

## Daniel 1:1-21 (New International Version, ©2011)

<sup>1</sup> In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. <sup>2</sup> And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia<sup>[a]</sup> and put in the treasure house of his god.

<sup>3</sup> Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring into the king's service some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility—<sup>4</sup> young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians.<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>5</sup> The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service.

<sup>6</sup> Among those who were chosen were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. <sup>7</sup> The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Beltshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

<sup>8</sup> But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way. <sup>9</sup> Now God had caused the official to show favor and compassion to Daniel, <sup>10</sup> but the official told Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your<sup>[c]</sup> food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you."

<sup>11</sup> Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, <sup>12</sup> "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. <sup>13</sup> Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see." <sup>14</sup> So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.

<sup>15</sup> At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. <sup>16</sup> So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.

<sup>17</sup> To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.

<sup>18</sup> At the end of the time set by the king to bring them into his service, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. <sup>19</sup> The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. <sup>20</sup> In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.

<sup>21</sup> And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.

- a. [Daniel 1:2](#) Hebrew *Shinar*
- b. [Daniel 1:4](#) Or *Chaldeans*
- c. [Daniel 1:10](#) The Hebrew for *your* and *you* in this verse is plural.

**Oasis: Living in Exile**  
*When Faced with Competing Stories*  
**Daniel 1:1-21**

*Preface: Welcome to our 9th LC Bible study in our sermon series “Living God’s Story.” This year we are working our way through the Bible, from Genesis through Revelation. So fasten your seat belt—it is quite a ride! These LC studies will complement the sermons, often using the same biblical texts, and will help your LC go deeper in personal understanding and application. These italicized portions are meant to resource and help you in leading.*

*Study’s BIG idea: When the world tries to rewrite your story, God can still tell His story through your faith-filled resolve.*

**Possible starter question (3 min.):** Think of someone in our world/culture who has resisted the pressures of society’s expectations due to her/his commitment to God. What do you admire about that person’s attitude or actions?

Transitional comment: In today’s passage, we meet the young man Daniel, who was literally yanked from his Hebrew family and culture, and immersed in an entirely foreign situation, which was pressing for a very different storyline than God’s. As different as Daniel’s context is, the relevance to our lives is BIG.

*(If you haven’t already prayed, pray for the Holy Spirit to lead your study, opening our eyes and hearts.)*

Let’s listen as our passage/story is read: (Suggestion: have 4 readers—a narrator (large part), Daniel (8 and 11-13), chief official (7 and 9-10) and guard (14-16).

Personal time to re-read and ponder: Take several minutes to read this again on your own. Spot those who are the “primary players.” What actions do they take? For what reasons? How does the story unfold?

**Study Discussion of first segment, Daniel 1:1-7:**

O What do we learn about the historical situation in vs. 1-2?

*(n.b. With the defeat of Egypt’s armies in 605 BC, Judah and Jerusalem fall prey to the newest world power, Babylonia. Rather than annihilating conquered states, Babylonia’s approach was to assimilate the foreign resources and people. While the bulk of the Jewish exile occurred in 587 BC, the first stage of it happened about 20 years prior.)*

O What qualities were sought in selecting those to be sent to Babylonia? Put these in your own words.

O In vs. 5-7, what were some of the means used by the Babyonians to “re-orient” them?

I Which do you suspect would have been most effective? Why?

*(n.b. each of the 4 Hebrew names in v.6 contained suffixes that referred to Yahweh.)*

A What are some similar, current influences that you have experienced in our society?

A With which influences do you find yourself having to struggle the most?

**Section II, second segment, Daniel 1:8-17:**

O In what ways does Daniel think about his situation? What does he resolve?

I What does “defile” mean? (*Webster’s—to make dirty, ceremonially unclean, pollute*)

*(n.b. The Babylonians did not maintain Jewish dietary standards, i.e. did not drain the blood from the meat. The food may also have been offered to idols.)*

O How does Daniel exercise wisdom and balance in his interaction with the official and the guard?

I How come Daniel’s actions don’t come across as self-righteous? What do you think?

O What is the test that Daniel proposes? The results? (vs. 12-15)

I Evidently, many of the other Jewish youth decided NOT to follow the pattern set by Daniel and his three friends. What might have been some of their reasons for not following Daniel’s approach?

I How might they have reacted to what happens in v. 16, when their royal food and drink is removed?

### Section III, third segment, Daniel 1:18-21:

O In the last section, what happens?

#### Summary:

O What do you learn about God’s presence and involvement in this passage?

I How does Daniel’s faith in God affect his lifestyle?

A What are the transferrable lessons and insights that you need to take to heart?

A Are there particular situations in your life (friendships, family, neighborhood, school, workplace, etc), where you know that the cultural story and God’s story are competing? If so, what changes do you want to make to allow God’s story to prevail?

A Prayer together: Pray for one another—that God’s grace-filled story would trump the competing stories in each of your lives and situations.

Text notes (you can access biblical texts via [www.Biblegateway.com](http://www.Biblegateway.com))

- a. Key verse: Daniel 1:8: “But Daniel resolved not to defile himself...”
- b. KEY: O = Observation; I = Interpretation; A = Application (or C = Challenge)

Advice to study leaders:

- a. Complement OIA questions with “process questions” (what else? what more? what do others think?).
- b. Remember that people learn best when they discover insights for themselves.
- c. Determine the core questions you’ll ask (know which ones to skip if pressed for time).
- d. Always reword questions in words that are comfortable for you (and, if the question doesn’t make sense to you, then discard it.) You want to “own” each question.
- e. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don’t rush people but encourage their participation. And avoid answering your own questions!
- f. Timing/pacing: allocate your time and move forward gently, with a steady pace.
- g. Application: Pace the study to conclude with “difference making” application.
- h. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into “teaching,” rather than facilitating. It can cause people to feel distracted or de-powered.
- i. I recommend the 1 vol. New Bible Commentary, Revised (21<sup>st</sup> Century ed, IVP). Well worth \$35.