# Study in Daniel - Part 1

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[0:00] Seeking the Lord's blessing, we'll turn to the part of scripture we read, the book of Daniel and chapter 1.

And I want really to consider the whole of the chapter with you, but perhaps focusing particularly upon verse 8. But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank.
But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself. As I mentioned last week, I want to look with you at the life of Daniel, as it's brought before us in the book which bears his name.
Daniel, we're told by the angel Gabriel, was a man greatly beloved by God. And he also appears to have been a man greatly beloved by men.
And therefore his life is an example to ourselves. He was a man of faithfulness to his God. Now the book that bears his name is divided in two parts.
[1:29] In chapters 1 to 6, you have his life and his experiences. And then there's a sudden change from chapter 7 through to the end.

In chapter 12, you have the visions and the prophecies which God gave to Daniel throughout his life. So you have the history of his life and his experience in chapters 1 to 6.
Now the name of the man gives us a clue to the theme of his life. Or if you like, the name of the book gives us a clue to the theme of the book.
The name Daniel means God is judge. And that is the theme that you find running through the whole book. It reminds us that God is not just the God of Israel, but that God is God of all the earth. He is reigning in Babylon. He is overseeing and he is overruling even the most wicked nations and the most evil empires. God is on the throne and he does his own great work in the midst of darkness.
[2:34] And that's particularly interesting because it's worth remembering that this book is set in Babylon. And that's where God's people were taken in chastisement for their sins.

They were taken away captivity. As Jeremiah had said, they refused constantly the call of the prophets to repent. And they backslid to the point where God, to refine his church and to cleanse his church, had to bring it into bondage.
And he brought them into captivity to Babylon. Now that would cause the world to say that the God of Israel was impotent, that he was unable to rule, and that he was weaker than the gods of the Babylonians.
Therefore, God shows himself powerful in Babylon. And through Daniel, he performs a series of extraordinary feats and miracles that show the world that God reigns and that God rules.
He will not allow the heathen to mock him, for God is not mocked. And so, just as is true, when Israel went down to Egypt, and God took them out by miracles to show his power, so we have here.
[3:47] When they go into captivity, he shows his power and he shows his glory by bringing his people back out. And friend, it requires the same strength of God to cleanse his people, to make them walk on the way as it does to renew them.

The same power that God puts forth to bring you from death to life is the same power that he keeps exercising for you to take every single step of the way from grace to glory.
It is the same power put out by the same God. And we're taught that in this book as well as elsewhere in the Bible. I think it's also worth pointing this out, that this book, perhaps more than any other, tells us how to live a life of faith in a pagan culture, or in a heathen environment.
And as we'll see in a moment, and I don't need to tell you anyway, you well know, that is the kind of environment in which we increasingly live. Our nation is turning constantly towards astrology, towards paganism, towards superstition, idolatry, departing from the living God.

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And this book shows us how to live a life of faith in the midst of a heathen society. And we'll see that God willing as we go on. And I think especially interesting is this, that it shows us how a man can be placed by God in a political situation, in a situation of power and influence, so as to rule things in the way in which God desires them to be ruled.
[5:24] Daniel, after all, was raised by God to a position of power in the state. He became a politician or a minister of state in Babylon.

And I think with the elections forthcoming, locally and nationally, that should remind us of some things. First, Christian people, ask yourselves, should I stand? Ought I to stand?
for a position of this kind? Is Christ's voice going to be heard in our council? Is Christ's voice going to be heard in the Scottish Parliament? Or must I leave it to the heathen?
And extraordinarily, there are some people who say that it is not a Christian's business to be in politics. Well, how can you come to that conclusion with a Bible in front of you?
Does the Bible not give us the example, one after the other, of people whom God raised into positions of being ministers of state for the good and the glory of his own cause?
[6:24] And if it is not your calling to stand, will you not pray God to raise another? And when he does, will you not pray for him? And will you not remember him? As God calls them into this particular duty.

So the book tells us that, that God rules even in Babylon, that God keeps faith in the midst of a pagan culture, and God raises his own people into positions of power and influence to do his own will.
Now, Daniel was taken captivity along with the rest of the Jewish people. But when we speak of the captivity in Babylon or the bondage, we often think of it as one event.
But it's useful to remember that there were actually three stages in this captivity. After Nebuchadnezzar, and he was a very powerful Babylonian king, after he had subdued Egypt, he then turned his attention towards the small kingdom of Judah.
And he first of all, in 605 BC, took away the very cream of the land. In other words, he went in, dictated his terms, took away the king temporarily captive, and took away the princes and some noblemen in the land.
[7:43] He took away a small group that were in the court of the king and deported them back to Babylon. After a short while, he released the king Jehoiakim again, and he was able to return and to rule in Judah.

But he was a very arrogant, pompous kind of man, and he continued, as it were, to irritate Nebuchadnezzar. And so in 597 BC, just a few years later, Nebuchadnezzar came back in, and he brought away the majority of the people into captivity.
And as though that wasn't enough, they still provoked him. And in 587, finally, Nebuchadnezzar came in and razed the city to the ground.
He broke its walls and destroyed it. These were the walls that Nehemiah was to view many years later. And for the temple, he took away all its treasure and all its wealth, and he razed the temple to the ground.
And one reason why it's useful to remember that this happened in three stages is this. God's judgments come like that. They accumulate it. He never just lets his hand fall like that, but he always gives a warning.
[8:55] He gives space to repent. He gives time and he gives opportunity. Because as we said in the morning from 2 Peter 3, God is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

And when they persisted in their stubbornness, his hand fell and the whole place was taken captivity and the temple was razed to the ground. And the point of that is this, that Daniel was one of the select few group of young men who was taken away in the first small captivity, led away in 605 B.C.
into Babylon. And at this time, Daniel would have been aged somewhere between 15 and 20. So he was a young man at a very formative stage in his life and he suddenly catapulted away from where God was in the vocabulary and God was in the environment into a place where there was no mention really of Jehovah at all.
We'll come to that in a moment. Now Nebuchadnezzar, and I'm just setting the stage a little bit for you here if you bear with me. Nebuchadnezzar, rather like Alexander the Great who came not too

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long after them, had a policy of selecting the finest young men from all the nations which he subdued and he would discipline them, train them, and school them to take a prominent place in his own bureaucracy.
He didn't confine the rule to his own people, the Chaldeans or the Babylonians. He rather spread it out in that way. And so these four men were selected immediately because of their promising appearance and they were taken and put under the supervision of the chief of the eunuchs, a man called Ashpenaz.
[10:50] And it was his job to make sure that they were well looked after, that they were well educated, well taught, well fed, so that after three years they would be personally examined by the king Nebuchadnezzar to see if they were worthy of standing in office before himself.

Now God is in this. And sometimes when you feel that God is a million miles away, God is right in the middle of a thing. You can look sometimes at a providence and say, where is God?
And God is all over it. By the way, that's one reason why the name of God is never mentioned in the book Esther. Many people say that that is a strange thing, that God's name is never mentioned in the book Esther.
The reason for that is just simply this. that he didn't appear to be present in Esther's providence. But the fact of the matter was that he was all over the place and he was in the middle of it, working out his own purpose and counsel.
And that's sometimes the way we feel that God is not in a thing. And lo and behold, God is right in the midst of it. And God was preparing these four men to do a great work in Babylon itself.
[12:05] And there's nothing as exciting as knowing that God is constantly at work like that, doing his own purposes. Perhaps in the heart of somebody here that you could never imagine. Maybe it's a wee boy or a wee girl.

And God is just shaping you and fashioning you to do a great thing in his own kingdom. And it's a wonderful thing to see that and to believe it. Now I want to look with you at three things.
First of all, the situation that Daniel faced. Secondly, the way he responded to that situation. And thirdly, the outcome when he stood before the king.
Now let's take first the situation that he faced. And I mentioned it briefly. He's suddenly exposed to a pagan heathen culture. And he's being squeezed on every side to be like the world around him. There is pressure from every single area exerted upon Daniel to be just like everyone else. To be a clone. To be like the world. To do what the world does.
[13:13] To say what the world says. To think what the world thinks. Just to follow that path. Now you can imagine how difficult it is for these four young men. They're on their own.

They're a small group. They've got very little support and very little props. And that may be true of some of you too. Or it might be true of some of you very shortly. You can be transported.
Perhaps at quite a young age. Maybe going away to work or going away to school or university or something. And you're landed in a completely different situation. And you don't have some of the safeguards around you that you have around you here.
And it's a test for you just as it was a test for Daniel. How are you going to walk? How are you going to live? What are your priorities going to be? Are you going to seek the Lord? Or are you going to follow Baal?
Well that's the kind of thing that came before Daniel right here in this situation. Now look at the pressure on him. Let's take first this question of names. Now look at verse 6 and 7 here.
[14:16] Verse 6. Now among these were the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, unto whom the prince of the eunuch gave names.

For he gave to Daniel the name of Belteshazzar, and to Hananiah the name of Shadrach, and to Mishael the name of Mishach, and to Azariah the name of Abednego.
Now this is important. One of the first things the eunuchs does, the eunuch does, is he changes their names. Now the reason that's important is this.
The names which these men had, had something to do with the Lord in them. For example, the name Daniel, I mentioned already, means God is judge.
So they delete that, and instead they put Belteshazzar, which means Bel will protect. Now Bel was one of the Babylonian deities, or gods.
[15:19] Bel will protect, that is your name. The next man is Hananiah, which means God is gracious. So again, they delete that, and they give him the name Shadrach, which means inspired

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by Aku.

Now Aku was another Babylonian god, and that was the name on this man. Azariah, the young man, was called God is my help.
That is his name. So he's given a name, Abednego, which means a servant of Nego, yet another Babylonian god. And last of all, the young man, Mishael, his name means who is like God, and he's given the name Mishach, which means who is like Aku.
Now, the contemporary name for that is brainwashing. That is exactly what is going on here, brainwashing. it is a process of trying to cleanse away all they've ever learned, and all they've ever known, the knowledge of Jehovah that had been planted in them.
You know, when these men were young, even younger, they grew up in the reign of Josiah, one of the few godly kings amongst the last kings of Judah. There was a great reformation under Josiah.
[16:43] The preaching of the gospel was heard again, and these young men grew under that, and they were formed under that. And there again is God's mysterious ways. He was just about to let Judah go, but before he lets Judah go, he raises up Josiah, and under Josiah, these four young men are made ready and prepared, and off they go to Babylon.

And you think the cause is lost, but no, God has planted the seed. He planted the seed in the reign of that man Josiah, and they learned and they listened.
They heard Jeremiah prophecy. Daniel would have listened to Jeremiah. He would have heard Habakkuk. He would have heard Sephaniah. And the words of these prophets came down into the hearts of these young men, and they took them with them.
But as soon as they go out there, there is an attempt to brainwash and to eradicate, to eliminate your roots. Now, friends, that goes on. It goes on all around us.
I'll come to that in a moment. In the life of the court, the same thing went on. The Babylonian court was famous, or I should say infamous, for its immorality and for its decadence.
[17:53] And all around, these young men are constantly exposed to this loose living, this loose talk, this carelessness. There's no obligations, no commitment between one party and another.

It's just live as you like. And they are exposed right in the midst of that. And then to crown it all, there's their own university education. Now, they're taken away, and they're taken away to learn. They'll be learning the languages, the Akkadian. They would be learning the Aramaic, the Koldean. They would be studying history, philosophy, maths, law, astronomy, science, all these things, with access to the finest library of the time, the imperial library of Babylon.
All these things, they're plunged into, and there's no way. And I hope you're alive to it.
It's going on all around us. The world will say to you, get off that kind of world and get into the real world. The real world is our world.
[19:05] Come and learn our ways, and come and follow our paths. It's the path to happiness, it's the path to joy, it's the path to fulfillment. Reject all this God thing that you've been hearing, and the word of God, and the catechism, and all that.

Leave it behind, and walk in our way. Let's delete your names, and give you new names, that speak of all that you could be. And that's going on everywhere. Look at the television.
How much is constantly being pummeled at you through that media, as though evolution is true. Creation is wrong. It's teaching you to think in a certain way, conditioning you to think in a secular way.
And even the soaps that people call entertainment, these soaps are not entertainment. It's a mistake to think of them as that. They are educational programs, that's what they are. And you may say, well, how are these soaps educational programs?
Well, they are. They're very clever educational programs. Because through the medium of entertainment, they tell you what you should think about adultery or about faithfulness or about homosexuality or any of these things.
[20:13] They present these things in a certain way to make you think what they want you to think. And all the time, it's anti-God. How many things can you find on the television that you can see that has God at its center?

Can you not see the hand of Babylon in it? The hand of the evil one himself who's trying to eradicate the good. I'm not saying it's all evil. I know that there is some good. And I don't mean that no one should watch it.

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But I mean that that's there and you've got to be alive to it. And when you see that evil, turn it off, turn away from it. It does you no good. It does no good. And there is this brainwashing process constantly going on.
Is it not true? Even in the system of schools progressively. Is this not true? Is God not being taken out of one subject after another? Is God in history?
Is he in English? Where is he? He's been squeezed into a little block that's called religious education. And he's got to share that with Buddha. And he's got to share it with Muhammad.
[21:18] All the time there is an erasing of the truth. Writing away our history. Our proud history. Of the reformation and of the covenants. Written away.

Delete it. Erase it from the mind. Let the young never hear it. Let the young never know. Let no one never hear of God. Let them not hear of Israel. Let them not hear of these things. And in their stead and in their place put these things.
The modern world with all its emphasis that acid test for Daniel and for his friends.
And it comes in verse five. The king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat and of the wine which he drank, nourishing them three years so that at the end thereof they might stand before the king.
And then in verse eight, Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.
[22:27] Now, with the education he could do it and he could study it. And the same was true with the names that he gave him.

Well, he can't tell what he's called. I mean, if people want to call him Belteshazzar, well, they'll call him Belteshazzar, but as far as he's concerned, he's still Daniel. But when it asks him this simple question, will you follow your God or will you follow the world?
Will you partake of the Lord's table or will you partake of the table of devils? Because for Daniel it was this, the food prepared in Babylon paid no attention to whether it was clean or unclean.
You know that God's law prescribed certain foods that were clean, certain foods that were unclean. For example, the Babylonians had no problem with eating pigs or eating horses. Both of these animals were prescribed for the Jews.
They were not allowed to be eaten. And not only that, but blood was forbidden. All meats had to be kosher. They had to be cooked in a certain way to avoid the eating of blood. That was no concern to the Babylonians.
[23:44] And Daniel says, I am going to obey the Lord. And I am going to keep the word of God. And for Daniel that was the acid test. And this is how God tests him as a young man.

And he's going to test you too. And he'll test every one of us. Whether we obey the Lord or whether we'll follow the world. And it's such an important difference.
Is God going to be his word and follow his people?
Or are you going to cleave to the world? And are you going to follow it? Now I can almost hear Satan talking to Daniel and I can almost tell you exactly what he would say.
He would say this Daniel don't throw it all away. Look you've been selected already and if you just stick with this and just eat the food and get on with it in three years you'll be well on your way to being one of the most powerful people in this kingdom.
[24:47] What sway you'll have and what power? And I can almost hear it. I can almost hear the devil say to yourself just work this Sunday or do some Sunday work. You've got ability and you're going to rise fast through the company and once you get the top you can stop Sunday work altogether.

Isn't that a good reason just to go on with a Sunday work? The devil is clever enough. But Daniel knew in his heart that obeying God is a serious matter and faithfulness to God is a serious matter and that's what God requires of you and me and young man and young woman that's what God requires of you.
There's nothing better that you can do with your life tonight and to yield it on the altar and to say Lord I am thine and I give you my life and you are my master and my king and my lord and I am not following Babylon.
Now Babylon looks charming and alluring and attractive and it is. Everything in Babylon glitters and glistens we'll come to that later on. We'll come to it especially in chapter 5 to some extent in chapter 2 but in chapter 5 everything in Babylon glittered but Daniel and the three young men with him knew

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the reality they knew that one day Babylon was going to come down and they also knew that God was doing his work and that if they stayed with him the Lord would bless them and I want to tell you that friends and I want to word you along that way the world flatters but it deceives the world glitters but I tell you it's not gold it's not gold because the world with its principles with its atheism and with its godlessness and with its fleshly lust is doomed to destruction you know Babylon had a double wall that was reckoned by everybody to be absolutely impregnable impenetrable but god got in there and god saw to it that that place was destroyed why why my friend will you be destroyed enjoying the king's table when you could be at the lord's table and be saved in time and be saved in eternity and that's what god is setting before you and it's a choice that you must make and
I said this before and I'll say it word choice or the word decision why not that is precisely what god commands of you it is his word that says choose this day whom ye will serve that is what it comes down to is your lot going to be with the world or is it going to be with god and with his people and Daniel is only young but he says I'm going to stand on god's side and so does Hananiah and so does Azariah and Mishael they stand with god and young man and young woman you'll never regret that come out on the Lord's side and you will never regret it now you'll notice that he purposed this in his heart verse 8 Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself now that means that he just set his face to it it was a resolve like
[28:11] David said he said I have said that I will keep thy holy word he purposed to sin not I don't mean by that that Daniel never fell of course he fell we all fall we all sin we all sin what it means is that he didn't set his feet to walk in a path of disobedience Daniel knew that if he was going down this way he was really selling his soul that's what he was doing I'm going to be walking the Babylonian way but I'm not going to walk the Babylonian way I'm going to walk the Lord's way and the way towards Zion and he purposed his heart to do that you purpose it them that honor me I will honor that is God's word and so what does Daniel do well in a and he arranges a meeting with the prince of the eunuchs and he puts it before him now notice

Daniel is a principled man but you notice the way that he conducts himself all the time he has one favor with even this man and he has one favor with this man subordinate a man called Melzar he's going to do the word of God keep the word of God and do his will but he always keeps his place he speaks like a man of God should and he behaves like a man of God should and he puts it before him and he says I cannot partake of the table of the world I cannot go to the king's table or to the table of Babylon and then suddenly you discover in verse 9 this that God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs and the prince of the eunuchs said to him I fear my lord the king you was appointed your meat and your drink for why should we see your faces worse looking than the children which are of your sort then you shall make me endanger my head to the king now what happened was and this again is interesting
Daniel felt he was taking his life in his hands putting this whole matter before the chief of the eunuchs but the chief of the eunuch had already had his heart won towards Daniel who did that God did it see you can worry about a thing and you can worry about doing a thing but if you are doing a thing according to God's word if you are in your place according to God's word God a stumbling block because what the man said is Nebuchadnezzar will deal with me if he discovers that you are not eating of his table but I think the man must have said something to his subordinate a man called Meltzar who was directly responsible for Daniel and Daniel comes to this man and Daniel says give us ten days give us pulse and water now pulse is just a name for things that are sown vegetables give us vegetables and water and look at us after ten days and look at all the other young men from all corners of your empire compare us with them after ten days and just see what you see and
Meltzar does it for ten days and afterwards he looks at their faces and he sees in verse fifteen that at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat they appeared fairer and fatter why because they did the will of the lord that's why why did they look better because they didn't live by bread alone but they lived by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of god why did they look better why did they look fairer and healthier because like the psalmist god is the health of my countenance it doesn't consist in rich food or in delicacies from the table of the king we live we live by god and by god's grace and god made them to look fairer and fatter than those who are living and reveling in the world with the best of the king's provision now my friends that is what god will do for you you set your face godward and the day will come when you shall appear before god not shamed where

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their faces your faces will appear before god after your life of consecration and obedience so beautiful and so attractive compared to those who have gorged themselves with worldly things and satisfied themselves with the things of the world how will you appear on that day strained decayed and lost because man cannot live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of god god gave them health god gave them life and god gave them strength and three years later in verse 18 we're told that Nebuchadnezzar brought them in now apparently the kings used to give them an oral examination themselves

Nebuchadnezzar wasn't where he was for nothing he was the head of a powerful empire and it was really he and his father who had welded this powerful Babylonian empire a very able man and he questioned them himself on all these arts and sciences and philosophies and languages and oral examination and he found them ten times better than all the magicians and the astrologers that were in all his realm god made them wise they stood for god and god made them wise and daniel then stood in the presence of the king and when it says that at the end of verse 19 therefore stood they before the king that doesn't mean that they just stood like i'm standing here just now it's a word that means government service it means that immediately nebuchad and ed sir said let them have a position in my administration notice the lord is at work who can stay his hand who can resist his will he does as he pleases amongst the armies of heaven and upon the earth and he here is working his own sovereign will and his own glorious counsel and there's an interesting verse right at the end here in verse 21 now i say it's interesting because you'd expect to find this at the end of the book it says daniel continued even to the first year of king cyrus now cyrus was the king many years afterwards who allowed the jews to go back home why does it say here that daniel continued until his first year well what that means is that daniel stayed in office until the first year of cyrus and that was when daniel was well over 80 years of age in other words he entered the service of the government around about 20 and he stayed in it for over 60 years until the people of god went back to their homeland why does he tell us that here well because he relates it to this decision that he took as a young man he relates it to that he stood for god and in a hard place he stood on god's side and god stood on his side men let us down you let me down i let you down we'll all let one another down somehow but god will never let you down and that's the glory of the bible that's the glory of the gospel you stand for god take a step follow him come on to his side enlist in his army under his banner and god will never let you down and daniel lived until he saw his people returning now i'll tell you you'd never have had the daniel of chapter 2 3 4 5 and 6 if you hadn't had the daniel of chapter 1 if the daniel of chapter 1 had said i'll just eat of the king's food and be done with it you'd never have had the rest but because you had this you had the rest when you're still young you take this step and let me urge that upon you i don't mean in any way to speak disparagingly of those who are old but i've said this before too many a survey has been done in many a country that has asked the and around 80% of them have been converted in their youth and what that seems to tell us is this that that is the time when god very often speaks to men most earnestly and most urgently and [37:49] calls you into his kingdom that is the time yes friend he's still calling you if you be 50 60 70 or 80 he's calling you too and who knows what you can do in his kingdom when god brings you in he's calling you too but young men young women he's calling you while you're still young and in the prime of your life give your years to god and don't insult the lord by saying i'll give you the last tail end of my life no give him the best give him the best years of your life and you'll know him as one who sticks close and as one who will never let you down no he's hardly gone into government when he has a great crisis to face because powerful as he is never had an answer discovers that he's not as powerful as he thought he was and it's then that Daniel is called to the rescue and we'll look at that god willing next time may gracious god help us to recognize that there is great reward in keeping thy commands and that there is a great blessedness for those who walk with thee and who love thee help us to choose that path and not the path of sin which leads ultimately to death and to destruction and there is no going back for if we be lost then we are lost forever for as the tree falls so it shall lie he that is unjust let him be unjust still we pray therefore that while we have time and we are on mercy's ground we would make a calling and election sure for

Christ's sake Amen

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