



International Bible Lessons Commentary

Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series

L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

Daniel 1:1-21 **New American Standard Bible** **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, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to 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) 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.

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) 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,

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) 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.

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) 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.

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 them from the sons of Judah were 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) 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.

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: Beltsehazzar probably meant “protect his life.” Shadrach means “the command of Aku (the moon God).” Meshack may mean “who is what Aku is.” Abednego means “servant of Nebo (another Babylonian god).”

(Daniel 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.

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

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 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."

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) But Daniel said to the overseer whom the commander of the officials had appointed 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) "Please test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables 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 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.”

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 listened to them in this matter and tested them for 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) 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.

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

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 youths, God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every branch of literature and wisdom; Daniel even understood all kinds of 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) Then at the end of the days which the king had specified for presenting them, the commander of the officials presented them 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) 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.

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) 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.

Magicians and enchanters (or astrologers) had occupied the king's court from the beginning as his advisers. To these advisors, 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 advisors 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 until the first year of Cyrus the king.

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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Contact: P.O. Box 1052, Edmond, Oklahoma, 73083 and
lgp@theiblf.com.