

# **Bible Study October 9, 2024**

## **DANIEL 1 (AMPLIFIED VERSION)**

### **VIRTUAL SERVICE**

#### **The Choice Young Men**

***<sup>1</sup> In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. <sup>2</sup> The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles of the house of God; and he brought them into the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and brought the articles into the treasury of his god.***

Nebuchadnezzar, the supreme leader of Babylonia, was feared throughout the world. When he invaded a country, their defeat was certain. After a victory, the Babylonians usually took the most talented and useful people back to their own country, leaving behind only those incapable of making a significant contribution to Babylonian society. Those who stayed could take whatever land they wanted and were required to live peacefully there (2 Kings 24:14). This system fostered great loyalty from conquered lands and ensured a steady supply of wise and talented people for civil service.

At certain times God allows his work to suffer. In this instance, the Babylonians raided the Temple of God and took the worship articles to the temple of a god in Babylon. This god may have been Bel, also called Marduk, the chief god of the Babylonians. Those who loved the Lord—though few in number—must have felt disheartened and discouraged, especially since most people were already worshiping other gods and neglecting the Lord altogether. We feel greatly alarmed when churches around the world are destroyed, close down for financial reasons, are split by controversies, or are wracked by scandals. We do not know why God allows his church to experience these calamities. But like the people who witnessed the plundering of the Temple by the Babylonians, we must trust that God is in control and that he is watching over all who trust in him. When you hear of God's people going through difficult times, pray that he will bring restoration. Remember God's promise that those who love him and suffer will experience joy when he returns (1 Peter 4:13).

***<sup>3</sup> And the [Babylonian] king told Ashpenaz, the chief of his officials, to bring in some of the sons of Israel, including some from the royal family and from the nobles, <sup>4</sup> young men without blemish and handsome in appearance, skillful in all wisdom, endowed with intelligence and discernment, and quick to understand, competent to stand [in the presence of the king] and able to serve in the king's palace. He also ordered Ashpenaz to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.***

The common language of Babylonia was Aramaic, while the language of scholarship included the ancient and complicated Babylonian language. The academic program would have included mathematics, astronomy, history, science, and magic. These young men received the best education in the world at the time, and they demonstrated both aptitude and discipline. Their integrity enabled them not only to survive but also to flourish in captivity. God was at work accomplishing his plans for them. And just as he had plans for them, he has plans for you. If you are currently experiencing a new, challenging, or difficult situation, discover the gifts and abilities God has given you to flourish.

***<sup>5</sup> The king assigned a daily ration for them from his finest food and from the wine which he drank. They were to be educated and nourished this way for three years so that at the end of that time they were [prepared] to enter the king's service. <sup>6</sup> Among them from the sons of Judah were: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. <sup>7</sup> The commander of the officials gave them [Babylonian] names: Daniel he named Belteshazzar, Hananiah he named Shadrach, Mishael he named Meshach, and Azariah he named Abed-nego.***

Nebuchadnezzar changed the names of Daniel and his friends because he wanted to make them Babylonian—in their own eyes and in the eyes of the Babylonian people. New names would help them assimilate into the culture. Daniel means “God is my judge” in Hebrew; his name was changed to Belteshazzar, meaning “Bel, protect his life!” (Bel, also called Marduk, was the chief Babylonian god.) Hananiah means “the LORD shows grace”; his new name, Shadrach, probably means “under the command of Aku” (the moon god). Mishael means “Who is like God?”; his new name, Meshach, probably means “Who is like Aku?” Azariah means “the LORD helps”; his new name, Abednego, means “servant of Nego/Nebo” (or Nabu, the god of learning and writing). This was one way the king attempted to change the religious loyalty of these young men from Judah’s God to the gods of Babylonia.

### **Daniel’s Resolve**

***<sup>8</sup> But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile (taint, dishonor) himself with the king’s finest food or with the wine which the king drank; so he asked the commander of the officials that he might [be excused so that he would] not defile himself.***

Daniel resolved not to eat the king’s food because some of it was forbidden by Jewish law, like pork (see Leviticus 11), and perhaps partly because accepting the king’s food and drink was the first step toward depending on his gifts and favors. For Daniel and his friends, keeping their own diet helped them retain their identity and beliefs as people

of God. Although Daniel lived in a culture that did not honor God, he still obeyed God's laws.

Daniel was determined to be devoted to principle and was committed to a course of action. When Daniel made up his mind not to defile himself, he was being true to a lifelong determination to do what was right before God and not to give in to the pressures around him. We, too, may be pressured to compromise our standards and live more like the unbelieving world around us. Just as Daniel continued to honor and obey God in a culture that rejected his God, you can stand up for God's absolute truths as revealed in the Bible. Perhaps your work environment requires you to participate in activities or visit places that the Bible would not condone. Boldly speak with your superiors about abstaining, and remember to uphold your identity and purpose in Christ in even the most difficult circumstances.

Daniel and his friends lived in a precarious situation. They were virtually slaves of a foreign, pagan, and powerful king who could easily have them killed for disobedience. First and foremost, however, they served a living, holy, and personal God, who is more powerful than any king on earth. Daniel worked hard to respect the king of the land, but he was determined to be ultimately loyal to the king of the universe, even if it meant forfeiting his earthly life. He did everything he could to serve his government—until it asked him to violate his commitments to the Lord. Standing for God's truth is easier if we understand what our loyalty to God entails well before challenges arrive. Daniel and his friends had made their decision to be faithful to the laws of God before they were faced with the king's plans, so they did not hesitate to stick by their convictions when asked to compromise them. We will get into trouble if we have not previously determined where to draw the line. Before such situations arise, decide to say no and have your reasons for doing so. Then when temptation or challenges to your faith come, remember God's purpose for you and rely on his strength to say and do what is right.

**<sup>9</sup> Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials,**

God moved with an unseen hand to change the heart of this Babylonian official. The strong moral conviction of these four young men made an impact. God promises to be with his people in times of trial and temptation (Psalm 106:46; Isaiah 43:2-5; 1 Corinthians 10:13).

**Isaiah 43:2 (AMP)**

**<sup>2</sup> “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;  
And through the rivers, they will not overwhelm you.  
When you walk through fire, you will not be scorched,  
Nor will the flame burn you.**

## 1 Corinthians 10:13 (AMP)

***13 No temptation [regardless of its source] has overtaken or enticed you that is not common to human experience [nor is any temptation unusual or beyond human resistance]; but God is faithful [to His word—He is compassionate and trustworthy], and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability [to resist], but along with the temptation He [has in the past and is now and] will [always] provide the way out as well, so that you will be able to endure it [without yielding, and will overcome temptation with joy].***

His active intervention often comes right when we take a stand for him. Stand for God and trust him to protect you even in ways you may not be able to see.

God can use anyone—even unbelievers—to accomplish his purposes. When you face overwhelming hardship, be on the alert for people whom God may use to help you. And take comfort in knowing that God provides support and encouragement through other people, including those you may not expect.

***10 and the commander of the officials said to Daniel, “I am afraid of my lord the king, who has prearranged your food and your drink; for why should he see your faces looking more haggard than the young men who are your own age? Then you would make me forfeit my head to the king.”***

Anything short of complete obedience meant execution for the officials who served Nebuchadnezzar. Even in such a small matter as this, the official feared for his life.

***11 But Daniel said to the overseer whom the commander of the officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, <sup>12</sup> “Please, test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink.”***

The Babylonians were trying to change (1) the thinking of these young men by giving them a Babylonian education, (2) their loyalty by changing their names, and (3) their lifestyle by changing their diet. Without compromising, Daniel found a way to live by God’s standards in a culture that did not honor God. Wisely choosing to negotiate first rather than to rebel, Daniel suggested an experimental ten-day diet of vegetables and water instead of the royal foods and wine the king offered. With God’s help, Daniel quickly thought of a practical, creative solution that saved his life and the lives of his companions. As God’s people, we may adjust to our culture where possible as long as we stay true to God’s Word.

You may think that Daniel is especially exceptional and that you could never think your way out of a tough spot like this. Or perhaps you don’t believe that God would show you this same kind of favor. But Daniel is known as a great example of faith because he had

confidence that God would help him. He trusted in God, and God acted. Do you have this kind of assurance? Trust God the next time you are in a tough spot and feel tempted to compromise your faith. As you put your confidence in him to help you, your faith will flourish, your courage will blossom, and you will become a faithful example as well.

***13 Then let our appearance and the appearance of the young men who eat the king's finest food be observed and compared by you, and deal with your servants in accordance with what you see."***

***14 So the man listened to them in this matter and tested them for ten days. 15 At the end of ten days it seemed that they were looking better and [g]healthier than all the young men who ate the king's finest food. 16 So the overseer continued to withhold their fine food and the wine they were to drink, and kept giving them vegetables.***

***17 As for these four young men, God gave them knowledge and skill in all kinds of literature and wisdom; Daniel also understood all kinds of visions and dreams.***

Daniel and his friends learned all they could about their new culture so they could do their work with excellence. But while they learned, they maintained steadfast allegiance to God, and God gave them skill and wisdom. Culture need not be God's enemy. If it does not violate his commands, it can aid in accomplishing his purposes. We who follow God are free to be competent leaders in our culture, but we are required to interpret culture through God's filter, not the filter of our own expediency.

***18 At the end of the time set by the king to bring all the young men in [before him], the commander of the officials presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. 19 The king spoke with them, and among them all not one was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; so they were [selected and] assigned to stand before the king and enter his personal service. 20 In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the [learned] magicians and enchanters (Magi) in his whole realm.***

Nebuchadnezzar put Daniel and his friends on his staff of advisers. This staff included many "magicians and enchanters." These men claimed to be able to tell the future through magic and occult practices. They were masters at communicating their messages so that they sounded authoritative—as though they had come directly from their gods. In contrast, God provided Daniel and his three friends with his wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. The king was far more pleased with them than he was with his "magicians and enchanters." Why? Because God is the origin of all truth and was the source of the authority and wisdom of Daniel and his friends. When you counsel others, consult the Bible. You will be amazed at the fruit of the wisdom you give because it is God's wisdom you are sharing.

To survive in a foreign culture such as this, the captives had to learn how the culture operated so they could achieve excellence in the work they were given, serve their captors well, pray for God's help, and maintain their integrity. We live in a transient world where people move between cities, states, and countries frequently and for a variety of reasons. God placed Daniel and his friends in a position to counsel the pagan King Nebuchadnezzar in ancient Babylon, and God still works this way today. He gives his people wisdom to speak to kings, politicians, and other leaders all around the world. Like Daniel, be prepared to speak wisely to those around you, wherever you go. If God gave Daniel and his friends the ability to adapt to and learn from the culture in which he had placed them, then he can do the same for you.

***<sup>21</sup> And Daniel remained there until the first year of [the reign of] King Cyrus [over Babylon; now this was at the end of the seventy-year exile of Judah (the Southern Kingdom) in Babylonia, as foretold by Jeremiah].***

Daniel was one of the first captives taken to Babylon, and he lived to see the first exiles return to Jerusalem in 538 BC. Daniel lived in Babylon for 69 years (605–536). Throughout this time he honored God, and God honored him. While serving as an adviser to the kings of Babylon, Daniel was God's spokesman to the Babylonian Empire. Babylonia was a wicked nation, but it would have been much worse without Daniel's influence.

## **WISDOM KEYS:**

### **#1 SOMETHINGS ONLY COME THROUGH PRAYER AND FASTING | MATTHEW 17:21 (NIRV)**

*That kind of spirit comes out **only** if you use **prayer and fasting.**]*"

### **#2 FASTING PRODUCES VICTORY | 2 CHRONICLES 20:1-4 (AMP) | ESTHER 4:15-16 (AMP)**

***<sup>1</sup> Now it happened after this that the Moabites and the Ammonites, together with some of the Meunites, came to make war against Jehoshaphat. <sup>2</sup> Then it was reported to Jehoshaphat, "A great multitude has come against you from beyond the [Dead] Sea, out of Aram (Syria); and behold, they are in Hazazon-tamar (that is, Engedi)." <sup>3</sup> Then Jehoshaphat was afraid and set himself [determinedly, as his vital need] to seek the Lord; and he proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. <sup>4</sup> So [the people of] Judah gathered together to seek help from the Lord; indeed they came from all the cities of Judah to seek the Lord [longing for Him with all their heart].***

## Esther 4:15-16 (AMP)

### Esther Plans to Intercede

***15 Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, 16 “Go, gather all the Jews that are present in Susa, and observe a fast for me; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids also will fast in the same way. Then I will go in to [see] the king [without being summoned], which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish.”***

## #3 FASTING PRODUCES POWER | LUKE 4:1-2, 14 (NLT)

### The Temptation of Jesus

***1 Then Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan River. He was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, 2 where he was tempted by the devil for forty days. Jesus ate nothing all that time and became very hungry.***

### Jesus Rejected at Nazareth

***14 Then Jesus returned to Galilee, filled with the Holy Spirit’s power. Reports about him spread quickly through the whole region.***

## #4 FASTING PRODUCING REVELATION | EXODUS 34:27-28 AMPLIFIED BIBLE (AMP)

***27 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Write these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.” 28 Moses was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he ate no bread and drank no water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.***

**IF YOU WANT SOMETHING YOU NEVER HAD YOU MUST BE WILLING TO DO  
SOMETHING THAT YOU HAVE NEVER DONE**