

**“DANIEL IN EXILE!”**  
(Text: Daniel 1:1-12:13)

- Since March, we’ve been in a series called THE STORY.
  - The unfolding story of God’s providential plan to have a relationship with all of mankind.
- We’ve been following the nation of Israel and we’ve seen how their rebellion against God brought severe consequences.
  - Their nation was divided into the NORTHERN and SOUTHERN kingdoms.
  - Because of the ungodly leadership of their kings, God delivered them into the hands of ASSYRIA and BABYLON.
    - ASSYRIA conquered Israel, the Northern kingdom.
    - BABYLON conquered Judah, the Southern kingdom.
- This morning we come to Chapter 18 of THE STORY and we come to the book of Daniel.
- Daniel was among the very first people taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar when Jerusalem was captured.

**READ: Daniel 1:1-7.**

- King Nebuchadnezzar ordered the chief of his court officials to bring to him some of the elite, young, Jewish men to be trained as future leaders for Babylon.
- The king laid out exactly what he was looking for. (**vs. 4**)
  - “Young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king’s palace.”

**Verse 6** gives us the names of four of those individuals: **Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael** and **Azariah**.

- They were to be trained in the language and literature of Babylon and were to be given new names.
  - Daniel was given the name BELTESHAZZAR. The others were given the names SHADRACH, MESHACH and ABEDNEGO.
- These four men were actually teenagers, torn away from their **families**, their **friends**, everything **familiar** to them along with whatever plans they’d had for the **future**.
  - Carried off to a foreign land and forced to conform to a pagan way of life.

**How can anything good come out of this?** Remember Who’s writing THE STORY. God specializes in impossible situations.

- You and I have a lot more in common with these 4 young men that you might think.

Three snapshots from Daniel give us a great picture of how we’re supposed to live.

**(1) AN UNUSUAL DIET (Daniel 1:1-21)**

- The king wanted them to eat and drink like he did. (“From the king’s table.”)
- Ever hear the phrase, “When in Rome do as the Romans do”?

- Well, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refused to do what the Babylonians did.
  - Why not? Who would've known?
  - Sure, it was against Jewish dietary laws and wouldn't have been kosher, but no one would've known. Besides, people would understand.
    - They were taken captive to a foreign land. They had to do it. They had no other choice.

### **We can rationalize almost anything and even feel good about it. Can't we?**

**Daniel 1:8.** "But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself in this way."

- In the law of Moses, certain foods were off limits for God's people.
  - Like pork, when it hasn't been preserved and prepared properly, can pose a health risk.
- But the king's chief official (Ashpenaz) was concerned for two reasons:
  - #1 - No one refuses anything from the king.
  - #2 - If Daniel looked worse than the other young men, because he was allowed to eat a different diet, the chief official would be held responsible.
- So Daniel proposed a TEN-DAY test. He and his friends would only eat vegetables and drink water.

**Here's how the test ended: Daniel 1:18-20.** The king found no one equal to them!

- God honors people who refuse to be defiled.
- Men and women who will take a stand even if it comes with a high price tag.
- THEIR STORY has a lot to do with YOUR STORY and MINE.

**1 Peter 1:1**, Peter begins by saying, "To God's elect, **strangers** in the world . . ."

**1 Peter 2:11-12**, "Dear friends, I urge you, as **aliens** and **strangers** in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us."

- Daniel and his three friends had a DIET that was different from the culture they lived in.
  - They **stood out** instead of **blending in**.

### **HOW ABOUT YOU?**

- Are you **jumping in**, **blending in**, and **fitting in**? Or are you **standing out** as a follower of **Christ**?
- Is your DIET the same as those who don't know the Lord? Not just the foods you eat and what you drink. But the things you do and the places you go.
- God is calling us to a higher standard – that we would be TEN TIMES better than our peers.
  - In our character and commitment to Christ.

### **AN UNUSUAL DIET . . .**

(2) **AN UNBELIEVABLE DEMAND (Daniel 3:1-30)**

- Daniel was the main character in Chapter One. Now, the story turns to his friends.
- King Nebuchadnezzar was a self-serving, arrogant, narcissistic egomaniac.

- He had his workers build a 90-foot tall/9 foot wide statue of himself.
  - The day came to dedicate the statue. (There may have been as many as 300,000 people there.)
  - Everyone had to come by order of the king.

**Verses 4-6.** A herald for the king told the people, “As soon as you hear the music, you must fall down and worship the image of gold that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. Whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.”

- As soon as the music began to play, the people bowed to the ground and began to worship this giant statue. (Remember: there were several hundred thousand people there.)

**Verses 8-12.** Some of the Babylonian wise men (astrologers, enchanters, magicians), who were peers of Daniel and his three friends made their way to the king and told him that **Shadrach, Meshach** and **Abednego** ignored the king’s directive.

- No doubt these were some of the same guys from Chapter 1, whom the king had said Daniel and his three friends were “TEN TIMES better than you are.”
  - **JEALOUSY** is probably the motive here.

**Verse 13.** The king was furious and had them brought before him.

- But because he liked them, he gave them another chance.

**Verses 16-18.** They answered the king, “We do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”

- **Wow! Talk about taking a stand!**

• Nebuchadnezzar’s attitude toward them (perhaps due to embarrassment) changed and he ordered the furnace heated **SEVEN TIMES HOTTER** than usual and commanded them to throw Shadrach, Meshach and **ABEDNEGO** into the fire.

- The fire was so hot it consumed the soldiers who threw the men in but not a single flame touched Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.
- In fact, when the King looked into the furnace, he asked, “Didn’t we throw three men tied up into that fire? Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods” (**vs. 24-25**).

**Who was that FOURTH MAN in the fire?**

- Many scholars believe it was a pre-incarnate manifestation of the Lord, Jesus Christ.
- When did God get in on all this? No one saw Him get in that fire.

**Daniel 3:17-18**, “the God we serve is able to deliver us . . . but even if he doesn’t, we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”

- I love that spirit, don’t you?
- That kind of radical, unshakable commitment to God.

- **THEIR STORY** was one of standing up for God even when it meant losing their lives in a fire.
  - What’s **YOUR STORY**? Will you stand up for God no matter what it costs?
    - Our world could use some men and women and young people like that today.

**One more note . . .**

- King Nebuchadnezzar was so impressed with the power of God and the fact these three men were willing to stand up for Him no matter what, that he made it a capital offense in Babylon for anyone to say anything against the One True God (**Daniel 3:28-29**).
  - You never know how God will use your testimony when you take a stand.

**Two things to remember:**

- 1. Your FAITH will be TESTED.**
- 2. Your GOD can be TRUSTED.**

**AN UNUSUAL DIET, AN UNBLIEVABLE DEMAND . . .**

**(3) AN UNMISTAKABLE DELIVERANCE (Daniel 6:1-28)**

- By **Chapter 6**, in the **Book of Daniel**, King Nebuchadnezzar has died.
  - **Darius the Persian** is now the King. (He's also known as **Cyrus**.)
- King Darius set up a system of satraps and administrators to govern the provinces in his kingdom.
- As you might expect, **Daniel** was selected as one of the top three administrators.

**Daniel 6:3**, "Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom."

- That didn't set well with the other administrators and satraps who were native Babylonians.
  - **JEALOUSY** rears its ugly head again and they decide to get rid of him.

**Verses 4**. "They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent."

**Verse 5**. "Finally, these men said, 'We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God.'"

- They knew Daniel would never do anything against God. What a testimony!

- So, they got King Darius to issue a decree there could be no prayers prayed for thirty days to anyone other than the King (**Daniel 6:8-9**).

- When Daniel learned about the decree you know what he did? **The same thing he always did**.
  - He didn't change his prayer life or to whom he prayed, just because the king made it illegal.

- Daniel's detractors waited until Daniel prayed and when they saw him they ran to the king and reminded him of the decree.

- **Verse 12**. "Did you not publish a decree that during the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or man except to you, O king, would be thrown into a lions' den?" The king answered, "The decree stands – in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed."

**Verse 13**, "Well Daniel, one of the exiles from Judah (no jealousy in that comment), pays no attention to you, O king, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day."

- The king was distressed and tried to find a way to rescue Daniel all afternoon until sundown.

**Verse 15**. The men came back and reminded the king of his decree and that it couldn't be changed.

- So the king had no choice but to have Daniel thrown into a den of lions.

- If you grew up in church you might've always thought the story of Daniel in the lions' den was a cute story.
  - There's nothing cute about it.

**ILL.** A few days ago, a University of Texas at San Antonio anthropology student named Andrew Oberle was dragged by two chimpanzees into their compound where they savagely beat and attacked him. He received numerous lacerations and fractures, lost several fingers and toes, received deep lacerations on both legs, both arms were ripped up and he lost one ear in the attack. He'd been in a medically induced coma before being moved to a hospital in Johannesburg a few days ago.

- That was in **A MONKEY SANCTUARY . . . NOT A LIONS' DEN!!**
- The king gave the order. Wished Daniel the best and had a stone brought so the mouth of the den was sealed.
  - That night the king **didn't eat**. He **couldn't drink**. He **couldn't sleep**.
    - But Daniel slept like a baby.

**Verse 19.** At the first light of dawn, the king was down at the den, calling out for Daniel to see if he was somehow still alive (**vs. 19-20**).

- He asked an incredible question: "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?"

**Verse 21-22.** "Daniel answered, 'O king, live forever! My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king.'"

- Instead of PREDATORS, the lions became PILLOWS for Daniel to sleep on.
- The king was overjoyed. Had Daniel lifted out of the lions' den and had the men who falsely accused Daniel, along with their families, thrown in.

**Verse 24.** "Before they reached the floor of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.

**HERE'S THE STORY LINE FOR YOU AND ME THIS MORNING . . .**

**Whenever you put God first, you'll never regret it. God will always come through.**

- He may not do it the way you think He should . . . or when you think He should.
  - But He will come through.

**IF YOU WILL TAKE YOUR STAND FOR HIM.**

Will you do that today?