

Lesson 107

God Blesses Daniel

Four young men choose to obey God rather than man.

Overview

Lesson Focus

The king of Babylon was hoping to brainwash Daniel and his three young friends. He wanted them to forget their home, their customs, and their God, and serve him. The four young men refused to eat the rich foods sacrificed to idols and instead asked to eat vegetables and drink water. God blessed their obedience to him and rewarded them with favor, knowledge, and wisdom.

Key Passages

Daniel 1:7–20; John 16:33

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify how the four young men obeyed God.

- Describe how God blessed the four young men.

Memory Verse

Isaiah 30:18 Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself

to show mercy to you. For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him.

Prepare to Share

Scriptural Background

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the key passages for this lesson along with this background.

Nebuchadnezzar overthrew King Jehoiakim of Judah and ordered that young Jewish noblemen “without blemish, of good-appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning” (Daniel 1:4) to be taken to serve the king of Babylon in his palace.

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were four Judeans whom Nebuchadnezzar brought to serve in his court. Nebuchadnezzar wanted to train the Jewish captives in the Babylonian language and customs for three years to prepare them to serve him. Nebuchadnezzar was set on brainwashing these bright young Jewish men to forget their godly heritage.

Part of the brainwashing plan was to change the names of the captives. The four men mentioned above were no exception. Their Hebrew names giving honor to God were changed in order to give honor to the false gods of the land. Daniel means “God is my judge.” His name was changed to Belteshazzar, which means “Bel

[chief god] protect the king.” Hananiah means “God is gracious.” His name was changed to Shadrach, which means “inspired of Aku [moon god].” Mishaël means “who is like God?” His name was changed to Meshach, which means “who is like Aku?” Azariah means “God has helped.” His new name, Abednego, means “servant of Nego (or Nebo) [the god of wisdom].” All of these changes were made in an attempt to remove their allegiance from the true God.

As future members of the court, these four young men, likely in their teens, were offered the fine delicacies of the king’s table. But “Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself” with the food and wine offered by the king (Daniel 1:8). As a Jew, he was called to honor God’s dietary laws as given to Moses. Daniel and the others were likely offered food that had been dedicated to false gods and that was prohibited by God (Leviticus 11—pork, shellfish, etc.). To eat this food would be to compromise and blend the worship of false gods with the one true God. Daniel and his friends refused to compromise, even knowing it could bring them trouble with the king.

Daniel presented a challenge to the reluctant chief eunuch: he and his friends would only eat vegetables and drink water for 10 days, and then their health would be evaluated. At the end of the 10 days, Daniel and his friends appeared better and fatter than the young men who had

eaten from the king's table. God had blessed their commitment to honor him, and they were allowed to continue to eat their diet of vegetables. God also gave them knowledge, skill, and wisdom. Daniel, in particular, was able to understand visions and dreams. This gift of interpreting would play an important part in Daniel's ministry to God, Nebuchadnezzar, and other leaders (see Daniel chapters 2, 4, and 5).

After the three years of training, there were none like Daniel and his three friends. In fact, the Bible says they were 10 times better than the others. Each of the men served the king, and all were appointed to posts as governors, with Daniel serving the king directly as an advisor (Daniel 2:48-49).

God rewarded the obedience of Daniel, Mishael, Hananiah, and Azariah. God preserved their lives and prospered them. They would face other tests in the future, including tribulation, trials, imprisonment, and persecution. But they would continue to reveal the same conviction to honor and obey God. This is the attitude that all true followers of Jesus Christ should have.

In our culture today, many people have the misconception that becoming a Christian will bring an end to their trials. But our Lord Jesus made it clear that we will have tribulations in this world. The tribulations we face in our culture may not be severe persecution for our faith like Daniel and his friends suffered. But if we are

truly followers of Christ, trials and tribulation will enter into our lives (John 15:20; 2 Timothy 3:12). And as they do, we need to remember that Jesus said to expect the trials, be obedient through them, and trust God. Remember that Jesus Christ, by his resurrection from the dead, has overcome this world and all of its trouble (John 16:33).

Historical/Apologetics Background

Daniel is an intriguing figure. As a teenager, he found himself taken captive by a foreign king and put into a training program aimed at brainwashing him to be a loyal Babylonian. You might imagine being whisked away to Moscow in the 1960s and placed in a concrete building for three years of training in communist philosophy in order to be put in place as an advisor to the government officials. That is similar to what Daniel and his friends faced. To stand uncompromisingly on God's commands at a time like that would require true faith, not a minimal commitment equivalent to showing up at church every once in a while. Daniel's faith in God was evident even though he had been kidnapped, forced to serve a pagan king, and given a name that honored a false god. It is only by such faith that any believer can serve God in the face of trials.

Because of Daniel's integrity and servanthood, he found such favor that he endured through many kings and likely lived into his 80s. His

service extended to the time of King Cyrus, who would finally announce the end of the 70 years of Judah's captivity in 537 BC. In fact, Daniel likely witnessed the first Jews returning to Jerusalem under the leadership of Zerubbabel (Ezra 1–3).

The book of Daniel contains historical accounts of the events in Babylon. It also includes many prophecies about the Gentile rulers of the Middle East over the next 500 years. Further careful study of the book of Daniel and these prophecies will provide confirmation of the supernatural accuracy of the Bible.

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