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### A Teenager's Decision That Changed the World

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## A TEENAGER'S DECISION THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL  
DANIEL 1:8-21  
NUMBER 2

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In our last study we saw how the Chaldean Empire tried their brainwashing technique on these young Hebrews. We studied how the Chaldean Empire rose from obscurity and how Nebuchadnezzar and Nabopolassar won the Battle of Carchemish and defeated Nineveh and Assyria and established the Chaldean Empire.

DANIEL 1:8 "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself." Nebuchadnezzar thought that in three years he could wash out of their minds all they had learned in Palestine and place the culture and wisdom of the Chaldeans in them. He was determined to make these fantastic young Hebrews into the master minds of his State Department. But notice that Daniel and his friends had other plans. The turning of the tide started here in verse 8. These four young teenagers stand out and one of them made a decision. He made a decision that required him to do something different than the crowd and do it under terrific pressure. Remember that teenagers are herd bound. When one drives a car, they all want to drive a car; when one gets a motorcycle they all want motorcycles; when one wears blue jeans, they all want to wear blue jeans and white socks and black shoes; when one wears a certain kind of T-shirt or sweatshirt, they all want to wear the same; and when one wears long hair, they all want to wear long hair. Now it is quite easy to understand this but it is not for the making of great men. One curse that has fallen on the American educational system is that we are grinding out young people in molds. They use the same kind of toothpaste, they drive the same kind of cars, they listen to the same kind of music, they have a passionate dread of being different from anyone else, and as a result, we are grinding out mediocre individuals. It may be that the hardest problem facing teenagers today is to break through their herd-bound barrier and do what they know is right. When great pressure came to these boys, they not only had knowledge of doctrine in their minds, but they had the courage to stand by their convictions. It says, "Daniel purposed" and it simply means that he made a decision. It might do us good for just a minute to go back into Deuteronomy and recall some of the training that had been given them.

Deut. 8:11-14

Deut. 6:5-15

Daniel made a decision in his frontal lobe and he applied the doctrine he knew to the situation. Daniel had quickly made friends with the chief eunuch who was in charge. His decision was based on the fact that he had been taught not to eat food that had been offered to idols and drink wine that had been poured out on the principle of making a libation.

Deut. 32:37-38

Daniel determined that he would act on the basis of his knowledge of the Word of God and he would not succumb to the customs around him. Conforming to the customs around you is one of the paths that leads many to destruction.

DANIEL 1:9 "Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs." The words "Tender love" here refer to emotional love. This chief Eunuch had become emotionally attached to Daniel. It is an emotional love, not a love of stability. Any love that is built on emotion is dangerous. But he was really taken with Daniel and Daniel had made a tremendous impression on him. He realized that Daniel was different. (One of the mottoes that had such a great impact on my student generation was "Dare To Be Different For Christ.")

DANIEL 1:10 "And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king." I call this sympathetic vacillation. What can you expect from the action of a man who is built on emotion? You can't be a stable person and live on emotion. And even though the chief eunuch loved Daniel he couldn't go along with him. We read, "He feared his Lord, the King." The Prince of the Eunuchs was about the third man in the empire and he had great power and fantastic influence. But please notice this--HE WAS A FRIGHTENED PERSON. He had his eyes on Nebuchadnezzar and when you are filled with fear, you can't be stabilized.

"Worse liking" and this means less healthy. There are certain kinds of food that make you less healthy. Carbonated drinks and candy and potato chips and all kinds of starch and white bread, but this is what most teenagers like. As a matter of fact, I am concerned about the diet of young Americans today. It is about time that someone took young people aside today and told them how they should eat. Even the Word of God recognizes the right kind of a diet. If you want to have a complexion that speaks of a rich starchy diet, then you can have it. Daniel here took a stand on the right kind of a diet and he is not going to eat all that rich starchy food and drink that wine of the king's palace. The Hebrew says here that "worse liking" means "less healthy." The eunuch was afraid that Nebuchadnezzar would find these boys looking so thin and pale and he would chop his head off. He is more concerned about his position than he is about what is right. The eunuch was a frightened person. Let us get this principle from verses nine and ten. People in places of high authority are just as frightened as people in lower stations of life. There is no security in positions of great power and leadership. Daniel was a persistent type of an individual and he held to his convictions. Daniel was gung ho for doctrine and truth.

DANIEL 1:11 "Then said Daniel to Melzar whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah," Evidently all the Jewish boys that had been brought to Babylon were divided up into groups of four each. Melzar, the steward who served them food and cared for them, realized he was responsible for what happened here. But Daniel was not discouraged for he had been properly trained. He knew where he stood. He knew the rules of the game and he wasn't about to discard those rules for those he had not tried.

DANIEL 1:12 "Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink." Daniel wanted a ten-day trial period. He wanted the diet tried out for ten days. He asked that they be given vegetables for ten days and water to drink. The word for "pulse" here means vegetables. Now I suppose that no children especially like lettuce and greens and spinach and brussel sprouts. Well, no Chaldeans ate like that! And remember, they were trying to make Chaldeans out of these young aristocrats.

DANIEL 1:13 "Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants." So here Daniel spelled out his proposition. He was calling for a ten-day test and he was willing to abide by the results at the end of the ten-day period.

DANIEL 1:14 "So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days." This Melzar was evidently a good sport and he went along with Daniel's ten-day trial test.

DANIEL 1:15 "And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat."

"Fairer" really means "beautiful." So this verse says that at the end of ten days their faces were beautiful. They had a marvelous color. "Fatter" isn't fatter but it means "firmer." It means that the texture of their skin was firmer. The diet they had had for ten days developed firmer flesh. Something we can all do without is "fat flesh." So these sound young men, by going the sensible Bible way, came out on top. They were eating things that were healthy and they were doing it God's way. God honored their Biblical stand and it even showed in their faces.

DANIEL 1:16 "Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse." So here is the victory of faith. So for three years they had a fantastic diet. They won going God's way. They knew that it was wrong to eat that rich food that had been offered to idols and to drink that wine. Daniel and his companion refused to go that way and as a result they had amazing lives and long lives. As a result, Daniel became one of the greatest men of all times. It was vegetables versus the rich starchy food of the King. He went God's way and won out in the end. They remembered the teaching of Deut. 3 and 8 and 11 and they lived by what they had learned. Nebuchadnezzar had brought quite a large number of teenagers back to Babylon, but we only remember four of them. The others passed into obscurity.

Now we have come to that section where we study the three-year test period and see the results.

DANIEL 1:17 "As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams." The word for children here means "teenager." God gave them knowledge. God provided for them doctrine. They had the writings of Jeremiah and Isaiah and they passed through that three-year brainwashing test and they came out on top. They graduated at the top of the class after the three-year crash program. When believers begin to learn doctrine categorically, it affects them academically. If you apply yourself in Bible study, then you apply yourself in other areas. There is a very vital relationship between the two. The result of their devotion to truth and wisdom in one realm spilled over into another realm. Daniel, in addition to the gifts of the others, was also a gifted prophet. God gave him this special talent.

DANIEL 1:18 "Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar." Now we skip over the next three years, from 605 to 602 B.C. In that period they learned the culture of the Chaldeans. At the end of that time, they were about to graduate and be led before the king.

DANIEL 1:19 "And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king." Now at last final exams came. Now how do you get ready for final exams? Well, I'll tell you. Learn your lesson every day and don't quit until you have learned that lesson for that day. Then learn the lesson for the next day. Never go out to have fun or run around until your lesson has been finished. (Many face what they call "dead week" by staying up all night, by drinking ammonia cokes and by eating canned heat, and in that way they try to learn in one night what they should have been learning all through the term.) These four boys in our story were studying the Chaldean system but they were taking in doctrine daily as well. And when final exams came, they finished Magna Cum Laude, Cum Laude, Cum Laude, and Cum Laude. Daniel was No. 1 and the others were right behind him. There is a very definite connection between academic excellence and spiritual excellence. If you store the truth away every day, then when the final exam comes, you are ready for it. The word "communed" means that the king examined them and among all of them none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. It means that they got the best jobs in the state department.

DANIEL 1:20 "And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm." Nebuchadnezzar found these boys ten times better than all the others who were in his realm. They were even better than his magicians and astrologers. The Chaldean government had four sections of their state department and two of them are mentioned here. God uses men of the Word. These men took in the Word of God and when the exams came they were ready.

DANIEL 1:21 "And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus." This means that Daniel continued until he was a very old man, until the time of King Cyrus which was 538 B.C. God uses prepared men.

#### NINE LESSONS FROM DANIEL 1

1. God disciplines in time. We saw that from what happened to the Jews in the application of the fifth cycle of discipline to them in Daniel 1:1.
2. Religion seeks to brainwash the true Christian and obscure doctrine and change Christian character. Verse 7o
3. Divine viewpoint in the frontal lobe results in right decisions. Verse 8
4. People of great authority and high position are often frightened people. The more people know about all that is involved in high places of leadership quite often the more they are frightened. There is no security in holding high office or wielding great power. Verse 10
5. Perception of Bible doctrine means perception of academic truth as well. Verse 17o
6. God honors those who put the Word of God first.
7. God uses prepared men. Verse 20o
8. God honors faithfulness. Verse 21
9. God never leaves himself without witness. The Chaldean Empire was on the way up and they went on positive volition at the point of God-consciousness. Daniel and these three friends were being prepared by God so they could give the gospel to many of them, and before it was all over, thousands were reached.