

## “Stand Your Ground” (Daniel 1:1–21)

Today, we begin a series on the book of Daniel that I am calling, “Courageous Living in Chaotic Times.” Perhaps you’re asking, “Why study the book of Daniel?” That’s a legitimate question, so I want to provide you three reasons. First, *Daniel’s situation parallels our own*. For most of his life, Daniel lived as part of a believing minority in a pagan majority. From the time he was a teenager until he died in his eighties, he served under a series of pagan kings. He never had the luxury of living in a nation surrounded by people who shared his beliefs. From his story we will draw many useful principles as we attempt to live for Christ in a world filled with people who don’t share our faith.<sup>1</sup> *Second, Daniel’s prophecies may soon be fulfilled*. This book is filled with dreams, visions, and prophecies about the end times. We will discover an amazing correlation between the words of Daniel and life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> Robert Macfarlane once said, “The church speaks the language of the End, so that we will know just how high the stakes are in the present.”<sup>3</sup> I like to keep the end-times before us so that we live with a sense of urgency. *Finally, Daniel’s God is our God too—and He is still on the throne*. The theme of the book of Daniel is: God is large and in charge! He is in charge of nations, families, and individuals. He is in charge of the past, the present, and the future. He is in charge of good times and bad times. There is nothing that happens in the world or in your life apart from God. Studying the book of Daniel ought to increase your confidence in the sovereignty of a God who makes no mistakes.<sup>4</sup>

**Act 1: Judah’s captivity (1:1–2).** With that said, the book of Daniel begins with what appears to be a tragic mistake on God’s part: **“In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah,<sup>5</sup> Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.” The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god**” (1:1–2). Verse 1 doesn’t begin with the thrill of victory, but rather with the agony of defeat. Daniel takes us back to 605 BC as the armies of Nebuchadnezzar besiege Jerusalem.<sup>6</sup> This obliteration of Jerusalem looks like the triumph of pagan gods over the true God of Israel. However, 1:2 states that “the Lord gave”<sup>7</sup> His people into the hands of His enemies. Daniel uses the Hebrew verb *natan*, from which we derive the name Nathan. This word means “to give.”<sup>8</sup> God Himself gave His people into the hands of an idolatrous king. God had made a covenant with Israel, promising that He would care for them and bless them *if* they obeyed His Word, but if they disobeyed He would chasten them and scatter them among the Gentiles.<sup>9</sup> For decades, God’s prophets had warned Judah’s rulers that their idolatry, immorality, and injustice toward the poor and needy would lead to the nation’s ruin. The prophets saw the day coming when God would bring the Babylonian army to destroy Jerusalem and the temple and take the people captive to Babylon.<sup>10</sup> God would rather have His people living in shameful captivity in a pagan land than living like pagans in the Holy Land and disgracing His name.<sup>11</sup> So even though the fall of Jerusalem looked like a victory for God’s enemies, it was actually a victory for the Lord! He kept His covenant with Israel and He fulfilled His promises.<sup>12</sup> This is further supported by the fact that Daniel uses the Hebrew term *Adonai* (“Lord”), which emphasizes God’s sovereignty over the affairs of men.<sup>13</sup> Daniel’s selection of this title emphasizes God’s sovereignty, the dominant theme of the book.<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, imagine being in Daniel’s sandals. He grew up a good Jewish boy. He read God’s Word, prayed, and worshipped in the temple. Suddenly, a foreign enemy conquers his nation. He is plucked up as a teenager, put in a totally different culture, a different environment, different language, different people, different food and they say, “You’ve got to become a different person.” It’s tough enough when you move to a new school or new community. Can you imagine a totally different culture? What if Iran took over America and exported some of our finest teenagers to Iran. Suddenly you could no longer listen to the music you listen to, you couldn’t wear the clothes you wear, couldn’t eat the food you eat, couldn’t pray to your God. Suddenly you’re made to eat Iranian food, pray to Allah, and wear Iranian clothes. That’s what happened to these teenagers. It was tough. Their world fell apart.

**Act 2: The selection of the trainees (1:3–7).** Although Daniel’s future once looked bright, it now lay in shadows. Yet, all of sudden, an unexpected opportunity presents itself.<sup>15</sup> In 1:3–5 Daniel writes: **“Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his officials, to bring in some of the sons of Israel, including some of the royal family and of the nobles, youths in whom was no defect, who were good-looking, showing intelligence in every branch of wisdom, endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge, and who had ability for serving in the king’s court; and he ordered him to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.** [This is an ancient name for the Babylonians.] **The king appointed for them a daily ration from the king’s choice food and from the wine which he drank, and appointed that they should be educated three years, at the end of which they were to enter the king’s personal service.”**<sup>16</sup> These verses mark quite a twist in our story. A number of deported Hebrews are hand selected to move from the prison to the palace. Instead of rotting away as slaves, an elite group of teens are awarded a full-ride scholarship (room and board) for the best education available in the ancient world. Upon graduation they are guaranteed a career in the government of the world’s greatest superpower. Daniel and three other teens would have the opportunity to study Babylonian philosophy, religion, magic, astrology, science, and medicine. At the end of three years, they would be able to earn the prestigious B.A.—“Babylonia of Arts” degree. This is an unprecedented opportunity for some of Israel’s elite young people. This is an opportunity that no young person would want to turn down.

A natural question is: Why does Nebuchadnezzar recruit the elite Hebrews to serve him? Answer: He is after the best of the best because he has an agenda. He wants to save himself some grief and at the same time develop some influential and powerful men. King Nebe is smart and he is a student of history. In Exodus, Pharaoh’s plan was to persecute God’s people. He was ruthless and put them through hard labor. He broke their back as slaves. It was a terrible attack on God’s people, but all that happened was that they multiplied and became stronger! Nebe recognizes that persecution doesn’t work. He realizes that the best way to subdue these Hebrews is not to persecute them, but to prosper them. His strategy is to welcome them and absorb them into the Babylonian culture. He opens doors of opportunity for them and places them on the fast track to Babylonian success. He is convinced that they will find it so intoxicating that they will quickly forget all about their Hebrew worldview and commitment to God.<sup>17</sup>

This story speaks powerfully to the church in America today. Over the years, God has used America to send billions of dollars to countries in need. America has sent countless missionaries to the outermost parts of the world. America has been a friend to Israel. Consequently, Satan is irate over some of the good work that God has allowed us to do. So what does he do? He attacks us, not with persecution, but with prosperity. The strategy is very simple. Intoxicate God’s people with the things of this world. Gradually erode their distinctive practices and values, and it will not be long before they are so assimilated into the culture that their distinctive calling to live for God’s glory is simply overwhelmed. Satan’s game plan has worked magnificently, and we’ve become an anemic and lethargic people. In fact, some believers who might be heroes under the persecution of Egypt are unable to resist the seductions of Babylon. Therefore, since we recognize the grave dangers of prosperity, we must diligently strive to practice the discipline of contentment. We must also “consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near” (Heb 10:24–25).

Back in Babylon four Hebrew teens come to the forefront (1:6).<sup>18</sup> Their names and the meanings of their names are as follows: Daniel (“God is my Judge”), Hananiah (“The Lord is gracious”), Mishael (“Who is like the Lord?”), and Azariah (“The Lord has helped”). The original Hebrew names tell us that these four teenagers must have been raised in godly homes by parents who raised their children to serve the true God. We don’t really know anything about Daniel’s parents, but they gave him a great name. It was as if his parents said, “You will not always have to give an account to us. But one day you will have to give an account to God. He is watching over you always. He knows what you think, and He sees all you do. He alone is your judge, so watch your life closely.”<sup>19</sup>

I believe it is rather likely that these young men turned out to be men of character and devotion to God because of the influence of the parents. We must never underestimate our role as parents and/or grandparents. We must seek to invest our time, energy, and spiritual maturity into our kids. The Psalmist likens our children to “arrows in the hand of a warrior” (Ps 127:4). This verse serves to remind us that we have about eighteen or twenty years to shape and mold our children, then we must shoot them out of our home. What are you doing right now to spiritually prepare your children to survive persecution or prosperity? How are you helping them to walk with God? If you’re not doing much, don’t beat yourself up. Simply take a single baby step today. If you haven’t been training with your children, make a commitment to pray with your children or teens three nights a week. If you haven’t been reading the Bible to your children or teens, ask their forgiveness and then invite them to read God’s Word with you at least once a week. A simple desire and determination to spiritually impact your children and grandchildren can make the difference in whether or not a walk with God.

In 1:7, there is another turn of events. Daniel writes, “**Then the commander of the officials assigned new names to them; and to Daniel he assigned the name Belteshazzar, to Hananiah Shadrach, to Mishael Meshach and to Azariah Abed-nego.**” There is disagreement on the meaning of these names, but what is certain is that these young men are now being identified with the gods of Babylon. Ashpenaz is attempting to “Babylonize” these teenagers. By putting them in another place, filling their minds with Babylonian teaching, and calling them by another name, he was attempting to erode the roots of their distinctive faith in God. At the end of three years at Babylon University, they would emerge with flying colors and a thoroughly Babylonian worldview. They would still be Jews, of course, but they would think, act, and respond exactly like the Babylonians.<sup>20</sup>

**Act 3: The test of faith (1:8–16).**<sup>21</sup> Verse 8 is the key verse of this chapter: “**But Daniel made up his mind<sup>22</sup> that he would not defile himself with the king’s choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself.**” Verse 8 begins with the phrase “But Daniel” (cf. 1:11). Daniel is a man of action who is willing to go against the grain. Yet, it is interesting that Daniel didn’t take a stand prior to this moment, even though he had to take Babylonian classes<sup>23</sup> and receive a pagan name. Why didn’t he stand his ground and put up a fight over his Babylonian education or name change? In the Old Testament there is no prohibition against taking classes from pagans on the occult. A believer is free to learn what other people have to teach. Moses and Joseph were both schooled in pagan cultures. There is also no biblical prohibition against being given a pagan name; you just can’t worship a pagan deity. Joseph’s name was changed to reflect an Egyptian god and it didn’t seem to bother him, either. But here in 1:8 the word “defile” (*gaal*) describes self corruption or impurity that comes from “any breach of moral or ceremonial law.”<sup>24</sup> To defile yourself is to break a law that you know is wrong. It appears, therefore, that to eat the food of the king would have somehow been unlawful for Daniel. Perhaps the food wasn’t kosher. In the Old Testament, there were dietary laws that forbade Jews from eating foods that were unclean or improperly prepared.<sup>25</sup> In addition, the king’s food was likely taken from animals sacrificed to Babylonian gods, and the wine was probably dedicated to Babylonian gods. To eat and drink this food and wine would therefore be a violation of the law.<sup>26</sup> To eat and drink the items dedicated to these gods was to acknowledge their deity. But I think there is an additional insight worth noting. Daniel repeatedly states that the food and wine are from the king (1:5, 8, 13, 15, 16).<sup>27</sup> To eat from the king’s table meant a pledge of loyalty to the king instead of remaining loyal and dependent upon God. Nebuchadnezzar has just defiled the Temple in Jerusalem and plundered its utensils. How can Daniel give total allegiance to him?<sup>28</sup> By refusing to eat the king’s choice food, the young men are acknowledging God as the Creator and Sustainer worthy of all praise and glory.<sup>29</sup> Ultimately, God’s glory is what’s really important. This is a truth that you can “go to the wall” for because God’s Word clearly articulates it. Sadly, Christians frequently argue over the things which God hasn’t spoken about, while allowing the things He has spoken about to slip under the rug.<sup>30</sup> Where God said no, Daniel said no. We need to have this same philosophy.

Saying no must not have been easy for Daniel. Daniel could have thought, “Wait a minute, I’m just a kid.”<sup>31</sup> Why should I be expected to turn down the good life? Or he could have said, “Look at all of those other fellows. Why should just four of us be denied the king’s meat and wine? After all, everybody else is living it up!” Daniel could have said, “I’m away from home, and Mom and Dad will never know.” He might have thought, “If I don’t eat the food and drink the wine, I will lose an opportunity to witness. How can we witness to people if we offend them?” Daniel could have said, “If we disobey the king, it may cost us our lives. Surely in God’s value system the preservation of human life is of greater consequence than obedience to Him. Furthermore, if we refuse to eat the king’s food, it may cost the life of the official who is responsible to see that we eat. Would not love dictate that we eat the food in order to preserve the official’s life? Does not love overrule obedience to a divine command?” He could have even said, “God is to blame for this. If He had not put us in this awful predicament, it would not have been necessary for us to break His law.” Here’s the best excuse of all. Daniel could have reasoned, “Now, Lord, I know this isn’t exactly right, and I probably shouldn’t do it, but I really want a place of leadership in the kingdom, and I know You could really use me if I were Your representative to Nebuchadnezzar.”<sup>32</sup>

It is worth noting that the phrase “made up his mind” is an expression of thoughtfully regarding or paying attention to something.<sup>33</sup> Daniel made up his mind in advance before challenging circumstances presented themselves. The backseat of a car is not the best place to be wondering what the Bible has to say about sexual purity. A party is not the best place to be wondering what the Bible has to say about drunkenness. A third date is not the best time to be wondering about what the Bible has to say about finding the right mate. At the final exam is not the best time to be wondering what the Bible says about integrity. Daniel made up his mind beforehand, and so should we.

Although Daniel is courageous and stands his ground, he does so graciously. He even seeks permission from the commander of the officials (1:8b). Daniel approaches the commander with a respect for authority. He acts wisely and went through the proper channels, never treating those over him with contempt.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, we need to possess confidence and courtesy. We need to be grounded, but we also need to be gracious. In 1:9–10, Daniel and Ashpenaz discuss the dilemma over Daniel’s convictions: **“Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion<sup>35</sup> in the sight of the commander of the officials, and the commander of the officials said to Daniel, ‘I am afraid of my lord the king, who has appointed your food and your drink; for why should he see your faces looking more haggard than the youths who are your own age? Then you would make me forfeit my head to the king.’”** At times God does grant favor and compassion in the sight of unbelievers. Proverbs 16:7 says: “When a man’s ways are pleasing to the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.” But we need to bear in mind that this not a guarantee. Some believers are persecuted and eventually put to death. In either case, Ashpenaz is kind toward Daniel. However, he also fears for his life and is uncomfortable with Daniel opting out of the king’s diet.

Fortunately, Daniel is a man of resilience. After Ashpenaz says “no,” Daniel goes to his direct overseer. **“But Daniel said to the overseer whom the commander of the officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, ‘Please test your servants for ten days, and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then let our appearance be observed in your presence and the appearance of the youths who are eating the king’s choice food; and deal with your servants according to what you see’”** (1:11–13). Daniel provides an alternative. He doesn’t just roll over and play dead; he proposes a reasonable test to be carried out over a ten day period. We should learn a lesson from Daniel. Tomorrow if your boss asks you to do something unethical it is probably not wise to respond, “You dirty rotten scoundrel, I’m a Christian man/woman and I don’t behave that way. You’re going to have to give an account for that one day before the God of the universe!” I don’t think that would go over too terribly well. But if you respond with: “Honestly, I’m not really comfortable with your suggestion. Would you consider another alternative? I care about you and don’t want either of us to be compromised in any way.” Obviously, your boss may not take this well either, but at least it is gracious and courteous.

Back in 1:14–16, Daniel writes: **“So he [the overseer] listened to them in this matter and tested them for ten days. At the end of ten days their appearance seemed better and they were fatter [this is a good thing in this context] than all the youths who had been eating the king’s choice food. So the overseer continued to withhold their choice food and the wine they were to drink, and kept giving them vegetables.”** I don’t like vegetables, so I can’t imagine enduring the Daniel Diet.<sup>36</sup> The fact that these four young men survived this diet of vegetables for ten days (without meat) is a greater miracle than Daniel surviving the lion’s den! The incredible results that the four teens experienced became evident in the amazingly short span of a week and a half. This certainly is not a testimony of a superior diet, but to God’s divine intervention.<sup>37</sup> The results ended up being a win-win situation for both Daniel and the overseer. Daniel and the boys were able to please God and the overseer was able to please his king, and most likely eat (or sell) the portions of food that Daniel and the guys didn’t touch. Like Hannibal on the A-Team used to say, “I love it when a plan comes together.”

**Act 4: The final exam and graduation (1:17–21).** Amazingly, there is a happy ending to this account: the young men thrive. In 1:17–20, Daniel records these words: **“As for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every *branch of* literature and wisdom; Daniel even understood all *kinds of* visions and dreams. Then at the end of the days which the king had specified for presenting them, the commander of the officials presented them before Nebuchadnezzar. The king talked with them, and out of them all not one was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king’s personal service. As for every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and conjurers who were in all his realm.”** Verse 20 provides quite a statement: King Nebe found the young men ten times better than everyone else. Verse 17 clearly indicates that “God gave” the four teens success. Although this is an unusual and miraculous biblical story, I don’t see why Christian teens can’t have the best minds, hearts, spirits, and bodies. God doesn’t ever guarantee this kind of favor, but He certainly promises blessing for obedience. The blessing will either come in this life or in the life to come (cf. 12:3).<sup>38</sup> Teenager, God wants to bless your life. You may not see the rewards for obedience immediately, but in time, you will see God’s blessing rest upon you. Your obedience and zeal for Christ not only pleases God, but it is also a tremendous blessing to your church. Churches need teens that are zealous and on-fire for Christ. God can use your single life to transform your entire church.

Our passage closes in 1:21 with an astounding statement: **“And Daniel continued until the first year of Cyrus the king.”** The first year of Cyrus was approximately 539 BC.<sup>39</sup> Daniel would have been over eighty years old. Daniel lived through the remainder of the Babylonian empire and on into the Persian empire. From his youth up he was in the court of a culture that was utterly pagan. And yet he is one of three men in the Old Testament about whom we have no report of wrongdoing.<sup>40</sup> Later in ch. 6, Daniel’s enemies try to find a weak link in his character so that they could expose him in the *Babylon Inquirer*, but they are unsuccessful (6:4–5).<sup>41</sup> The man is squeaky clean! And he did this in a government job! Now that’s impressive. Think of all the infighting that goes on in high government circles. Think of all the attempts made by Daniel’s jealous peers to sabotage his position. Think of the various changes of administration. Yet through it all, Daniel remained on top.<sup>42</sup>

Like Daniel, you can persevere in your faith. You can live in victory! You can be faithful to God. You have everything pertaining to life and godliness (2 Pet 1:4). If you rely upon God, He will give you the courage to honor Him. The key is: *View your adversities as adventures.* Chapter 1 is filled with various adversities. In the first two verses God’s people are experiencing persecution as they are deported and taken into captivity. Immediately thereafter, God’s people experience prosperity in the pagan land, which is another form of adversity. This is quickly followed up with an ethical test and potential consequences for disobedience. Adversity abounds! Yet, all of these episodes were adventurous. Today, will you *view your adversities as adventures?* Your perspective will make all the difference.

### Scripture References

Daniel 1:1–21  
Proverbs 16:7  
Matthew 5:13–16  
1 Corinthians 10:14; 15:58  
Colossians 4:5–6  
Titus 3:1–8  
1 Peter 2:12; 3:15–16

### Study Questions

1. If I had been in Daniel's sandals, how would I have responded to being deported (Daniel 1:1–2)? How would I feel about God in the midst of such a crisis? In *The Problem of Pain*, C.S. Lewis writes: "Pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, and shouts in our pain. It is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world." In what ways have I experienced the truth of these words in my personal life?
2. When have I been in a situation similar to the one Daniel experienced in Dan 1:3–7? Did I seek to counter wickedness with a godly alternative (Daniel 1:8–13)? What was the result? Booker T. Washington (1856–1915) said, "A measure of a man's success is not what he achieves, but what he overcomes." How have I overcome adverse circumstances in my life? Read John 16:33 and Romans 5:3–5.
3. How can I effectively influence my culture with grace and truth (Daniel 1:8, 12; cf. John 1:14)? Do my boss, coworkers, and neighbors consider me a gracious person? Why or why not? Since the cross is already offensive (1 Corinthians 1:23), how can I speak and act in a less offensive manner? Read Colossians 4:2–6. What person(s) in my life needs to experience the love and compassion of Christ?
4. How have I prepared my children to stand strong in this "crooked and perverse generation?" Read Philippians 2:14–16. Am I sharing with my children what I am learning in God's Word? Do I read the Scriptures to my children? Do I ask my children if they are studying God's Word on their own? How am I deliberately seeking to "transfer truth to the next generation?"
5. How does God exhibit His sovereignty throughout Daniel 1? What impresses me the most about God in this chapter? In what ways does God's sovereignty in this account help me to trust Him in a deeper and fuller way? When have I sensed God's sovereign control over the circumstances of my life? When have I felt like He wasn't even present? What biblical truths related to God's sovereignty do I need to meditate on this week?

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, Daniel is mentioned very infrequently throughout Scripture. Outside of the book that bears his name, Daniel is mentioned in Ezek 14:14, 20 as a man of righteousness. He is named there with Job and Noah—truly a select crowd. He is also mentioned in Ezek 28:3 as a man of wisdom. He is mentioned just once in the NT (Matt 24:15), where Jesus refers to the abomination of desolation (Dan 11:31). There is an allusion to Daniel in Heb 11:33: “who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed *acts of* righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions,” referring to Daniel’s experience recorded in Dan 6.

<sup>2</sup> The two great books of prophecy in Scripture are Daniel and Revelation. What most people don’t recognize is that the prophecy in the book of Daniel focuses primarily on the Gentiles whereas the nation of Israel is the central subject of the prophecy in Revelation.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Macfarlane in a sermon (Nov. 10, 1992) *Christianity Today*, Vol. 37, no. 2.

<sup>4</sup> These points are from Ray Pritchard, “The Four Freshmen: How the World Tries to Seduce the Church” (Dan 1:1–7): [www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/1999-11-07-The-Four-Freshmen-How-the-World-Tries-to-Seducethe-Church](http://www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/1999-11-07-The-Four-Freshmen-How-the-World-Tries-to-Seducethe-Church).

<sup>5</sup> Daniel lived approximately 400 years after David and 600 years before Jesus. The book covers the period 605 BC to about 530 BC.

<sup>6</sup> This disaster has been detailed already in 2 Kgs 24:1–4; Jer 25:1–14; 27:19–22; 36:1–3; and 45:1–5. Each reference to the invasion indicates that Israel’s sin caused the defeat. See Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998), 499. We know from history that eventually Nebuchadnezzar had his way and overran the city’s defenses. From that day onward the temple, the city, all the things that mattered most, fell into the hands of the pagans. The first of Israel’s recorded deportation is found in Daniel 1. A second one followed in 597 BC, and in 586 BC the Babylonians attacked again, this time utterly destroying Solomon’s Temple, leaving the city in ruins and the walls torn down.

<sup>7</sup> “The Lord gave” or a similar expression is repeated in Dan 1:9 and 17.

<sup>8</sup> HALOT s.v. *natan* 1.

<sup>9</sup> See Lev 26; Deut 27–30.

<sup>10</sup> A century before the fall of Jerusalem, the prophet Isaiah had proclaimed this message (Isa 13; 21; and 39), and Micah, his contemporary, shared the burden (Mic 4:10). The prophet Habakkuk couldn’t understand how Yahweh could use the godless Babylonians to chasten His own people (Hab 1), and Jeremiah lived to see these prophecies, plus his own prophecies, all come true (Jer 20; 25; 27).

<sup>11</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Resolute* (Wheaton: Victor, 2000), Electronic ed.

<sup>12</sup> The same God who raised up the Babylonians to defeat Judah later raised up the Medes and Persians to conquer Babylon. The Lord also ordained that a pagan ruler decree that the Jews could return to their land and rebuild their temple.

<sup>13</sup> HALOT s.v. *adonai* B.

<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, in the Hebrew text, Daniel prefixes the article (“the”) to the title “Lord.” This is a deliberate device that occurs throughout the book. It indicates that Daniel’s God is not just one among the many in the Babylonian pantheon; but that He is the one true God.

<sup>15</sup> Bryan Chapell, *Standing Your Ground: A Call to Courage in An Age of Compromise* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 21.

<sup>16</sup> What occurs here in Daniel 1 is a fulfillment of Isa 39:7: “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.”

<sup>17</sup> Smith, *Unlocking the Bible Story*, 188–89.

<sup>18</sup> Apparently, the other young men of Judah’s royalty and nobility didn’t remain loyal to the Lord. This should come as no surprise. The attraction of the world was strong in Babylon, especially to young men. Harry Bultmea, *Commentary on Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1988), 39.

<sup>19</sup> Rodney Stortz, *Daniel: The Triumph of God’s Kingdom*. Preaching the Word Commentary Series (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004), 21.

<sup>20</sup> Colin S. Smith, *Unlocking the Bible Story* (Chicago: Moody, 2002), 188.

<sup>21</sup> Daniel and his trio of friends were willing to obey God in a difficult season of their lives. It would have been easy to be bitter toward God for being exiled. Bitterness toward God makes it easy to disobey when the going gets tough.

<sup>22</sup> A wordplay is found in Dan 1:7 and 8, both of which begin with the same word in Hebrew (*sum*). Both Ashpenaz and Daniel are determined.

<sup>23</sup> The Babylonians had their own accounts of important biblical events. The Enuma Elish replaced the account of Creation, the Edapamin was the Babylonian version of the fall of man, and the Gilgamesh Epic was the story of the Flood. All of this literature are not only extolled Babylonian deities, but portrayed a pagan view of life and ethics.

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<sup>24</sup> TWOT s.v. *gaal*.

<sup>25</sup> Gleason L. Archer, Jr., "Daniel," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), Electronic ed.

<sup>26</sup> See Exod 34:14–15; Num 25:1–2; Deut 32:37–38.

<sup>27</sup> C.L. Seow, *Daniel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 26.

<sup>28</sup> Ernest C. Lucas, *Daniel*. Apollos Old Testament Commentary (Downers Grove: InterVarsity; Leicester: UK: Apollos, 2002), 54.

<sup>29</sup> Tremper Longman III, *Daniel*. The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 53.

<sup>30</sup> David Jeremiah, *The Handwriting on the Wall: Secrets from the Prophecies of Daniel* (Dallas: Word, 1992), 32.

<sup>31</sup> Daniel is about fifteen years old. Paul Benware, *Daniel's Prophecy of Things to Come* (Clifton, TX: Scofield Ministries, 2007), 13.

<sup>32</sup> See Renald E. Showers, *The Most High God: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Bellmawr, NJ: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, 1982), 6; John Phillips and Jerry Vines, *Exploring the Book of Daniel: An Expository Commentary* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1990), 28; Jeremiah, *The Handwriting on the Wall*, 31–32.

<sup>33</sup> HALOT s.v.

<sup>34</sup> Charles R. Swindoll, *Daniel: God's Pattern for the Future* (Fullerton, CA: Insight for Living, 1986), 16.

<sup>35</sup> The expression "loyal love and compassion" is a hendiadys; the two words combine to express one idea. See NET Study Notes: [www.net.bible.org/bible.php](http://www.net.bible.org/bible.php).

<sup>36</sup> Vegetarians are undoubtedly cheering at this point. However, it wasn't the food that did it for the Hebrew boys; it was their resolve to do what was right.

<sup>37</sup> See also Benware, *Daniel's Prophecy of Things to Come*, 43.

<sup>38</sup> Lucas, *Daniel*, 59 sees this point as well.

<sup>39</sup> Longman III, *Daniel*, 42.

<sup>40</sup> The other two are Joseph and Jonathan.

<sup>41</sup> Jeremiah, *The Handwriting on the Wall*, 42.

<sup>42</sup> Phillips and Vines, *Exploring the Book of Daniel*, 34.