

# Kingdom Devotion

## *Daniel 1*

The nation of Israel is a nation like no other in the history of the world. She is a nation with whom God makes an unconditional covenant to bless her and give her a future and to give her a land . . . and the LORD binds His Name to this people even before they are a people. When this people are about to enter the land that God gives to them, the LORD tells them what to expect from Him. In Deuteronomy 28, the LORD tells them through Moses that he will bring blessing upon them if they obey Him, but that He would bring cursing upon them if they turn in rebellion against them. Specifically, the LORD tells them plainly that He will use ungodly nations to punish them for their sins against Him.

*"The LORD will bring a nation against you from far away, from the end of the earth, swooping down like the eagle, . . . "They shall besiege you in all your towns, until your high and fortified walls, in which you trusted, come down throughout all your land." (Deuteronomy 28:49-51 ESV)*

But the LORD's covenant people do not heed God's warnings. They act in disobedience and idolatry. **In patience and love, the LORD sends Isaiah and Jeremiah to warn Judah that the time of His severe discipline is close.** These prophets call this nation to repent and receive mercy from the LORD. But Judah continues in her unfaithfulness. Specifically, the LORD names Babylon as the nation that He will use to bring His displeasure upon His unfaithful people.

Around 700 BC Isaiah prophesies,

*"Behold, the days are coming, when all that is in your house, . . . shall be carried to Babylon. Nothing shall be left, says the LORD. And some of your own sons, . . . shall be taken away, and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon."" (Isaiah 39:6-7 ESV)*

Nearly 100 years later God fulfills His prophetic warning. In 605 BC, God raises up a Babylonian king named Nebuchadnezzar who begins his rule by marching against Jerusalem. The prophet Jeremiah counsels King Jehoiakim to quickly surrender to Nebuchadnezzar and Jehoiakim takes his advice for once!

Think now with me of one particular noble family living in Jerusalem. Daniel's family is unique among the Jews of this day. They are among the few faithful to the LORD. Daniel's dad and mom taught him all of his 16 years to know the scriptures and to worship the LORD alone.

Being part of the nobility, they know that Jerusalem's gates will soon be opened and the Babylonian army will flood in to their beloved city. . . a city that had been secure for four hundred years . . . a city established by King David . . . a city to which every Jew flocked to worship God at the magnificent Temple that Solomon built.

God is beginning a new chapter in the history of the world . . . a time that Jesus will call "the times of the Gentiles" when the land promised to Israel will be under the rule of foreign nations.

Daniel's dad sits at the table with him. *"Daniel, we have prepared you for a life that we did not want for you. We taught you how to live in unfaithful Judah and we pray we have taught you how to live in ungodly Babylon. Tonight you will be taken from us. You may never come back to your home again."*

As a tear streams down his face he continues, *"This may be the last night that we will ever see you here in this world. Daniel, do not be afraid for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go. He will not leave you."*

Remember what King David wrote, *"The LORD is my shepherd, I shall lack nothing that I need . . . even though I walk through the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for you are with me. Your rod and your staff they comfort me . . . You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies . . . Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD."*

*"Son, prepare for the evil one to tempt you away from the LORD. Pray to Him constantly for He will hear you when you cry for help; He will strengthen you when you are weak; He will give you wisdom when you do not know what to do; He will provide for your every need. Son, remember the LORD and obey Him and it will go well with you."*

Suddenly, the door to Daniel's house crashes open. Dad and mom quickly embrace their son and he is yanked away from them by armed soldiers.

In the night Daniel is thrown together with other Jewish teenagers. He is happy to see that his three best friends are among them! These four connected so deeply because they were among the few in their high school class who chose to obey the LORD and not chase after the things of this world. That night Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah began a long long walk . . . 1700 miles they walked until they arrived in Babylon's royal city.

The city is immense and beautiful and strange! These four are taken to Ashpenaz who is a chief official given the responsibility to shape the Jewish captives into helpful Babylonians. Ashpenaz tells them that their future depends

upon their success in learning over the next three years. He says, *"Young men, expect everything to be hard. You will be schooled in agriculture, architecture, , astronomy, law, religion, math and our language. You have no time to cry. You must succeed or die. But if you do well, the king will reward you with position, responsibility and favor!"*

Well, everything is different for Daniel and his friends. They are given new clothes to wear, a new language to speak, even new names to bear. **Their new names were to remind them that their past is the past and that their future is Babylon. They need to become Babylonians in their thinking, their speaking, and their worship.**

--Daniel "God is Judge" to Belteshazzear "Bel's Prince"

--Hananiah "Beloved of the LORD" to Shadrach "Illumined by the Sun god"

--Mishael "Who is like God?" to Meshach "Who is like Shach?"

--Azariah "The LORD is my help" to Abednego "The Servant of Nego"

Lastly, Ashpenaz tells the teens that they will be on a strict diet that will help them grow strong and healthy. At the end of the first day, the four friends huddle together. Daniel and his friends discuss what they are to do. They know that rebellion will lead to their deaths. Daniel finally says, *"Friends, I think we can remain faithful to the LORD and go along with this program. Except for the food. We cannot eat the food that the Babylonians feed us and still obey the LORD. The LORD told us not to eat certain foods nor to eat food that has been sacrificed to pagan gods. We have to draw a line here."*

That night these four teens resolve to not defile themselves with the king's food . . . even if it means execution. Daniel says, *"Let us pray that the LORD will give us favor as we talk tomorrow to Ashpenaz about this."*

The next morning Daniel tells Ashpenaz, *"Respectfully sir, we cannot eat the king's food. We must be true to the LORD our God."*

Ashpenaz has taken a liking to Daniel. He sees that he is respectful and honorable, but he is troubled, *"Daniel, I am very afraid for you. If at the end of this time, you are weaker and not as strong as the others because you have chosen a weaker diet, the king will put you to death . . . and he will put me to death too!"*

Daniel understands Ashpenaz' plight and he says, *"Sir, please if you will, one thought. Test us for the next ten days. Let us eat our vegetables and drink only water. They see if we are not stronger than the others! If we are, then the problem is solved! Just ten days sir! That is all I ask."*

*“OK. Ten days.”*

Well, at the end of the ten days the four were stronger and healthier than all the others! So Ashpenaz agreed . . . from now on you can eat the food that honors your God!

Over the next three years, the LORD favors these four in remarkable ways. They excel in every subject, every sport, every test, every quality. Daniel in particular stands out for his understanding in all the meaning of all visions and dreams. The king comes down at the end of this time to examine all the young men in this program and he finds these four to be 10 times more wise and capable than any of the magicians and enchanters in his kingdom!

Now Daniel will spend the next 70 years in Babylon. He will serve under four different rulers. Though helpful to Babylon, he knows that his citizenship belongs with God’s people. In spite of the opposition and the temptations that he will endure over the next 70 years, he lives faithfully to the LORD and the LORD honors him for that.

**Main Idea: God knows what He is about. He is effectively working in a broken world to bring glory to His Name. What we think about God defines how we live every day.**

### **Six Dependable Actions of God**

#### **Quality #1: God rules over the nations.**

**From a human standpoint, it seems like Nebuchadnezzar is in control of the world’s affairs in 605 BC.** Many of the Israelites thought so. Nebuchadnezzar thought so. When N. defeats Jerusalem, one of the first actions he takes is to march into the Temple of the Jews and plunder it. He brings many of the valuable sacred articles back to the temple of his god. Why? **Because he believes that the reason why he defeated the Jews is because his god was more powerful than Yahweh. He believes that having Yahweh’s worship articles in Marduk’s temple proves that Marduk is greater than Yahweh.**

Overtime Nebuchadnezzar will learn how wrong he is about that!

But Daniel knows differently! In chapter 2 when God reveals N.’s dream and its meaning to Daniel, he blesses the LORD this way.

*“Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings;” (Daniel 2:20-21 [ESV](#))*

What a remarkable thing for Daniel to say! He was taken out of his home, deported to a land of strangers, losing every dream he had as a young man because of Nebuchadnezzar's rise to power. Yet here he is early in his life exulting in the LORD's sovereign working in the affairs of nations.

### **Jesus' perspective at His crucifixion:**

*So Pilate said to him, "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?" Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above." (John 19:10-11 [ESV](#))*

### **Paul's perspective in Athens:**

*And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place," (Acts 17:26 [ESV](#))*

### **Series Title: "Lord of the Kings. "One king to rule them all!"**

Yes, it is difficult for us to understand WHY the LORD places some people on their throne or why He leaves them there for so long of a time. **God does not do what I would do if I were God.** What happened in the plane crash that took the president of Iran out of this world? I do not know the human factors, but I know the eternal factor. God said, "It is time to remove you."

We ought to read the news headlines differently than unbelievers do! **Let us never forget that God's hand is working in every human event to move all human history toward the great day when His Son is exalted and every knee bows. The LORD knows what He is doing!**

This is an election year where many rulers will be placed in offices all throughout our country. Politics will have profound practical impact upon our every day lives . . . perhaps in a devastating way. Let us remember that the LORD rules over the nations. He is in control of our times, our leaders, our world.

**Application: What does this truth do for us as followers of Jesus in an ungodly, unstable age? How does it affect our involvement in politics?**

- God's sovereignty does not make us passive regarding the political happenings of our present world. But it does keep us from thinking of this present world as the most important matter in our lives.
- God's sovereignty does not make us to be unfeeling about the spiritually downward direction of our nation. But it does keep us from being fearful or anxious about our nation's future.
- God's sovereignty does not make us oblivious to the very hard times that may come to our country. But it does make us hopeful about our future in Christ.
- God's sovereignty does not keep us from being vexed about evil that is advancing. But it does make us to love our enemies and not grow bitter towards others.
- God's sovereignty does not keep us from acknowledging that our nation is in decline. But it does make us humble ourselves before the LORD and turn from our sins and seek His face.

### **Quality #2: God disciplines the unfaithful.**

**Daniel's story is possible because the LORD is faithful to love His own people by disciplining us when we disobey**

**Judah had a problem of "dual allegiance". They worshipped the LORD, but they also worshipped false gods too. They wanted both. God said, "That will not work for Me. I told you that from the beginning!"**

Do you perceive any ways that the church is seeking to worship both the LORD and the gods of this world? Are we trying to follow the LORD and follow the gods of self, sexual pleasure, career, sports, or money?

Warren Wiersbe said, **"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."** God is showing His love to Judah by keeping them from continuing to live in the darkness of sin and idolatry.

**He warned them over and over. And yet they hardened their heart against Him.**

*"Tell this to the nations, proclaim concerning Jerusalem: 'A besieging army is coming from a distant land, raising a war cry against the cities of Judah. . . . This is your punishment. How bitter it is! How it pierces to the heart!'" Jeremiah 4:16-18 NIV*

*"And when your people say, 'Why has the LORD our God done all these things to us?' you shall say to them, 'As you have forsaken me and served foreign gods in your land, so you shall serve foreigners in a land that is not yours.'"" (Jeremiah 5:19 [ESV](#))*

**Friends, God's discipline is patient and slow. But the LORD never speaks an empty warning. He warns so that we will turn from our sin and the disaster that is coming to us.**

*"And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives" . . . he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."(Hebrews 12:5-6, 10-11 [ESV](#))*

**Application: Let us listen intently to the warnings of God. They are given in love so that we avoid disaster.**

### **Quality #3: God ordains trials for His faithful.**

Daniel is among the faithful in Judah. He is not an idolater, a thief, a sexually immoral young man. He is obedient to God. Yet here he is deported to Babylon. Think of being 16 years old and having your life so disrupted . . . torn apart and turned upside down. Would it not be tempting to shake a fist at the LORD and say, ***"WHY? WHY? I have been obedient to You! Why is this happening to me?"***

Satan bends us toward self-pity. If he gets us there, we are vulnerable to every other temptation he throws at us.

The LORD is not disciplining Daniel, but He is ordaining a painful trial for him.

**TRUTH: God has purposes for our trials that we cannot see when we are in them. Though God often uses evil, His purposes are good. We can trust Him to be faithful to us and to never let evil take from us the blessing God establishes for us.**

Jump forward 65 years. Daniel is being lifted out of the lion's den. You are interviewing Daniel. *"Daniel, are you angry that God took you out of your home*

*and placed you here in Babylon? Do you wish that He would have allowed you to live out your hopes and dreams in Israel?"*

*Daniel smiles, "My life is not my own. I am the LORD's. He has been good to Me every day and has never failed me. He has used me in ways that bring eternal purpose to my being. Angry with the LORD? No. I cannot be and I won't."*

*"For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal." (2 Corinthians 4:17-18 [ESV](#))*

### **When God Wants to Make a Man**

When God wants to drill a man,  
And thrill a man,  
And skill a man,  
When God wants to mold a man  
To play the noblest part;  
When He yearns with all His heart  
To create so great and bold a man  
That all the world shall be amazed,  
Watch His methods, watch His ways!

How He ruthlessly perfects  
Whom He royally elects!  
How He hammers him and hurts him,  
And with mighty blows converts him  
Into trial shapes of clay which  
Only God understands;  
While his tortured heart is crying  
And he lifts beseeching hands!  
How He bends but never breaks  
When his good He undertakes;  
How He uses whom He chooses,  
And with every purpose fuses him;  
By every act induces him  
To try His splendor out—  
God knows what He's about.  
—Author Unknown

**Quality #4: God instructs His faithful.**



*"But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank." (Daniel 1:8 [ESV](#))*

What do you consider to be the most important questions of your life? What college attend? What job should I pursue? Whom shall I marry? Where will I live? How many children should we attempt to have?

All important questions. But these are not the most important questions? Here is the most important question: **How does the LORD want me to live my life?**

If you have the answer to that question and then pursue it by faith, God will bless you! Regardless of how all these other questions are answered . . . this one is THE QUESTION. **How does the LORD want me to live?** Have you asked that question lately? Have you made this a matter of prayer?

Daniel had a Book from the LORD that answers this all important question for his life. He studied that book with a commitment to obey everything written in it. **Daniel is not confused about what he should or should not do in a culture of sin and idolatry.** He gives his heart to the LORD's instruction. He resolves at any cost to do what the LORD tells him to do and to NOT do what the LORD forbid. He does not have to wring his hands. He does not have to read blogs about the right interpretation. He simply listens to the LORD with an obedient heart.

*I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:14-17 [ESV](#))*

**Truth: If we are willing to obey, the LORD is willing to instruct us. He does not leave us in the dark about the most important issues of life.**

Notice that Daniel does not wait for more to join him. He and his friends are pushing forward regardless of who is on board. He does not need a group to know what was right!

**Application: Ask the LORD to help you see all that your culture pushes you toward that defiles you spiritually. Would you take some time for that today?**

I do not need to make a list for you. I can offer some suggestions. **But this is not about a legalistic pursuit of adhering to our community standards. This is about**

**worship. This is about allegiance to your LORD.** This is about standing in the place of His blessing. Think about some categories. Start where Daniel did. Start with what you eat and drink. Then move to what you read and see. Then move to relationships in family and school and work and church. Then move to internal values. Then move to worship.

#### **Quality #5: God favors His faithful.**

*So he listened to them in this matter, and tested them for ten days. At the end of ten days it was seen that they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king's food." (Daniel 1:14-15 [ESV](#))*

#### **Truth: No one ever loses by obeying the LORD. No one. Ever.**

Satan loves to whisper doubts into your mind. He says, *"Hey . . . you will never get ahead in your job, in your social group, in your goals for life if you are strict about obeying Jesus in everything. Do not be legalistic! God wants you to succeed and this is the path where you will thrive."*

This is a powerful lie. Daniel had to sit down and make a decision. He felt the pull of the lie. Satan had him isolated, indoctrinated, and threatened.

To combat this war in his own soul, he "resolved" to honor the LORD. He knew that he was being tempted to compromise . . . to be pulled in the direction of his new world.

In the quietness of his heart before the LORD, Daniel says, *"No. I will not defile myself with this world. I am in this world, but I am not of it. I will faithfully serve N. but I will never love what N. is offering me. I will love the LORD my God with all my heart and all my soul and all my strength."*

Daniel loved God despite the unfairness of his life. Daniel obeyed God despite the pressures to disobey.

**Truth: If we learn nothing of the Gospel . . . it is that the Gospel brings eternal blessing to all who believe it. God is not calling us to forfeit personal blessing when we follow Jesus. God is calling to claim His blessing by committing to Christ as our King.**

**Jim Elliot: "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."**

### **Quality #6: God commissions His faithful.**

*“Daniel 1:17 As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. Daniel 1:18 At the end of the time, when the king had commanded that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel 1:19 And the king spoke with them, and among all of them none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Therefore they stood before the king. Daniel 1:20 And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom. Daniel 1:21 And Daniel was there until the first year of King Cyrus.” (Daniel 1:17-21 [ESV](#))*

**Big question for young people: What is the purpose of my life?**

**Today, you are taught to look within your own heart to define your identity and define the purpose for your existence.**

The LORD never intends for you to bear that insufferable weight. God does not ask you to discover for yourself who you are and the reason why He placed you here on this earth. The LORD in love TELLS us our identity and our purpose.

**Truth: We are created by God to know Him, to love Him, to serve Him and to be used by Him to bring glory to His name in this dark world.**

That is it. I know that there are specifics to discern. But God takes care of those specifics as we walk with Him day by day. Every person who follows Jesus is commissioned with an eternal purpose. Not one exception to that. Not many in history have their purpose published in God’s Book like Daniel does. But that does not make our purpose less significant.

When I was in high school, I came across a poem that resonated with me then and still does today:

*Dare to be a Daniel  
Dare to stand alone  
Dare to have a purpose firm  
Dare to make it known.*

Why would we dare such a life? Only if we KNOW the LORD the way Daniel does!!

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#### **Six Dependable Actions of God**

**Quality #1: God rules over the nations.**

**Quality #2: God disciplines the unfaithful.**

**Quality #3: God ordains trials for His faithful.**

**Quality #4: God instructs His faithful.**

**Quality #5: God favors His faithful.**

**Quality #6: God commissions His faithful.**

Do you know the LORD?

*“Thus says the LORD: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.””(Jeremiah 9:23-24 [ESV](#))*

*““For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life . . . And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” (John 3:16; 17:3 [ESV](#))*