

DANIEL: THRIVING IN A GODLESS CULTURE

I: Choosing To Obey God In A Godless Culture

(Daniel 1:1-21)

I. Introduction

- A. As believers living in a spiritually decaying, godless culture, we need to live affirmatively in victory over sin.
- B. Daniel as a young man was taken captive by the godless Babylonians, and he lived through Persia's conquest of Babylon, serving the Lord in righteousness and wisdom amid a godless culture as a great example for us.
- C. We thus view Daniel 1:1-21 on how he chose to obey the Lord in a godless culture for our insight:

II. Choosing To Obey God In A Godless Culture, Daniel 1:1-21.

- A. Daniel faced a number of unwelcome, intense pagan pressures to live in ungodliness, Daniel 1:1-7:
 - 1. First, he faced the unwelcome, traumatic invasion of his nation by a foreign, pagan empire, Daniel 1:1-2a.
 - 2. Daniel then faced the demeaning treatment of His God when the Babylonians placed some of His temple's holy vessels in the temple of the Babylonian pagan god Bel's temple to signify the conquest of Bel over God in Babylonian culture, Daniel 1:2b; Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1329-1330.
 - 3. Daniel faced unwelcome pressure to ingest unbiblical food and drink, Daniel 1:3-5:
 - a. The Babylonians sacrificed the meat they ate to their false gods, what Exodus 34:15 directed that such food sinful for the Hebrew people to ingest. (Ibid., p. 1330)
 - b. The Babylonian wines were the "strong drink" condemned by Proverbs 20:1 and Isaiah 5:11 where the Hebrews watered down their wines with 3 to 6 or even to 10 parts water to wine, Ibid., p. 1330-1331.
 - 4. Daniel faced the unwelcome, ungodly change of his name, Daniel 1:6-7: his Hebrew name "Daniel" meant "God is my Judge" where the Babylonian name "Belteshazzar" given to him meant "Lady, protect the King" in honor of a pagan goddess, Ibid., p. 1330.
- B. However, Daniel personally committed himself to be holy in his own thought and actions regardless of the pressures to conform to the ungodliness around him, Daniel 1:8.
- C. God consequently helped and eventually rewarded Daniel for this decision, Daniel 1:9-21:
 - 1. The Lord brought Daniel into favor with his superior, the prince of the head of the eunuchs (Daniel 1:9) in fulfillment of Proverbs 16:7 where Solomon taught that when a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.
 - 2. When this official declined Daniel's request not to eat of the king's unbiblical food for fear that it might cost him his life (Daniel 1:10), Daniel asked the Babylonian guard immediately over him and his three Hebrew fellow captives and friends to be allowed to take a ten day test of eating only grains and vegetables versus the king's meat, Daniel 1:11-13. (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Daniel 1:12)
 - 3. Since ten days was a fraction of the three years of preparation time the young men were being prepared in order to meet the king (Daniel 1:5), the guard readily consented to Daniel's request, and Daniel and his three friends passed the test with God's obvious help, Daniel 1:14-15. The guard thus took away the king's food from these three men and gave them grains and vegetables to eat, Daniel 1:16.
 - 4. The final test involved Daniel and his three Hebrew friends being examined by king Nebuchadnezzar himself, and Babylon's king found them to be ten times better than not only the other Hebrew captives, but better than even the established "magicians and enchanters" in the whole kingdom, Daniel 1:17-20 NIV. Daniel in particular was found to excel in knowledge and understanding and all kinds of literature and learning and to have special insight into understanding visions and dreams of all kinds, Daniel 1:17 NIV.
 - 5. Consequently, God enabled Daniel to last in positions of influence not only in the Babylonian court, but also in the Persian court that replaced Babylonian rule, and he lasted until the first year of Persia's king Cyrus when the first wave of Hebrew captives returned from the captivity, Daniel 1:21 with Ezra 1:1-4.

Lesson: *Though facing a variety of unwelcome, traumatic pressures to conform to an ungodly pagan culture, and that at a young age, Daniel purposed in his heart to think and to do what honored the Lord, and God helped and greatly blessed him throughout his long life.*

Application: *(1) Though we may face many godless pressures to conform to ungodliness over which pressures we have no control, since God will still bless us if we purpose in our hearts to think and to do what is godly where we have the power to do so, may we purpose to obey the Lord regardless what godless pressures we face. (2) Even if we are young, may we stay committed to following the Lord regardless of peer pressures for God's great blessing.*