

The Quiet Sovereignty of God
Daniel 1
October 11th, 2026

1. Tragically _____ to Babylon (1:1-7)

2. Wisely _____ in Babylon (1:8-16)

3. Successfully _____ beyond Babylon (1:17-21)

4. How to live a faithful life in an ungodly culture:
 - a. _____ in the quiet sovereignty of God.
 - b. _____ between the important and unimportant.
 - c. _____ your heart to honor Christ above all.

Questions for Discussion/Reflection on Daniel 1

1. Why would Daniel ascribe ultimate responsibility for the capture of Jerusalem to the Lord in vv. 1-2? What does this teach us about Daniel's view of God? And what does this imply about human agency? (See also 2 Kings 24:1-4; Jer. 25:8-9)
2. Why does Nebuchadnezzar go to all the trouble of deporting some of the Jews to Babylon? What strategy might he have in deporting members of "the royal family and nobility" in particular (v. 3), and then training them in the culture and customs of the Babylonians (v. 4), as well as providing for them materially (v. 5)?
3. How does this chapter show the superior power of the Lord God over the Babylonian gods, even though some articles of treasure are taken from the temple and placed in the house of a Babylonian god? Compare/contrast with 1 Sam. 5:1-4.
4. Daniel could have simply refused the king's food with a simple "no." What do you notice about his approach to the issue? How might we apply similar wisdom in a situation that violates our convictions? For example, if a company policy requires you to display a pro-LGBTQ symbol, how might you wisely interact on the topic with conviction and compassion?
5. This first chapter climaxes when King Nebuchadnezzar tests Daniel and his three friends in their learning. The text tells us they were "ten times better" than anyone else. Why do you think this point is emphasized?
6. How does the experience of Christians in America compare to Daniel in Babylon? How do we wisely determine when we can happily go along with the culture and when we need to set our minds (v. 8) not to go along?

Some questions partially adapted from *Knowing the Bible: Daniel* by Crossway.

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Big idea: Mighty Babylon conquered Judah and conscripted Daniel and his friends, but the Lord remained quietly sovereign.

Intro

To an outside observer, the events of Daniel chapter 1 look bleak. It looks like the God of Israel is absent or has abandoned His people.

Jerusalem has been conquered by Babylon, and it wasn't even a major military challenge.

The Egyptian Pharaoh had imprisoned one king of Judah and then placed a different king into power, Jehoiakim.

Babylon and Egypt were the actual superpowers. After Babylon defeated Egypt in 605 BC, they scooped up Jerusalem as an afterthought.

The Babylonians carried away the treasures in the temple and some of the people, including some young men among the royal families, just teenagers at the time.

These young men were ripped from their homeland and carried hundreds of miles away.

They were given new names to replace their Jewish names.

They were instructed in new knowledge in a new culture.

And yet, to quote the words of an early 20th century hymn, God is "quietly sovereign" in the events.

We would know that from the rest of scripture even if Daniel 1 didn't tell us that. But Daniel 1 doesn't leave us guessing.

In 1:2 it was the Lord who gave Jehoiakim and the vessels of the house of God into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.

In 1:9 it was the Lord who gave Daniel favor in the eyes of a certain royal official.

In 1:17 it was the Lord who gave Daniel and his friends knowledge

1. Tragically **conscripted** to Babylon (1:1-7)

a. The historical events in v. 1 occurred in the year 605 BC.

i. TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS IN OT

- ii. Renald Showers, "In 605 BC The Babylonian army under Nebuchadnezzar, the crown prince, attacked the Egyptian army at Carchemish on the upper Euphrates River. The Babylonians defeated the Egyptians. The Egyptians were forced to retreat south to their homeland. This opened Palestine to the control of the Babylonians. As a result, by August of 605 BC, Nebuchadnezzar took control of the city of Jerusalem. That same August, Nebuchadnezzar's father, King Nabopolassar, died in Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar took the throne. He brought with him some captives from Jerusalem and vessels from the Temple of YHWH in Jerusalem."
- iii. Jerusalem wouldn't fall completely until 586 BC when the temple would be destroyed, but this was the first in a series of attacks and exile events.
- iv. They were brought to the land of Shinar, 800 miles away. Shinar is an ancient way of describing the land of Babylon, reminiscent of when the tower of Babel was built in Gen 11.

- v. SEE MAP
- b. Carrying away “the vessels of the house of God” was significant.
 - i. In the ANE, the fortunes of a people and their god were connected.
 - ii. Babylon carrying away people and items from the Lord’s temple showed that Babylon’s “gods” were more mighty and powerful.
 - iii. Davis – if the people were losers, it meant that the Lord was a loser.
 - iv. Olympics – an athlete representing a country might win or lose but we say “Germany won” or “the USA lost.”
 - 1. Jerusalem lost. Jehoiakim lost. YHWH lost.
 - 2. Or did He?
- c. “The Lord gave” them into his hand.
 - i. From a human perspective it would have looked like war between super powers (Egypt and Babylon), a siege against Jerusalem, and an easy victory.
 - ii. But God is quietly at work.
- d. It wasn’t just treasure that was taken, it was people.
 - i. Some from the royal family.
 - 1. Fulfills Isaiah 39:6-7
 - 2. **Isaiah 39:6-7** 'Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house and all that your fathers have laid up in store to this day will be carried to Babylon; nothing will be left,' says the LORD. ⁷ 'And *some* of your sons who will issue from you, whom you will beget, will be taken away, and they will become officials in the palace of the king of Babylon.'
 - ii. Young – probably teenagers
 - iii. The most promising
 - 1. It’s often challenging for an 18 year old to go away to school.
 - 2. Imagine if It was not 18 but far younger. And not by choice. And not for 4 years but forever. You were ripped away from family and the life you knew.
 - 3. These short verses describe that reality.
- e. They were to be trained to serve in the king’s court.
 - i. Literature and language of the Chaldeans.
 - ii. Chaldeans were a subgroup within the Babylonians. Neb. was a Chaldean. It was an elite, privileged class.
 - iii. Study of Sumerian, Akkadian and Aramaic among languages and the extensive literature written in them, including the various mythological texts, as well as historiography, astronomy, mathematics, and medicine. Omen texts – series of astrological omens in 77 tablets, we of which focused on observations of the moon, medical omens that had as many as 110 tablets. (Davis)
- f. Their names were changed.
 - i. Each originally had a reference to the God of Israel.

1. “yah” or “el” in the names referred to YHWH or Elohim, God’s name or a reference to God.
 - ii. Each was changed to reference a Babylonian god.
 - iii. Daniel – God is my judge
 1. Beltashazzar – Bel protect his life – after a chief Babylonian god, Bel
 - iv. Hananiah – YHWH is gracious
 1. Shadrach – command of Aku – after the moon-god, Aku
 - v. Mishael – who is what God is?
 1. Meshach – who is what Aku is?
 - vi. Azariah – YHWH has helped
 1. Abed-nego – servant of Nebo, after the god Nebo (Nego)
 - g. Everything was designed to pull them into a new culture and give them a new identity.
 - i. They were making them into Chaldeans/Babylonians not Jews.
2. Wisely **resisting** in Babylon (1:8-16)
- a. But...Daniel resisted.
 - i. Implied that the others did as well.
 - ii. He made up his mind.
 1. Davis – Heb *sim* translated “set” often –
 2. 7a – chief set names for them
 3. 7b – he set for Daniel Belteshazzar
 4. 8a – now Daniel set (it) upon his heart ...
 5. Daniel has his own setting that he has done
 - b. The place he resisted was not at the name they put on him or the education they gave him, but with the food.
 - i. The name was just a label.
 - ii. The education was something he could receive without buying into false ideas.
 - iii. But now there was something that would force him to participate in something wrong.
 - c. Why was the food a problem?
 - i. Likely a mix of the food being sacrificed to idols and unclean animals that were forbidden by the Jewish dietary laws.
 - d. Daniel showed wisdom in recognizing the situation and wisdom in the route that he took.
 - i. The situation didn’t seem like a crisis, at least not compared to future crises like the fiery furnace in chapter 3 or the lion’s den of chapter 6.
 1. But it was a compromise.
 2. He could have rationalized it away
 - a. Under normal circumstances we should obey, but this is abnormal

- b. God is to blame – he put us in this spot
- c. If we eat, we'll be put in government posts. Think of the good we could do!
- d. If we disobey, it will cost our lives. Shouldn't we value life?
- e. If we don't eat, the official will die. Shouldn't we value his life?

3. But they didn't rationalize.

ii. Notice how he went about objecting.

- 1. He learned about the food/drink
- 2. He made up his mind not defile himself
- 3. He asked the overseer – one step down from the chief of staff – the authority over him – that he might not defile himself – he went through proper channels
- 4. When the commander expressed fear (not unwillingness to help), Daniel suggested a test. He showed concern for the commander and his interests.
- 5. He made that request respectfully, "Please test your servants ..."
- 6. God granted him favor

e. They had been removed far from the land of Israel, but they were not far from the God of Israel.

i. Their commitment was to remain faithful to the Lord as distinct people of God, which meant they could say yes to some things and no to other things.

f. How to remain faithful to the Lord in an ungodly environment

3. Successfully ***persevering*** beyond Babylon (1:17-21)

a. God gave them knowledge

i. The Lord is credited with giving them these things

- 1. They likely would have been tutored/taught and yet it was the Lord who gave them knowledge and intelligence.
- 2. Not an academic strategy for our college students – just pray that God gives you knowledge and intelligence and keep the books put away!

b. Daniel even had a special capacity to understand visions and dreams, a foreshadowing of what is to come.

c. No one was found like them, so they entered the king's personal service.

i. They were part of a subjugated kingdom but they stand at the head of the palace's royal service corps. (Davis)

d. Notice the last line

i. "Daniel continued until the first year of Cyrus the king."

ii. That may not sound significant until you consider what that means.

iii. Daniel was captured in 605 BC, the first year of the reign of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar.

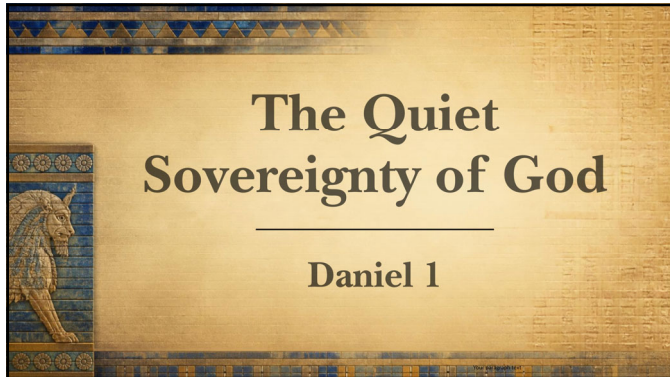
iv. Nebuchadnezzar reigned for 43 years until he died and was succeeded by Nabonidus and then Belshazzar.

v. Then in 539 BC the Medo-Persians conquered the Babylonians under Cyrus.

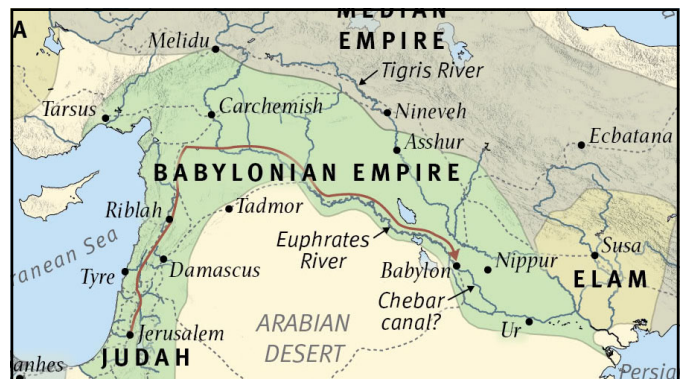
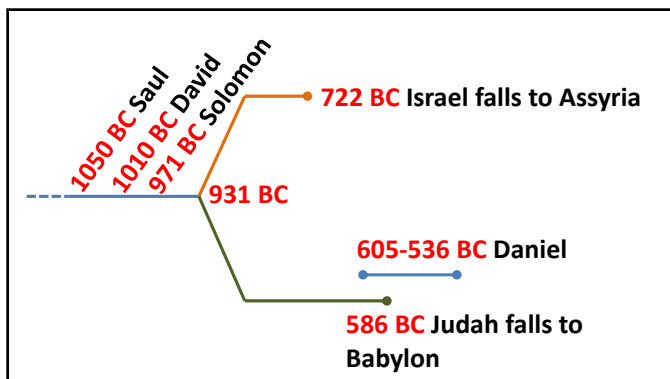
- vi. Daniel would have been about 80 years old at that point and he served until at least the 3rd year of Cyrus' reign, 536 BC.
 - e. Kings would come and go. They would live and die.
 - f. Even kingdoms would come and go!
 - g. But Daniel, a young man who was relocated, re-educated, had his name changed would continue for more than 65 years.
4. How to live a faithful life in an ungodly culture:
- a. **Trust** in the quiet sovereignty of God.
 - i. The Lord gave into his hand (1:3), God granted Daniel favor (1:9), God gave them knowledge (1:17)
 - ii. God has you at a particular time and place, not a random time and place.
 - iii. God is not surprised by the challenges and temptations you may face.
 - b. **Distinguish** between the important and unimportant.
 - i. Practice moral discernment
 - ii. "In every way that is unimportant, let them make us Chaldeans." The line comes from a play by Daniel Jurman, which I haven't seen or read so I can't endorse it, but I came across it in a book years ago and the line stuck in my head.
 - iii. For Daniel - Knowing the language. Understanding the literature. Even the names that were used – unimportant.
 - iv. Violating the law of God – important.
 - 1. Later it would be a command to bow down to an idol of Nebuchadnezzar – important.
 - 2. Then a command to only pray to King Darius – important.
 - v. For students at ISU or in other local schools –
 - 1. What a privilege to get an education.
 - 2. Be grateful to grow as a creator and a thinker and a scholar.
 - 3. Christians aren't anti-education.
 - 4. Take the classes, answer the test questions, read the books – but pass them through a Biblical filter.
 - vi. For Christians to benefit the broader culture they need to be different than the culture. The world does not need more of the same thing that they already have. In America, our culture has entertainment, materialistic consumption, and superficiality. They do not need more of those things from Christians.
 - vii. Distinguish between compromising convictions making connections.
 - c. **Set** your heart to honor Christ above all.
 - i. **1 Peter 3:14-16** But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED, ¹⁵ but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; ¹⁶ and keep a good

conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.

- ii. It might be on a work trip where your coworkers “let loose” and you can join them on the trip but can’t join in their activities.
- iii. It might be in a family gathering where you’re the only Christian.
 - 1. Go! Enjoy your family! Share in the stories, keep close relationships, honor where you can.
 - 2. And yet if you’re asked to do something wrong or you think a certain activity would have a negative influence on your kids, then you don’t cross that line.
- iv. If you’re in school, there might be a group of kids that you sit with and they are friends, but they aren’t Christians.
 - 1. You can be friends with them and laugh with them!
 - 2. But there might be times when they want you to join them in making fun of some other kid or cheating on a test, and you have to commit in your heart to obey Jesus in that moment even if it makes your friends upset.
- v. It’s easier to live in the extremes of isolation or assimilation, but God’s Word calls us to something more nuanced and challenging – wise engagement.



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- Daniel Jurman

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