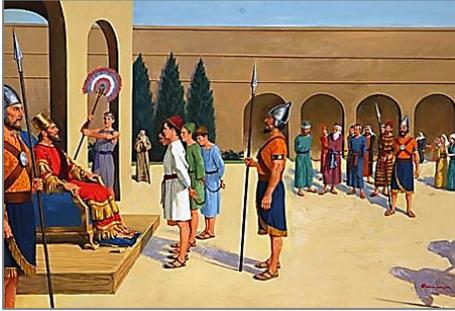


FOUR TEENAGE CAPTIVES

Daniel Chapter 1



Four Jewish teenagers, and many other Jews, are suddenly taken captive by a foreign king and deported to a pagan city hundreds of miles away from Jerusalem. There, these four teenagers would spend the rest of their lives, living under new pagan names, speaking a foreign language, and often facing serious danger for being loyal to God.

Was this all a nightmarish dream or did God have a purpose in allowing it to happen? The answer begins to unfold in this first chapter.

A. WHAT TO WATCH FOR



Notice how Daniel is able to succeed as a faithful Jew living in a pagan Babylonian culture. This first chapter is the foundation for the main idea of the book—God’s Sovereign rule over the nations past, present, and future. Because Israel was deep into idolatry God allowed a gentile nation to conquer the northern kingdom (Israel) and eventually the southern kingdom (Judah). Was this a surprise move by God? Certainly not, he warned Israel in the days of Moses that this would happen if they disobeyed his laws (cf. Deut. 28:25).

B. BACKGROUND

Daniel was from the royal tribe of Judah and was about 13-14 years old at the beginning of the book.

The narrative begins immediately with a crisis—the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, who exports many Jews, including a teenage boy named Daniel, to his capital city of Babylon in the year 605 BC. This was the first of four deportations by Nebuchadnezzar.⁵

⁵ (Payne 150-152)

Pagan nations at this time believed that each nation had its own god(s) which ruled only over a nation's geographical area. By removing captives from their native land they would be weakened and unable to resist the conquering (suzerain) king.

After captives were relocated to Babylon they were enculturated into its language, customs, and religion. As part of this strategy, Daniel's name was changed along with those of his three friends.

As a teenager, Daniel found himself far from his home and now in a strange circumstance. He was selected to be trained as part of the king's court and had to learn the ways of a royal servant to Nebuchadnezzar. Was he to adapt to his new situation and stay on the king's good side by becoming a Babylonian, or remain loyal to God? His faith was being tested.

Table 1 Daniel and Friends Renamed

Hebrew Name	Babylonian Name
Daniel ("God is my judge")	Belteshazzar ("whom Bel favors")
Hananiah ("God is gracious")	Shadrach ("illuminated by Shad" – a sun god)
Mishael ("Who is like God?")	Meshach ("who is like Shach" – a love goddess)
Azariah ("God is my helper")	Abednego ("the servant of Nego" – a fire god)

C. DANIEL CHAPTER 1 (NIV)

1. Daniel and his friends taken into exile (1:1-7)

" In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ² 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 and put in the treasure house of his god. ³ 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-- ⁴ 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. ⁵ 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. ⁶ Among those who were chosen were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. ⁷ The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego."

2. Daniel and His Friends Remain undefiled (1:8-16)

"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. ⁹ Now God had caused the official to show favor and compassion to Daniel, ¹⁰ but the official told Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your 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." ¹¹ Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, ¹² "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³ 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." ¹⁴ So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days. ¹⁵ At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. ¹⁶ So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead."

3. Daniel and His Friends Promoted and Preserved (1:17-21)

"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. ¹⁸ At the end of the time set by the king to bring them into his service, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹ The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. ²⁰ 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. ²¹ And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus."

D. CHAPTER SUMMARY



Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Babylonians, surrounded Jerusalem, took many of the royal family, and seized some of the temple treasures (Daniel 1:1, 2). Daniel, a perfect physical specimen, healthy, good-looking, intelligent, and well-informed, was one of those taken (Daniel 1:4). Daniel determined not to defile himself with the king's food (Daniel 1:8), so he suggested that he and his friends be given nothing but vegetables and water for ten days—then be compared to those who ate the king's food. Daniel and his friends were found to be ten times better (Daniel 1:12-15). God rewarded Daniel and his friends with unusual knowledge and understanding. He also gave Daniel the ability to understand visions and dreams (Daniel 1:17).

F. CHAPTER WRAP-UP

In this chapter we clearly see God's sovereignty in action and how he is ultimately in control of all circumstances, and all governments, including powerful empires and kings. We also see how he blesses those who remain true to him.

1. God is the _____ God of Israel.

2. God disciplines those whom _____.

3. God sometimes allows the innocent to _____.

4. God honors those who _____.