

Daniel 1 Teaching

We meet a new king here. Judah has now been through 18 different kings since the death of King David, some who followed God's commands and others who went their own way. It is like being on a yo-yo's string reading through the history of them all and how back and forth regarding following God's will the leadership was over His people!

Jehoiakim, the king of Judah mentioned in this chapter was an evil king. His father, King Josiah brought Judah back in good standing with God, but this rebellious son chose the opposite path of his father and his God and brought a nation down with him – WAY down! He did what God said was wrong and did not repent and God was done with being patient with Judah's rebellion. Therefore, God allowed King Nebuchadnezzar to conquer and take Jehoiakim captive and the choice things and people of Judah also. Moral of the story: **God will always have a plan to deal with our sin – He will stay patient and is slow to anger but will not allow it to continue forever.**

Jeremiah the prophet was warning the people of Judah during this time that God would bring serious punishment, but they would not listen and change their ways. They learned the very hard way that God is serious when He says not to turn against Him.

And we can see and know that from entire nations to businesses, to churches and smaller family structures, leadership matters. What the head of these establishments do and believe trickle down to others and affect outcomes. If a father and mother follow God's commands and word closely, their children benefit greatly, the same goes for a nation or a business or even just a friendship between two people.

We read that King Nebuchadnezzar was wanting to raise up a group of future leaders for his growing kingdom. He wanted pliable youth to be trained up to do his bidding and lead for him and under him. This is why he chose young boys – he thought he could mold them easily into his ways of leadership and into the Babylonian belief system. The

“way of the Chaldeans” meant they were to be taught a new religion – one that directly opposed Yahweh. These youth were expected to look, act, eat and worship as a Babylonian would.

We see Daniel standing up as a true leader in a very tough situation – just a boy, but age has little to do with leadership – character does. Daniel was not going to bow down to this new king or culture, let alone a new “god”. He did not rebel outwardly, swinging a sword or an obnoxious attitude, but instead, he yielded a much more powerful weapon as he remained honorable, likeable, and respectable. Otherwise, the king’s high servant most likely would not have shown him favor and given him and his three friends the option to go against the king’s orders to eat different food as the others.

This is a very big deal! Ashpenaz could have been killed by doing this act of defiance to the king’s orders. **Daniel persuaded him by having the Godly characteristics of humility, peace, love for others and appreciation - these fruit in our lives can help us overcome situations that seem insurmountable!** This also harkens back to Joseph’s story in Egypt. He won favor with the Pharaoh, due to his character, not by his might, his skills for debate, or his good looks. **Godly character matters!**

We see that Daniel and his three friends stayed the course and were seen as healthier than the others who ate the fatty foods and wine. **They were fed with water and vegetables, but more than that – they were fed by God’s ever-presence through prayer not only sustained them but enhanced them!** This reminds us to never neglect our time with God and receive the blessings that brings us in our physical, mental and spiritual health.

[Dan 1:20](#). “And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.”

They ate differently for ten days, and now we are told that they are ten times better than all of the “wise men” in the kingdom. And, we know by this account that these were young men desiring to follow God and God alone. What they put in their hearts and minds over those ten days was way more important and filling than what they fed their body. New Testament correlation: There is an account in John 4 where Jesus at the well in Samaria when the disciples came back from town trying to force bread in His hand: John 4: ³¹ Meanwhile the disciples were urging Him, saying, “Rabbi, eat *something*.” ³² But He said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” ³³ So the disciples were saying to one another, “No one brought Him *anything* to eat, did he?” ³⁴ Jesus *said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work.” (NASB)

This is each of our calling as followers of God! This is where true contentment lies.

Also - the number ten is significant - From an online commentary: “...the meaning of 10 is one of testimony, law, responsibility and the completeness of order.

We find, In Genesis 1, the phrase “God said” 10 times, which is a testimony of His creative power. God gave the Ten Commandments to man. Ten therefore represents man's responsibility to keep the commandments. A tithe is a 10th of our earnings and is a testimony of our faith in the Lord.”ⁱ

Anytime we seek God and His will, our lives will be multiplied in goodness too and we will have a testimony to tell!

These young men had their names changed by Ashpenaz. What is in a name? These boys in this story had names given by their Hebrew parents of Jewish heritage and a reverence for the true God. Each of their names meant something very special:

Daniel – “God is my judge”

Hananiah – “Yahweh is Gracious and Merciful”

Mishael – “Who is like God?”

Azariah – “Helped by God”

These young men had their names changed. But their character did not change; it remained steadfast and true to the names given to them at birth.

Daniel was given the name Belteshazzar which means “Who lays up treasures in secret”.

Hananiah was given the name Shadrach which means “Command of Aku” Aku was a false moon god of Babylon.

Mishael was given the name Meshach – which meant “Who is like Aku?” Interesting isn’t it that Mishael means “Who is like God?” (the one true God) and he was given a name to replace it with the same question about a false god? This would be especially offensive to a young man intent on following Yahweh with all of his heart, mind, and body, right?

And, Azariah was given the name Abednego – which means “Servant of Nebo” which was a Babylonian god of wisdom.

This man attempted to take away even their names – strip them of all their heritage and future as true Jewish men. **It turns out what Ashpenaz meant to do to remove their heritage only made them more intent on following it more and more.** You can take the God out of a name, but you can’t take the true God out of the man (or woman) once they know Him in all truth! And these boys were truth-bearers of the Living God! They would soon introduce the *true God* to a people whose life revolved around worship and sacrifice to many false gods. What a blessing it is to a nation have truth-tellers among so much falsehood! We must ask ourselves – are we willing to do the same?

It is interesting to note that the qualities these men had to be considered “worthy” for service to the king were being good looking, well-educated, capable of learning and

understanding and able-bodied. They were trained for three years before becoming servants of the king.

Jesus' disciples had only two similarities we know of to these men chosen by the Babylonian king: Capable of learning and understanding and that they were trained under Jesus for three years as well before being released on their own to change the world. Nothing in the Gospels speak to outward appearances: God does not care about the superficial and of outward shell, only about the inward things – the heart of those chosen to serve Him for His purposes. (1 Samuel 16:7b NASB: "God does not *see* as man sees, since man looks at ^{to}the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.")

We are to remember how the secular world looks at things are often the exact opposite of how God looks at things. But, in this case as noted in Daniel, these superficial attributes of Daniel and his friends, made them acceptable to the worldly king to be used to bring God's will into their situations with him and those around them.

This is a life-lesson point – God will orchestrate everything for His good purpose. He will use what and who he needs to use and bring order to what at first may appear chaotic – these young men must have felt confused and sad as to why they were being pulled from their Hebrew families and brought into the secular King's palace away from everything familiar. But they stayed faithful and were used in God's ultimate plan for them. They stayed true to their real identity!

It is important to note how Daniel pre-determined to stay faithful. It says he "But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself". He was settled and unshakeable in his convictions. This is just how we all are to be. **We must decide ahead of trials and temptations how we will face them in the Lord's way and will. This is how we are best used in God's kingdom.** Scripture tells us not to be "double-minded". We are to be solid, unmovable pillars for Him and that is when we are blessed by Him

and His faithfulness right back to us. We pour out faith and He pours out His faithfulness.

God needs us, His church to be this way in today's world. As secularism strengthens and ramps up, the church is to do this 10-fold to bring truth and change for good!

These boys in this story as we will soon see in upcoming chapters just how critical standing firm no matter what does. God is in control, in the small conflicts and the large, even the fiery and frightening things that happen to us. **Our job is not to go along with the world but to stay true to God's will. He will never leave us to do this alone. As Daniel and his friends were given special knowledge and understanding – God will do the same for those that seek Him with pure hearts - let us keep continuing to trust Him to work all things out for good.** Let us strive to live like Daniel - full of unwavering faith - so we can influence others for God and show them His character in our actions and reactions. Amen.

- J. Usselman

ⁱ [Meaning of the Number 10 in the Bible \(biblestudy.org\)](http://biblestudy.org)