

## **Bible Study – Daniel**

### **Week 2 – Chapter 1**

#### **I. Who was Nebuchadnezzar and what exactly is Babylon?**

##### **a. Who Was Nebuchadnezzar?**

- i. He was the son of Nebopolassar, who was King of Babylon during the overthrow of the Assyrian Empire.
- ii. Nebuchadnezzar means “Nebo, protect the crown!”
- iii. Nebuchadnezzar was the general of the Chaldean army and attacked Palestine after crushing Egypt at the battle of Carchemish (May-June 605 BC)<sup>1</sup>
- iv. Nebuchadnezzar served as co-regent with his father.
- v. Nebuchadnezzar, himself, subdued Israel/Jerusalem and took captives.
  1. Jehoiakim was an ally of Egypt and was put into power by Pharaoh Neco.<sup>2</sup> This is likely why he attacked Judah.
- vi. In August of 605, Nebopolassar died, making Nebuchadnezzar, King.<sup>3</sup>
- vii. Nebuchadnezzar reigned from 605-562 BC.

##### **b. What is Babylon?**

- i. Babylon was a capital city established by Nimrod (Genesis 10:10).
- ii. Babylon is also translated as Babel. (Genesis 11: 1-10)
- iii. In Daniel’s time, it was the capital of the Babylonian empire.
- iv. Between 1770 and 1670 BC and 612 to 320 BC Babylon was one of the largest cities in the world with a population of around 200,000. There was a square wall around the city that was between 42 and 56 miles in length. The walls were 24 meters wide. Chariot races were held on the city walls.
- v. According to John MacArthur, Babylon is the birthplace of all false religion.

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen R. Miller, vol. 18, *Daniel*, electronic ed., Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 56.

<sup>2</sup> Miller, 56.

<sup>3</sup> Miller, 56.

- vi. Babylon is typically viewed as the antithesis of Jerusalem, a worldly city full of false religions as opposed to God's city.

## II. Daniel 1:1-2

In the third year of the reign of King Jehoiakim of Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.<sup>2</sup> The Lord let King Jehoiakim of Judah fall into his power, as well as some of the vessels of the house of God. These he brought to the land of Shinar, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his gods.

- a. God was the protector of Israel. No force could have overcome Israel unless the Lord allowed it. Because of Israel's sin and constant disobedience, God allowed them to be taken over. It wasn't because of any Babylonian military might.
- b. In v. 2 the word translated "Lord" is not Yahweh (represented in the NIV by "LORD") but *'ādōnay*, and this fact is significant. "Owner, ruler, or sovereign".<sup>4</sup> This indicates that God was in control of everything that happened.
- c. The raiding of the temple was significant for the Babylonians because, in their minds, it showed that their god, Marduk (Bel), was superior to the conquered land's god.
- d. This was predicted in Isaiah 39:2,4.

## III. Daniel 1: 3-4

Then the king commanded his palace master Ashpenaz to bring some of the Israelites of the royal family and of the nobility,<sup>4</sup> young men without physical defect and handsome, versed in every branch of wisdom, endowed with knowledge and insight, and competent to serve in the king's palace; they were to be taught the literature and language of the Chaldeans.

- a. Eunuch in this verse is translated as *saris*. A *sārîs* could refer to a literal eunuch (Isa 56:3), but the term also was employed in a general sense to designate any official<sup>5</sup>
- b. Daniel and his friends were not necessarily made into a sexually impotent eunuch. The text does indicate that the King wanted men that were without defect.
- c. Nebuchadnezzar likely wanted captives for two reasons.

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<sup>4</sup> Miller, 57-58.

<sup>5</sup> Miller, 59.

- i. After his father's death in 605, Nebuchadnezzar returned to Babylon as its king. He likely took these socially elevated captives as political prisoners to ensure that Israel would not revolt.
- ii. In order to help integrate and rule the Jewish people, the King probably thought to convert some of these captives to Babylonian thinking and culture. At that point, he would have trusted servants who would be knowledgeable about Jewish ways and be able to advise him.

#### **IV. Daniel 1:5**

The king assigned them a daily portion of the royal rations of food and wine. They were to be educated for three years, so that at the end of that time they could be stationed in the king's court.

- a. The food and education was part of the indoctrination process. In order to obtain the loyalty of the captives, the King provided the best food and drink possible along with education in Babylonian culture and science.
- b. What do think of this method as a form of brainwashing?
- c. A 3 year training program was standard at that time. At the end of their training, the King would judge if they were worthy of entering his service.

#### **V. Daniel 1:6-7**

Among them were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, from the tribe of Judah.<sup>7</sup> The palace master gave them other names: Daniel he called Belteshazzar, Hananiah he called Shadrach, Mishael he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego.

- a. By the phrasing "Among them", we can assume that many more were taken than just Daniel and his four friends. Likely there were between 50-75 captives.
- b. Daniel Means – "God is my Judge"
  - i. Belteshazzar means – "Bel (likely another name for Marduk) Protect the King"
- c. Hananiah means – "Yahweh is gracious"
  - i. Shadrach means – "Command of Aku (moon god)"
- d. Mishael means – "Who is what God is"
  - i. Meshach means "Who is like Aku"
- e. Azariah means – "Yahweh has helped (or will help)"
  - i. Abednego means "Servant of Nebo (son of Bel, god of vegetation)"

- f. Stripping their identity and having their names associated with Babylonian deities was meant as a further means of brainwashing.
- g. This was also meant to help Daniel and his friends forget the true God and accept the Babylonian gods.

## **VI. Daniel 1:8**

But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the royal rations of food and wine; so he asked the palace master to allow him not to defile himself.

- a. Dietary restrictions for the Jews were given in Exodus 34: 13-15 and Leviticus 1.
- b. Daniel and his friends did not refuse the changing of their names or the education that was being offered to them. There was no Scriptural mandate against those things. There was a clear mandate on diet however.
- c. The food being offered to Daniel and his friends would have already been offered to the Babylonian gods. This would make it unfit for them to eat. In addition, the food would have likely included pork, which was an unclean animal.
- d. Daniel was unashamed of his God and stood up for his beliefs. Who else in the Bible showed this kind of character? (Moses, David, etc.)
- e. Daniel was probably around 15 at this time. What do you think of his stand that he would not defile himself by eating the King's food?

## **VII. Daniel 1:9-13**

Now God allowed Daniel to receive favor and compassion from the palace master. <sup>10</sup> The palace master said to Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king; he has appointed your food and your drink. If he should see you in poorer condition than the other young men of your own age, you would endanger my head with the king." <sup>11</sup> Then Daniel asked the guard whom the palace master had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: <sup>12</sup> "Please test your servants for ten days. Let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. <sup>13</sup> You can then compare our appearance with the appearance of the young men who eat the royal rations, and deal with your servants according to what you observe."

- a. Because of Daniel's stand for the Law of God, God interceded for him. The palace master didn't just randomly like Daniel, but rather God forced him to have compassion on Daniel.
- b. The word for "favor" can also mean "unfailing love".
- c. God can make even the most hated enemy have compassion. - Proverbs 16:7

- d. The steward (Melzar) was still afraid of the king, and rightly so. Failure to comply with the king's orders could mean his death. Even so, he went along with Daniel's plan.
- e. Daniel did not just refuse to eat the food that was portioned for him, but instead offered a plan to the palace master. He was still subservient to the authorities over him, but was able to stay in harmony with the commandments of God. Where else is that Biblical principle described? Romans 13:1-7
- f. Daniel only asked to be given water and vegetables (the translated Hebrew word could also include grains and seeds) for 10 days. Though other food was allowed under the Law, Daniel was taking his commitment to a new, stricter level to show his obedience to God.
- g. Wine was not prohibited for most people in the Old Testament, but a special order was given to the priests and rulers. – Leviticus 10:8, Numbers 6:1-4, Proverbs 31:4-6

### **VIII. Daniel 1:14-16**

So he agreed to this proposal and tested them for ten days. <sup>15</sup> At the end of ten days it was observed that they appeared better and fatter than all the young men who had been eating the royal rations. <sup>16</sup> So the guard continued to withdraw their royal rations and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

- a. After 10 days, Daniel and his friends looked healthier and better nourished than everyone else who had eaten the king's food. What kind of miracle would have had to happen for a noticeable difference to be made after only 10 days?
- b. "Better and fatter" literally means more physically fit and healthier.
- c. After seeing this, the guard made sure to do the same thing with the rest of the captives.
- d. Nebuchadnezzar had ordered that the captives be given the same food he was eating, but this steward went against that order and gave the captives only vegetables and water. An order that was meant to force the Jews to adapt to the culture of the Babylonians by forcing them to eat their food was ignored because he was tasked with making sure the captives looked healthy and received proper training.

### **IX. Daniel 1:17**

To these four young men God gave knowledge and skill in every aspect of literature and wisdom; Daniel also had insight into all visions and dreams.

- a. Because of their obedience, God “gave” these men with knowledge and wisdom. This indicates that their gifts and abilities were not because of their training, but rather endowed by God.
- b. God further gifted Daniel with insight into visions and dreams. Why do you think that is?
  - i. Many Babylonians believed the gods spoke through dreams.

## **X. Daniel 1:18-21**

At the end of the time that the king had set for them to be brought in, the palace master brought them into the presence of Nebuchadnezzar, <sup>19</sup> and the king spoke with them. And among them all, no one was found to compare with Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they were stationed in the king’s court. <sup>20</sup> In every matter of wisdom and understanding concerning which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom. <sup>21</sup> And Daniel continued there until the first year of King Cyrus.

- a. Daniel and his friends were brought before Nebuchadnezzar sometime between 603 BC and 601 BC, depending on when the training actually started.
- b. The king questioned these men and found that they were better educated and wiser than not just the captives, but also all of the magicians and enchanters in the whole Kingdom.
- c. The term “magician” in this context does not refer to someone who performs magic tricks, but more likely refers to a scribe or bookkeeper that would journal the events in the kingdom.
- d. The term “enchanter” does mean someone who performs magic and is generally attributed to conjuring or necromancy. Undoubtedly, Daniel and his friends never participated in this.
- e. Daniel probably lived from 620-535 BC, Making him between 85 and 90 years old when he died.
- f. The coming of King Cyrus, by name, was predicted by Isaiah 44-45, nearly 100 years before his arrival in Babylon.