

How To Stand Up To Stand Out

Daniel 1:1-21

What Does The Bible Say?

During the third year of King Jehoiakim's reign in Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

(Daniel 1:1 NLT)

This is secular history.

2 The Lord gave him victory over King Jehoiakim of Judah and permitted him to take some of the sacred objects from the Temple of God. So Nebuchadnezzar took them back to the land of Babylonia and placed them in the treasure-house of his god.

(Daniel 1:2 NLT)

This is biblical theology.

The book is written from a combination of these two points of view. People are making history: "King Nebuchadnezzar

of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it" (v. 1). Yet, God is also involved in these historical occurrences: "The Lord gave him victory over King Jehoiakim of Judah" (v. 2). The Lord Himself orchestrated the destruction of His people and His city.

5 Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Listen to this message from the Lord of Heaven's Armies: 6 'The time is coming when everything in your palace—all the treasures stored up by your ancestors until now—will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left,' says the Lord. 7 'Some of your very own sons will be taken away into exile. They will become eunuchs who will serve in the palace of Babylon's king.' " (Isaiah 39:5–7 NLT)

God said that He would use another nation to discipline His people.

3 These disasters happened to Judah because of the Lord's command. He had decided to banish Judah from his presence

because of the many sins of Manasseh, 4 who had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood. The Lord would not forgive this. (2 Kings 24:3–4 NLT)

What Does The Bible Say?

3 Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, his chief of staff, to bring to the palace some of the young men of Judah’s royal family and other noble families, who had been brought to Babylon as captives. 4 “Select only strong, healthy, and good-looking young men,” he said. “Make sure they are well versed in every branch of learning, are gifted with knowledge and good judgment, and are suited to serve in the royal palace. Train these young men in the language and literature of Babylon.” 5 The king assigned them a daily ration of food and wine from his own kitchens. They were to be trained for three years, and then they would enter the royal service. 6 Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël, and

Azariah were four of the young men chosen, all from the tribe of Judah. (Daniel 1:3–6 NLT)

The lifestyle of Babylon is introduced to Daniel and his companions, and they are given Babylonian names.

They were isolated from religious practices.

They were indoctrinated with a different way of thinking.

They were asked to compromise on their food choices.

They were identified differently from their godly heritage.

How we think about God, ourselves, others, and the world affects our actions.

How Can You Obey?

8 But Daniel was determined not to defile himself by eating the food and wine given to them by the king. He asked the chief of

staff for permission not to eat these unacceptable foods. (Daniel 1:8 NLT)

16 So after that, the attendant fed them only vegetables instead of the food and wine provided for the others.

17 God gave these four young men an unusual aptitude for understanding every aspect of literature and wisdom. And God gave Daniel the special ability to interpret the meanings of visions and dreams. (Daniel 1:16–17 NLT)

The young guys are the smartest and fittest of their generation after three years of training, despite just eating vegetables.

They decided on God's Word when given the option to pick between God's Word and the king's food.

To those in positions of power, they showed respect.

7 When people's lives please the Lord, even their enemies are at peace with them. (Proverbs 16:7 NLT)

Throughout the Bible, there are examples of brave people who had to oppose authority to obey God, and in each instance, they did so thoughtfully and lovingly.

18 Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone. (Romans 12:18 NLT)

The four Jewish students made no threats, organized a protest, or attempted to set fire to any structures. They behaved honorably well in school and requested that the attendant put them to the test by giving them only water and veggies for ten days.

Because they did not compromise, God strengthened their character for the tests that awaited them.

Additional Notes:

If you would like to use your home to disciple others, check out our training at www.crosswaveschurch.com/host. Cross Waves

has produced short videos to train you how to use your home to reach others for Christ. So please check it out.

Additional Notes:

In the Talking Theology segment, it is inspired by Philip Graham Ryken, *Written in Stone: The Ten Commandments and Today's Moral Crisis* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003), 169-183.

Explore:

KEY TRUTHS:

- 1. The World Wants to Squeeze Believers Into Its Mold
(Daniel 1:1-7)**
- 2. Believers Do What Pleases God Instead of What the
Culture Dictates (Daniel 1:8-16)**

3. God Uses Believers for His Glory When They Choose to Honor Him (Daniel 1:17-21)

HOW IT FITS: Where This Lesson Fits in the Story of the

Bible: The events in the book of Daniel took place during the time when God's people had been taken into captivity by the Babylonians and later the Medo-Persian Empire from 605 BC to 536 BC.

Explore:

When God allowed Judah to be conquered by their Babylonian enemies, some Israelites surely doubted whether Jehovah God was as all-powerful as they had believed. The Babylonians definitely proclaimed it as proof their gods were stronger. Yet God had only allowed Babylon's victory; He had not been forced to accept it reluctantly. In fact, He had raised up Babylon to

serve His purpose. God used Daniel to demonstrate and proclaim God's power and sovereignty, right in the middle of Babylonian (and Persian) power.

The World Wants to Squeeze Believers Into Its Mold

(Daniel 1:1-7)

True to God's warnings in Scriptures such as Leviticus 26:33-39, Deuteronomy 4:27, and Deuteronomy 28:64, God disciplined His chosen people when they turned away from Him into sin and idolatry (2 Kings 24:1-4). He allowed the ungodly Babylonians to defeat them. Babylon rolled over Judah in three waves of conquest. Here, king Nebuchadnezzar took some of the vessels the Jews had dedicated for the worship of the true God and sent them back to Babylon.

He defiled those vessels by placing them in the temple of his false god (verses 1-2). According to tradition, the ark of the covenant had been hidden before the invasion.

The Babylonians were building a true empire, ruling over many tribes and nations. Effective administration of such an empire was a serious challenge. Babylon's sensible policy was to take the best and brightest from the conquered territories and immerse them into Babylonian language, culture, and training. Then, these young people with an understanding of multiple cultures served in the Babylonian imperial administrative service. With this in view, Nebuchadnezzar ordered that some young people from the Jewish royal family and the families of nobility be taken back to Babylon. Isaiah had foretold this in 2 Kings 20:18. They were to be educated in the Babylonian culture and then be examined by the king (verses 3-5).

Daniel and three Hebrew companions—Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah—left Judah for Babylon in the first wave, around 605 BC (verse 6). In Babylon, they took their place among other captives (Jewish and otherwise). As circumstances for captives go, they could have done worse. They had good food and

lodging, an elite education, and likely a guaranteed position in the administration after success in their studies. Yet one thing was clear: Babylon expected them to abandon their former beliefs or at least to make them secondary to what Babylon ordered.

The same is true of the lost culture around us. Satan wants every square inch of this world and all its systems, and he wants to sweep as many people as he can into his collection. Believers do well to practice discernment and to evaluate the influences of the culture around them. Are those influences sinful? What is their overall influence and direction? What kind of world do they foster? What kinds of belief do they promote and oppose? Will those influences make us more like Christ or more like the worldly culture? Asking these kinds of questions can help us avoid being conformed to the world's way of thinking and living.

Explore:

Education, at all levels, remains one of the primary ways to instill culture and worldview in young people. It is never neutral. It will always be a potent force for transmitting philosophy and beliefs to students. Babylon explicitly sought to transmit its values through its educational system. We must understand that the education- al system we use for our young people will seek to mold them into a certain way of thinking and acting. We do well to prepare them for the forces and influences they will meet, especially if it is an unbelieving system. *Surviving Culture: When Character and Your World Collide* (Randall House, 2014), by Dr. Eddie Moody is an excellent resource for teens and parents that draws timeless principles from the experiences of Daniel and his friends.

Explore:

Believers Do What Pleases God Instead of What the Culture Dictates (Daniel 1:8-16)

Daniel's objection to the royal diet seems to have started early in the process. There was something in the menu that caused Daniel to believe it would not please God for him to eat it. So, he asked the official in charge of their training to allow them to eat something different (verse 8).

Just as God gave Joseph favor down in Egypt, God granted Daniel and his friends favor with the official in Babylon (verse 9). The official's objection (you'll endanger my head with the king!) was sensible, and so was Daniel's response: Fair enough. Let's try it for 10 days, and then you decide (verses 10-12). God honored the purpose in Daniel's heart in a visible way. This was the beginning of God's showing His sovereign power right there in the corridors of power of mighty Babylon. God made the

difference in appearance so obvious that the official easily decided to grant the request (verses 15-16).

Daniel was powerless to bring about the desired outcome, but He trusted God to make things clear. His proposed trial period demonstrated an acknowledgment that the decision was the official's, confidence that the official would be able to see a difference, and especially that God would make it clear.

We cannot personally change all of the sinfulness in our culture. Nevertheless, we should purpose in our hearts not to defile ourselves in areas where we have control. We should also show ourselves respectful to those in authority by making appeals instead of demands, as Daniel did, and offer reasonable solutions.

We can be respectful in choosing to do what we know is right and trusting God to honor our desire to honor Him. It will also help our cause to work hard and to do it with excellence. How

would it have honored God if Daniel and his friends had insisted on zealous-yet-picky eating for God, but had shown themselves too lazy to apply themselves to their studies and responsibilities?

Explore:

God Uses Believers for His Glory When They Choose to Honor Him (Daniel 1:17-21)

The four young Israelites were no doubt fine and intelligent men. It is unlikely the Babylonians would have selected them if they were not. Still, verse 17 indicates that God worked in them in a way that went beyond their natural abilities. They had honored God, and God in return honored them. No doubt, the daily grind of their studies and preparation routinely clouded their vision. Yet, they knew the sunshine of God's presence and honor was there beyond the momentary clouds of practice and training.

They started out honoring God and maintained that purpose throughout their studies.

It paid off! This program of study was no mere formality. The king himself examined each one at the end of it. He was surely pleased to find them better equipped than the professional corps with which he ordinarily interacted (verses 18-20).

Verse 17 also mentions the understanding of dreams and visions, which Daniel would display later in the book. All four of these godly young men displayed wisdom and learning in all literature. They were well read, and they understood what they read. They had become instruments that God could use in ways that no captives could ever have expected. Not everyone can become as skilled as Daniel and his friends. Still we should honor God in every way possible, and we should apply ourselves to learning all we can about this world in which He has placed us.

Explore:

We usually think of Daniel as the young man who turned down the king's food, and that was an important episode of his life.

Still, the book of Daniel is short, and skips over much of what was really a long life. Daniel 1:21 indicates that Daniel was there (serving Babylon, etc.) until the first year of King Cyrus (of the Medes and Persians), which included a total of eight rulers, (only four of which are noted in Scripture), spanning approximately 70 years.

Explore:

God's work on behalf of Daniel and his companions while in captivity demonstrated that God is the Sovereign Lord of all.

Explore:

Several reasons have been proposed for why Daniel and his friends rejected the king's diet. Some scholars consider that some of the meat would not have been acceptable as kosher according to the Law God gave to Moses. Also, Jews usually diluted wine with water to heed the warnings against "strong drink," but the Babylonians did not. Others believe that the wine and meat would have first been offered to idols—a precursor to problems the New Testament church would face hundreds of years later. Some believe Daniel and his companions chose the restricted diet to protect themselves from being lured into the comforts of Babylonian culture. Perhaps all of these explanations applied.

Explore:

God would have been untrue to His Word had He not delivered His people into exile: He had told them what would happen if they turned away. Passages such as 2 Kings 24-25 and 2 Chronicles 36 describe the sad defeat. Leviticus 26:33- 39, Deuteronomy 4:27, and Deuteronomy 28:64, among others, made it clear what Israel could expect if they abandoned God. Three waves of invasion and defeat overwhelmed Judah (note that some sources will move the invasion dates by a year in one direction or another, depending on the dating of other historical events):

606 or 605 BC – Babylon took much treasure and the first group of exiles, including Daniel and his companions.

597 BC – Babylon took King Jehoiachin prisoner, as well as more treasure and exiles.

586 BC – Babylon took King Zedekiah and still more treasure and exiles. They destroyed the Temple, tore down the walls, and

burned Jerusalem.

Daniel 1:1 places the invasion in the third year of Judah's King Jehoiakim, but Jeremiah refers to the fourth year in Jeremiah 25:1. Is this an error or a contradiction, as some critics have claimed? Not at all! Both dates are correct, but they use two different means of counting the years of a king's reign. The Jews counted the part of the year leading up to a king's ascension to power, but the Babylonians counted the king's years in power starting after his ascension. Therefore, the Jewish system (naturally used by Jeremiah) puts the same event in Jehoiakim's fourth year, but the Babylonian system (used by Daniel, working within the new system) defines it as the third year.

Explore:

Christianity is about more than going to church and living a good moral life. Being a Christian is about having a vibrant personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Every Sunday School

teacher or Bible study leader should want to see each of his or her learners enter into this relationship—their eternal destiny depends on it. As you work toward this goal, keep the following in mind:

Following Christ is about more than a mere decision; it is about a lifelong relationship. Jesus called us to make disciples, not mere decision-makers. Aim for long-term faith, not momentary emotion.

Salvation is a matter of grace, not works. Our works do not save us (Ephesians 2:8-9), nor do they keep us (Galatians 3:2-6). Good works are a product of salvation, not a prerequisite to it.

Don't confuse sanctification with salvation. Holiness follows salvation; it doesn't precede it. Don't try to impose "Christian" expectations on men and women who don't know Christ.

- Keep it simple. Being born again is not complicated. Here's a simple way to explain it:

- Acknowledge your sinfulness and your need for a Savior (Romans 3:10, 23).

- Trust in Christ's sacrifice for your sins and in His resurrection (Romans 10:9-10).

Surrender your life to God's transforming power (Romans 12:1-2).

Most of all, remember that your job is to tell the truth in a way others can understand, answer their questions, and give them an opportunity to respond. If you do that faithfully, some will respond and join the band of Christ- followers. When they do,

Heaven will rejoice!

Question 1 of 5

Why is stealing a sin against God?

Question 2 of 5

Describe a time when you saw someone stand for their beliefs against tremendous pressure. What was the situation? How did they do it? What was the result?

Question 3 of 5

If you were Daniel, would it be hard to believe in the God of Israel when another country has captured your country and destroyed your temple?

Question 4 of 5

How does the world try to fit us into its mold?

Question 5 of 5

Why is it important for believers to be respectful as we go against sinful cultural norms?