

DANIEL CHAPTER 1

2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

- Romans 12:2.

Daniel was captured by Babylon and forced into a 3-year training and indoctrination program in an attempt to 'brainwash' and assimilate him into the Babylonian culture of the day. Complete with new names, each name Daniel and his friends were given carried a meaning associated with a different Babylonian deity. Daniel's name meaning 'God is my judge' became Belshazzar meaning 'Baal protects the king.' Hananiah meaning 'beloved of the Lord' became Shadrach 'illuminated by Rak', the sun god. Mishael meaning 'who is as God' was called Meshach 'who is like Shak', the Babylonian Venus, and Azariah meaning 'the Lord is my help' became Abed-Nego 'servant of Nego', the god of fire.

Their Hebrew names carried rich truth about the one true God. The suffix of Daniel's name (and Mishael's) is -el, which refers to Elohim, one of the names of the God of Israel. Azariah and Hananiah carry the suffix -iah or -yah, which is short for Yahweh, the covenant name of God. It makes sense then that their Babylonian captors would change them to mock the God of Israel since they so easily took it captive.

Yet, after the wonders of God were shown to him, Nebuchadnezzar himself acknowledged Daniel's true name and honored the God of Israel, writing, "*Daniel came into my presence. . . . (He is called Belteshazzar, after the name of my god, and the spirit of the holy gods is in him*" Dan 4:8). Years later, the queen of Babylon still referred to Daniel by his Hebrew name, although she knew of Nebuchadnezzar's attempt to change it: she spoke of him as "*Daniel, whom the king called Belteshazzar*" Dan 5:12. It may be safe to say at the end of it all Daniel's true name and Godly identity still carried through.

What's in a name? These new names also represented the new identities that these men would be forced to live in. It's no different in today's world. The enemy wants to give you a new name, he calls you by your sin and the false gods you follow, but God knows your real name. Do you?

Discussion Questions

1. How do we see culture try to reshape the identity of the church as well as ourselves?
2. Daniel excelled in worldly things by the power of God. And as believers, we are also commanded to excel in all things as we "work unto the lord and not men," Col 3:23. In what ways can you bring Glory to God in your work?
3. Daniel and his friends were willing to be tested in their faith, they trusted that the Lord would protect them if they stood by His commands and rejected the things of the world. Are you able and willing to be tested? In what ways have you been tested?
4. How do we recognize the Sovereignty of God in our lives?
5. Daniel was unwilling to compromise, even on the small things. What things of God have you compromised? What do you need to give back to Him?