

"Living for God in the Midst of Difficult Times"

Part 3

Daniel 1

Introduction: Today we are coming back again to the book of Daniel and as we do I need to remind you of what this study is all about. We are looking at a study entitled "Living for God in the Midst of Difficult Times". We are looking at this study in light of the direction our Nation and our world is headed. This is why we are in the book of Daniel because Daniel was a young man who knew all about being faithful to God when the world around him was falling apart.

As the book of Daniel opens we find that the situation is very dark. The year is 605 BC and God has removed from the Southern Kingdom His hand of protection and this allowed the Babylonians to lay siege to the city of Jerusalem. Let me give you a really quick review then we shall get to where we are going today.

God had warned the Southern Kingdom over and over again that if they did not repent then judgment was coming. He had even announced through the prophet Jeremiah that this judgment would come from the north.

Jeremiah 1:15-16

¹⁵ For, lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the LORD; and they shall come, and they shall set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah.

¹⁶ And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands.

God had warned them through the captivity of the Northern Kingdom when the Assyrians came and carried them away into captivity. The Assyrian captivity happened between 740 BC and 720 BC. This was a little over 100 years before the Southern Kingdom would go into the Babylonian captivity.

Judah however never thought it would NEVER happen to them but they were wrong.

Notice Daniel 1:1

In 605 BC it all started. Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians came into Jerusalem. He however was not there long until his father died and he then returned back to Babylon.

Before he went back to Babylon he needed a way to keep Jehoiakim, king of Judah in check. So he did 2 things:

1. He took the part of the vessels from the Temple.
2. He took a group of hostages.

Notice Daniel 1:2-3

There were actually 3 deportations of people. This one in 605 BC and then another in 597 BC and then the last one in 586 BC. So there were 19 years from the first to the last.

Now last week I explained to you that God was in control of this entire captivity.

Notice Daniel 1:2a

We see the Lord gave the king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. God had allowed Daniel and his friends to be taken in the first deportation because God wanted to get His men in place before the rest of the people were carried away.

But something we need to keep in mind is that Satan tried his best to use the circumstances to corrupt the people of Judah. That is what we are going to look at this morning.

So Daniel and many others are deported to the land of Babylonian. They were separated from friends and family. These men would have been from 13-16 years old.

I. The Babylonian Plan

Notice Daniel 1:3

We looked at this a few weeks back but there is more here to see so I want us to work our way slowly through these verses again because the Babylonian plan is so important to see.

Nebuchadnezzar gave Ashpenaz the freedom to pick those who be the hostages but they had to be children of royalty. They were of the king's seed and they were princes.

Remember that these young men were taken to keep the king of Judah, Jehoiakim in check.

Notice Daniel 1:4

Here is the list of requirements for those who were taken as hostages:

1. No blemishes.
2. Well favored - Good looking.
3. Skillful in wisdom. - The ability to apply wisdom.
4. Cunning in knowledge. - They had to be gifted in learning.
5. Understanding science. - They had to be able to think on their own.
6. The ability to serve in the king's palace. - They had to have social graces.

It was the king's desire to take these young men and train them in the way of the Chaldeans and set them over the Jews who would later come into the land. But as I told you before there was more behind the scenes which is not evident on the surface.

Satan was involved here and it was his desire to corrupt the Promised Seed which would be Jesus Christ. You see God had made a promise in Genesis 3 that from the woman would come a man who would destroy Satan.

Genesis 3:14-15

¹⁴ And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:

¹⁵ And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Satan did not know when or where the Messiah would be born but he did his best to stop the Promise of God.

This was an attempt to brain wash these children of royalty. Nebuchadnezzar's plan was to fill the minds of these young men and completely change their way of thinking.

Notice Daniel 1:5-7

We see 2 ways in which the king attempted to brainwash these men:

1. He gave them food that was from his table. This was the very best which they could have received. This was the most expensive steaks and the most expensive wine. This would have introduced these young men to a lifestyle like they had never known before.

2. Nebuchadnezzar changed their names. We can see the purpose in the meaning of the names.
 - a. He changed Daniel to Belteshazzar. - Daniel means "God is my Judge".
 - b. He changed Hananiah to Shadrach. - Hananiah means "God has favored".
 - c. He changed Mishael to Meshach. - Mishael means "Who is what God is
 - d. He changed Azariah to Abednego. - Azariah means "Jehovah has helped".

Now the names given to the young men when they were born tell us that they came from families who were of faith.

When they came to Babylon they were given names which were connected to the false gods of Babylon. This was an attempt to get them to forget their roots and to forget about the God of Israel.

Application:

Now as I said we know that Satan was behind this because it was his desire to corrupt these young men who had the potential to make a difference for God. We also know that it was Satan's desire to corrupt coming Messiah whom God had promised would come from the nation of Israel.

I made this application before when we started this study but it needs to be made again. Satan's ways never change so we can look at this and we can see exactly how he is working today. This was a spiritual battle in Daniel's day and it is a spiritual battle today in our society.

Satan will focus upon those who are of the family of royalty today and that would be those who are born into the family of God through faith in Jesus Christ. The bottom line is there will be attacks directed at you and I and it should be expected.

1 Peter 5:8

⁸ Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

Earlier in the same letter Peter told his readers not to be surprised about the persecution.

1 Peter 4:12

¹² Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

Now as we look at what happened to Daniel and his friends we can see what to expect as we find ourselves in the midst of the darkness.

1. Satan will attempt to fill our minds with the philosophies of this world so as to replace the Truth of God's Word.
2. Satan will attempt to lure us into the ways of the world by offering the riches and the delicacies of this world.
3. Satan will do all he can to cause us to walk away from God and forget who we are in Christ.

So how do we stay true to God as the times become more difficult?

II. Daniel's Stand

Notice Daniel 1:8a

Daniel "proposed in his heart" which means he had "set in his heart" that he would not partake of the king's food. Why would he not eat of the king's meat? I believe there were several reasons:

1. **With all the false god's in Babylon the meat which was set before the king was surely offered to one of the false gods.**

So for Daniel to partake of the king's meat would have been to place his stamp of approval upon idolatry. But there was also another reason.

2. **To eat of the king's meat was to then be obligated to the king.**

If Daniel had eaten the king's food then he would have had a sense of obligation. Thus it would have made it more difficult to stand in opposition.

Let me show you what is recorded in Proverbs.

Proverbs 23:1-6

When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee:

² *And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite.*

³ *Be not desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful meat.*

⁴ *Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom.*

⁵ *Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.*

⁶ *Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats:*

This is a warning to anyone who has an appetite for the dainties of this world. If that is your weakness then do not even expose yourself to it. Let me show you the words of Auberlen:

"Daniel and his three friends stand out like an oasis in the desert. Like Moses, Daniel chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

Here is the bottom line; Daniel refused to compromise even when he had no idea what the end result would be. These were the orders of King Nebuchadnezzar and to go against his orders would surely be sudden death. But Daniel was not concerned with offending King Nebuchadnezzar he was more concerned with offending God.

Application:

Here in Daniel's life we see one of the keys to living for God in the midst of difficult times. **It is to set our hearts to be true to God and to remain separated from the world.**

Let me remind you what James said about a believer's friendship with the world.

James 4:1-4

From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?

² *Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.*

³ *Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*

⁴ Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

Conclusion:

As the darkness increases in our world God is looking for people He can use to make a difference for Him. There is no greater honor and privilege than to be a vessel fit for the Master's use.

2 Timothy 2:19-21

¹⁹ Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

²⁰ But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.

²¹ If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.