

**A PERSONAL  
VERSE BY VERSE COMMENTARY**

**DANIEL**

**SHARON CRAVENS**

The chronological flow of this book is chapters 1-4, 7-8, 5-6, 9-12.

Though many have questioned the authorship of Daniel, Jesus declared that Daniel was the author in His teaching known as the Olivet Discourse.

*Matthew 24:15* When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)

**Dan. 1:1** In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it.

**Dan. 1:2** And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god.

According to commentators, the events described here happened in 605 BC and pertain to the first time that Nebuchadnezzar takes captives to Babylon from Judah; it marks the beginning of the 70 years of captivity predicted by the prophet Jeremiah.

*Jeremiah 29:10* For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.

2Kings 24 and 2Chronicles 36 give accounts of these same events. Neb did not destroy the temple at this time, but he did take many of the valuable vessels from the temple to bring back to Babylon (Shinar) in honor of his god, Marduk.

*Genesis 11:2 & 9* And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of **Shinar**; and they dwelt there....Therefore is the name of it called **Babel**...

David Guzik made note of some interesting things from history occurring during this time period.

- Construction on the Acropolis in Athens began
- Mayan civilization flourished in Mexico
- Aesop wrote his fables
- Confucius and Buddha lived
- The Phoenicians made the first known sea journey around Africa

**Dan. 1:3** And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring *certain* of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes;

**Dan. 1:4** Children in whom *was* no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as *had* ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.

When Neb first conquered Judah/Jerusalem, he took some of the smartest and most privileged children, including those of the royal family, back to Babylon to teach them their language and indoctrinate them in the ways of the Chaldeans. Ashpenaz, the master of the eunuchs, was the designated authority to supervise the training of these young men. These young men were described as:

- Having no physical flaws
- Handsome; pleasing to look at
- Quick learners
- Smart, intelligent
- Having ability to discern, understand, reason and make application of knowledge
- Having demonstrated the ability to assume leadership positions

I was reminded that these verses are directly connected to God's judgment against Hezekiah declared by the prophet Isaiah.

*Isaiah 39:6-7 Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.*

**Dan. 1:5 And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king.**

These young men were given the best that Babylon had to offer; they were even fed from the same food that was prepared to serve the king. The designated time of training and preparation was three years. At the end of that time they were to assume positions of service as determined by the king.

**Dan. 1:6 Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah:**

**Dan. 1:7 Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego.**

At this point four of the captive youths are specifically identified by both their Hebrew and Babylonian names. Hitchcock's Bible Names Dictionary defines the names as follows:

1. Daniel (judgment of God, God my judge) = Belteshazzar (who lays up treasures in secret)
2. Hananiah (grace, mercy, gift of the Lord) = Shadrach (tender, nipple)
3. Mishael (who is asked for or lent) = Meshach (that draws with force)
4. Azariah (he that hears the Lord) = Abednego (servant of light, shining)

The Hebrew names seem to indicate that their parents were true servants of the Lord who had determined to invest in the spiritual development of their

children. The fruit of their investment is reflected in the young men 's commitment to please God as they face tests of loyalty as related later in this book.

Joe Focht posits that Daniel was probably around 14 when taken captive. He stated that it was the custom in Babylon for young men to complete their education at age 17 and assume the positions for which they had trained.

**Dan. 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.**

In my opinion, this is a very important verse in scripture. It teaches that we are people with the ability to make choices and that it is important that we choose well according to the teaching of God's word.

"purposed in his heart" – Daniel made a decision; he determined that he was not going to do anything to defile himself, to make himself unclean according to God's food laws. Instead of responding with a defiant spirit, he respectfully asks Ashpenaz to allow him to eat according to the laws of God.

**Dan. 1:9 Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.**

**Dan. 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.**

God knows our hearts. He wants us to succeed. Daniel had a heart to obey God, so God caused Ashpenaz to look on Daniel with kindness, compassion and mercy. Ashpenaz wanted to grant Daniel's request, but he was afraid of what would happen to him if Daniel and his friends didn't look as healthy as the rest of the captives who were eating and drinking the best that Babylon had to offer.

"your faces" – This phrase implies that Daniel's request had included his three friends.

Ashpenaz was afraid he would be beheaded. I thought it was interesting to note that this is a punishment still practiced in this part of the world.

**Dan. 1:11 Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,**

**Dan. 1:12 Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.**

**Dan. 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.**

“pulse” = something sown, grown from planting, a vegetable

Daniel continues to exhibit respect and diplomacy. He proposes a simple ten-day test to allow Ashpenaz to see if the change in diet reflected poorly in the appearance of the young men. For ten days they would only eat vegetables and drink water. After that time, Daniel would accept Ashpenaz’s decision.

This is a great step of faith on the part of Daniel. He has purposed in his heart to obey God, and he is stepping out in faith that God will provide for him to be able to obey Him. A step of faith according to the revealed will of God will always result in victory / success. Evidently, Daniel had personal experience or had observed the success of his parents or someone else whom he respected in the matter of faith and obedience to God. Daniel’s actions were quite mature for one so young.

**Dan. 1:14 So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days.**

**Dan. 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.**

**Dan. 1:16 Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse.**

Ashpenaz agreed to the time of testing. At the end of the ten days Daniel and his friends looked much healthier than the rest of the captives. From that time on they were given vegetables instead of meat.

“Melzar” – the term appears to reference the butler, the one who served the food. He seems to be the delegated authority under Ashpenaz.

**Dan. 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.**

These four Hebrew children were especially gifted by God to excel in all areas of their studies. Daniel was singled out as having a gifting in understanding visions and dreams.

This seems to indicate that Daniel’s gifting had been revealed before he was ever confronted with the events of chapter two. Daniel had already been grouped with the “wise men” of the kingdom. God was already preparing Daniel to serve Him by serving the king. I couldn’t help but be reminded of the story of Joseph.

**Dan. 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.**

**Dan. 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.**

**Dan. 1:20 And in all matters of wisdom *and* understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians *and* astrologers that *were* in all his realm.**

When the captives were brought in to Nebuchadnezzar at the end of the three years, the four Hebrew friends stood out as the top of the class; they were definitely the best of the best. In fact, Nebuchadnezzar found them to be ten times better than any of the recognized magicians and astrologers in all of Babylon. The record will reveal that the king appointed them to serve him in top positions in the land.

**Dan. 1:21 And Daniel continued *even* unto the first year of king Cyrus.**

Daniel was one of the first captives taken to Babylon, and it is noted that he lived to see Cyrus conquer Babylon. He served the ruling kings almost the full 70 years of the Babylonian captivity.

Why 70 years? To fulfill the prophecy of Jeremiah.

*2 Chronicles 36:20–21 “And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.”*