

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Let's pray...

So, we are starting the book of Daniel today.

I want to start off with two questions,

**1. What is it like living a life for God without compromise?**

And the reason I ask this question is because Daniel, as we will study over the next few weeks, lived a life without compromise.

**2. What does it mean to live a life for God without compromise during a time of exile?**

It is hard enough to live a life without compromise when everything is going ok – but think about how much harder it would be during turbulent times.

Daniel lived a life for God without compromise during turbulent times – during a time of exile.

We live in a culture; we live in a time in history where we could even say that we live in a time of exile.

Think about what goes on in the world today as the culture we live in, time after time, will tell us that our God and His Word has no place in our culture.

God has no place in our schools – that is what the world says.

God has no place in our laws – we don't care what the bible says about marriage – that is what the world says.

The bible is offensive – that is what the world says.

Sometimes we hear it from those that we love.

Oh mom or oh dad! Things change – you need to adapt to the new ways of thinking.

But church, God's word never changes – and Daniel, as we will see – is going to experience change

everything around him is going to change –

Where he lives

His name

The language that he speaks

His diet

Who he is allowed to worship to

yet, he will still holds on to God's word and does not allow himself to be changed.

He stays true to who he is and who he serves.

Despite the circumstances.

So a little background on where we stand.

Since we just finished the book of 1 Samuel – I want to provide a timeline from 1 Samuel to the book of Daniel.

King Saul was Israel's first king – and we know that David becomes Saul's successor.

Solomon then follows David.

The significance of Israel's first three kings is that the Kingdom of Israel was united under them.

They were one nation (consisting of all the tribes)

However, after the period of Solomon, civil war breaks out – and the tribes are divided into two kingdom. The Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom.

Israel becomes the Northern Kingdom, all of their kings were bad – really bad, and that kingdom lasted for 209 years before God’s judgment finally came upon them as He used the Assyrians to invade it.

Judah, the Southern Kingdom, they had their share of bad kings as well, but they also had a few good kings who turned people back to God – their kingdom lasted for 325 years before God used Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians through a series of raids to come in and conquer them.

Why did this happen?

Two main reasons, they started worshipping other gods and they also chose not to keep the Sabbath.

Turn with me to Leviticus 25,

**[Lev 25:1-7 NKJV] 1 And the LORD spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying, 2 “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When you come into the land which I give you, then the land shall keep a sabbath to the LORD. 3 ‘Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather its fruit; 4 ‘but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath to the LORD. You shall neither sow your field nor prune your vineyard. 5 ‘What grows of its own accord of your harvest you shall not reap, nor gather the grapes of your untended vine, [for] it is a year of rest for the land. 6 ‘And the sabbath [produce] of the land shall be food for you: for you, your male and female servants, your hired man, and the stranger who dwells with you, 7 ‘for your livestock and the beasts that [are] in your land—all its produce shall be for food.**

So as a result of their disobedience, God sends His judgment upon His people.

**[Dan 1:1-21 NKJV] 1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.**

This happens in the year 605 b.c. I had mentioned that the Babylonians made several sieges. This was the first one.

**2 And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the articles of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the articles into the treasure house of his god.**

The Babylonian army came in and took some of the articles from the temple as well as some of the best and brightest young men from Judah.

It is important to note that the temple was not destroyed until the 3rd Babylonian siege made about 20 years later.

So this first siege fulfilled the prophetic words that Isaiah spoke to King Hezekiah.

Turn to 2 Kings 20,

**[2Ki 20:16-18 NKJV] 16 Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the LORD: 17 'Behold, the days are coming when all that [is] in your house, and what your fathers have accumulated until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left,' says the LORD. 18 'And they shall take away some of your sons who will descend from you, whom you will beget; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.' "**

You see, it was (and still is) customary for an invading army to take back to their land, trophies to commemorate their victories. These trophies were taken back to their land and hung on their pagan temples for display so that the entire kingdom would be able to see their dominance over other nations.

This is what Nebachadnezzar did with some of the articles of the temple.

However, not all the trophies were made out of gold, some of the trophies were living trophies, and this is what Nebuchadnezzar did as he also took some of the brightest young men and reeducated them so that they might serve him.

And this is what we see here starting in verse three as Daniel becomes one of these living trophies.

**3 Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel and some of the king's descendants and some of the nobles, 4 young men in whom [there was] no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who [had] ability to serve in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans.**

Part of Nebuchadnezzar's foreign policy involved taking the best and brightest from each kingdom he conquered, and educating them in the ways of Babylon, and using them to help run his empire.

Their education probably included:

Agriculture, architecture, astrology, astronomy, law, mathematics, and the difficult Akkadian language.

So these young men were going to be indoctrinated into the Babylonian culture.

**What was the point of this indoctrination??**

This indoctrination was going to remove the two things that mattered to them the most.

- Their Hebrew heritage – this was going to be accomplished by stripping away their language and changing their Hebrew name.
- Replacing their reliance on the word of God with worldly wisdom. We need to remember that growing up; the Israelites were trained in the Law of Moses. Now, this is being substituted with the wisdom of man.

**5 And the king appointed for them a daily provision of the king's delicacies and of the wine which he drank, and three years of training for them, so that at the end of [that time] they might serve before the king.**

Now, the scriptures do not reveal to us what the menu consisted of.

However, we must remember that the Jews were required to follow certain dietary laws that were described in the laws of Moses.

They were forbidden to eat food considered unclean (Lev 11)

They were forbidden to eat meat that had not had the blood properly drained (Lev 17)

They were also forbidden to eat food that had been sacrificed to other gods.  
(Ex 34:15)

**6 Now from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. 7 To them the chief of the eunuchs gave names: he gave Daniel [the name] Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abed-Nego.**

- Daniel – Ash changes Daniel's name to Belteshazzar. It goes from "God is my judge" to "Lady, protect the king"



Daniel's name change is interesting because not only has the meaning change but also the gender. This is a girl's name. That is like someone changing my name to Nancy.

His name is transformed from a man who acknowledges the Almighty and All Powerful One to a lady that must find a way to protect her king/god.

- Hananiah – His name is changes to Shadrach, it goes from “Yahweh has been gracious” to “I am fearful of god”

The Babylonians used a name that inverted the true nature of God, a God that is good, gracious and kind to a god that is vengeful and unmerciful. Something reserved for a tyrant or monster.

- Meshael – His name is changed to Meshach, it goes from “ Who can compare to my God” to “ I am despised, contemptible and humiliated”

Once again, the Babylonians used a name that undermined the goodness of God in our relationship to Him. It shifted the identity from one that had confidence in God to one of cowardice.

- Azariah – His name is changed to Abed-nego, it goes from “Yahweh has helped” to “Servant of Nebo”

Azariah went from being a son or heir of God, a term of endearment for the living God, to being the slave of another man, a king or a small “g” god.

Church, when you consider that Babylon in scripture is a type of the world, it is no surprise that the world still uses this tactic today.

The world attempts to change our identity – Who we are. What is our purpose?

It attempts to reeducate us in the ways of the world.

And it attempts to force feed us what the world has to offer.

**8 But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.**

Daniel purposed in his heart – this means that he had already decided inside himself that he was not going to cross what he already knew what was wrong.

He had already made up his mind that he was not going to compromise.

Now, I want you to notice that Daniel never objected when they changed his name – why? Because he knew who he was.

Daniel never objected to the Babylonian education – because he knew what he believed.

Yet, here Daniel objects to the food from the king's table because he knows that eating it was in direct disobedience to the word of God.

And therefore he tells the chief of the eunuchs – “I can't eat this because it will defile me.”

The word that is used here for defile it implies polluting or staining.

And this was very courageous of Daniel to do because rejecting what the king had selected for the menu was rejecting the king.

It was grounds for severe punishment.

**9 Now God had brought Daniel into the favor and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs.**

Every time we see Daniel or his friends doing something remarkable, we see God doing something even more remarkable.

Here, the curtain is drawn back and we see that, behind the scenes, the Lord was working on the heart of this official, to give grace and compassion for Daniel.

Church, we need to remind yourself of this truth which is presented so often in Scripture: God is very busy on levels high and low, in your home and around the world, working and accomplishing His purpose.

Turn to Psalm 57,

**[Psa 57:2 NKJV] 2 I will cry out to God Most High, To God who performs [all things] for me.**

God is at work around you, in you and for you. As we stay in communion with Him He is able to do great things, even through the small details of our lives.

**10 And the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who has appointed your food and drink. For why should he see your faces looking worse than the young men who [are] your age? Then you would endanger my head before the king."**

So, Daniel is looking for an alternative to the king's food.

Ashpenaz's response was one of concern.

He feared that Daniel and his friends, if given a different diet, would end up looking ill.

After all, what diet could be better than the one the king himself ate?

Ashpenaz could just picture these 4 young men standing with all the rest when it came time for them to be tested, and their countenance would be sickly and pale.

He knew his neck would be on the line as the one who was responsible for the safe-keeping of these charges.

**11 So Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, 12 "Please test your**

servants for ten days, and **let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink.** 13 "Then let our appearance be examined before you, and the appearance of the young men who eat the portion of the king's delicacies; and as you see fit, [so] deal with your servants."

So Daniel is aware that the chief eunuch is worried that he will have to take the fall if Daniel and his friends don't eat the king's food and are seen sickly before the king—

So he makes an agreement – not with the chief eunuch but with the one under the chief eunuch and he proposes that the four of them will eat a vegan diet for 10 days and after 10 days, if they look worse than the others who ate the king's food – then do what you gotta do.

Notice that he doesn't say after 10 days if we look worse, we will eat the king's food. They were never going to compromise.

**14 So he consented with them in this matter, and tested them ten days.**

**15 And at the end of ten days their features appeared **better and fatter** in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king's delicacies.**

If one reads this out of context, one will make the assumption that what the scriptures are telling us here is that we should eat a plant based diet.

May I remind you that it was a 10 day test.

Eating vegetables for 10 days is not going to cause anyone to increase in weight.

It wasn't the vegetables that made Daniel and his friends appear better and fatter than those who had eaten the king's food – it was the mighty hand of God who had intervened on their behalf.

The issue was compromise - and what God does by improving the health of these 4 young Jewish men is show His approval of their refusal to yield to the paganism surrounding them.

**16 Thus the steward took away their portion of delicacies and the wine that they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.**

Daniel and his three friends would stay vegan for all 3 years of their training.

Once their training was done, they had more freedom as government officials to chose the diet they were going to follow.

They didn't have to eat food that was offered up to idols or food that was unclean.

In fact in chapter 10, Daniel will reference that he, once again, was an eater of meat and wine.

So it's not like he remained a vegan.

But for those 3 years that they were training, Daniel and his friends were happy to have 'less', because it meant more in the areas that mattered.

It meant fellowship and intimate communion with their God.

**17 As for these four young men, God gave them knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.**

Again, it wasn't the diet that gave them knowledge and skills – it was God.

And because these 4 young men made the pursuit of holiness a priority,

God found in them men He could entrust the riches of His wisdom and knowledge to.



And we see that God gave Daniel the special skill of being able to decipher the secret meaning of dreams and visions.

This was a skill highly valued among the Chaldeans and so it destined Daniel for prominence in the Babylonian court.

And we will see this skill be used by Daniel multiple times over the next few chapters.

**18 Now at the end of the days, when the king had said that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar.**

This is after the three years of training.

**19 Then the king interviewed them, and among them all none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they served before the king. 20 And in all matters of wisdom [and] understanding about which the king examined them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians [and] astrologers who [were] in all his realm. 21 Thus Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus.**

Despite the circumstances around them – Daniel and his friends were tops in their class.

And they got to the top without having to compromise.

How did they accomplish this –

Because they purposed in their heart to not compromise with sin.

Turn with me to Acts 11,

**[Act 11:19-24 NKJV] 19 Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. 20 But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. 22 Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. 23 When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with **purpose of heart** they should continue with the Lord. 24 For he was a good man, full of the**

**Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.**

What Barnabas is doing here in Acts is encouraging those in Antioch and us as well – to set in our heart - to make up our minds already.

that we will pursue a whole hearted devotion to God – one without compromise.

Just like Daniel and his friends.

Amen.

Let's pray...



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