

## **Resolve**

Daniel 1:3-21

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*Purpose statement: Obedience to God trumps obedience to man.*

**Attention Getter:** We've all heard the old adage, "You are what you eat." And we're constantly reminded to make healthy food choices. We know the consequences of making unhealthy choices. Although healthy choices aren't always the easiest, most convenient, most tasty, or even the most popular, they're the best choices for a healthy life. With a constant barrage of tempting unhealthy foods, a person needs resolve to consistently make healthy decisions. We live with the dietary choices we make and understand the impact of those choices.

The same is true morally and ethically—the choices we make impact our life. Just like we're constantly faced with dietary choices and temptations, we're also constantly bombarded with moral and ethical choices and temptations.

More than most, LEOs regularly make moral and ethical decisions that not only impact their own lives and careers, but the lives and careers of others. Most decisions officers make are life-altering for people they don't even know.

**Introduction:** But life is full of choices—for everyone. Every day we make decisions. Some will drastically change the course of our lives—others won't. Many times, it's not the BIG choices that chart our course. It's the everyday little decisions that builds character, opens opportunities, or glorifies God. Conversely, it's the little everyday decisions that reveals poor character, limits opportunities, or dishonors God. Young Daniel and his three friends had a decision to make.

Although it was a dietary decision, it was much more than that. It was a moral choice that would not only be life-changing—it would be life-threatening.

**Read: Dan. 1:3-8a** *“But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself....”* (Dan. 1:8a).

**Background:** The book of Daniel covers about 80 years of Daniel’s life; from the time he was taken captive in 605 BC and through the 70 years of Babylonian captivity. The invasion of 605 BC was the first of three invasions by Babylon, the last was in 586 BC. Judah was held captive until 536 BC, the third year of the Persian king Cyrus.

Although containing history (chapters 1-6) and prophecy (chapters 7-12), the theme of the book is “God is **sovereign**,” (5:21b). Four times in Daniel the Lord is called “*the Most High God*” and ten times simply “*the Most High*”.

Chapter one begins the historical section of Daniel; it was written in Hebrew, and the original audience was God’s people who were exiled to Babylon. Today’s sermon can be outlined: the chosen, the choice, and the consequence. Let’s begin with the chosen.

## I. **The Chosen (1:3-7)**

As mentioned, Nebuchadnezzar invaded Jerusalem three times. It was during the first assault (in 605 BC) that select young men were particularly chosen to serve Nebuchadnezzar. Their captivity, along with the other items taken mentioned in 1:2, was foretold to King Hezekiah by Isaiah a century earlier in 701 BC. Hezekiah became sick and Babylon sent a royal delegation to Jerusalem with presents. Hezekiah recovered and happily showed off Israel’s treasures, **Isa.**

**39:1-2.** Isaiah warned what the Babylonians would do, **39:5-7.**<sup>1</sup> Daniel 1 records the fulfillment of this prophecy, **Dan. 1:3.**

The young captives were of royal blood and were likely in the line of King David. The Jewish historian Josephus says they were related to King Zedekiah (*Ant.* 10.10.1<sup>2</sup>). The text identifies them as quality young men, **1:4a.** The Persians began training young men at the age of 14; it's likely the Babylonians did the same.<sup>3</sup> Daniel was about that age when taken captive. The young men were both physically and intellectually gifted. They had wisdom and understood science, language, and math. (the NIV says, “*showing aptitude for every kind of learning,*”). These guys were gifted, talented, and good looking.

To sum, they were competent young men that had what it took to learn the language and ways of the Chaldeans and stand before the king, **1:4b.** The word translated here as *Chaldeans* may refer to the Babylonian population in general or to a special class of Babylonians. This special class was the wisest and highest educated. Priests and wisemen were selected from this group. The best were educated to advise King Nebuchadnezzar.

As the book unfolds, we find that four young men had much more than intellectual capacity, they had character. Character is having the **backbone** to do what is right—even when it's not popular. Even when doing right may bring about unfavorable consequences. The ability to stand for what is right is forged into young people by significant adults—and by God himself, through his word.

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<sup>1</sup> (see also 2 Kgs. 20:12-18)

<sup>2</sup> (Josephus, 1974, pp. 80-81)

<sup>3</sup> (Miller, 1994, p. 60)

Nebuchadnezzar had a three-step plan to indoctrinate the Hebrew youth into becoming true Chaldeans—material pleasure, reeducation, and a new identity. The plan began with material pleasure.

1. **Material** pleasure (1:5a)

The young men were taken captive by a foreign nation, what did they think awaited them? They knew the stories of the Egyptian bondage, and likely feared the same doom awaited them. But to their surprise they were provided the best food and drink, **1:5a**. What a deal! This was even better than what Jerusalem offered! Life was looking up! Next was reeducation.

2. **Reeducation** (1:5b)

They were to be reeducated into a Babylonian mindset, **1:5b**. Along with history, science, language, and math, they also learned Babylonian religious beliefs. One scholar describes Babylonian religion as a “systematized superstition.”<sup>4</sup> During Daniel’s day, the Babylonian religion was a hodge-podge of religious beliefs. Marduk was the chief god who received the glory for creating heaven and earth out of the corpse of a dead goddess.<sup>5</sup> Life from death; sounds a lot like the evolution theory—the popular alternative to the Genesis account of creation that says all life comes from God.

Dr. David Jeremiah writes, “*Mind control begins with the young. By destroying their beliefs and indoctrinating them into a counterculture, the ruling forces of evil can capture a generation for their purposes.*”<sup>6</sup> The idea was to get them to

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<sup>4</sup> (Miller, 1994, p. 62)

<sup>5</sup> (Youngblood, 1995, p. 152)

<sup>6</sup> (Jeremiah, 1992, p. 29)

question the truth about their God. That's where Satan begins. In Genesis, Satan is quoted as saying, "Did God actually say..." (3:1). When Satan can get people to question the validity of God's word, they have stepped into his trap. Lastly was giving them a new identity.

### 3. A new **identity** (1:6,7)

The final step was to change how they thought of themselves by changing their identity. All four had names that identified them with the true God of the Bible. Renaming them was an attempt to identify them with pagan gods, **1:6-7**.

Daniel – "God is my Judge"  
protect his life"

Belteshazzar – "Bel protect his life"

Hananiah – "Yahweh is gracious"  
command of Aku"

Shadrach – "command of Aku"

Mishael – "Who is what God is"  
what Aku is?"

Meshach – "Who is what God is"

Azariah – "Yahweh has helped"  
ant of Nebo"

Abed-nego – "Servant of Nebo"

The three-step plan of indoctrination presented the young men with a choice.

## II. **The Choice (1:8-14)**

Daniel was at a crossroad in his life. He had a decision to make. But this was nothing new for God's people. Before the period of the judges, Joshua called on Israel's families to make a choice. But Daniel was away from his family. No one would know, except him and his buddies.

During the monarchy, Elijah called on all Israel to make a choice, “Who is your God?” Their answer—silence! Doing nothing is choosing. Choices. We make choices every day. Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah had a decision to make. Will they be true to Yahweh, the God of Israel, the God of David, the God who had allowed them to be taken captive? Or, will they go along with the crowd? Will they do what’s popular or what’s right? Will they do what’s easy or what’s right? Will they do what feels good or what’s right?

Yes, Daniel was at a crossroad in his life. He had a decision to make. God commanded Jews not to eat certain foods, not to eat food offered to idols, and to abstain from strong drink. Eating the food from the king’s table violated God’s word. Saying nothing, as the people had responded to Elijah’s question, was making a decision (James 4:17), it was giving in to the pressure.

Daniel could have come up with a number of excuses that sounded good.

1. His was a unique situation—surely God would understand.
2. Had not God put him there?
3. Going along may bring an important position where he could be used by God.
4. It may cost him his life by refusing the king’s food; surely God wouldn’t want him to die just to obey this little portion of his word.
5. Everyone else was doing it—peer pressure.
6. It may hurt another (Ashpenaz); surely God wouldn’t want an innocent Gentile to be hurt because a Jew wanted to obey God’s law to the Jews, **Dan. 1:10.**<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> (Miller, 1994, p. 67) (Showers, 1982, p. 6)

Let's look back at the Lord's clear instruction, **Deut. 6:17-18**. The principle still applies. We are to do what is *right and good in the sight of the Lord*. Those who claim to be God's people are simply to do what is right.

Daniel **resolved** to do the right thing, no matter what it cost him, even his life, **Dan. 1:8a**. The word translated *resolved* in the ESV is translated *determined, purposed, and made up his mind* in various translations. The Hebrew word means to set in place, to plant, to fix, etc. This was not an emotional decision made on the fly; this was a **predetermined, intellectual** choice. Not unlike the oath LEO's swear when appointed.

Although Daniel resolved to do right before God, he wasn't condescending toward those who disagreed or didn't understand. In fact, Daniel asked permission to abstain from defilement, **1:8b**. The reason Daniel purposed to abstain from some of the food and drink served was that it was a direct violation of the OT law Jews were commanded by God to observe. Further, drinking the wine offered to idols was tantamount to worshipping the false gods, violating the first commandment.

Knowing Daniel's request put the life of the chief eunuch in jeopardy, we wouldn't expect Ashpenaz even to entertain the idea; however, we find once again God was at work, **1:9**. Daniel had already gained the respect of his boss. There's something to say about character. Even those who disagree with you may still respect you and be willing to listen; such was the case with Daniel.

Ashpenaz's concern was legitimate. His job was to ensure the young men were well taken care of and in top physical

condition. As mentioned, if Daniel and his three friends appeared tired and worn down from a lack of good nourishment it could cost Ashpenaz more than his job, **1:10**.

Daniel suggested a ten-day trial diet to his immediate supervisor, **1:11-14**. Daniel and his friends went on a ten-day vegetable diet. Notice the latter part of v.13, “*and deal with your servants according to what you see*”—Daniel didn’t know what would happen in ten days and he never consented to following Ashpenaz’s commands. Daniel was willing to take whatever consequence came for his faithfulness to God’s word.

### III. **The Consequence (1:15-21)**

God knows what’s best for us. Because the four followed God’s plan they were healthier, **Dan. 1:15-16**. Nutritionists today know the benefit of a diet that consists of fruit and vegetables. However, this doesn’t mean eating meat is unhealthy. Eating meat was even commanded in the OT Law. The lesson learned is this: **God’s** plan is better than **man’s** plan.

Further, God blessed them with reasoning skills and insight above all the others who received only the Babylonian instruction, **1:17**. The bottom line is God blessed their faithfulness. That’s not to say everything was a bed of roses from that point on. In fact, as we continue through Daniel, we’ll find this was just the beginning of their trials.

Daniel received the special gift of *understanding in all visions and dreams*. This was a significant gift because the Babylonians believed that the gods spoke through dreams.

Nebuchadnezzar thought he was preparing the four to serve the Kingdom of Babylon when all the while God used Nebuchadnezzar to prepare them to serve the Kingdom of God. Daniel's gifts weren't solely to benefit Daniel; they were given for Daniel to carry out God's purpose in his life.

After the three years of training, they were presented to the king, **1:18-19**. They were promoted not by man's **logic** but by God's **wisdom**.

Daniel and his companions were blessed by God *far more abundantly* than all they could ask or think, **1:20**.<sup>8,9</sup> In fact, Daniel outlasted the entire Babylonian Empire, **1:21**.<sup>10</sup>

**Conclusion:** Tomorrow you will face a choice. A choice between right and wrong. A choice between man's logic and God's wisdom. What decision will you make? Will you do what is right in the sight of man or in the sight of God? Will you be true to Yahweh, the God of the Bible, the God who allows trials in your life? Or, will you go along with the crowd? Will you do what's popular or what's right? Will you do what's easy or what's right? Will you do what feels good or what's right?

It will be your choice. The decision you make may very well have life-changing consequences. God provides guidance and promises blessings for making the right choices. But he will not decide for us. Resolve *now* to do what is right in the sight of the Lord.

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<sup>8</sup> (Eph. 3:20-21)

<sup>9</sup> The term *magician* comes from the Hebrew word *chartom* (Kar-tome) and means engraver or writer. The term *enchanter* (Hebrew: *ashshaph*, ash-shawf) means conjurer, exorcist, or necromancer and refers to those who believed they could communicate with the spirit world.<sup>9</sup> Daniel would have been in the group known as magicians or simply wise men. Necromancy was clearly forbidden by God and Daniel, who was concerned about the dietary laws surely wouldn't have engaged in other forbidden practices.

<sup>10</sup> In 10:1 Daniel says that he was still around in the third year of Cyrus, is there a contradiction here? No, in chapter one Daniel is making the point that through divine providence, he outlasted the very power that took him captive.

There is another choice, a choice you can make today, a choice that may not wait until tomorrow. A choice that will have life-changing eternal consequences, **2 Cor. 5:21-6:2—  
Salvation!** The choice is yours. Will you choose obedience to God's wisdom or man's logic?