



International Bible Lessons Commentary

Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series

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Daniel 1:1-21 King James Version January 7, 2018

The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, January 7, 2018**, is from **Daniel 1:1-21** (Some will only study **Daniel 1:8-21**). **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

(Daniel 1:1) In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it.

King Jehoiakim was appointed king over Judah by the king of Egypt before the Babylonians conquered Egypt and Judah. The "third year" may refer to Babylonian dating for some time between 606-605 BC. Daniel was taken to Babylon in the first captivity and remained there for the entire 70 years of captivity (see Jeremiah 25:11-13). Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC, and many more Judeans were carried away into exile to Babylon.

(Daniel 1:2) And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god.

Because of their sins, because the Judeans had turned from worshiping and serving the true God only to also sacrificing (even sacrificing their children) to idols, they forfeited the protection of God. Indeed, as punishment, the Lord actually delivered Judah into the hands of the Babylonians and into exile. God would no longer hear their prayers, and God would punish them at the hands of faraway enemies who would conquer them. Shinar is another name for Babylon. The gods or idols were probably Marduk and Bel.

(Daniel 1:3) And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes;

Perhaps three groups of people were meant in this verse: Israelites with skills that could be used by the Babylonians; descendants of the house of King David; nobles from Judah and other Israelite tribes who had homes in Jerusalem when the city fell to King Nebuchadnezzar.

(Daniel 1:4) Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.

The king of Babylon wanted perfect physical specimens of those he defeated in battle to beautify his court and demonstrate his power over other nations. The sons of the nobility and the descendants of King David and King Solomon would have received the best education the Judean court could have provided. Their knowledge of science, mathematics, and politics would help the Babylonian court when they learned how to speak the Babylonian language, act according to court customs, and learn Babylonian history and literature.

(Daniel 1:5) And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king.

The king showed concern for their mental and physical well-being; for selfish reasons probably. God also providentially showed love and concern for the Judean captives who especially remained loyal to God but who were taken into captivity anyway, as in the case of Daniel and his three friends whose rose to prominence in the king's service.

(Daniel 1:6) Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah:

These four young men became examples of how to act if carried into captivity or if you are under the dominion of a government that does not seek to obey the true God and the moral law. Their Judean names probably meant: Daniel – “God is my judge.” Hananiah – “God is gracious.” Mishael – “Who is what God is.” Azariah – “God has helped.”

(Daniel 1:7) Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Beltshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego.

The palace master gave them new names because they were now under a new king and were required to learn a new language and customs. Their new names meant a new worldly authority had conquered them. They now had to have Babylonian names that referenced Babylonian idols: Beltshazzar probably meant “protect his life.” Shadrach means “the command of Aku (the moon God).” Meshach may mean “who is what Aku is.” Abednego means “servant of Nebo (another Babylonian god).”

(Daniel 1:8) 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: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

Daniel's resolve may have influenced the other three not to defile themselves either. We should not be surprised if this were the case. The Book of Daniel does not tell us how many other Judeans may have done the same as Daniel, or if there even were other Judeans chosen to serve in the King's court. There may have been others from Jerusalem who ate the king's rations (which seems possible since the nation was exiled for her unrepentant idolatry and allegiance to foreign gods). The food and wine had probably been offered to idols first and some meats God had forbidden His people to eat.

(Daniel 1:9) Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.

Emphasizing human responsibility to obey the Lord in the face of danger, Daniel first resolved to obey God completely. Then, he asked the official over him for permission to avoid eating the king's rations. God intervened at that point and the palace master showed them favor, compassion, and understanding. God sustained Daniel in his resolve to remain completely loyal to Him. The Book of Daniel will continue to illustrate the importance of courageously obeying the Lord in the face of danger and death.

(Daniel 1:10) And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he

see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king.

The palace master did not command Daniel and his friends to eat the king's food. He simply expressed his fear of the king to Daniel and why he feared the king: he feared Daniel and his friends might not look as healthy as the other young men, and if the king discovered that he had disobeyed and had fed them different food he would be executed.

(Daniel 1:11) Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,

Since the palace master did not approve or deny Daniel's request, Daniel spoke to the palace guard who had direct responsibility for Daniel and his friends. Daniel quietly and patiently persisted in trying to receive the approval of his captors for a diet change instead of defiantly confronting anyone directly and endangering the lives of anyone needlessly.

(Daniel 1:12) Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.

Daniel showed his wisdom by proposing a test regarding the foods they would eat so as not to defile themselves. Rather than eat forbidden meats or meat that had been offered to idols, they would eat vegetables only. Rather than drink wine, and possibly so much wine that it would impair their judgment and ability to learn, they would drink only water.

(Daniel 1:13) Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.

Daniel did not want to disobey the objective moral law of God that he knew God had given for the benefit of all people. To show the guard that obeying God's law is better than obeying a king's command, Daniel asked the guard to judge by their appearances as obedient servants of the Lord. Daniel believed that God would bless the appearance of those who obeyed Him when they were tempted to do wrong or were tested.

(Daniel 1:14) So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days.

The guard saw no harm in agreeing to a short test. Neither the king nor the palace master would notice much change in Daniel's appearance over 10 days (if they even saw him at all), but the palace guard would be particularly attentive to any problems since his life depended on his obedience and watchful care over Daniel and his friends.

(Daniel 1:15) And 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.

God nourished Daniel and his friends properly when they sought to obey Him and not defile themselves by eating unclean food. Their whole godly lifestyle would give them a better appearance than those who ate unhealthy foods and/or drank too much wine. Less disciplined or less godly captives might have overindulged "because of their good fortune" to eat and drink so well; rather than consider the consequences in the long term.

(Daniel 1:16) Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse.

At Daniel's request, the guard may have wisely brought them "choice food and wine" by the king's standards in addition to the necessary amount of vegetables and water that Daniel requested. Then, Daniel and his friends would eat only vegetables and drink only water, and send the "choice food" back uneaten. Since they looked so well, the guard would no longer need to bring them "choice food and wine." The purpose of the king's command was to promote the mental and physical well-being of those he had chosen to beautify and serve his court. It would not do for Daniel and his friends to condemn the royal rations and declare defiant disobedience to the king; so, God gave them wisdom and showed them a diplomatic way to obey Him and achieve the ultimate purpose of the Babylonian king without disobeying God.

(Daniel 1:17) As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

These four young men were rewarded by God for their loyalty to God and their unswerving efforts to obey God in everything – even by what they refused to eat and drink. Their diet no doubt aided their study and promoted clear thinking. In addition, God gave all four of them knowledge, skill, and wisdom beyond human learning. As far

as we know, only Daniel received from God insight into visions and dreams, which he will demonstrate in the king's court throughout the Book of Daniel.

(Daniel 1:18) Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar.

After three years of education and only eating foods approved by God, Daniel and his three friends (along with all the other young men, who ate and drank the choice food and wine of the king) were brought before King Nebuchadnezzar to be examined and judged personally by him. After having passed the 10-day test of the guard, they were tested again at the end of three years by the king himself.

(Daniel 1:19) And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king.

The king questioned all those he had formally set aside for service in his court. None of the exiles from Judah or any other nation except for Daniel and his friends excelled as much as they did as they were examined. Therefore, the most godly and obedient young men from Jerusalem were stationed in the king's court as advisors to the king, which would bring many blessings to the exiled Judeans and perhaps saved many from death. Daniel eventually became the king's most honored and trusted advisor, especially after he faced further tests of his loyalty to God. Perhaps unknowingly, the king was always given the best godly advise of Daniel; similar to Joseph as an advisor to Pharaoh in Egypt.

(Daniel 1:20) And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.

Magicians and enchanters (or astrologers) had occupied the king's court from the beginning as his advisers. To these advisers, the king added four men of God: men who prayed and obeyed God no matter what the possible consequences (as the entire Book of Daniel shows). Those who listened to God and inquired of God for guidance were 10 times better advisers than those who worshiped idols and sought only worldly wisdom. This fact has been true for hundreds of years in many nations.

(Daniel 1:21) And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus.

Daniel continued to serve in the court of the Babylonians until the Babylonians were conquered by the Persians and Babylon itself fell to King Cyrus. We have no indication that Daniel did not continue to serve for some time in the court of King Cyrus. It seems very likely that he would have served King Cyrus and have helped the Judeans return home to Jerusalem at the command of King Cyrus. God, who had blessed Daniel during 70 years of exile, would have continued to watch over him until his work on earth was done.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What resulted when the four young men put obedience to God first in their lives?
2. Can you name two prophets whose words might have encouraged Daniel as he and his friends were taken into exile?
3. Can you think of one reason God might have wanted these four young men to serve in the king's court?
4. Read the Romans 8:28. Did God keep this promise to Daniel and his three friends? Explain your answer.
5. What tests did Daniel and his three friends face?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.

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