of the Hebrew boys all were given to them to remind them of who God is. These names would have been carefully selected by their parents.

The names Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah all end in the letters "el" or "iah."

El = Elohim                      iah = YHWH

Every time they heard their names God was mentioned. My name has the "el" suffix in it and means "Elohim is God." The Babylonians wanted to remove the Hebrew God from their vocabulary and give them names that would invoke the names of their gods.

Daniel became Belteshazzar; Hananiah was given the name Shadrach;

Mishael was named Meshach and Azariah became known as Abednego. For the sake of time I've listed what all those names mean in your notes on the app, but won't go through them all now.

- \* **Daniel = Elohim is my judge // Belteshazzar = Bel's prince**
- \* **Hananiah = Beloved by YHWH // Shadrach = Illuminated by sun-god**
- \* **Mishael = Who is like Elohim? // Meshach = Who is like Venus?**
- \* **Azariah = YHWH is my help // Abednego = Servant of Nego**

**c. Encourage them to engage in ungodly practices.**

The food offered to the Hebrews was most likely sacrificed to idols or it was not kosher. Daniel didn't object to the training and education he would receive from the Babylonians. He knew what he believed and hearing different teaching couldn't persuade him otherwise. They couldn't force him to believe the things they were teaching him.

Daniel didn't object when it came to having his name changed. He knew who he was and that his identity was grounded in God. Calling him by a different name wouldn't change that.

But when it came to breaking the law of God, Daniel was resolved to stand firm in his beliefs and not defile himself.

**“A belief never becomes a conviction until it's tested.”**

**– Shawn Barnard**

Daniel stood by his conviction not to eat the food, but look at how he goes about this. Daniel doesn't throw a tantrum, he doesn't start a rebellion, he doesn't go to the streets to riot against a perceived injustice.

**8 But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and *he asked* the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.**

**9 Now God had caused the official to show favor and compassion to Daniel,**

**10 but the official told Daniel, “I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you.”**

**11 Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah,**

**12 “*Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink.***

**13 Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see.”**

**14 So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.**

**Compromise happens with indecision or lack of godly conviction.**

If we are going to follow God and live in faithful obedience to Him we need to know ahead of time what we will do when tempted to sin. Parents, this is why it's so important for us to raise our children to know the truth of God's Word and to understand how to honor Him and live faithfully for Him in any situation they are presented with. Daniel was probably 14-15 years old at this point, living in a pagan culture that wanted to brainwash him for their purposes.

**Righteousness begins with a firm commitment to God.**

We serve a holy God. The point of this story isn't to simply mimic Daniel and do the right thing when in a pressure packed situation. The point is to understand that God is holy and as His people we are called to set ourselves apart from the world around us in order to live faithfully for Him. That begins with being committed to God by valuing His holiness above our pleasure.

Let's get back to the story...

When Daniel makes his request he asks politely. He wasn't rude or mean and he didn't challenge the official's authority. And again, in verse 9 we see that God is at work behind the scenes to have the official show Daniel favor and compassion. But that doesn't mean that official wasn't scared! He is afraid that this experiment will result in these boys being unhealthy and falling behind in their studies.

**Your godly convictions will impact the lives of others- how you approach them is vital.**

Daniel asked for a trial period and then to be reevaluated. He gave the official a way out if things weren't going in his favor. I don't think this was a hill to die on for Daniel and his friends. We will see instances of that in the coming chapters, but God was faithful to let Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah come out healthier than all the other boys after the 10 days. As we close the chapter we will see what happens after 10 days and then we are going to jump ahead and see how things end at the end of their 3 years of school.

**15 At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food.**

**16 So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.**

**17 To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.**

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Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah remained faithful to God even when it could have cost them and God showed His faithfulness by letting them excel far beyond everyone else in wisdom and with God's gifts.

Question: What area(s) of your life do you need to be resolved to following God, regardless of what it might cost you?

Are you prepared for how following your godly convictions will set you apart from the rest of our culture?

Stand firm in your convictions, not as a way to somehow hold God captive to doing for you what you want, but as a way to bow before Him and exalt Him in this world.

- Pray

Discussion Questions for Life Group Leaders:

Ice Breaker Question:

What is something you have to do on a regular or consistent basis that makes you uncomfortable? As the group leader you may want to go first on this one to set the tone and lead by showing vulnerability. I (Joel) plan to share with my group that meeting strangers often makes me uncomfortable- something I have to do almost every Sunday morning! I'm always afraid I'll say the wrong thing or come across weird to people!

Follow up with your group if you asked this question last week: "What is one action step you think God is asking you to take this week to follow Him, be changed by Him or be on mission with Him?"

Set up the passage: We are beginning a new series that will walk through the book of Daniel. In this book we will see how God is moving behind the scenes in human history to act sovereignly over all the events on a global stage and in our personal lives. In Daniel 1 we find that King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon has conquered Jerusalem and taken the best and brightest and youngest and strongest to Babylon.

Read Daniel 1 together as a group.

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think God is revealing about Himself in this passage? Why?
2. What stands out to you most from this early story in Daniel's life?

3. Can you describe a time you took a stand for something you believed in? How did it turn out?
4. Daniel's request not to defile himself with the king's choice food and wine could have negatively impacted the official over him- he even says he is afraid for his life. In what ways might our Christian convictions impact other people's lives?
5. What area of your life do you think God may be asking you to follow Him by being resolved to honor God's holiness rather than following the ways of our culture? (This may be a good question to split up between men and women and let everyone talk more freely.)