

Daniel 1 – The Fall of Israel

By Holly Effiom

V1

Why did God allow Israel to be conquered by his enemies?

What is the name of the king who conquered Israel?

What nation was he from?

What was the name of Israel's king at the time of the conquest?

How long had he been on the throne?

What does the term "besieged" mean? Does it mean that the war was over immediately?

LESSON: The book of Daniel picks up right at the transfer of power from Israel's king, Jehoiakim to Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. The historical books, especially 1st & 2nd Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, provide insight into the actual formation of Israel into a nation – with its own place, language, culture, religion, and structure of government – to its eventual conquest by Babylon.

V2

Did Israel fall because Nebuchadnezzar was a really powerful warrior?

What vessels were in the temple at Jerusalem?

What happened to them at the conquest of Jerusalem? Where were they taken?

Did Nebuchadnezzar worship the same god as Israel?

What was the treasure kept at that the temple of Nebuchadnezzar's god?

LESSON: Exodus 25-34 provides more information on the construction of the Tabernacle of God and the vessels used in service to God by Moses. These vessels were maintained in the temple at Jerusalem, and were made of gold (Holy of holies) and brass (outer court). Of course, Nebuchadnezzar would consider these vessels "spoils of war" and he would take them home to the land of Shinar; and not to use them in the worship of his own god, probably Belteshazzar, but to add to his wealth, his own treasure.

What we learn from this verse was that the nation's treasury was located within the house of Nebuchadnezzar's god – his "temple". This had been a common practice, and not just in the orient, that religious institutions were custodians of the king's or nation's treasury. Why do you think this was?

What did it mean for the "priests"? What did it mean for the temple? What if the king and the temple become at odds?

Notice how the "conquest" is described, "The Lord gave Jehoiakim" – Israel's king – "into his" – Nebuchadnezzar's – "hand." The king of Israel was being punished for his sins but because of his position in society, his subjects, his people, would ALSO suffer the consequences for his sin.

SPIRITUAL CONCEPT

The people are the ones who suffer when a leader sins against God or fails. Case in point: Adam and Eve. The most important lesson to learn for today from verse 2 is that even though God's "chosen" people were being conquered and feeling that their world was falling apart and out of control, God was still very much in control.

VV3-4

What is a eunuch? What position does Ashpenaz hold? What did the king direct Ashpenaz to do?

Why the children, and not the kings or princes themselves?

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What characteristics did the children need to possess?

Why royal children?

Why did he want these children to be knowledgeable of “wisdom”, intelligent, know science, and to know how to behave in the king’s palace? What is meant by “wisdom”?

Who are Chaldeans?

LESSON: In Matt 19:12, Jesus shares a word about eunuchs with His disciples, warning: “All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given.” Eunuchs are generally described as men who have had their testes or external genitalia removed. What is the purpose of genitalia? In general, genitalia are the external organs of reproduction – they are the means by which procreation takes place – so, if you lack genitalia, you cannot have children. Now, you can understand why eunuchs usually refer to men.

When Jesus explained that there are different types of eunuchs in the world, He was using a physical phenomenon that everyone understood and applying it to a spiritual concept, and if you view it as a “spiritual concept” the meaning extends beyond just men.

There are eunuchs that are made so from birth – i.e., natural mutation, where one is born without genitalia or functioning genitalia. There are eunuchs that are made so by men – i.e., mutilation of the genitalia by men, with the purpose of emasculating another – not allowing the production of children – and thereby consigning a man to perpetual servitude. But Jesus mentions another type of eunuch – one which makes oneself a eunuch for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.

Is Jesus encouraging the mutilation of genitalia with this statement? No. Would such action be an interpretation from a “spiritual” perspective? No. Is this type of “eunuchry” applicable only to men? No. Any man or woman can choose to place a sexual constraint on the self – deciding to not reproduce in this life or for a time – instead, choosing to work to advance of the kingdom of heaven, or servitude to God.

Is Jesus saying that this is the only way a man or a woman can advance the kingdom of heaven? No. That is why He said, “He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.” The path of the spiritual eunuch is not everyone’s choice. But, I will say this: the eunuch holds a special place in God’s heart because they have been robbed or deprived of their hope and future, whether by the hand of nature, or by the hand of man. He will honor their trust in Him. Isa 56:3-5; Jer 39:15-18

Needless to say, it is likely the caste of eunuchs discussed here in Daniel were probably made so at the hand of men, as, I believe, were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (2 Kings 20:18). It was the practice in the orient, when conquering a nation to take some of the royal children, the nation’s best and brightest; and to press them into perpetual servitude to the conquering king, as a means of perpetual subjugation of a nation.

Chaldeans. The term “Chaldean”, in scripture, is used synonymously with Babylonian; however, the “caste” of priests called Chaldeans were actually part of the Egyptian king’s, Sesac’s, “expedition” to Babylon where he installed them as “observers of stars”, as part of the government he left in place. Considering “Chaldeans” still exist by the time of Nebuchadnezzar, perhaps some “practices of the orient” had African origins.

VV5-7

Why did the king appoint the food and drink for these children?

What was going to be taking place during the 3 years?

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What were the children being trained to be?

What were the names of the children from among the children of Judah?

What are the Babylonian names of these boys? Why were their names changed?

VV8-14

What is it to defile oneself?

In what way would the food and the wine provided by the king defile Daniel? Does this section explain what specifically would be an abomination? So, what would Daniel go by to make the determination? Lev 11

How did the prince of the eunuchs feel about Daniel? Why?

How did the prince of the eunuchs respond to Daniel's request to not be given the king's food and drink? What was the prince's concern?

Who is Melzar? Why was Daniel speaking with him?

What request does Daniel make to Melzar? Do you think the prince of the eunuchs was aware of this request?

How does Melzar respond to Daniel's request?

What is "pulse"?

LESSON: The KJV translates "pulse" as vegetables; but, checking the dictionary, it describes pulse as the edible seeds of various crops of the legume family, like peas, beans, or lentils. I was glad to read that! Have you ever tried eating just vegetables and water for 10 days? I tried it for one day... and became faint. That's called the "Prison Fast".

What does this section of scripture tell us?

1. It is God who brings us into the favor and tender love of others.
2. When Daniel's heart was set on something he was going to have it – and God honored that diligent seeking after Him!

VV15-17

What happened at the end of the 10 days? Did Melzar find Daniel and his friends passed out from hunger?

Would you say the food made them appear as they did; or was it God?

In what way did God gift the boys? What was Daniel's gifting in?

VV18-21

What happened when the 3 years of training were up?

Did the prince of the eunuchs get in trouble with the king? Why or why not?

Did the king only commune with Daniel and his friends, or was it all the children?

What had the boys from Judah been trained to do?

How long was Daniel's career?

LESSON: Daniel and his friends had been brutalized and found themselves in perpetual servitude to a system, a nation, a king that went against everything they had been taught to believe. And mind you, none of this happened because of their own sins, but rather the sins of their king. Did they respond against

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this injustice by raging against the system? Did they go out, picket the king and say disparaging things against him in public? No. But Daniel and his friends find their own way to protest what was happening, and that was to not allow themselves to be sullied in the eyes of God by what was going on around them – to not participate in it themselves. Take a lesson. They put their lives into God’s hands, and God honored their trust.

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