

Daniel 1:8-21 – Daniel Does not Conform

Daniel was taken from Jerusalem to Babylon while he was a youth. How much training did he receive in Judea about the law of Moses? We will get an indication from today's passage. Someone did a good job of raising Daniel when he was growing up in Judea. Given the rampant sin in Judea at the time, that is surprising but God always preserves a remnant. How do God's people live in a godless world? Daniel is a good example for us to follow. Daniel was in the enemy's camp. A weaker person would have fully conformed to the heathen culture just to get along. That was not the approach Daniel took. He did not follow the "go along to get along" approach to life.

Read Daniel 1:8-16.

In verse 1:5, we learned that Daniel and his friends were assigned a portion of the king's food and wine. Why was that a problem for someone who followed the law of Moses? What food would have been a problem for Daniel? Was it a problem for someone following the law of Moses to drink wine? (1:8)

Some commentators believe that Daniel did not object to the king's food based on the law of Moses. I don't know how to take that. Do they believe that it was fine for Daniel to eat pork? Some believe that Daniel rejected the food to resist assimilation into Babylonian culture. But why draw this arbitrary line? Why not also reject the name "Belteshazzar" which was tied to a Babylonian god? A key word is "defiled". This is not a common word in the OT. In Isaiah 59:3 and Lamentations 4:14 it was used of people stained with blood (murderers either literal or figurative). In Ezra 2:62 and Nehemiah 7:64 it was used of priests who were unclean because their ancestry could not be verified. Malachi 1:7, 12 speak of polluted food and the Lord's polluted table which were a result of people offering blind and lame animals in sacrifice. "Defiled" in these verses relates to specific violations of God's law. I don't have an answer about the wine, but the defilement from unclean food seems consistent with these other uses of the word in the OT. Daniel's vegetarian diet was only temporary. Under a Persian king, Daniel ate meat and drank wine. See Daniel 10:3. Why do you think Daniel objected to eating the king's food and drinking the king's wine? Based on this verse, should we all become vegetarians and only drink water? (1:8)

Most or all of us do not need to worry about this, but younger Christians have been confronted with their employer demanding that they call certain men "woman" and refer to people by their preferred pronouns. Would you comply with that rule? Why or why not? Would you attend the wedding of your grandson if he was marrying another man?

What did Daniel ask of the chief of eunuchs? Did the chief of eunuchs grant Daniel's request? Why was he reluctant? What did God do for Daniel? Who granted Daniel's request and why? Does this passage prove that a vegetarian diet is better than a diet that includes meat? Why did Daniel and his three friends look healthier than the others? (1:8-16)

Do you think that the king knew that Daniel and his three friends were not eating the king's food? In this passage, the adjustment to the king's orders that Daniel came up with worked for everyone. The diet kept Daniel from being defiled but it also resulted in him looking healthier than those who ate the king's food. That worked in the steward's favor and the end result would please the king as long as he didn't know that his dietary provisions had been rejected. (1:8-16)

Read Daniel 1:17-21.

From verse 17, what did God give to Daniel and his three friends? What did God give to Daniel that his three friends may not have received? (1:17)

From verse 5, we know that the training period was supposed to last for three years. When their training was complete, the chief of the eunuchs brought Daniel and his three friends before king Nebuchadnezzar. When the king examined them, what were his conclusions? Who were they compared to? (1:18-20)

Verse 4 has "stand in the king's palace" (ESV) and verse 5 has "stand before the king" (ESV). NKJV, NASB and NIV all have the idea of "serve in the king's palace" / "enter the king's service". This phrase is repeated in verse 19. ESV has "stood before the king". NKJV, NASB and NIV all translate this phrase with the meaning "they entered the king's service". This makes me curious. In the world of sports, music and business, people are sometimes given contracts based on their potential but it quickly becomes apparent that they are duds. I wonder what happened to the people who failed the king's oral examination. This was not the case with Daniel and his friends. At this point in Daniel, we are not told what positions Daniel and his friends were given in the king's service. (1:18-20)

Daniel and his friends did not conform to the king's diet and they excelled beyond their peers and even beyond the established magicians and enchanters. When we take a stand in the workplace to not conform to the world, are we always rewarded with earthly success? What sometimes happens when Christians take a Biblical stand in the workplace?

Verse 21 has a lot to say. King Cyrus was a Persian and not a Babylonian king. King Cyrus is credited with conquering the Babylonian empire. What is the message, knowing that Daniel was still alive after the Babylonian empire had died? (1:21)