

He Purposed In His Heart **Daniel 1:8-21**

Scriptures for Today: Daniel 1:8-21

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But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. 9 Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. 10 And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king. 11 Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, 12 Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. 13 Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants. 14 So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days. 15 And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat. 16 Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse. 17 As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. 18 Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. 19 And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king. 20 And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm. 21 And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus.

Introduction — Babylon's Plan to Change Them

Before we walk through this passage, we need to understand the setting of the book of Daniel.

The book of Daniel takes place during the time when the kingdom of Judah has fallen under the power of Babylon. Jerusalem has been attacked, and many young men from Israel have been taken captive into Babylon.

Daniel is one of those captives. He is a young man living in a foreign empire that does not worship the God of Israel. The book of Daniel shows us something powerful: how a man can remain faithful to God while living in a wicked culture.

The book itself is made up of two major parts. The first part, chapters **1 through 6**, records historical events in Daniel's life. These chapters show Daniel and his friends living in Babylon

and remaining faithful to God despite enormous pressure. In these chapters we see events like the fiery furnace, the writing on the wall, and Daniel in the lions' den.

The second part, chapters **7 through 12**, contains visions and prophecies that God gave to Daniel about the future. These chapters reveal the rise and fall of world empires, the coming of the Antichrist, great tribulation, and the ultimate victory of God's kingdom.

So the book of Daniel teaches two major lessons: First, it teaches us how to live faithfully in a world that opposes God. Second, it reveals God's control over the rise and fall of nations and kingdoms.

Empires rise. Empires fall. But God remains in control of history. And the very first chapter begins teaching us that lesson.

Before our passage begins in verse 8, the Bible explains how Daniel ended up in Babylon.

"In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it."

Babylon attacked Jerusalem, and God allowed the city to fall into Nebuchadnezzar's hand. Then the king of Babylon selected certain young men from Israel to be trained in his court.

"And the king spake unto Ashpenaz... that he should bring certain of the children of Israel... children in whom was no blemish."

These young men were intelligent, capable, and chosen to serve in Babylon's government. Among them were four young men from Judah: 1) Daniel, 2) Hananiah, 3) Mishael, and 4) Azariah.

Babylon then tried to reshape their identity by giving them new Babylonian names. But while Babylon could change their location, their education, and their names... It could not change their hearts. And that leads us directly to verse 8, where Daniel makes a decision that will define his life.

Daniel's Decision

Daniel 1:8

But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

This verse reveals the key moment of the story. Daniel **purposed in his heart**. Before the pressure came. Before the temptation came. Daniel had already decided. Holiness begins with a decision inside the heart.

Daniel was surrounded by Babylonian culture. He was offered the king's food and wine. But Daniel believed it would defile him. So he refused. But notice something important. Daniel did not rebel. The verse says he **requested** permission.

Daniel stood for holiness but did it with respect.

God Gives Favor

Daniel 1:9

Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.

Daniel stood for what was right. But God was already working behind the scenes. God gave Daniel favor with the official overseeing them. The Bible often shows this principle. When people honor God, God works in ways they cannot see.

The Official's Fear

Daniel 1:10

And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king.

The official was afraid. Nebuchadnezzar had ordered that these young men eat the king's food. If Daniel looked weak or unhealthy, the official could lose his life. So he hesitated. Standing for God sometimes places pressure on others around us. But Daniel handles the situation wisely.

Daniel's Proposal

Daniel 1:11

Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

Daniel now speaks to the steward who had direct authority over them. The prince of the eunuchs had placed this man, Melzar, in charge of their daily care and supervision. Notice the group mentioned in the verse.

Daniel is not standing alone. The Bible names **Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.**

These four young men had been taken from Judah and placed in Babylon together. They were living in a foreign land, surrounded by a pagan culture, yet they chose to stand together for what was right.

Standing for God becomes easier when faithful people stand together. These four young men support each other in their decision not to defile themselves with the king's meat. So Daniel approaches Melzar and begins to propose a solution that will allow them to remain faithful to God without causing unnecessary conflict.

The Ten-Day Test

Daniel 1:12

Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.

Daniel proposes a simple test. Ten days. Give them pulse, which refers to vegetables or plant food. Give them water to drink. Then observe the results. Daniel trusts that God will sustain them.

The Comparison

Daniel 1:13

Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.

Daniel invites the steward to compare them with the others. Look at our faces. Look at their faces. Then make your decision. Daniel is confident because he trusts God.

The Test Begins

Daniel 1:14

So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days.

The steward agrees. The test begins. Sometimes faith begins with small steps of obedience. Ten days. Just ten days. But those ten days will prove something powerful.

God Honors Their Stand

Daniel 1:15

And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat.

The results are clear. Daniel and his friends appear healthier than the others. God honored their faithfulness. Their stand for holiness was not wasted.

Their Diet Is Changed

Daniel 1:16

Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse.

After seeing the results, the steward permanently removes the king's food from them. Their faithfulness changed their situation. God rewarded their obedience.

God Gives Wisdom

Daniel 1:17

As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

God blesses these four young men with wisdom. Their knowledge is not merely natural intelligence. It is a gift from God. And Daniel receives something unique. Understanding of visions and dreams. This prepares us for the prophetic role Daniel will play later in the book.

Presented Before the King

Daniel 1:18

Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar.

The training period ends. The young men are brought before Nebuchadnezzar himself. This is the moment of testing. The king will evaluate them personally.

The King's Judgment

Daniel 1:19

And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king.

Nebuchadnezzar speaks with them. He questions them. He evaluates them. And the result is astonishing. None were like Daniel and his friends. Out of all the young men in Babylon, these four stood above the rest.

Ten Times Better

Daniel 1:20

And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.

The king compares them to the wisest men in Babylon. The magicians. The astrologers. The scholars of the empire. And Daniel and his friends are found to be **ten times better**. True wisdom comes from God.

A Life of Faithfulness

Daniel 1:21

And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus.

This verse tells us something important. Daniel served through multiple kings and multiple empires. Babylon rose. Babylon fell. But Daniel remained. Faithfulness to God lasts longer than the kingdoms of men.

Practical Applications

- 1. Holiness Begins in the Heart.** Daniel purposed in his heart. Victory over sin begins with a settled decision inside.
- 2. Standing for God Requires Courage.** Daniel stood for holiness in a pagan empire. Faithfulness often requires courage.
- 3. God Honors Faithfulness.** God gave Daniel favor, wisdom, and influence. God blesses those who honor Him.
- 4. True Wisdom Comes From God.** Babylon had scholars and magicians. But men who fear God have greater wisdom.

Conclusion — One Decision Changed Everything

Everything in this chapter turns on one thing. "But Daniel purposed in his heart." That one decision shaped Daniel's entire life.

Because he chose holiness: God gave him favor. God gave him wisdom. God gave him influence.

And Daniel remained faithful for decades. Holiness begins with a decision in the heart. And that decision can shape an entire life.

Let's pray.