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Lesson 1 Dan

Daniel 1:1-21 (NASB)

¹ In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

² The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, **along with some of the vessels of the house of God**; and he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god.

³ Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his officials, **to bring in some of the sons of Israel**, including some of the royal family and of the nobles,

⁴ youths in whom was no defect, **who were good-looking, showing intelligence in every branch of wisdom, endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge**, and who had ability for serving in the king's court; and *he ordered him* to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.

⁵ The king appointed for them a daily ration from the king's choice food and from the wine which he drank, and *appointed* that they should be educated three years, at the end of which they were to enter the king's personal service.

⁶ Now among them from the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.

⁷ Then the commander of the officials assigned *new* names to them; and to Daniel he assigned *the name* Belteshazzar, to Hananiah Shadrach, to Mishael Meshach and to Azariah Abed-nego.

⁸ But Daniel made up his mind that **he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank**; so he sought *permission* from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself.

⁹ Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials,

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

¹¹ But Daniel said to the overseer whom the commander of the officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah,

¹² "Please test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink.

¹³ "Then let our appearance be observed in your presence and the appearance of the youths who are eating the king's choice food; and deal with your servants according to what you see."

¹⁴ So he listened to them in this matter and tested them for ten days.

¹⁵ At the end of ten days **their appearance seemed better and they were fatter** than all the youths who had been eating the king's choice food.

¹⁶ So the overseer continued to withhold their choice food and the wine they were to drink, and kept giving them vegetables.

¹⁷ As for these four youths, **God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every branch of literature and wisdom; Daniel even understood all kinds of visions and dreams.**

¹⁸ Then at the end of the days which the king had specified for presenting them, the commander of the officials presented them before Nebuchadnezzar.

¹⁹ The king talked with them, and out of them all not one was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's personal service.

²⁰ As for every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he

found them **ten times better** than all the magicians *and* conjurers who *were* in all his realm.
²¹ And Daniel continued until the first year of Cyrus the king.

I. PERSONAL HISTORY OF DANIEL ([CHAP. 1](#))

A. Daniel's deportation ([1:1-7](#))

[1:1-2a](#). The first two verses of the Book of Daniel state when and how the prophet was taken to Babylon. The events in the book began **in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah**. This seems to conflict with Jeremiah's statement that the first year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, was in the *fourth* year of Jehoiakim's reign ([Jer. 25:1](#)). At least two explanations may be given for this apparent discrepancy. The first is the difference between Jewish and Babylonian reckoning. The Jewish calendar began the year in Tishri (September-October) while the Babylonian calendar began in the spring in the month of Nisan (March-April). If Babylonian reckoning were used, the year Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem was the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign. But if the Jewish reckoning were used it was Jehoiakim's third year. Daniel, a Jew, may well have adopted the familiar Jewish calendar.

A second explanation is based on the Babylonian method of reckoning the dates of a king's reign. The portion of a king's reign that preceded the beginning of a new year in the month Nisan, that is, the year of accession, was called the first year even if it was of short duration. If Jeremiah followed that method of reckoning, he counted Jehoiakim's year of accession (which was only part of a full year) as the first year. And if Daniel used the Jewish method of reckoning (which did *not* count the first months of a king's reign before the new year) he then counted only the three full years of Jehoiakim's reign. The year was 605 B.C.

Daniel referred to **Nebuchadnezzar** (whose name means "Nabu has protected my inheritance") as **king of Babylon**. At that time (605) Nabopolassar was king in Babylon, and Nebuchadnezzar had not yet acceded to the throne. However, Nebuchadnezzar, while in battle, heard of the death of his father and hastened to Babylon to be enthroned (see "[Historical Background](#)" in the *Introduction*). Writing at a later date, Daniel referred to Nebuchadnezzar as king in anticipation of his occupation of the throne.

Nebuchadnezzar's besieging of **Jerusalem** took place during the reign of **Jehoiakim**, the 17th **king of Judah** and eldest son of Josiah (cf. [2 Chron. 36:2](#) with [2 Chron. 36:5](#)). Jehoiakim's younger brother Jehoahaz had been placed on Judah's throne after Pharaoh Neco killed King Josiah in 609 B.C. (See the chart "[The Last Five Kings of Judah](#)," near [2 Kings 23:31-35](#).) But Neco dethroned Jehoahaz and placed Jehoiakim on the throne ([2 Chron. 36:3-4](#)).

Jeremiah had warned Jehoiakim of impending invasion by Babylon. And Jehoiakim had heard of the prophet's instruction to God's people to submit to Babylon without resistance. So when Nebuchadnezzar besieged the city, little or no resistance was offered, and Jehoiakim was captured and taken to Babylon. Thus Judah came under Nebuchadnezzar's authority.

With this incursion by Nebuchadnezzar an important prophetic time period—the times of the Gentiles ([Luke 21:24](#))—began. The times of the Gentiles is that extended period of time in which the land given in covenant by God to Abraham and his descendants is occupied by Gentile powers and the Davidic throne is empty of any rightful heir in the Davidic line. The times of the Gentiles, beginning with Nebuchadnezzar's invasion of Jerusalem in 605 B.C., will continue till the Messiah returns. Then Christ will subdue nations, deliver the land of Israel from its Gentile occupants, and bring the nation Israel into her covenanted blessings in the millennial kingdom.

God had made a covenant with Israel in Moab ([Deut. 28-30](#)) just before she entered the land ([Deut. 29:1](#)). In this covenant God set forth the principle by which He would deal with His people. Their obedience to Him would bring blessing ([Deut. 28:1-14](#)) but disobedience to Him would bring discipline ([Deut. 28:15-68](#)). In this second portion God outlined the disciplines He would use to correct the people when their walk was out of line with His revealed Law. These disciplines would seek to conform them to His demands so they would be eligible for His blessings. The ultimate discipline He would use to correct His people was the invasion of Gentile nations who would subjugate them to their authority and disperse them from their land ([Deut. 28:49-68](#)).

Moses then stated when Israel would come under God's discipline, that discipline would not be lifted until the people forsook their sin, turned in faith to God, and obeyed His requirements ([Deut. 30:1-10](#)). The Northern Kingdom of Israel had gone into captivity to Assyria in 722 B.C. This was the outworking of the principles of [Deuteronomy 28](#). From time to time (though not consistently) the Southern Kingdom (Judah), in light of the fall of the Northern Kingdom, had heeded the prophets' admonitions and turned to God. The Southern Kingdom continued for more than a century longer because of her repentance and obedience under her godly kings.

That condition, however, did not last. Judah also ignored God's covenant, neglected the Sabbath Day and the sabbatical year ([Jer. 34:12-22](#)), and went into idolatry ([Jer. 7:30-31](#)). Therefore, because of the covenant in [Deuteronomy 28](#), judgment had to fall on Judah. God chose Nebuchadnezzar as the instrument to inflict discipline on God's disobedient people (cf. [Jer. 27:6](#); [Hab. 1:6](#)).

[1:2b-3](#). When Nebuchadnezzar returned to Babylon from this invasion of Judah, he brought spoils to signify Judah's submission to Babylon. First, he brought some valuable articles from the temple in Jerusalem which he placed in the temple of his god in Babylonia (cf. [2 Chron. 36:7](#)). "His god" may have been Bel, also called Marduk, the chief god of the Babylonians (cf. [comments](#) on [Dan. 4:8](#)). (In Heb. the word rendered Babylonia is Shinar, NIV marg., an ancient name for that land; cf. [Gen. 10:10](#); [11:2](#); [14:1](#); [Isa. 11:11](#), NIV marg.; [Zech. 5:11](#), NIV marg.) This would signify the conquest of the God of Judah by the Babylonian deities.

Second, Nebuchadnezzar brought with him some of the Israelites (Jews) from the royal family and the nobility. As stated in the *Introduction*, these royal princes may have been considered hostages, to help assure Judah's continued submission to Babylon. Or they may have been taken to Babylon to prepare them to fulfill positions of administrative leadership there if Nebuchadnezzar should have to return to subjugate Judah. Ashpenaz was chief of the court officials. He is mentioned by name only here in the Old Testament but is called "the official" or

"the chief official" six times ([Dan. 1:7-11](#), [18](#)). It is not clear whether the word for "official" (*sārs*) means a eunuch or simply a courtier or court officer. Kitchen suggests it meant eunuch in Daniel's time (Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1966, pp. 165-6).

[1:4-5](#). These captives were choice **young men** both physically and mentally and as such, they could be an asset to **the king's palace**. An attempt was made to assimilate them into the culture of the court for they were compelled to learn both **the language and the literature** of the people among whom they now dwelt. They were to undergo a rigorous **three-year** course of training **after** which **they were to enter the king's service**. That educational program probably included a study of agriculture, architecture, astrology, astronomy, law, mathematics, and the difficult Akkadian language.

[1:6-7](#). No mention was made of how many captives were taken but four are mentioned here by name because of their later significant role in Babylon. Because all four bore names that honored Yahweh, the God of Israel, their names were changed. *El* means God and *-iah* (or *-yah*) is an abbreviation for Yahweh, thus suggesting that the young men's parents were God-fearing people who gave them names that included references to God. **Daniel**, whose name means "God has judged" (or "God is my Judge"), was given the name **Belteshazzar** (*Bēlet-šar-ušur* in Akk.), which means "Lady, protect the king." Eight of the 10 times "Belteshazzar" occurs in the Old Testament are in the Aramaic section of the Book of Daniel ([2:26](#); [4:8-9](#), [18-19](#) [3 times]; [5:12](#)). The other 2 occurrences are in [1:7](#) and [10:1](#).

Hananiah ("Yahweh has been gracious") became **Shadrach** probably from the Akkadian verb form *šādurāku*, meaning "I am fearful (of a god)."

Mishael ("Who is what God is?") was given the name **Meshach**, which possibly was from the Akkadian verb *mēšāku*, meaning "I am despised, contemptible, humbled (before my god)."

Azariah ("Yahweh has helped") was named **Abednego**, "Servant of Nebo" (Nego being a Heb. variation of the Babylonian name of the god Nebo). Nebo (cf. [Isa. 46:1](#)), son of Bel, was the Babylonian god of writing and vegetation. He was also known as Nabu (cf. [comments](#) on [Dan. 1:1](#) on Nebuchadnezzar's name).

Thus **the chief court official** (Ashpenaz, [v. 3](#)) seemed determined to obliterate any testimony to the God of Israel from the Babylonian court. The names he gave the four men signified that they were to be subject to Babylon's gods.

B. Daniel's devotion to God ([1:8-16](#))

1. THE REQUEST ([1:8](#))

[1:8](#). Nebuchadnezzar had made abundant provision for the captives. Theirs was a life of luxury, not deprivation, for they were given a portion of **food and wine** daily from the king's own table. However, this food did not conform to the requirements of the Mosaic Law. The fact that it was prepared by Gentiles rendered it unclean. Also no doubt many things forbidden by the Law were

served on the king's table, so to partake of such food would defile the Jewish youths. Further, without doubt this royal food had been sacrificed and offered to pagan gods before it was offered to the king. To partake of such food would be contrary to [Exodus 34:15](#), where the Jews were forbidden to eat flesh sacrificed to pagan gods.

Similar problems would arise in drinking the wine. To abstain from the Old Testament prohibition against "strong drink" (e.g., [Prov. 20:1](#), KJV; [Isa. 5:11](#), "drinks"), Jews customarily diluted wine with water. Some added 3 parts of water to wine, others 6 parts, and some as much as 10 parts of water to 1 part of wine. The Babylonians did not dilute their wine. So both the food and the drink would have defiled these Jewish young men. **Daniel** knew the requirements of the Law governing what he should and should not eat and drink.

Daniel's desire was to please God in all he did. So he **resolved** that even though he was not in his own land but in a culture that did not follow God's laws, he would consider himself under the Law. **He** therefore **asked the chief court official** to be excused from eating and drinking the food and wine generously supplied by the king. Daniel was courageous, determined, and obedient to God.

2. THE REQUEST GRANTED ([1:9-14](#))

[1:9-10](#). The chief official's reticence to grant Daniel's request is understandable. He was responsible to oversee the young captives' physical and mental development so they would become prepared for the roles **the king** had in mind for them. Evidently these youths held a strategic place in the king's plans, so he wanted them well trained. If the men had been of little consequence to **the king**, their physical conditions would not have mattered and Ashpenaz would not have risked the loss of his life.

Daniel had trusted his situation to God who intervened on Daniel's behalf to move the official's heart **to show favor** (*ḥesed*, "loyal love") **and sympathy** (*rahămm*, "compassion") **to Daniel**.

[1:11-14](#). When Daniel's request seemed to have been denied by **the chief official... Daniel** approached **the guard whom** Ashpenaz placed over the four youths and requested a **10-day** trial period in which **Daniel** and his companions would be given only **vegetables... and water**. (The Heb. word for vegetables, meaning "sown things," may also include grains.) Since the Mosaic Law designated no vegetables as unclean, Daniel could eat any vegetables put before him without defiling himself. In so short a time (**10 days**) there could have been no marked deterioration that would jeopardize the life of anyone in authority. In fact Daniel hinted that their **appearance** would be better than that of the others who were on the king's diet.

Since the guard was under the chief official's authority he must have acted not on his own but with permission from Ashpenaz. This indicates that God intervenes on behalf of those who trust Him, and protects and preserves those who obey Him, even under pagan rule.

3. THE RESULT ([1:15-16](#))

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[1:15-16](#). **At the conclusion of the 10 days**, the four who had lived on vegetables appeared **healthier** than those who had dined on the king's **food**. Since the four looked better—and not worse than the others, as Ashpenaz had feared ([v. 10](#))—he did not object to the diet Daniel had requested for himself and his friends. So they were allowed to continue on a diet of **vegetables**.

Though God did not prohibit eating meat altogether (cf. [Gen. 9:3](#); [Rom. 14:14](#); [1 Cor. 10:25-26](#)), the vegetable diet was superior to the king's food. Also this shows that God blesses those who obey His commands and prospers those who trust Him. This incident would have been a lesson for the nation Israel. God had demanded obedience to the Law. Punishment came because of disobedience but even during a time of discipline, God protects and sustains those who obey Him and trust Him for their sustenance.

C. Daniel's appointment ([1:17-21](#))

[1:17](#). **These four... men** being prepared by Nebuchadnezzar for positions of responsibility in the royal court were actually being prepared by God. For **God gave them knowledge and understanding** in many realms. "Knowledge" has to do with reasoning skills and thought processes. They were able to think clearly and logically. "Understanding" has to do with insight. This points up their ability to discern the nature of things clearly and to interpret them in their true light. The **literature and learning** in which God gave them ability was broad (cf. [comments](#) on [v. 4](#)). By divine enablement and through his years of instruction under able teachers, **Daniel** gained a wide knowledge of arts and sciences.

Though the knowledge of others in Babylon in those subjects may have equaled that of Daniel, he was superior to them all in one area: he had the God-given ability to **understand visions and dreams**. People have always been curious about the future and have sought to predict coming events. For example, after Israel entered the land of Canaan, they encountered many who attempted to prognosticate the future by various means. But Israel was forbidden to follow any of these practices ([Deut. 18:9-13](#)), which were also prevalent in Babylon.

[1:18-21](#). **At the end of the time set by the king** (i.e., at the end of the three years' training; cf. [v. 5](#)), **the king** examined **Daniel** and his three companions and **found** that **none** equaled them. In fact they were **10 times better than all** who practiced the arts of divination. (On **magicians** and **enchanters**, see [comments](#) on [v. 17](#).) "Ten times" is an idiom meaning "many times" (cf. [Gen. 31:7, 41](#); [Num. 14:22](#); [Job 19:3](#)).

The king consulted magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, astrologers, wise men, and diviners. "Magicians" (*ḥartūmmm*, [Dan. 1:20](#); [2:2](#)) was a general word referring to men who practiced the occult. (This word is also used in [Gen. 41:8, 24](#); [Ex. 7:11, 22](#); [8:7, 18-19](#); [9:11](#).) "Enchanters" (*ʿaššāpm*, used only twice in the OT, [Dan. 1:20](#); [2:21](#)) may refer to those who used incantations in exorcisms. The word "sorcerers" (*meḳaššepm*, [2:2](#)) probably is from the Akkadian verb *kašāpu*, "to bewitch, to cast a spell." (This participial noun, rendered "sorcerers," used only here in Dan., occurs only four other times in the OT: [Ex. 7:11](#); [22:18](#); [Deut. 18:10](#); [Mal. 3:5](#).) "Astrologers" (Heb., *kašdm*, [Dan. 2:2, 4](#); Aram., *ka'dīn*, [2:5, 10](#) [twice]; [3:8](#); [5:7, 11](#)) seems to refer to a priestly class in the Babylonian religion (misleadingly rendered "Chaldeans" in the

KJV) who depended on revelation through the stars, which were objects of worship. "Diviners" (*gāzern*, [2:27](#); [4:7](#); [5:7](#), [11](#)) may be those who sought to ascertain or decree the fate of others.

The practices of these five groups may have overlapped extensively. Several times Daniel referred to these men under the general rubric of "wise men" ([2:12-14](#), [18](#), [24](#) [twice], [48](#); [4:6](#), [18](#); [5:7-8](#), [15](#)).

Daniel's ministry in the royal court of Babylon continued until the overthrow of the Babylonian Empire by **Cyrus** in 539 B.C. God had said, "Those who honor Me, I will honor" ([1 Sam. 2:30](#)). **Daniel** determined to honor God even though he was living where people did not have the high standards God demanded. And God honored Daniel's obedience to the Law and promoted him in the king's court. This incident would have reminded Israel that obedience brings blessing and that righteousness is a prerequisite for enjoying the covenanted blessings.

The fact that God gave Daniel the ability to understand and interpret visions and dreams ([Dan. 1:17](#)) meant that throughout Nebuchadnezzar's long reign he depended on Daniel for understanding future events, revealed through dreams and visions. This anticipated the ministry Israel will one day fulfill. God had set Israel apart to be a kingdom of priests ([Ex. 19:6](#)). As such they were God's light to the world ([Isa. 42:6](#); [49:6](#)). They were to receive God's revelation and communicate it to nations that were ignorant of God. They were continually reminded of their role by the lampstand erected in the tabernacle. Daniel, during his tenure in the royal court in Babylon, fulfilled that function as God's spokesman to the Gentiles. When Israel will enter her millennial blessing under the reign of the Messiah, she will fulfill the role for which she was set apart by God and will then communicate God's truth to the Gentiles ([Zech. 8:21-23](#)).

The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty.

Open it

1. If you wanted to adopt a healthier eating plan for yourself, what foods would you give up or cut back on and what foods would you eat more often?

Less sweets and more protein, high volume low calorie food

Explore it

2. When did Nebuchadnezzar go to Jerusalem? ([1:1](#))

To besieged it

3. When the king came to Jerusalem, what happened? ([1:1-2](#))

The city was besieged and the Lord gave Jehoiakim into Nebuchadnezzars hand along with vessels from the hose of God, he brought them home and placed the vessels in his gods treasury

4. What were the characteristics of the captives? ([1:3-4](#))

Youths in whom was no defect, good looking, intelligent in every branch of wisdom, endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge and had the ability to server the king

5. What did the king order Ashpenaz to do? ([1:3-5](#))

To train the in their language and literature so they could serve in the king's person service, giving them a daily ration from the kings choice food and wine. To do so for a period of 3 years.

6. What new names did the chief court official give four of the men? ([1:7](#))

Then the commander of the officials assigned new names to them; and to Daniel he assigned the name Belteshazzar, to Hananiah Shadrach, to Mishael Meshach and to Azariah Abed-nego.

7. What was Daniel's resolve? ([1:8](#))

But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself.

8. How did the chief official respond to Daniel's request? ([1:9-10](#))

Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials,¹⁰ and the commander of the officials said to Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has appointed your food and your drink; for why should he see your faces looking more haggard than the youths who are your own age? Then you would make me forfeit my head to the king.

9. What did Daniel say to the guard? ([1:11-13](#))

Please test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink.¹³ Then let our appearance be observed in your presence and the appearance of the youths who are eating the king's choice food; and deal with your servants according to what you see."

10. What did the guard do about Daniel's request? ([1:14](#))

He listened and tested them for 10 days

11. What was the result of the test? ([1:15-16](#))

At the end of ten days their appearance seemed better and they were fatter than all the youths who had been eating the king's choice food.¹⁶ So the overseer continued to withhold their choice food and the wine they were to drink, and kept giving them vegetables.

12. What did God give to the four men? ([1:17](#))

God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every branch of literature and wisdom; Daniel even understood all kinds of visions and dreams

13. In evaluating the four men at the end of their training, what did Nebuchadnezzar conclude concerning them? ([1:18-20](#))

Then at the end of the days which the king had specified for presenting them, the commander of the officials presented them before Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹ The king talked with them, and out of them all not one was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's personal service. ²⁰ As for every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and conjurers who were in all his realm.

14. How long did Daniel remain in the king's court? ([1:21](#))
until the first year of Cyrus the king

Get it

15. When have you taken a Christian stand in a non-Christian setting?
Abortion, I voted against it

16. What sacrifices have you made that reflect your dedication to the Lord?
Family time, money spent on bible study programs

Apply it

17. In what setting do you want to remember to stand up for your Christian convictions?
In any setting that is not up to God's standards

18. What can you do this week to develop a God-given talent or strength for the sake of God's kingdom?
Keep on keeping on with studying the bible