

Daniel and His Test (Part 1)

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[0 : 00] Amen. Make our way.

You know, there's a good portion of Daniel's prophecy that is yet to be fulfilled, and we'll get to that part, hopefully, before it is fulfilled. But if not, that's okay, too, isn't it?

All right. It's great to see. All right, let me go ahead and, even though we're going to be in this portion of it for, oh, probably, well, I'll probably be able to finish it up next Wednesday.

I want to go ahead and read chapter 1, starting with verse 8, and all the way to the end of that chapter. So we've got to get the whole thing in our minds, and then we'll start to make our way through it.

Starting with verse 8 of chapter 1, I like the way it's translated in New King James.

[1 : 27] The New American Standard just says food. Delicacy sounds a whole lot better, doesn't it? Nor with the wine which he drank. Therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

Now God had brought Daniel into the favor and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs. 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 said to the steward, whom the chief of the eunuchs had said over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink.

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 he consented with them in this matter and tested them ten days. And at the end of ten days their features appeared better and fatter. I guess it's okay to look a little fatter.

[2 : 42] Fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king's delicacies. Thus the steward took away their portion of delicacies and wine that they were to drink and gave them vegetables.

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

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. Then the king interviewed them, and among them all, none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

Therefore they served before the king. 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 his realm.

Thus Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus. All right, so again, we're not going to get all the way through that passage or that text tonight.

[3 : 49] I think we'll be able to finish it next week. But if you remember, since we started our study, that we looked at the first seven verses of chapter one, kind of using it as an introduction, kind of giving an introduction, but also kind of using the first seven verses to help us to introduce ourselves to the book of Daniel, really to Daniel himself.

because I did so under the heading of Daniel and his times, his times. And so we talked about the captivity and the captives and how all that came about and so forth.

Kind of as an introduction to the book. Tonight, we want to look, as I have started to read and did read, started with verse eight and following, under this heading, Daniel and his test.

Daniel and his test. And there's a test mentioned here. And so I use the word test, really I'm borrowing the word from the text itself, because the word appears there.

But I use it really in kind of a title for this, our study of this portion of the book, to convey two things. First of all, God's testing of Daniel's faith.

[4 : 59] That's number one. Even though it's kind of behind the scenes here. This is at work. God is at work behind the scenes as really God is proving and preparing his prophet, Daniel.

And so test is an appropriate word here to describe what God is up to, what God is working in Daniel's life. God is testing Daniel's faith in his word, you see, in the trustworthiness and validity of the word of God.

He's testing Daniel with this. In a sense, he is leading Daniel to prove, to prove that God's word is true. And that's what we see here in this part of the story.

So God is testing Daniel's faith in his word, but also testing Daniel's faith in him, in God himself. And God does that quite often in our lives, not testing us in the sense of tempting us, but testing us in the sense of proving, proving us, proving our faith, improving the substance of our faith.

Second, Daniel's testing of himself. That's really what we have here in this passage. Daniel's testing of himself. Again, verse 11.

[6 : 22] So Daniel said to the steward, whom the chief of the eunuchs had sent over, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, you know, their names have been changed, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, remember. These are their Hebrew names are mentioned here.

And this is what he said to the steward. Please test your servants. All right, so this is a kind of a self-imposed test, isn't it? Daniel is testing himself.

And so it's not Nebuchadnezzar's test for Daniel. This is not Ashpenaz's test. Who was Ashpenaz? He's the chief of the eunuchs.

And this was not Ashpenaz's steward test. See, you have Nebuchadnezzar and then they have the chief or the master of the eunuchs.

He's in charge of this larger body of young men that have been taken into captivity and brought into the king's castle. And then below him, you have his steward that is over several of these men, actually specifically for them, Daniel and his friends.

[7 : 32] But it's not his test either. This is Daniel's test, right? He's the one suggesting it. He says, please test your servants. But what was the object of his test?

That's what we need to understand here. It was a test, really when you kind of get down to the kind of the real substance of the test, it was a test of Daniel's faith in Yahweh.

Or really, not his practical faith, you know, his faithfulness to God, but a test of the faith, his faith, the substance of Daniel's faith in Yahweh.

Is Yahweh the one true God? That's the test. Is Yahweh's word true? See, this is the substance of Daniel's faith.

Is Yahweh the one and only God? And is his word true? And are Yahweh's laws binding? That's what this test is all about. And we could even add to that, are Yahweh's promises of blessing for those who obey God's laws, are those promises valid?

[8 : 44] Are they valid? Can we count on them? Can we believe in those promises? Basically, believing the promise God gave Israel, way back there in Deuteronomy chapter 28, verses 1 through 14.

I don't think I put that passage in there, but let me read it to you. It's kind of a lengthy passage, but I want you to see, this is what Daniel is testing. Not that he needs to be convinced of this, he believes this.

But he is giving an opportunity for a test to be conducted that would prove the trustworthiness of God and his word. And so the promise that is given in Deuteronomy 28, verses 1 through 14, we could sum it up under these words, obedience brings blessing.

And here's what it says, Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all his commandments, which I command you today, that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth.

This is a promise given to Israel. If they would just obey his word. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of your God, all these blessings that follow here.

[9 : 59] Blessed shall you be in the city and blessed shall you be in the country. Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle, the offspring of your flocks.

Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Blessed shall you be when you come in. Blessed shall you be when you go out. The Lord will cause your enemies. And we just go on with the text. These are the blessings that God is promising to Israel if they will do what? Obey his word and trust it. And God says obedience brings blessing. And this is what Daniel believed. So I think we see here that Daniel believed this. God's promise concerning obedience to his laws for Israel. But Daniel wants to prove it to be true. Not just for himself, not to himself, but for the Babylonians. [10:59] He wants to show them that God's word is true and that obedience to his laws will bring blessing and we're going to prove it to him. So test me. Test me in this.

And, you know, thinking about that, you know, do we trust the promises of God that much? Do we really? I want you to think about this.

This is what, what was Daniel doing? He is believing that if he will follow the laws that God has given to him and to all the Hebrews concerning food laws and such, that his life will be blessed. He's believing that and he wants to prove that to the Babylonians. That God's word is trustworthy. That we would put them, now think about it, could we believe in that same way that we would put God's word to the test, not to convince ourselves, but to prove it true to the world around us. You know, I'm not so sure that we believe God's word like we should, that we can stick our necks out there. So God will bless if I will live according to his word. This is what Daniel's doing.

[12:10] All right, so now getting to the text, first thing we want to see in this passage is Daniel's heart. Daniel's heart. And basically, verse 8, though some other passages will come into play as we work our way through this.

But what does verse 8 say? The first kind of two, first two parts of it. It says, but Daniel purposed, there's this, this very significant thing he said. It says, 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.

Now most of us reading that, we think, well, what's the big deal about, you know, the king's food and the king's wine? Well, we're going to, we're going to find that out here in a minute.

But the point we want to really key in on here, the idea is Daniel's purposing in his heart. Daniel's heart. See, it all began with a decision that Daniel made, that he made in his heart.

Even before all of these other things are transpiring, Daniel made a decision in his heart. Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself.

[13:28] That is, he would not disobey God's word and defile himself with principles and rules and activity that would defile him according to God's word.

He purposed in his heart. He made a decision about that in his heart. Now, you know, Daniel, very, very young at this point. If you remember, as we were, I was introducing the book, Daniel very likely was in his early teens.

And all of these young men were. Preteen, early teens, young men that were taken into captivity.

So Daniel's very young. And when you think about it, most of the really significant decisions that we make in life are made when we're young.

I know we continue to make decisions as adults. I'm talking about the really significant ones, kind of the life-shaping ones are made when we're young.

You can take, for example, decisions about friends. Quite often, lifetime friends have been made early in life. And they continue to be lifelong friends.

[14:43] I'm just talking about the, you know, in the overall kind of view of things. A lot of those decisions are made when we're young. Or how about education? You know, as well, when I was young, I didn't really think about going to college.

I'm talking about even decisions made concerning how well you would do in school. Grade school, high school. Decisions then that would have an effect on whether or not you would even go to college.

And if you did, what kind of student you would be. And then what kind of degree you would seek.

Those decisions are made pretty much early in life. Decisions about where you're going to live.

You know, in a region of the country. Now, I know, you know, obviously there, some of those decisions are made for us, you know, depending on our vocation. But let's just talk about decisions about vocation.

That will be, in some cases, lifelong. If not working for the same company, at least working in the same kind of field. Those decisions are quite often made early, early in life.

[15 : 53] Decisions about marriage partner. Usually pretty early in life. So, most of these decisions we make early in life, and so our life's destiny is often set by those decisions made early in life.

Someone has said that what we are today is the result of decisions we have made in the past. For good or bad. We know this to be true. This person also said what we will be tomorrow will be determined by the decisions we make today.

Now, that's not just simply age relative. I mean, you know, when we're young, but all throughout our lives. Decisions shape our lives for good or for bad, but the most significant decisions, most of them, for good or bad, are made early in life.

And they are made in the heart. And that's really the key here. What's made in the heart. Now, notice how this is revealed in Daniel.

First of all, Daniel made a purposeful heart decision. He made a purposeful heart decision. Now, think about it.

[17 : 05] Daniel found himself in a crisis in life. I mean, early in his life. As a young teenager, his life in a crisis, he was literally torn away from his home, torn away from his family, his country, even his name, his identity was changed.

He's very young, inexperienced, immature, though when we look at Daniel's life as it's described here, we could hardly use immature as a word to describe it.

And yet, obviously, at some level, he hasn't lived very long. And so, he still has a lot to learn. This is a time of crisis for him. And all he had ever known in his young life had suddenly been taken away.

Suddenly, dramatically, abruptly. And he's carried off to a foreign land and a pagan culture, one that is determined to reorient his life and his thinking and his values.

And it sounds very much like going to college, doesn't it? You know, a young person leaves the house and goes to the university. It's very much the same way.

[18 : 21] You know, you enter into a foreign land and a pagan culture is determined to change your whole orientation of thinking. And sometimes they succeed in that with our young people. And that's very sad.

But, to Daniel's credit, he made a purposeful heart decision, didn't he? He would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies.

Now, a couple of things, points of explanation are needed there. First of all, the very phrase, purposed in his heart, by the way, it's just one word in the Hebrew text.

Purpose in his heart, it literally means Daniel laid it upon his heart. He laid it on his heart. All real and firm decisions are heart decisions, not head decisions, because the head can change.

But, we're talking about the heart, those settled things that we decide upon. That's where conviction takes place, and these things shape our life, for good or bad.

[19 : 21] Second of all, the phrase, the king's delicacies, is simply a reference to the king's choice food. In fact, that's the way it's translated in the New American Standard. But, what's so bad about that?

I mean, isn't food just food? I mean, think about it. Well, not according to the Mosaic Law. Now, remember, I'm not talking about laws that apply to us today. We're talking about laws that were given specifically to Israel.

We can debate all night if we want to about whether some of those apply, and books have been written about the diet laws and such, and there's some wisdom in those, but we're not bound by these laws that were given to Israel.

But, Daniel was bound by them, and he's going to honor them and obey them. Nebuchadnezzar, his choice foods and wines would have defiled these young men in a number of ways.

Many of the foods eaten by the Babylonians would have been unclean according to God's law, law for Israel, and the food laws in Leviticus 11 and also Deuteronomy 14.

[20 : 24] It would be unclean either because of their preparation. You know, the blood would not be drained from the meat, and that was the strict law that the blood must come out of the meat or the type of food, whether it be pork or some other unclean animal according to the Mosaic law.

Also, in the pagan culture of the Babylonians, a portion of the meats that they would eat would have been offered to idols. They're pagan idols. And the wines also, the very same wine that would be the king's choice wine that he would want these young men to drink, would have been used in their

drunken pagan rituals and worship as part of their worship.

And so here's the bottom line I think we need to understand for Daniel, and that is partaking of the foods and wines of the Babylonians would have been an indirect participation in the worship of their false gods.

And so Daniel purposed in his heart not to defile himself. And so this also tells us a lot about his character. Daniel's godly character is revealed here.

The Bible says in Proverbs 4.23, Keep your heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life. That applies to us today.

[21 : 53] Keep your heart. Guard your heart with all diligence. It's out of the heart that come the issues of life. It reminds me actually of something the Bible said about another young man in Israel's history.

His name was Moses. Moses, and you know the story of Moses and how he was born and went into Pharaoh's household. Hebrews chapter 11 verse 24 tells us that by faith Moses when he became of age refused.

He refused something. He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin.

Can you imagine what was accessible to Moses inside Pharaoh's household and palace? Some very positive things certainly education and so forth.

I think Moses probably was one of the most educated men in all of Israel's history. Probably could read and spoke many different languages of the day. He was highly educated. But also think of the opportunity for sin that was available the pleasures of sin and he refused those things early in his life.

[23 : 13] He esteemed or he put great value on being reproached the reproach of Christ. He esteemed those things as greater riches than all the treasures in Egypt.

See here's what we learn from Daniel but also Moses. Like Moses and like Daniel we need to be refusing some things and choosing. Refusing and choosing.

Refusing sin and the pleasures of sin and even the temporal rewards of sin and there are rewards in this life sometimes for sin.

Crime does pay sometimes. But refusing the pleasures of sin and choosing rather some refusing and choosing choosing rather Christ and obedience to God's word.

Alright so a purposeful heart decision. Next a personal heart decision. And this is important to note a couple of things. Daniel's decision was individual.

[24 : 16] First of all individual decision. Verse 8 says but Daniel purposed in his heart. His heart. No one made this decision for him.

He had to make it and he made it individually. No one outside of himself made him accountable to it except of course God. which by the way is the true test of a godly character.

I mean when no one's looking when no one is forcing you when it's all up to you to go the right way make the right decisions to purpose in your heart this was individual something that he personally decided in his heart.

And then second to that Daniel's decision was invincible. It was invincible it could not be conquered here is this young man again early teenage years very likely and yet Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself regardless of peer pressure.

You think he had peer pressure? I think he certainly did. He certainly did. Only four young men if you just kind of read between the lines here you really don't have to read between the lines you can get this from the text itself there are only four young men who are mentioned by name among the young Hebrew men who were taken captive by the Babylonians by Nebuchadnezzar taken captive brought into his palace only four men are mentioned by name right?

[25 : 48] But it seems clear from verses three and four and especially verse 15 in fact what does verse 15 say? Verse 15 says at the end of ten days their features appear better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king's delicacies so there were others there not just these four men that we have named in the text there may have been dozens of others one commentator said there may have been a hundred or more young men taken into captivity brought into Nebuchadnezzar's palace who'd be trained to be leaders within his kingdom again these were of noble birth and so forth and so I think it's safe to assume that Daniel and his three friends are mentioned because they were the only ones who stayed true committed to the word of God now can you imagine the peer pressure that must have tempted Daniel and his friends you know they're

probably living together eating together and I think there would have been a lot of peer pressure said what's the matter with you guys

I mean look we're enjoying this great food you know there would be a lot of peer pressure Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself regardless of peer pressure but also regardless of fear pressure now I don't know if you've thought about this but you know certainly the chief of the eunuchs thought about this about the danger of this decision Daniel could not have known what Nebuchadnezzar would do to him to his friends once he learned that they had refused to obey his orders he's king Nebuchadnezzar is king he's you know the sovereign malevolent sovereign and who could tell what he might do there would be some fear pressure here and something else Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself regardless of peer pressure fear pressure and get this one sneer pressure well you know I just slave to alliteration sneer pressure what do I mean by that well the

Babylonians they had no respect for God's word had no respect for Daniel's God and the Babylonians laughed at the law of God why it's ridiculous and they I'm sure mocked Daniel's God as well as Daniel's worship of God and so forth so sneer pressure so Daniel's decision was individual and invincible so Daniel that is Daniel's Daniel purposed inside of himself to obey God's word no matter what and no amount of pressure outside of himself was going to change that decision Daniel was quite a fellow quite a young man something that our young people today should learn alright so we're talking about Daniel's heart need to get this finished here purposeful heart decision personal heart decision and then one more persuasive heart decision in verse 8 of course only Daniel is mentioned here he's kind of standing alone he has purposed in his heart his own heart to obey God no matter what any of the other his other countrymen did whatever they do he's purposed in his own heart but when you get to verse 9 Daniel is not alone in this and so what started as a private conviction in his own heart quickly became a public observation this is something everyone could see and then ultimately it became a persuasive thing very persuasive thing a persuasive demonstration of the truth of God's word and so notice the progression here first Daniel persuaded Ashpenaz the chief of Nebuchadnezzar's eunuchs verse 9 God had brought Daniel into favor and good will with the chief of the eunuchs so his faith in the word of God has persuaded the chief of the eunuchs then Daniel persuaded

Nebuchadnezzar you say really did he yeah I think so verse 10 and the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel I fear my lord the king who has appointed your food and drank for why should he see your faces why should he see you looking worse than the young men who are your age then you would endanger my head before the king so what's he saying he said old Nebuchadnezzar is going to find out about this he's going to look at you going to see your face he's going to see and here's the idea he's going to see whether or not your God's law is true and what God has promised in your word is going to come to pass Nebuchadnezzar is going to see that and that he did verse 18 if you skip on ahead now at the end of the days the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar then the king interviewed them and he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm I think Nebuchadnezzar is convinced so Daniel persuaded [31 : 23] Ashpenaz he persuaded Nebuchadnezzar Daniel persuaded his own friends verse 11 so Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had said over Daniel Hananiah Mishael and Azariah please test your servants for ten days and let them give us vegetables to eat water to drink and then you skip to verse 15 and at the end of ten days their features appeared better and fatter and flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king's delicacies so it's not just Daniel but also his friends Shadrach Meshach and Abednego those are the names that we're familiar with the Babylonian names so he persuaded his friends and then he persuaded the Babylonian culture their way of thinking verse 16 thus the steward took away their there meaning not just Daniel and his friends but all the other men kind of back up to verse 15 to see that in its context so thus the steward took away all this diet and wine from all of the captives that they took out of Israel took away the portion of delicacies and the wine that they were to drink and gave them vegetables so their whole scheme changed see the persuasion of this one man

Daniel because he had purpose in his heart not to defile himself and that was persuasive at so many levels outside of him because what is he doing he is proving to them the trustworthiness of God's word and we should dare to do the same in our lives amen Thank you.