

DANIEL



Sometimes being a Christian and following Jesus can be tough. Consider the persecuted church in countries where it is illegal to own a bible or share your faith with other people. It can also be tough here in NZ.

The bible tells us that we should expect persecution when we decide to follow Jesus (John 15:19). Christians throughout time have experienced this. This week we are going to be taking a look at the character of Daniel as an example of someone who is uncompromising in his faith in God. In this study we will look at two examples of situations where Daniel decides to put all his trust in the Lord even in very difficult circumstances (chapter one and chapter 6).

Part 1: An uncompromising life in a compromising world

As you read this chapter highlight the following words:

Wisdom

Understanding

Daniel and his pronouns

King Nebuchadnezzar and his pronouns

Daniel Chapter 1

1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. **2** And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia^[a] and put in the treasure house of his god.

3 Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring into the king's service some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility— **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. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians.^[b] **5** The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service.

6 Among those who were chosen were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. **7** The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name

Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

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 this way. ⁹ Now God had caused the official to show favor and compassion to Daniel, ¹⁰ but the official told Daniel, “I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your^[c] food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you.”

¹¹ Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, ¹² “Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³ Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see.” ¹⁴ So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.

¹⁵ At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. ¹⁶ So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.

¹⁷ To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.

¹⁸ At the end of the time set by the king to bring them into his service, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. ¹⁹ The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king’s service. ²⁰ In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanterers in his whole kingdom.

²¹ And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.

Chapter theme: In one sentence what is a theme or summary of this chapter?

What does the word compromise mean?

Chapter Context:

Before Daniel was written Israel had entered the promised land about 800 years earlier. Now God's people were conquered and taken away as captives. Babylonia had become the dominant world power and their custom was to take the spoil and the best people of a conquered nation back home with them.

In 605BC Daniel was taken in the first of three waves of captives to Babylon. Daniel was thought to be one of approximately 75 Judean captives taken from Israel. He was thought to be about 15 years old at this time.

Why did God allow all this to happen to his people? Jeremiah 16:10-13

What sort of captives did the king of Babylon want chosen into a special group? (Daniel 1:3-4)

What do you think was the king's purpose for his special treatment of them?

The custom of the Babylonians was to take a select group of the people they had conquered. The goal was to convert the group to the Babylonian way of living, as was a means of Babylon controlling the people.

Babylon had an ungodly culture. They had killed Daniel's people and destroyed his homeland. In what ways were they now attempting to enforce the ungodly Chaldean (Babylonian) culture on Daniel and the other 75 Judean captives?

Of all those cultural pressures which one did Daniel steadfastly refuse?

Daniel and his 4 friends take a risk to honour God and imitate an unusual test. How many times in the text can you see God's direct intervention to influence the outcome? (Daniel 1: 8-20)

Given Daniel's youth, his recent trauma as a refugee from war, his loss of family, and his previous way of living; where you think Daniel's confidence in God came from?

The last verse singles out Daniel, and tells us just how long he was useful to God as a man of Godly influence to stand before the king. How long?

As a result of Daniel's (and his 3 friends) faithfulness to God, we are told in verse 20 that Daniel received wisdom and understanding in every matter that the king inquired of them. Daniel and his friends were found to be far more knowledgeable and useful to the king compared to all the magicians and enchanters in the kingdom.

Daniel never went home. For the rest of his life he lived in a foreign country and served a foreign king (multiple). We are told in verse 21 that Daniel was there until the first year of King Cyrus which was in 539BC. For about 70 years Daniel served God in a pagan court.

Father God,

Please protect us from the lifestyle of the ungodly and aid us to be steadfast like Daniel and not to compromise on obeying your commands for Jesus. Amen.

Part 2: Daniel in the lion den

Now we are going to take a look at a situation Daniel faces later in his life. This is another example of how Daniel puts his faith entirely in God and trusts in him for the outcome. Read Daniel chapter 6.

Highlight:

- Pray
- God and His pronouns
- Daniel and his pronouns
- King Darius and his pronouns
- Rescue

Daniel in the Den of Lions

6 ^[a]It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, ² with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss. 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. ⁴ At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. 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.”

⁶ So these administrators and satraps went as a group to the king and said: “May King Darius live forever! ⁷ The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or human being during the next thirty days, except to you, Your Majesty, shall be thrown into the lions’ den. ⁸ Now, Your Majesty, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.” ⁹ So King Darius put the decree in writing.

¹⁰ Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done

before. ¹¹ Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help. ¹² So they went to the king and spoke to him about his royal decree: “Did you not publish a decree that during the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or human being except to you, Your Majesty, would be thrown into the lions’ den?”

The king answered, “The decree stands—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.”

¹³ Then they said to the king, “Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, Your Majesty, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day.” ¹⁴ When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him.

¹⁵ Then the men went as a group to King Darius and said to him, “Remember, Your Majesty, that according to the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or edict that the king issues can be changed.”

¹⁶ So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions’ den. The king said to Daniel, “May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!”

¹⁷ A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel’s situation might not be changed. ¹⁸ Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep.

¹⁹ At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions’ den. ²⁰ When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?”

²¹ Daniel answered, “May the king live forever! ²² 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, Your Majesty.”

²³ The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

²⁴ At the king's command, the men who had falsely accused Daniel were brought in and thrown into the lions' den, along with their wives and children. And before they reached the floor of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.

²⁵ Then King Darius wrote to all the nations and peoples of every language in all the earth:

“May you prosper greatly!

²⁶ “I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel.

“For he is the living God
and he endures forever;
his kingdom will not be destroyed,
his dominion will never end.

²⁷ He rescues and he saves;
he performs signs and wonders
in the heavens and on the earth.
He has rescued Daniel
from the power of the lions.”

²⁸ So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus^[b] the Persian.

Chapter context:

By this stage Daniel is thought to be about 90 years old. The Babylonian empire under which Daniel was taken as a young teen has been conquered and taken over by the Medo-Persian empire. A new Persian king, Darius is now ruling. We are told in verses 2 and 3 that under this new king, Daniel was made an official to help rule over the kingdom.

According to verse 2 and 3 what was Daniel's new position in Darius's kingdom?

What did the new King and his officials notice about this nearly 90 year old man?
(verses 3-5)

What two very different responses did these same impressions bring about in:

a. the King

b. the other presidents and satraps

The other satraps and high officials were jealous of Daniel and so they came together to devise a way in which they could get rid of him. They found that they could not fault Daniel in any of his works and decided that the only way they could trap Daniel was by using his faith against him. What law did they think up and convince the king to initiate? (verse 7)

How were the officials able to persuade the king to ratify their new law? (verses 7 and 14)

We learn in verse 10 how Daniel prayed three times a day every day. Who could this godly habit have been modelled on? Read Psalm 55:17-19.

In verse 10, after Daniel learns about the new law what does he do? What attributes is Daniel showing by his response to the changed situation? What decision had he obviously come to prior?

Why was Daniel not harmed in the lion's den? (verse 22-23)

How do we know the lions simply weren't hungry? (verse 24)

The jealous enemies could not destroy him, the lions could not eat him, the king could not save him. Daniel's fate was entirely in God's hands. In what way are we like Daniel?

What about people whom God did not save from martyrdom? Was Daniel more worthy than those people? Read Hebrews 11:32-40.

Take some time now to think about what we can learn from Daniel's example.

What are some difficult circumstances that you have faced?

What are some examples of what it would look like to be thrown into the lion's den for you today?

Have you ever put your trust in God before? If so, what happened? If not, what's stopping you from trusting God?

Do you want to possess the sort of faith that Daniel has when you are 90 years old? What steps will you need to take now to achieve this?
